

# HORSPATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 24th April 2024  
at 7.30pm in Horspath Village Hall.

**Present:** Mr D Burgess  
Mrs P Cook  
Mr I Harris  
Mr B Igoe  
Mrs B Oakley (Chairman)  
Mr P O'Brien  
Mr E Parker  
Mrs H Kogel, Clerk  
Mr S James-Lawrie (District Councillor)

**Apologies:** Mr I Coolman, Mrs C Riley

**Absent:** Mr T Bearder (County Councillor)

**Public:** 14

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** – Apologies were given on behalf of Mr Coolman and Mrs Riley. Mr Bearder was absent from the meeting.
- 2. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL.**  
The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023, were approved and signed by the Chairman as correct.
- 3. STATEMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2023/24 – Un-audited.**  
A statement of un-audited accounts for 2023/24 was circulated. No questions were asked.
- 4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Mrs Beverley Oakley.**  
The last twelve months has been a learning curve for Horspath Councillors. We have considered and either approved or refused over 60 planning applications, and although there were three enforcement notices issues, SODC Planning Department has yet to follow these through.  
Mrs Oakley and Mr Harris have attended two consultation meetings with Chelgate Public Relations who are acting for Brasenose College for the 1800 housing development at Northfield, Garsington. As yet no actually planning application has been submitted.  
Repairs to the roof and fascia's at the Gateley bus stop have been carried out by Mr Coolman and Mr Harris. They have also erected the two new noticeboards, one on the Green and the other at the Gateley bus stop.  
The flower tubs have been planted twice by Mrs Oakley and Mrs Cook, with a considerable discount on the plants given by Mill View Nursery.  
A new defibrillator has been installed at the Berkeley Mobile Home site.  
New signs directing people to the burial ground have been installed on the Village Hall gate and on the Burial Ground gate.  
Mrs Oakley, Mrs Cook, Mrs Riley and Mrs Kogel have recently sorted through an enormous amount of old Parish Council correspondence which was stored in the Doctor's room, and thanks to Mr O'Brien for arranging the disposal. We are in the process of moving the remaining correspondence into permanent files.  
At the September Parish Council meeting, Mr O'Brien asked County Councillor, Mr Tim Bearder why the estimate for a pedestrian crossing was so high, between £60-£80k, when the contractors who would install the crossing only charge up to £20k. After a slightly heated debate Mr Bearder left the meeting and has not attended any other Parish Council or Horspath Stone Pit Meeting since that date.  
We are still waiting to hear from OCC when the 20mph speed limit will be implemented in the village.  
Councillors send their deepest condolences to Sandra Eason following the very sudden death of Max, who was Horspath Cricket Club. We wish Horspath Cricket Club our very best wishes for the future.

I wish to thank several villagers who help enormously with Horspath Parish Council, Martin Harris, Keith Brookes, Rob Gray, Bob Surman, Bob Hamlet, Jane Hamlet, Bob Gambles, Michelle Thomson and the many litter pickers. Special thanks to Bob Hamlet for repairing the bridge in the Conservation Area. There is one other person who works so hard to ensure the smooth running of Horspath Parish Council, Hayley Kogel, the Clerk, who without doubt is the best Parish Clerk, who makes my position as Chairman a lot less stressful. Horspath is very fortunate to have such a knowledgeable and conscientious Clerk. Finally, thanks to my fellow Councillors, the last four months particularly have been incredibly difficult but they always make the meetings enjoyable. At the moment Cath Riley is still in the rehabilitation unit in Abingdon after suffering a second stroke in February. She has made slight improvements but it will be a lot longer before she is back to normal.

There are two vacancies on Horspath Parish Council, if anyone would like to apply please email the Clerk.

**5. VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE'S REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS. – Treasurer, Horspath Village Hall.**

A copy of the report and statement of accounts 2023/24 from HVHMC was circulated to all residents and Councillors.

Mr Goss commented on the very high costs for electricity. Mrs Oakley stated that Mrs Drew has recently negotiated lower costs. Mrs Oakley stated that the water bill is also very high. It has recently been established that the water was flushing in the urinals every 8 minutes. This can be fixed so that it only flushes after use. Mrs Oakley has requested a quotation for the repair. There is also an awful smell in the ladies toilets which is due to a broken air trap. A quotation has been requested for the repair.

**6. HORSPATH STONE PIT CHARITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.**

A copy of the un-audited 2023/24 accounts was circulated to all Parish Councillors and members of the public, no questions were asked.

Mrs Oakley reported that since April 2023 numerous grants have been awarded to both individuals and organisations, totaling £32,890.99 and also hardship grants totaling £4,000. The meal voucher scheme has proved popular with old age pensioners in Horspath being able to visit the Queens Head for a meal. Sincere thanks to Pat and Jason. Meals are still being delivered to the severely housebound. The Parish Magazine “from the horse’s mouth” is particularly well received, thanks to John Underdown, Brian Lowe and Anna Radcliffe and all of the volunteers that deliver the magazine to all households. At the December meeting, Trustees agreed that a large proportion of the charity money be transferred to a Treasury Account that pays better interest. It was reported on social media that £700k had gone missing, which is not the case, it is in a Treasury Account as reported in the Minutes. If any residents have a topic that they wish to raise, please contact the Clerk. Thanks to Hilary Franklin, Brian Lowe and Mr Hamlet who are Independent Advisors for HSPC and ensure that Trustees act in accordance with HSPC Constitution.

**7. HORSPATH RECREATION CHARITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.**

A copy of the 2023/24 accounts was circulated to all Parish Councillors and members of the public, no questions were asked.

**8. FRIENDS OF HORSPATH – Report from Sheila Frankum.**

The Friends of Horspath trustees who run the Hub have just celebrated ten years of being open and serving the village and those that live in Horspath. This is quite an achievement especially when we think how busy the Hub is during the week with so many different clubs and classes. There is very often an event, celebration or meeting at the weekends as well. During the last year we have had another successful Scarecrow Trail, a Family Apple Day, two Produce Markets. A very successful talk from Mensun Bound concerning his well televised trip to Antarctica to discover Shackleton’s boat. We now

run a successful village magazine every two months to keep everyone informed. Obviously, our Cafe and Post Office is a very important part of many villager's week. Although taking a time the garden is almost complete which will add to the facility that everyone who uses the Hub enjoys. We are very grateful to all those who support us.

## 9. **SODC COUNCILOR'S REPORT – Mr Sam James-Lawrie.**

**Last Year of SODC 23/24:-** In May 2023 the Liberal/Green coalition administration at SODC was re-elected with an increased number of Councillors; the partnership is now made up of 21 Lib Dems and 8 Greens. Cllr David Rouane continues as the Leader of the Council with Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers (LD) and Cllr Robin Bennett (G) sharing the role of Deputy Leader. This resounding result vindicated the focus that had been placed on nature, climate change, affordable housing and community well-being over the previous four years and gives us the confidence to develop a new 4-year strategic plan through to 2028 which builds on the progress made during our First Term. This annual report highlights some of those achievements and explains how our strategic priorities are being translated into delivery by Council officers.

**Affordable Housing Delivery** - The SODC Local Plan 2035 includes a policy which ensures that 40% of new housing developments of 10 or more units are affordable, with a variety of tenures included. In 2023/24 156 affordable home completions have been registered so far (with another quarter to go), and a new Housing Delivery Strategy adopted in November 2023 will enable SODC to build up its own stock of houses for social rent or to provide funding for 3rd parties such as Community Land Trusts or Housing Associations to deliver more homes. A small development on the Broadway in Didcot will be the first homes built by the Council in over 25 years, and we have also been able to purchase over 20 houses with the help of a 40% grant from the Government as part of the Local Authority Housing Fund programme. A new Empty Homes Policy has been adopted in March 2024 to enable the council's Housing Team to more actively engage with private owners to return properties to the rental market as our housing list grows. During the past year, SODC has allocated over £7m of CIL funding for infrastructure projects across the district.

**Joint Local Plan 2041** - Over the past year the Planning Policy team has been working hard on the development of the new Joint Local Plan (covering both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts), which will guide the kinds of new housing and jobs needed and where they should go, informing planning decisions for the districts. A key milestone for the JLP was the "Preferred Options" consultation held between 10 January and 26 February 2024, which was carried out both online and with in-person events and which attracted a very high number of submissions. Feedback from this consultation is now being processed and analysed, and the next stage will be a consultation on the draft Plan in the autumn of 2024. Having an up-to-date Local Plan is essential to avoid speculative planning applications and unwelcome proposals which do not align with our strategic vision, our housing need or our environmental aspirations for our district. Just as important as the housing site allocations in the Local Plan, are the policies to protect and restore our natural environment – such as reducing light pollution, delivering biodiversity net gain, and securing open green spaces for our communities.

**Community Hub becomes permanent** - The Community Hub was first set up during Lockdown to provide support for residents during the pandemic. Government funding ceased in 2023 but SODC committed to on-going funding for this important service, particularly as so many residents have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis. The Hub has now been made a permanent part of the Council's structure and will continue to offer advice and support on a wide range of issues including financial help, housing and homelessness concerns, Council Tax payments and Health and Wellbeing. The Active Communities team runs a variety of activities and programmes to help people recover from Covid-19 or to help families access free or low cost activities that provide physical and mental wellbeing opportunities.

**SODC Grant Schemes including new CIL Grant Fund** - Each year SODC provides capital and revenue grants to a wide range of voluntary and community organisations to support their on-going

operations or to fund a one-off project or event. Many local groups and projects have benefitted from this scheme. The newly launched CIL Grant Fund is designed to provide much-needed infrastructure to support the growth of the district as a result of recent housing developments. It is the first time local organisations are able to bid for grant funding from SODC's share of the CIL receipts collected from house builders. At the time of writing, many Expressions of Interest have been registered and funds will be allocated later in 2024.

**Reducing our Carbon Emissions** - As a Council we have a very ambitious target to achieve Net Zero in our own operations by 2025. Over the past year we have continued to decarbonise our leisure and arts centres by switching to non-fossil fuel heating systems, reducing the temperature of water in swimming pools, circulating warm air more efficiently and generally upgrading the fabric of the buildings. This has helped to reduce emissions considerably, but the largest source of emissions for us is our waste management service, which accounts for over 57% of SODC's total emissions. Decarbonising the entire waste fleet at a time when technology is still evolving and while we were waiting for clarity from the Government on future recycling requirements would have been expensive and impractical, so we haven't been able to make the progress we would have liked. However, we have now agreed a 2-year extension with Biffa and are in the process of acquiring a new fleet of more efficient vehicles and a waste management strategy that will take us further forward towards reaching our goals. We also continue to collaborate with other authorities across Oxfordshire on the delivery of the "Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire" action plan, which includes installing EV charging stations, retrofitting homes to make them more energy efficient, exploring Biodiversity Net Gain projects and renewable energy infrastructure.

**Recycling Champions!** - We were very excited to be announced as the country's top recycling district in DEFRA's latest tables! Initiatives such as our "Check it before you chuck it" promotional campaign in autumn 2023 demonstrate our commitment to maintaining this position.

**Financial Stability** - When the council were first elected in 2019, one of the first priorities was to stabilise the finances of South Oxfordshire District Council. They were in a very poor state and the Council were having to draw on around £3m of reserves each year to plug the funding gap in its operating activities. Over the past few years the Council has restored financial stability and for 2023/24 approved a balanced budget with only a small (sustainable) draw on our reserves. The Council was fortunate to benefit from higher interest rates but we also employed a specialist officer to seek external grant funding to supplement our own resources. This officer has paid for himself several times over by securing government funding for projects such as the decarbonisation of our leisure centres and covering the increased costs of our swimming pools.

The Council Tax charged by SODC remains one of the lowest in the country and it still costs us more to deliver services to new households than we earn in Council Tax receipts, so we have to generate income from other services and grants to cover all our costs. The Council have worked hard to balance increases to fees and charges with the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis and providing value for money remains a priority.

**Openness and Accountability** - We are committed to transparency in the way we make decisions (almost all our public meetings are live-streamed and all papers are in the public domain at least a week in advance) and to reporting on our performance with honesty and accountability. Our quarterly performance reports are online.

Mr Hamlet asked how many enforcements have been enforced by SODC. Mr James-Lawrie stated that he does not know the figure but he will find out. Mrs Oakley stated that SODC have not followed through any enforcements in South Oxfordshire even though the Planning Inspector has ruled in favour of SODC. A SODC representative has stated that following through enforcements is too costly.

Mr O'Brien requested that under Openness & Accountability, what was SODC's deficit for the year. Mr James-Lawrie stated that he is not sure, he thinks that it is now £3million but he will find out. SODC has recently increased council tax.

**10. OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – Mr Tim Bearder. – No report provided.**

Mr Parker stated that not only did Mr Bearder not attend the meeting this evening, he didn't provide a report.

Mrs Oakley and Mrs Cook recently attended a meeting at OCC and raised a point that a neighbouring Parish Council to Horspath had filled the potholes in their village themselves. The Chief Executive thought it was a great idea, but the representatives from Highways stated that Parish Councils are not permitted to fill potholes. Mrs Oakley stated that OCC will not take responsibility for poor repairs carried out to potholes. Mr Gambles has been round the village to report potholes, there are 9 just on the Village Green as well as several other roads in the village.

A resident asked what action HPC will take if the County Councillor is not attending meetings, as we need to ensure that we have a representative. Mr Parker stated that Mr Bearder made it clear at the September meeting that he would not be attending any further Parish Council meetings. Mrs Oakley stated that Horspath do not have an OCC representative.

Mrs Oakley stated that a representative at the OCC meeting announced that he had secured funding of £3.47m from Central Government to establish electric micro village hubs which consisted of charging points, scooters etc. There was a plan of a village, and when asked where the village was, it didn't exist. A local Parish Council, with help from their County Councillor in 2018 secured funding of £1.2m from Central Government for a cycle route from Berinsfield to Nuneham Courtenay. To date nothing has been done, but OCC has received the funding of £1.2m.

Mr O'Brien stated that a national newspaper has recently reported that on the A40 to Witney they have built a new park & ride, but they then realised that they need funding for the entrance, so they have 850 spaces almost complete that they can't get into. It is expected to be 8/9 years before they get the funding. OCC representatives do not take responsibility and do not except criticism.

Mrs Cook stated that the whole meeting at OCC was about representatives stating how well OCC are doing. Mrs Oakley asked OCC how many of the 29 illegal traveller encampments cleared up after themselves. The answer was none.

**11. REQUEST TO RELOCATE HORSPATH FAIR.**

Mrs Oakley stated Horspath Fair is held on the Village Green and over the last couple of years it has encroached slightly on Church Road and Manor Farm Road. A resident has asked that the Fair be moved onto the recreation field/car park. Councillors have spoken with Mr Pettigrove, who is not in favour of moving the Fair. Historically the Fair has been held on the Village Green and will remain there. The weight of the lorries going on the recreation field near the cricket pitch will cause a lot of damage. Mr Parker stated that the traffic situation has deteriorated over the last couple of years, the rides have slightly expanded and are encroaching on to the roads and it is quite dangerous coming round where the Fair is. We need some kind of traffic control when the Fair is in. Mr Hamlet suggested that HPC contact Thames Valley Police to arrange for PCSO's to be in attendance. Mr Burgess stated that the Police were going to contact Mr Pettigrove with regards to signage and barriers being in place to separate pedestrians from the traffic. Mr O'Brien stated that when the boys football team played on that field it was un-playable by October so if the Fair moves on to the recreation field it will not get off. Mrs Cook stated that it would be a shame to move the Fair, and suggested that HPC looks at closing the road. Mr Parker stated that it is the main bit of road coming past the Chequers and round the corner that is the problem. Mrs Oakley stated that we need to restrict the Fair and keep thoroughfares. Mrs Gray stated that the problem is the two big rides either side of Manor Farm Road.

A resident asked what the historical agreement is with Mr Pettigrove. Mrs Oakley stated that the agreement was set up with Mr Pettigrove's father and grandfather over 200 years ago. The resident stated that in the absence of any agreement, as the landowners, HPC's obligation is to the residents of Horspath who have raised safety concerns, as have the Police. The Fair does not serve the purpose that it

once did as the roads are used more now and children are running across the street so it is dangerous. Mr O'Brien stated that it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that children do not run across the roads. If the road could be shut while the Fair is in the Village or move it to another location such as the car park. Mr Parker stated that we cannot enforce closing the car park. The resident stated that signs could be put in place to notify people that the car park will be shut to the public while the Fair is in the Village. Mrs Oakley stated that the decision about the future of the Fair needs to be made by village residents as this is only one residents' opinion. Councillors are aware that there are safety issues which will be addressed. Mr Parker stated that it is not an option to move the Fair as Mr Pettigrove is not in favour of moving. The resident stated that the only option then is to close the road. Mrs Oakley stated that HPC will consider all of the options and liaise with Mr Pettigrove and the Police. Mrs Legg stated that she does agree with the resident raising the concerns, and asked what due diligence checks are carried out for the Fair. Mrs Oakley stated that Mr Pettigrove provides all necessary risk assessments, health & safety checks and insurance documents before the Fair arrives. Mrs Oakley stated that further discussions will take place at the May Parish Council meeting. The resident stated that Horspath PTA, and the Nursery all support the Fair being moved due to safety reasons. Mrs Cook asked if all of those people are residents of Horspath. Mr Parker stated that none of those people have attended the meeting this evening. Mr Underdown stated that if the rides didn't spread out on to the road there wouldn't be a problem. Mr Parker stated that he would like to see the two big rides moved and if possible set up a diversion up Butts Road for two days. The resident stated that that would be a perfect solution. Mr Burgess stated that he is not sure that this is an option as access needs to be available for emergency vehicles at all times.

**12. NEW VILLAGE HALL. – Update.**

Mr O'Brien reported that a pre-application has been submitted to SODC. The reason being as we do not know how many surveys etc. will be required for the project. A pre-app will provide the full list of the requirements and then a decision can be made if this project is viable. If this project goes ahead, it will rely on the committee, particularly Mr O'Brien and Mr Coolman, and there is already talk of Mr O'Brien, Mr Harris and Mr Coolman taking money from HSPC, and do they want this hassle? Mrs Gray stated that the comments should be ignored. Mrs Gray asked if it is not viable, could the Village Hall be renovated. Mr O'Brien stated that the Village Hall accounts are a disaster and the cost would be high. Mr Hamlet stated that he was in favour of a new Village Hall, but with the lack of enthusiasm of the villagers he wouldn't consider it. Why put the effort and money into a new Village Hall when residents don't attend any meetings. Mr Hamlet's opinion is that the existing Village Hall should be renovated. A resident asked what is the vision for the Village Hall? Mrs Oakley stated that there is a Village Hall committee but very few people are on it at the moment. There are cleaning issues in the main corridor, both men & ladies toilets which have been power washed and painted by the Cricket Club. Mrs Oakley stated that people are not booking the Village Hall for several reasons and the booking system is also a problem. Mr Parker stated that the existing Village Hall is not financially feasible to revamp, so we are looking at the possibility of building a new Village Hall. HPC has canvassed the village and once the planning situation is resolved, if we are going to submit a full planning application we will consult with the village again. Mr O'Brien stated that looking at the notes from the Village Hall report, only 7% of the bookings last year were from local residents. Mr Parker stated that HSPC has a good income stream and can only be used for the benefit of the residents of the village. Mr O'Brien stated that HSPC has reserved money hoping that residents want to go ahead with a new Village Hall. Mr Parker stated that the booking system, marketing etc. all needs to be revamped. Mrs Oakley stated that the Booking Clerk/Secretary will be resigning on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024, so there will be a concerted effort to encourage residents to volunteer and join HVHMC. Mr Burgess stated that there are several positions available on HVHMC at the moment that are dealt with by HVHMC and not HPC.

**13. POSSIBLE NEW PLAY PARK.**

Mrs Oakley stated that the existing play park is not fit for purpose, and quotations have been sought for a new play park and are around £191k +vat. The plans are available to view this evening. The proposed new play park will be located the other side of the existing play park parallel with the over-flow car park. HPC has submitted an expression of interest to SODC’s CIL Grant Fund, and have now been invited to submit a full grant application for the play park. If full funding is not awarded, other grants can be applied for. Mr O’Brien stated that HPC is only likely to be awarded 10% of the total project. A resident asked if families can help by distributing information. Mrs Oakley stated that further discussions will take place at the May meeting or when we hear about the grant funding. Mr O’Brien stated that the Play Park project should be completed first, followed by the Village Hall. A resident asked if a grant is not awarded is there another option for funding. Mrs Oakley stated that HPC will apply for other external grants first as HSPC funds are needed for the new Village Hall project.

**14. REQUEST FOR A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING.**

Mrs Oakley reported that OCC quoted £60k - £80k to install a pedestrian crossing compared to a quotation of around £20k from a local contractor. The difference in costs was raised with OCC who stated that the costs were all to do with planning requirements. Jon Beale, OCC has recommended that the Parish Council wait to see what impact 20mph speed limits has before looking at installing a crossing. The recent update from OCC on the installation of 20mph speed limits is between June 2024 – June 2025. Mr O’Brien reported that the Surveyor company provided all of the information required for a pedestrian crossing, estimating the cost to be around £9k - £15k. Jon Beale, OCC stood by his quotation of £60k - £80k and warned that it is possible that the quotation could double. A resident stated that a 20mph speed limit is completely different to a pedestrian crossing which allows you to cross the road safely. Mr O’Brien stated that it is not the Parish Council waiting, it is OCC. Mr Burgess recommended that residents write to Jon Beale OCC. Mrs Oakley stated that the Parish Council has been trying for 8 years to obtain permission from OCC to remove the chicane on the Oxford Road, and have had several meetings with Jon Beale at OCC who has witnessed the near accidents at the chicane. Mr Parker stated that the chicane is supposed to slow the traffic but it doesn’t work.

**15. AOB.**

**Public:-**

- a. A resident asked who is the Trustee of the Pound? Mrs Oakley stated that HPC is the Trustee of Horspath Recreation Charity which includes the grass areas as part of the Village Green. Mr Burgess stated that the un-adopted access roadway is owned by the people that use it. In the past easements were purchased by residents with properties on the Village Green, but they are no longer legal. The resident stated that there is a large pothole in the road up to the Pound. Mr Parker stated that the road is un-adopted and the responsibility of the residents living at the Pound.
- b. A resident asked if the Parish Council can escalate the fact that the County Councillor does not attend the meetings. Mr Burgess stated that on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 is the Police & Crime Commissioner Election and Mr Bearder is a candidate, so he may resign as County Councilor if he is successful. Mrs Legg stated that Mr Bearder attended the Wheatley APM and one other meeting in the last 6 months. Mrs Oakley stated that he hasn’t attended a HPC meeting since September 2023 and a HSPC meeting since January 2023, and doesn’t send a report or apologies. Mr Hamlet stated that HPC should notify OCC and Liberal Democrats and complain that Horspath is not being represented.

**16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING. – To be confirmed.**

Signed ..... Date .....