

## Stonesfield Parish Council

### Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held at Stonesfield Primary School on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 7.30pm

*Meeting starts at 7.30pm*

*The meeting was chaired by Cllr Phi McArdell*

**Attendees:** Cllr Simon Powell, Cllr P McArdell, Cllr Simon Warr, Cllr Mick Heduan, Cllr David Brown, Cllr Tim Sumner (DC), Cllr Andy Graham (CC), Genny Early (DC)

**Other present:** the clerk and 63 members of public

**24/01 To receive and accept apologies for absence:** Cllr Eleanor Bailey,

Jim O'Brien has stood down as councillor with immediate effect.

**24/02 Declarations of interest:** Cllr P McArdell declared interest as a member of Stonesfield Community Trust.

#### **24/03 Introduction of Councillors**

Councillors introduced themselves to the electorate.

#### **24/04 Chairmans Report** (*Chair for the last term of Council – Cllr Phil McArdell*)

I would like to start by thanking the clerk and councillors for their contributions over the last 12 months. This is a voluntary role and your time and commitment are appreciated and without which the village of Stonesfield would not be able to function.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank and recognise Jim O'Brien, who has sadly resigned as Parish Councillor after more than 20 years. This is a phenomenal contribution to the village of Stonesfield. While we will miss your sense of humour during meetings, the biggest loss will be your behind-the-scenes work - talking and listening to the parishioners.

Financially, we have had a healthy year, and have been able to financially support numerous organisations around the village including the Septembeerfest, Food Bank, The Church, Stonesfield Mutual Aid, Playing Fields Association and the Scouts. As well as continuing to support the SAFER Road Safety team and maintain the Stonesfield Common.

The Neighbourhood Plan Sub-Committee has also been progressing well towards the goal of a Neighbourhood Plan for Stonesfield by this time next year.

Most importantly I wanted to mention the re-opening of the White Horse pub and thank all who helped make this dream a reality – in particular the BacktheWhiteHorse team.

The thing in common with all of the organisations and sub-committees I have mentioned above – and from the many groups represented here tonight, is that they are run by volunteers. And in today's demanding society, where volunteers are hard to come by, I would like to thank you all on behalf of the council for making Stonesfield a special place to live.

#### **24/05 Minutes; To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

Proposed: Richard Morris, Seconded: Susan Rudlin

There were no matters arising.

**24/06 Accounts for the year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.** To receive the statement of the Parish Councils accounts (full finance information on the website).

**24/07 To receive from our District and County Councillors.**

Cllr Andy Graham (OCC) gave a short report to the electorate. Reiterated that residents need to use the local bus service and confirmed the increase of electric buses in the Oxford County. He is also discussed that the Oxfordshire County Council does support providing the lease of the land to Oxford United Football Club. The OUFC club does require planning permission still from Cherwell District Council.

Cllr Andy Graham supports the White Horse pub and has provided some financial support to help the community pub through his Priority Fund.

Cllr Andy Graham reminded the council and electorate to be kind and think before blame as people put a lot of effort into things.

Cllr Tim Sumner (DC) – S106 funding – leisure projects officer has encouraged councils to contact them for leisure funding.

Welcomes Genny Early as new DC in this ward.

West Oxfordshire is planning to be climate neutral by 2030. Looking at green ways to heat leisure buildings. Also, speaking with Thames Water about their record in the district.

Genny Early DC spoke at the meeting to say thank you for electing her as DC. Is at the beginning of learning curve to be effective DC. Echoed to the village about being kind and respectful.

Looking to

**24/08 To receive reports from representatives of groups in the village who wish to report.**

Scouts (Ben): Trying to build scouts hut, this has started. Footings and slab are going in over the next few weeks. Phased approach over this year. Trying to minimise disruption for local people and asked residents to bear with them during building works. There is a lot of soil to remove from the site. Earn your building badge – if you know of funds, we still need funds. We also need materials / company support and ask residents to help support with this ongoing fundraising. Volunteers will also be needed once the shell is built. The council encouraged Ben to speak with District Councillor Tim Sumner regarding leisure funding.

Gardening club (Gaye Olesen): Encouraged people to join and enjoy working with plants / sustainability. Various talks taking place. 50 swift boxes aim to be placed in the village. The club raises funds from plant sales, open gardens and some money raised goes to local charities. Gardening club welcomes local charity nominations. Supporting the pub group, looking after the pub garden. Also working on community orchard which is coming on well. Active group, welcome for people to join.

Common (Richard): Work on the common is all done by volunteers. Huge thanks to the volunteer team, it is essential to keeping the common in good order. There are some invasive species on the common which are detrimental to the common. Lots of work has been done to cut branches back. Rabbits are a problem on the common. There is hardcore to be placed against the fence posts – this has not been done yet (the ground has been too wet). Ollie Stobo still plans to do this as soon as weather permits. There is a Natural England ruling to look after this land. There are cattle on land at the moment.

**Stonesfield Voluntary Transport Scheme (Viv):** Take local people who need transport for medical appointments (hospitals and doctors' surgeries) and we wait for people. This can take time. There is a team of 15 volunteer drivers as of now. In the last year there 1600 miles covered by our drivers (91 lifts).

In the year to the end of April 2024, SVTS volunteer drivers gave 91 lifts to local GP surgeries, dentists and other medical services; also to the hospitals in Oxford and Banbury (a 25% increase over 73 the previous year), and they just under 1600 miles (a 23% increase over 1300).

A total of 16 drivers contributed through the year; we currently have 15 drivers and one more is likely to become available later in the summer.

**Slate (read on behalf Diane & Paul Bates):** The *Slate* is now 48 years old and still going strong, even in these days when lots of people get their information solely online. Our team of bundlers and deliverers still make sure that every household in the village receives a copy, as well as providing extras for the shop, library and the pub.

Thanks to a loyal group of 55 advertisers the *Slate* makes enough profit to distribute money to good causes in Stonesfield. In the last year £950 has been given, mainly to help those struggling to make ends meet.

The editors and publishers are very grateful to all those individuals, community groups and sports clubs who take the time to write articles every month, to keep everyone informed and entertained.

**Stonesfield online (Parish website – managed by Paul Bates):** During 2023/4 Paul has updated the website posts at least once a week with news, events and parish meetings/information (when provided by Karen). The village diary is updated when I receive information, all too rarely, and The Slate is posted monthly. The main picture on the home page is changed monthly to keep site looking 'fresh'.

This year a few minor tweaks have been done such bringing community groups together under 'Community Action' and adding to this 'Food Groups'.

Occasionally a resident or a group will send me information asking Paul to put it on the website. Unfortunately, this is infrequent and most of the time Paul must seek out the information for the website. Some of this comes easily from articles sent into the Slate, other times just from local knowledge.

To ensure the information remains relevant, Paul removes events once they have happened but everything else remains permanently on the website.

If I feel that something very important (e.g. Neighbourhood Plan) has been posted and needs a wider audience, Paul will flag it on NextDoor with a website link.

Also on website are several links to downloadable information pages. Paul checks these pages periodically and update them when I find new information e.g. change of Parish Councillors.

It is possible to subscribe to receive an email update when a new post is made. To avoid bombarding subscribers these are sent out weekly with a maximum of three per week (news,

events and parish meetings). Subscriber numbers have remained relatively static with 172 people currently subscribing for emails.

Paul tries to ensure information is up to date but welcome any corrections, there is a 'contact us' page on the website for this.

### ***Stonesfield Community Trust (report submitted in writing from Mark Hatton): Annual Report for the Parish Council 2024***

Stonesfield Community Trust was established in 1983, it was one of the first community land trusts in the UK. The Trust is a registered charity providing 15 truly affordable houses in the village. The Trust is committed to working in partnership with other stakeholders such as The Parish Council and West Oxfordshire District Council and providing more affordable housing to enable people to be able to live in the village they were born in or live.

Over the financial last year (end 5/4/23) the Trust has refurbished three of its properties as well as undertaking routine maintenance across its estate, spending a total of £28,117.

The Trust also provides grants to support projects in the village. During year ending 5/4/23, the Trust has given a total of £12,735 to good causes in the village including the following:

- Stonesfield Primary School
- Stonesfield Tree Group
- Stonesfield Village Hall
- Stonesfield Playingfields
- Stonesfield Sports and Social Club

The Trust has also delivered a leaflet to all residents of the village providing more information about The Trust, copies are available on request. A new website has also been launched in the last year – [www.stonesfieldcommunitytrust.com](http://www.stonesfieldcommunitytrust.com)

The Trust has submitted its audited accounts for financial year ending 05 April 2023 to the Charity Commission which show the following:

Total income:	£77,367
Total expenditure:	£64,839

### **24/08 To receive reports from working groups of the council – SAFER & Neighbourhood Plan**

***Neighbourhood Plan (Richard Morris):*** The steering group has been working on the NP since 2021. A report is sent to the Parish Council each month. There are 11 parishioners on the group including two parish councillors. This is a working group of the parish council. An independent landscape assessment was undertaken last year, and grant funding was secured for this. Following consultations with WODC the NP prepared a housing needs assessment. Philippa Lowe (part of the steering group) wrote the housing needs assessment – reviewed by community first Oxfordshire. Their view on the HNA is to hold back on the independent valuation but noted the content remains useful as baseline evidence for the NP. Last year at the APM reported village survey completed with good responses. Since then, results have been analysed. This supports the policies written for the plan. All policies must comply with National Planning Policy Framework and District Local Plan. Revised District

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Local plan to 2041 is underway. Character assessment is in progress and is being written by volunteers. There will be a fuller report provided in an open village hall meeting in June – next steps will be shared then too. Member Q – how does NP comply with District Local Plan if we don't know what's in it – A – in theory the district draft plan will be put out for consultation before NP draft is published.

It was reiterated that the electorate is consulted on the NP (once the Parish Council has confirmed ok to consult).

- The Steering Group has been working on the Neighbourhood Plan since the end of 2021. The Group is made up of 11 parishioners, two of whom are representatives from the Parish Council.
- The Steering Group meets every month. A report is given to the PC each month via one of its representatives. The Group also provides a report most months in the Slate.
- The Steering Group held an open meeting in the village hall last June and will hold another this June. We had a stand at the school fete.
- In June last year we commissioned external consultants W H Landscape to produce a Landscape Assessment for the Parish, using Government grant funding via Locality.
- An independent Landscape Assessment is important to provide evidence to back up policies relating to the surrounding countryside. A key result of the Neighbourhood Plan survey was the importance of the surrounding countryside to village residents.
- The Landscape Assessment was completed earlier this year.
- Following consultation with West Oxfordshire District Council we were recommended to produce a Housing Needs Assessment. It proved very difficult to find an independent consultancy that we were happy to commission, or thought would provide value for money.
- Philippa Lowe, a member of the Steering Group with considerable experience in the area of providing affordable housing, has written an HNA for the Plan.
- This has been reviewed by Community First Oxfordshire who said:  
*“Just to summarise our view on the Housing Needs Assessment: now, we would suggest holding back on commissioning independent validation of your excellent HNA. .... the content of the existing HNA remains very useful as part of the baseline evidencing for your NP, supporting the housing mix etc. policies which you are drafting – adding local detail to relevant Local Plan policies.”*
- At last year's Annual meeting I reported that the village survey had been completed in March 2023. Since then, we have been analysing the results and applying them as evidence, along with the HNA and Landscape Assessment, to support the policies that are being written for the Plan
- Most of the policies have been written in draft form and are now being reviewed. All policies must be consistent with the NPPF, WODC Local Plan and pass the scrutiny of the planning inspector.
- We are in the process of completing a Character Assessment of the village, being written by a small team of village volunteers. This has been delayed due to some volunteers having to step down. This highlights the fact that the whole Plan, with the exception of a couple of workstreams, is being conducted by volunteers, and inevitably other life matters get in the way. The Character Assessment will be completed this summer.

- Finally, a reminder that there will be a much longer and fuller report given at an open village hall meeting in June, including an outline of the future steps.

**SAFER (Mick Heduan):** There are 7 SAFER volunteers for this working group of the Parish Council. For one hour today the team were out with the speedwatch gun– 94 cars passed the speed gun – of that only 13 passed above 24mph (20 is the limit) – this is much improved from when we started. Data is shared with TVP community speedwatch website. Those that speed will receive letters from TVP.

Highest speed in Stonesfield within past 6 months – 73mph along the Woodstock Road. The team have 3 speed indicator devices; the volunteer team maintain these and deal with vandalism of them.

SAFER also work with OCC Highways – helping to support signage, road markings etc.

Q. asked if some of the signage can be removed now the speed has reduced. The volume of signage (creeping urbanisation) is higher. A. Residents are asked to email Cllr Heduan and this can be fed back to OCC.

Q. Sign as come into the Ridings (unsuitable for HGVs) – there is a sign one end but not both ends. A. Resident asked to email Cllr Heduan and this can be fed back to OCC.

Cllr Heduan also supports the Village Traffic Network – first stage of this is to support walking and cycling routes in the village. Next stage is to implement the networks. Mick Heduan will now work to collate funding for this project. Blenheim has already promised some money for this. (*To note this is not a parish council initiative and is separate to SAFER*). Q. asked what measures VTN might implement if got funding. A. connect local routes, bike racks for example, signage, app for finding routes and report areas that need attention.

#### **24/09 Resolutions / Questions: To consider any resolutions or questions (of which written notice has been given in advance)**

None.

#### **24/10 Public Participation**

No further questions or updates.

#### **24/11 Any other matters – for information only**

Note that the current councillors' vacancies will be published within the next few days by West Oxfordshire District Council along with the terms of adding new councillors. We welcome applications from members of the public and are always welcome of people to volunteer with the council.

*Meeting closes 8.45pm*