

HORSPATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 23rd April 2025
at 7.30pm in Horspath Village Hall.

Present: Mrs P Cook
Mr L Coolman
Mrs H Franklin
Mr I Harris
Mr P Hookham
Mr B Igoe
Mrs B Oakley (Chairman)
Mr P O'Brien
Mr E Parker
Mr G Walker
Mrs H Kogel, Clerk
Mr S James-Lawrie (District Councillor)

Apologies: Mr R Burgess.

Absent: Mr T Bearder (County Councillor)

Public: 14

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** – Apologies were given on behalf of Mr Burgess. Mr Bearder was absent from the meeting.

2. **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL.**
The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on Tuesday 24th April 2024, were approved and signed by the Chairman as correct.

3. **STATEMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2024/25 – Un-audited.**
A statement of un-audited accounts for 2024/25 was circulated. No questions were asked.

4. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Mrs Beverley Oakley.**
It has been an interesting twelve months for Horspath Parish Council, and some very worrying concerns for residents and Councillors.
After a consultation with SODC regarding the building of a new village hall it was deemed to be too costly to proceed, and Councillors agreed to an upgrade of the existing village hall. Planning permission has yet to be granted by SODC Planning Department.
Following an open meeting for Horspath residents with Sustrans and contrary to our observations, Sustrans are adamant the route should follow Church Road and the up the slope to Butts Road, through to Littleworth and on to Wheatley. It was pointed out that the slope (with an underground spring) freezes during the winter. Sustrans discounted this objection. Sustrans also attended a Parish Council meeting, but their representatives turned up late. They were not aware that all Parish Council meetings are recorded. They proposed a pedestrian crossing from the Green to the Hub. HPC pointed out that it could prove to be a danger point, but this too was discounted. HPC suggested that they send the Council detailed maps and plans in order that we could discuss further their proposal. I received a message a week later which said that they were glad that we were on board with the proposal including funding. I replied that fortunately the meeting had been recorded and no decisions had been made. We did not receive any more communications until the end of March 2025 when they requested a Zoom meeting. This will be discussed at the May Parish Council meeting.
Oxford City Council is still planning a burial meadow on the farmer's field on Oxford Road. Several reports have been given regarding serious flooding and parking issues, but there is no further update at the time.

Oxfordshire County Council advised the Parish Council that the chicane on Oxford Road could not be
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replaced by wide speed cushions until the 20mph speed limit was introduced throughout the village. We shall continue with talks with the Highways Department. In my view, the 20mph limit has made little impact on the speed of some road users travelling through the village.

A horse chestnut tree near the memorial was vandalised. A cherry tree close by had also died and with permission from SODC these trees were removed. A sweet gum replacement tree will be planted next month.

Myself and Mr Martin Harris have attended numerous meetings with Chelgate Planning Consultants with regards to the Northfield housing development at Garsington. We are hopeful that a substantial tree line between Northfield and Horspath is retained.

Now some good news. In July 2024, George Walker and Hilary Franklin were both co-opted onto the Council making a full compliment of Councillors.

The path from the bottom of Manor Drive and the Green has been resurfaced.

A handyman has been appointed to deal with minor tasks as and when needed around the village.

The existing bus shelter on the Green has been repaired and a new bus shelter will be installed adjacent to the layby by the bridge as soon as a quotation has been approved.

A new tractor has been purchased for the sole use of Rob Gray who mows all of the grass areas around the village. The flower tubs outside the village hall and by the war memorial continue to be planted and maintained by Paula Cook.

The trees at Blenheim Road leading to Shotover were pollarded due to Ash Dieback disease.

Sad to say, our Oxfordshire County Councillor, Mr Tim Bearder has not attended any meeting with Horspath Parish Council since September 2023, but he is still standing for re-election on 1st May 2025. Two quotations for the new play area have been received and a third quotation is expected before 16th May 2025. We did apply to SODC for a grant for the play area and after 5 months we were informed that we were unsuccessful. Horspath Stone Pit Charity has agreed a grant, depending on the quotations. In future, draft Minutes will be posted on the website. These Minutes will be subject to change at the next meeting before they are accepted a accurate.

In October 2024, the automatic resignation of Mrs Catherine Riley for 6 months of non-attendance, due to her continued poor health was accepted. Following advertisements on the website and village noticeboards, Mr Philip Hookham applied and was co-opted on to the Parish Council.

My thanks to the residents who complete two litter picks around the village. Also thanks to Martin Harris, Bob Surman, Keith Brooks, Bob Gambles, Nigel Webb, Rob Gray and the Bennett family who all undertake tasks or attend meetings on behalf of Horspath Parish Council.

Finally, my sincere thanks to Councillors for their continued support and work undertaken for Horspath Parish Council. I also wish to thank their wives, husbands, partners and families for their understanding, especially when Council takes precedent over family gatherings. Our Clerk, Hayley Kogel continues to work so hard for Horspath Parish Council. We are truly blessed that Hayley is an experienced and knowledgeable Clerk, and remains as Horspath Clerk, thank you.

5. VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE'S REPORT. – Mrs Beverley Oakley.

Following the resignation of Peter Dobson and Penny Drew, Horspath Councillors agreed to be responsible for the management of the village hall as an interim measure. A new booking system has been implemented by the new Booking Clerk, Natalie Oakley, and has proved to be far easier to use, and bookings have increased by 150%. The village hall bank, Santander, has frozen the bank account because of an anomaly with the Charity Commission. Mr Parker and Natalie Oakley have spent many days, not hours, trying to un-freeze the account, with work still in progress. In the meantime, utility direct debits were not being paid, so Horspath Parish Council has taken on the responsibility of paying all direct debits and when Santander finally reinstate the village hall account, all monies paid by the Council will be repaid. Many thanks to Shauna Hilland for taking on all cleaning following Catherine Riley's ill health.

6. HORSPATH STONE PIT CHARITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2024/25.

A copy of the un-audited 2024/25 accounts was circulated to all Parish Councillors and members of the public, no questions were asked.

In January 2025 a full review of the Constitution and Standing Orders took place. The amendments can be viewed on the Horspath Stone Pit Charity website.

The automatic resignation for non-attendance resulted in Mr Tim Bearder's forced resignation as an Independent Advisor. He has not attended a meeting of Horspath Stone Pit Charity for two years. Mr Anthony Absolum and Mr Lee Smith have both agreed to be Independent Advisors and are a most welcome addition to this committee.

The meal voucher scheme was discontinued in February this year. I felt that a minority of residents' considered a voucher as their right and not as a welcomed gift from Horspath Stone Pit Charity. I do intend asking for another grant sometime in the future and hopefully everyone will appreciate the generosity of the Stone Pit Charity.

Grants for swimming lessons, school bus transport costs, educational trips and school uniform are regularly applied for. The Charity does not approve grants for tuition costs, sports equipment, start-up business costs or housing repairs.

We have also supported several residents with grants for severe emotional and financial difficulties.

7. HORSPATH RECREATION CHARITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2024/25.

A copy of the 2024/25 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 who run the Horspath Community Hub have had yet another busy year with many events, clubs and activities taking place in the Hub. We have had another successful Scarecrow trail, Apple Day, our Christmas Market and talks connected to Shackleton's epic Journey.

In conjunction with St Giles church, the village magazine "The Horse's Mouth" has had a further 6 additions published and delivered by The Friends, keeping the whole village informed of news, future events and information concerning all those who live in Horspath.

Through our own fundraising, a lot of volunteer support and help from the Stonepit Charity Trust, we have repainted the hall and managed to redesign our garden.

We are continually pleased with the range of people who use and enjoy taking part in our activities and use the facilities both on a regular basis and for occasional celebrations and remembrances.

Our MP Freddie van Mierlo has paid the Hub a visit and is now writing an article in the magazine and supporting the Post Office issue.

It is very unfortunate that the Post Mistress from Great Milton has had to retire which has now affected our Friday morning Post Office. We are however continuing to fight to get the Post Office back and thanks to everyone for signing our petition and for giving their support.

We look forward to another full year of community activities with the people of Horspath.

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

Last Year of SODC 24/25:-

Enforcement Update: - I was asked last year in an Annual Parish meeting how many Enforcement cases the SODC had, we currently have since February 246 open enforcement cases. For the year of 24-25 (March to February) we have taken on 216 new cases and completed 207. The SODC is continuously working on enforcement both long standing and new.

Local Government Reorganisation: - This year has been turbulent for the Council with the blank paper on reorganisation, many different opinions have been put forward including a Full Oxfordshire

Unitary and a Smaller “Ridgeway Unitary” but ultimately it is the decision of central Government. The current timeline has a shadow council elected in 2027 and a full take over by 2028 with the final abolishment of both the District and County. At the same time the Strategic Authority will also be established, likely using already established regions such as B.O.B care board but as with Unitaries it will be up to central government to decide.

Financial and Grants: - This year for the first time in 9 years the council has run a budget without having to use reserves, and in fact has managed to put money into the reserves. We have allocated £10,000,000 towards purchases new housing stock for the council to be owned by ourselves, we have also allocated more to the Councillor grants going from £5000 per Councillor to £7500. +

Joint Local Plan:- This year just before Christmas our joint local plan was accepted, the hard work of the council and the rush to get it ready before the announcement of the white paper led to a considerable overtime by the officers but with its acceptance we are in a good position where other councils are not. It protects us against ad hoc developments and safeguards our 5 year land supply.

Q – Mr O’Brien asked about the 246 enforcements as of February 2024, and asked if there is a further 216 new cases?

A – Mr James-Lawrie stated that in February 2024 there was 246 cases and another 216 cases in the last year. 207 cases have been completed leaving around 256 current cases.

Q – Mr O’Brien stated that he has recently contacted SODC Planning Department regarding a planning application that has been on-going for 11 weeks with no reply. SODC then sent a reply stating that the planning application is on-going and they could not put a time on it, but will let him know when it has been concluded. Mr O’Brien stated that it is a clear breach of planning and asked why does it take 11 weeks to reply and why can’t they put a time frame on it to be concluded. SODC stated that they are not here to punish people, they are there to help and Mr O’Brien should read the enforcement guidance available on the website.

A:- Mr James-Lawrie stated that he struggles with enforcements. SODC are having a re-organisation which he hopes will help the team. There are a number of long standing enforcements in his area that should be opened and shut. Mr O’Brien stated that SODC has advised him that when it is concluded, they will probably advise the applicant to submit a retrospective planning application. Mr James-Lawrie stated that he has sat in Planning and was shocked at some of the results and believes that the enforcements should be changed.

Q:- Mrs Oakley asked about the £10m for housing stock, who does this money go to, SODC or SOHA.

A:- Mr James-Lawrie stated that the money will stay with SODC. When SODC sold their housing stock in 2014 the money sat in their reserves gaining interest. Now they have been given permission to purchase houses, and as SODC has the highest reserves they decided to purchase houses.

Q:- Mr Coolman asked why the new brown bin permit is so expensive to purchase at £75. Cherwell charge £49, West Oxfordshire Council £52 and SODC £75. Are other Councils subsidizing the service in their area?

A:- Mr James-Lawrie reported that he signed off the new price increase. It is a not for profit service. Mr James-Lawrie did suggest reducing the cost, but SODC did not want to subsidise the service. Mr James-Lawrie will look into the costs in other areas. Mrs Oakley stated that people who can’t afford the permit may fly-tip their waste. Mrs Cook stated that people will start to burn waste which is not good for clean air. Mr James-Lawrie stated that there are teething issues with the new system and he has asked Officers to look at a discount option for brown bins for Parish Councils and Churches.

Q:- Mr Hamlet asked if there is a mechanism to de-select Mr Tim Bearder as the County Councillor for Horspath as we get no representation from Oxfordshire County Council. Horspath needs a Councillor that will represent the village.

A:- Mr James-Lawrie stated that he doesn’t know as Mr Bearder is Oxfordshire County Council not South Oxfordshire District Council. Mr Underdown stated that his attendance at Oxfordshire County Council is very low. Mr James-Lawrie stated that his attendance at SODC is low but is higher at OCC and Councillors have to attend a meeting every 6 months.

Q:- Mr Brooks asked if anyone has made a complaint about Mr Bearder to Liberal Democrat Party?

A:- Mrs Oakley stated that not as a Council but individuals may of.

10. NEW VILLAGE HALL.

Mrs Oakley covered the new village hall in Chairman’s report. Mr O’Brien stated that a planning application was submitted to SODC end October/early November but it did not get registered because SODC are waiting for an Ecology Report. The architect chased SODC in February/March and 10 days ago SODC replied confirming that they need an Ecology report. Mr O’Brien has received one quotation for an Ecology Report and is waiting for a second quotation.

11. NEW PLAY AREA.

Mrs Oakley confirmed that two quotations have been received and a third quotation is due in the next few weeks. A further update will be available at the May Parish Council meeting. There may be a need to hold a separate meeting to discuss the quotations and how to move forward.

12. AOB.

Public:-

- a. Mrs Gray reported that the burial ground wall before the gate has been damaged. Mrs Oakley stated that the Parish Council is aware of the damage.
- b. Mr Hamlet stated that there is no need for a separate meeting for the play area. A grant from HSPC has been awarded and when all three quotes are available, Councillors can make a decision. Mrs Oakley stated that would not be until the June Parish Council meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING. – To be confirmed.

Signed Date