

STONESFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Stonesfield Primary School on Wednesday 2nd October 2024 at 7pm

Meeting starts at 7pm

Attendees: Cllr Ursula Rice (Chair), Cllr Claire Renshaw (Vice Chair), Cllr Simon Powell, Cllr Simon Warr, Cllr David Brown, Cllr Jessica Huband.

Other present: The clerk, Cllr Andy Graham (OCC), Genny Early (WODC) and 4 members of public

24/774: Public Participation: None.

24/775: Playing Field Association: Andy Tacon of the Playing Field Association attended to update the new councillors on the history of the play equipment and to take questions.

Cllr David Brown made the introductions and noted that he is the Parish Council's representative on the Playing Field Association not the Playing Field Associations representative on the PC, nor is he a Trustee.

A year ago, the PFA raised concerns over their ability to build up a fund to replacement the equipment at the end of its life cycle, they approached the PC asking if it would be able to provide this. As the playing equipment is not a PC asset, the PC does not have spending powers to cover the asset replacement. The PFA asked if the PC would be willing to take it one as their asset.

Andy Tacon confirmed that the play area will not be shut due to this, and advised it was an exercise to consider the long-term life of the play equipment. The last refurbishment was in 2015 costing £80,000. This money was raised by FOSS and through the PC.

Cllr Ursula Rice asked how much it costs and the expected life cycle of the equipment, Andy Tacon updated that the last ROSPA inspection raised £2,000 of works, which was funded by the £4,000 donation from beer festival, the zip wire also needs repairing but there is some money left to cover this.

Cllr Jess Huband asked if it was just the playground, or outdoor gym and fence – Andy Tacon said equipment and fence would come over as an asset too. It was asked if there are any grants available for maintenance, of play equipment, Cllr David Brown said no, grants covered new equipment only.

Cllr Jess Huband noted that from her experience with the Scouts play equipment, items only have a lifespan of 10-12 years. Cllr David Brown said on that basis, the equipment will need replacing in 3 years.

Cllr Simon Warr asked is there or isn't there ongoing maintenance costs that the PFA cannot afford, Andy Tacon responded no. It is a replacement cost reserve not maintenance costs that the PFA cannot afford. Cllr Simon Warr went on to ask what the net revenue is and carried forward funds now.

Andy Tacon responded that £3,700 per annum is guaranteed income from sports clubs, sports and social club and hiring of the MUGA is approx. £5,000.

Spend is on average £5,500 per year on maintenance. Cllr Ursula Rice said the £3,200 surplus can be used to develop a sinking fund for replacements. Andy Tacon noted that

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this covers the MUGA and play field area, Cllr David Brown confirmed the MUGA maintenance will eat the sinking funds.

Cllr Jess Huband asked if any fundraising in advance could be done, she believed that the community was already paying for the facility indirectly through their precepted council tax.

Cllr Simon Warr noted that the sports clubs and social club in terms of rent, should be more per annum.

Cllr Claire Renshaw asked how it would work regarding the land ownership and rent. Andy Tacon it would be a lease like Hunts paddock

Cllr Jess Huband asked CCllr Andy Graham if there is any support for the PFA regarding funding, he suggested Westhive at WODC, he also agreed to look at what S106 money is left, if any for Stonesfield.

24/776: To receive and accept apologies for absence: Cllr Tim Sumner (WODC).

24/777: Declarations of interest: Cllr Claire Renshaw is a Village Hall Committee Member. Note: There is no item on the agenda relating to this.

24/778: To approve the minutes of the meeting 4th September 2024. It was *RESOLVED* to approve the minutes.

Proposer: Cllr Ursula Rice **Secunder:** Cllr Simon Warr – all in favour.

24/779: Questions on the Clerks Report on matters arising from them.

- i. The Clerk is to ask Ollie Stobo, when the hardcore will be laid.
- ii. War Memorial railings: confirmed that Clive Parsons can undertake the repainting works, the materials are in hand and works will start soon.
- iii. Hedge cutting: The Clerk was advised to give the go ahead on the hedge cutting at the original cost of £1,260.00 plus VAT.
- iv. Tree survey: The clerk advised she could not find a history of a tree survey being undertaken; the previous Clerk confirmed this. She will ask a local company for a quotation.
- v. Unity Bank charges are £22.00 per quarter, the Clerk advised that the banking system is easy to use and add payments. It was agreed to switch to Unity from Barclays bank. Proposed Cllr Ursula Rice, Seconded Cllr Claire Renshaw – agreed
- vi. Old Jail lock up: Cllr Ursula Rice had emailed 3 local solicitors asking for their fee proposals – she is waiting for responses

24/780: To consider and receive reports from District Councillors: DCllr Genny Early updated that:

- WODC have passed a motion to support the take up of pension credit after Labour removed the winter fuel payments, she asked that this information be passed onto residents.
- She, along with Cllr Claire Renshaw went to LCWIP meeting on cycling and walking around Woodstock, which includes Stonesfield. Cycling infrastructure was discussed and

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she queried if it would be possible to have secure cycle stands to lock up bikes on the main A44. DCllr Genny Early asked if there is any data on who uses the bus stops, Richard Morris advised that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group does. CCllr Andy Graham said that we need to prove the case for the need of the bus stop with data. It is important that the rural bus services remain and are good and useable. He went on to advise that OCC are looking into running the bus service themselves rather than a commercial entity.

Cllr Jess Huband asked if it could be flagged with stagecoach, that with the introduction of the £2 flat fare, it has become harder to track where people are getting on and off as the journeys are not tracked via payment method.

Cllr Ursula Rice asked the CCllr's and DCllr's to write something for the slate, a bus awareness page.

- Cllr Ursula Rice and DCllr Genny Early had made a start on the biodiversity policy with Cllr Ursula Rice reaching out to 20 organisations asking for information to draft the plan. It was suggested that this request be put in the Slate, Cllr Claire Renshaw asked if it can be a QR code.

24/781: To consider and receive reports from County Councillor. CCllr Andy Graham updated

- Oxford Community Groups can apply to a community fund that is £500,000 meaning grass roots clubs can apply for to help people live well and healthy within their community. There are 2 Tiers: Up to £5,000 you can apply via Community First Oxford. Larger community capacity grants for £5,000-20,000 are dealt with by Oxford Community Foundation. Last year Charlbury's community workshop received a £2,750 grant.
- Coombe bridge potholes are being sorted out at Swinbrook and Coombe, this will fix the gutter and potholes to help stop flooding.
- Glymton 20-30 mph scheme has been approved.
- Home school transport issues for parents is still paramount to his work.
- Government pushing through devolution, OCC are keen in keeping Oxfordshire working together
- OCC are moving out of County Hall and relocating to Speedwell House, which is more modern, fit for purpose and more accessible for people. Issue is how do you dispose of the asset you have and fund the refurbishment – OCC looking in this.

24/782: To consider and receive reports from Parish Councillors.

- i. **Recruitment of New Clerk** – Cllr Claire Renshaw to contact previous applicants and ask if they are still interested in the position.
- ii. Cllr Jess Huband met with Merylin Davies of Blenheim Palace and asked her the following questions on behalf of the residents:
 - Blackthorn obstructing public footpath on Baggs Bottom (this is Blenheim land, and the public right of way is becoming impassable due to the Blackthorn.) This site is a SSSI and therefore requires careful management whilst maintaining the public right of way. Please can we have an update on how/when (and by whom) this will be managed (in the near future and ongoing) by Blenheim? *The Blackthorn is being cut this week and will be cut annually as per previous years*
 - Management of trees in the Stockey Woods. Do Blenheim undertake a regular tree survey? Is there a plan to replace/replant fallen and felled trees? It would be good to

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see these woods managed (tree planting etc.) *We do have a ten-year woodland management plan which was approved by the forestry commission. As part of this plan, Stockey Woods will be thinned in 2030, and we can then look at the possibility of replanting. Currently the woodland floor does not have enough sunlight to make planting a success. Fallen trees are removed.*

- Consultations and communications around major events. Unfortunately, despite Stonesfield and Combe facing the greatest impact from the recent ECP, Stonesfield Parish Council (and Stonesfield residents) were not communicated with. All information was received/gleaned second/third hand, so we are hoping to set-up (re-establish) a better communication between Blenheim and Stonesfield. *Thank you. I think we discussed how I would now be managing the communications surrounding events and would attend more PC meetings. If we keep in regular contact, you can then raise things with me outside of meeting dates.*
- Traffic going in/out of Goral Doors. Concerns have been raised around the increase of traffic and vehicles pulling out in front of others. (Plus, recent run off/flooding from track/entrance opposite Goral Doors.) Ditto, traffic going through Stonesfield en route to the Goral Doors entrance. (Parishioners have noted an increase in traffic through the village – both in terms of volume (quantity), noise and speeding, when there is a large event in Blenheim with access via the Goral Doors. Most recent was Salon Prive.) Do Blenheim monitor/record traffic levels when using alternative access points, such as the Goral Doors and the Ditchley Gate. *We are going to improve signage to the entrance, and we are also considering speaking to Highways about reducing the speed limit around Goral Doors.*
- Shooting. Locations, behaviour etc.
“Shooting below Foxhole Barn by the footpath: Whilst it’s not illegal for shooting to take place by a footpath, it’s not responsible. On that stretch of footpath, I’ve often been confronted by an intimidating firing squad shooting over the footpath. It’s a big area and I’d have thought the shooting could take place far away from the footpath. I emailed Blenheim about it in 2022 and never got a response. Shooting on the Oxfordshire Way and track down to Fawler is another issue, in that it seemed to be daily in 2023, rendering it unusable by those of us with nervous dogs. It’s just another example of loss of amenity for residents who get nothing in return.” –
Please can Blenheim share (in advance) a list of shoots (dates) which will impact upon Stonesfield and nearby footpaths (rights of way)? *Our game keeping team are reluctant to share dates of shoots because of concerns over protesters. They have said, however, that shoots would normally take place near Stonesfield between 10am – 12pm.*
- Cycle route through the Estate, for parishioners to safely cycle to Woodstock (and beyond). (Extended from Marlborough School pupils to all.) *I am arranging a meeting with colleagues about this, I will let you know the outcome.*
- Discounted tickets/annual passes for residents who live within the wider Estate and/or are impacted upon by the noise, traffic etc. generated within the Estate. This could increase footfall and revenue in the Palace café, shops etc. Feedback that local residents are unable to afford the Annual Pass(es) and/or event ticket prices.

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some work has been done on developing a community pass, so I am going to get hold of that, and try to reinvigorate it. I whole heartedly agree there should be one and will work towards getting you and other parishes, one.

24/783 To receive reports from Stonesfield PC working groups:

- i. **Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:** Cllr Jess Huband updated that the Steering Group had met and discussed the following:
 - SUSTO mailing list said they are looking for new volunteers, the current SUSTO members will be seeing the Neighbourhood Plan through to its completion but are eager for new members to start.
 - There are currently 4 sections drafted, further 3 will be circulated shortly. There are 30 policies in the plan, with 26 written, the remaining 4 are connected to character assessment. The draft for this has now been received and the volunteers involved with that are looking at it.
 - The local green spaces are being considered; each one is being assessed using the Cotswold District Council toolkit. This is a lengthy process taking circa 45 minutes per area.
 - When all the PC members have read the draft and fed back in January, the aim is to get the plan signed off at the 4th Feb 2025 meeting, triggering the Reg 14 process. All administration of setting up, facilitating and processing feedback of the Regulation 14 consultation must come back to the PC. This will require more hours required for the Clerk.
 - Proposed Reg 14 start date 14th Feb 2024 for a minimum of 6 weeks. This will include hosting an exhibition with highlights and summary of the draft, with refreshments.
 - All the above is subject to the West Oxfordshire District's plan. It was confirmed that the drafted plan conforms with the current local plan and will consider any changes in the new local plan. Cllr Genny Early noted that WODC have notified of an update on the timetable of the plan in Nov 24.
- ii. **The Common:** - Richard Morris advised that:
 - Pollarding of willows needs to be done around March / April 2025 time. There are 12 in total, 6 done last year, leaving 4-5 still to do. Cllr Simon Powell noted that this needs to be scheduled with a budget allocated for it.
 - Fencing around the alder trees before cattle arrive: Ed Noble & Gordon Horner from Abingdon & Witney College, looked at the site and the number of materials needed, they confirmed the original quote was not enough, therefore the amount of timber has increased to £294.96. The college would undertake the work as a student project. Currently delayed due to flooding.

24/784 Planning:

- i. [Permission in principle for the construction of one dwelling](#) 
Land South of Evenlode Edge Brook Lane Stonesfield Oxfordshire
Ref. No: 24/02390/PIP – OBJECT with the following comment:

The Parish Council objects to the application for the following reasons:-


- The proposal is contrary to policy BC1 of the WOLP 2031 which states that proposals for development should be consistent with the strategy which includes

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conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). To grant permission for the proposal would set a precedent for building on the AONB. Any additional building in this area will spread the built environment into the AONB.

- The Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group carried out a survey to inform the plan which included the allocation of this area as greenspace – 569 residents responded of which 89% agreed or slightly agreed with the designation as greenspace because of the views of the Bridgeway. The emerging Neighbourhood Plan should be taken into consideration.
- The area is also a part of the Upper Thames Tributary and an environmentally sensitive area.
- A proposal to build on this area (1980s/1990s) was turned down by both the parish and district councils.

- ii. [Installation of 2 rear AC units, replace existing white PVC cladding to wood composite, change colour of window/door frames and soffits, replace existing white guttering for galvanised steel](#) 

Pendle Court Pond Hill Stonesfield Oxfordshire OX29 8QN

Ref. No: 24/02178/FUL - Approve

24/785: To consider matters of finance and policies.

- i. **Ratification of Payments** – all are paid via bank transfer: The council *RESOLVED* to approve the finance report circulated by the clerk.
Proposer: Cllr Ursula Rice, Seconder: Cllr Claire Renshaw

Gross Amount (£)	VAT Value (£)	Payee	Details	Power
1350.00		Locum Clerk & RFO	September 2024	LGA 1972 S112
547.58		Gallagher Insurance	Annual Insurance Policy	LGA 1972 S112
579.08	96.51	RJ Stobo & Son	Hardcore for North Side of Common	Open Spaces Act

- ii. **Approve and Adopt the following policies: The 5 policies were taken as one vote: Approved and Adopted Proposer Cllr Ursula Rice, Seconder Cllr David Brown - all in favour.**

- Code of Conduct
- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Risk Management Policy
- Internal Financial Controls Policy

- iii. Consider and approve the quotation submitted for Solar SID's: Each SID costs £399.00 plus VAT with a £45.00 delivery charge. The proposal is to replace all 3 signs:
a. **3 SIDs** = £1,242 + VAT

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- b. 2 SIDs = £843 + VAT
- c. 1 SID = £444 + VAT

Cllr Simon Powell proposed purchasing 3 SID's at a total cost of £1,242 plus VAT. This was seconded by Cllr David Brown – All in favour agreed

- iv. Consider and approve the relocation of the defib from the Preschool to the St James' Centre: Cost as per quotation £425.00 (circulated beforehand).
This was agreed once confirmation was received that the defib can be used on both children and adults, and that it will remain at the St James' Centre for use by all residents.
Proposer Cllr Ursula Rice; Seconded Claire Renshaw – all in favour

24/786: Agree to co-opt at the November 6th 2024 meeting – all interested applicants must write to the Clerk and attend the meeting where a vote will take place. The Clerk will advertise in the Slate. Closing date the 30th Oct 2024.

24/787: The Chair opened the meeting and asked if the members had any questions:

- Cllr Simon Powell asked that John Sampson be notified when the orchard site at the Glebe is due to be cut. It has been requested that the contractor speak directly with him and agree to leave some areas uncut for Mr Sampson to do.
- The alley way along Bugsby Close has been strimmed, members asked if anyone knew who had done it. They did not.

24/789: Items for the next agenda.:

- i. Stocky Bottom pumping station blew during the heavy rainfall. Raw sewage was pumped into the runoff and polluted watercourse, Discuss writing to Thames Water with the PC concerns
- ii. Merylin Davies to be invited attend November's meeting.

24/790: Date of the next Full Council Meeting: 6th November 2024 at 7pm (Stonesfield Primary School)

Meeting closes 9:15pm