

**FOREST HILL WITH SHOTOVER PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES of the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on**  
**Thursday 23 September 2021 at 7.00pm in Forest Hill Village Hall**

**Present:** Parish Cllrs A Waite Brown (Chairman), G Blomley, W Blyth,  
C Massey, D Waters  
Clerk and RFO H Cross

There were no SODC or OCC Councillors nor members of the public present at the meeting.

**No. Item**

- 67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – To receive and accept.  
The council received and accepted apologies from Cllrs J Hobbins, M Leeding and T Bearder.
- 68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – To receive requests for declarations of interests from Councillors relating to items on the agenda.  
There were none.
- 69. PUBLIC FORUM** – To facilitate public participation.  
There were none.
- 70. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL** held on Thursday 12 August 2021 - previously circulated.  
The Council **RESOLVED** to agree the minutes be accepted as a true record.
- 71. UPDATE ON PROGRESS FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING** –  
Chairman/Clerk to report on progress of outstanding items which do not require further decision.
- i) Planning applications - min.2021/53**  
All Parish Council comments submitted.
- ii) Replacement notice board for Old Rd, Shotover** (min.2021/58ii)  
Ordered.
- iii) Replacement dog waste litter bin for Village Hall** (min.2021/58/iv)  
Ordered and received.
- iv) A meeting for Councillors with John Howell MP** (min.2021/65i)  
Arranged.
- v) SODC deep clean services** (min.2021/38v)  
BIFFA will not be returning to do any further work at this time as the village has received its allocation for the deep cleanse service.
- vi) Replacement litter bin on the rec** (min.2020/56)  
Cllr. Waite Brown has ordered a new bin liner.
- 72. OCC and SODC MATTERS** - To receive reports.  
Cllr. Bearder had previously circulated a report as copy attached.  
The Parish Council have issues to raise with Cllr Bearder regarding the quality of the re-surfacing of the village roads and the plans for the lay-bys on the A40.  
**Action:** Clerk to write to Cllr Bearder.
- 73. PLANNING** - To consider all recent applications received and to report notifications and decisions from South Oxfordshire District Council – all previously circulated.

**i) Applications**

**a) P21/S3335/HH** – Hazels, Old Rd, Shorover Hill, OX3 8TA – Construction of a new single-storey garage – previously circulated. As the determination date of 12 September 2021 could not be changed, the PC had discussed and made comments remotely:

The Council **RESOLVED** to agree there were no objections but request that previous comments made on application P21/S3335/HH relating to this property development be taken into account.

**b) P21/S3761/HH** – Bramley Cottage, Main St., Forest Hill, OX33 1DY Construction of a rear single storey extension, demolition of existing garage, new rear door and repainting of existing windows and external door – previously circulated.

The Council **RESOLVED** to agree there were no objections.

**Action:** Clerk to submit comments to SODC

**ii) Notifications – for information only**

**a) P21/S3560/LDP** – Long Leys, The Ridings, Shotover Hill, OX3 8TB – Certificate of Lawfulness for proposed single storey side and rear extensions – previously circulated.

**iii) Decisions – for information only**

**a) P21/S3560/LDP** – Long Leys, The Ridings, Shotover Hill, OX3 8TB – previously circulated.

APPROVED

**74. FINANCE**

**i) To receive the current finance report:**

**Balances at bank – as at 3 September 2021**

Business Reserve Account	29,243.47
Current Account	<u>25,035.97</u>
	54,279.44
Less: Unpresented cheques	<u>136.00</u>
	54,143.44
(This includes a remaining CIL balance of	<u>22,231.04</u> )
	31,912.40
Less: Earmarked reserves	<u>10,000.00</u>
<b>Total available funds</b>	<b>£ 21,912.40</b>

**Receipt included in above total**

£1,000 SODC grant received towards new rec-safer entrance.

**ii) To consider and approve payment of the following:**

Admin to the Council	599.84
Green Scythe Ltd. – Inv.13589	
Grass mowing on 21&22/07/2021	586.80
Inv.13701	
Grass mowing on 12&25&26/08/2021	<u>681.60</u> 1,268.40
SP1 Solutions – Inv.18429	
Annual software licence	1,100.15
Advancedscape – Inv.AD05727	
Dob waste bin	80.00
Lincoln College – RENT05725	
Village Hall rent 29/09/21-28/09/22	250.00

Since writing agenda the following have been received:

Poppey Appeal – Donation (agreed min.2018/106c) for Remembrance Day Poppy Wreath	40.00
Moore – Inv.307850 External annual audit fee	240.00

The Council **RESOLVED** to agree all payments. Duly signed.

75. **CLERK / RFO** – To receive a report.  
i) Insurance 2021/22 has been confirmed.  
ii) VAT claimed on payments made for year 2020/21 totalled £1,794.71.  
Since writing the agenda:  
The Annual External Audit certificate has been received and  
Conclusion of Audit notice displayed on main notice board and web site.
76. **GOVERNANCE** – To receive any reports, updates and matters for consideration.  
There were none.
77. **BUS SERVICE and TRANSPORT** - To receive reports.  
In the absence of Cllr Leeding there was no report.
78. **VILLAGE and PARISH MATTERS** – To receive reports, updates and any matters for consideration.  
i) **Grass cutting** – to receive an update.  
In the absence of Cllr. Hobbins it was report that all cuts completed were satisfactory.  
ii) **Appointment of Maintenance Worker for the Parish** (since June 2021min.2021/38vi) – to receive an update.  
An advert had been placed in the 4 Parishes Newsletter but there had been no interest from residents.  
No further action.  
iii) **Dog waste bin emptying** – to review current arrangement with SODC.  
SODC are proposing to increase prices again next year. A quote had been obtained from a private company. Other local companies had been approached but are not able to supply a service at the current time. It was proposed to accept the quote once confirmation of their licence, insurance and details of their method of disposing of the waste has been obtained and passed scrutiny of the council and a contract agreed.  
The Council **RESOLVED, 4 in favour, 1 against**, to agree to the above.  
iv) Since writing the agenda a request had been received to replace the flowers in Forest Hill planters.  
The Council **RESOLVED** to agree to pay £50 towards the costs.
79. **VILLAGE HALL** - To receive a report, updates and any matters for consideration.  
i) **Managing Trustees report** – previously circulated.  
The reserves as at 2 September 2021; Current Account £3,208.15  
Deposit Account £2,887.81. The current bank balance shown incorporates the cost to decorate the exterior and the deposit for the window replacements. A further £1,049 is due later this year. £415 had been raised through a second-hand sale. Lettings are picking up.

**ii) Grant request from Managing Trustees** – previously circulated. To consider.

A request had been received from the Managing Trustees of the Village Hall for a grant to cover the cost of £1,958 to repaint the exterior paintwork of the village hall and replacement of the windows. After consideration the Council **RESOLVED, 4 in favour, 1 against**, to agree to award 50% of the cost, to be taken from CIL money.

**Action:** Clerk to respond to Managing Trustees.

**iii) Possible re-opening and re-imaging of the village hall** (since June 2021 min.2021/39iii) – to receive an update.

No responses had been received to the notice in the 4 Parishes Newsletter so it is noted there is no interest from residents.

**No further action.**

- 80. RECREATION GROUND** - To receive a report, updates and matters for consideration.

**i) Replacement repair of a gate on the rec** (since Nov 2020 min 2020/77iii) – to receive an update.

SODC grant has been received.

**Action:** Cllr Waite Brown to order the gate.

**iii) Proposed new project and rewilding** (since Aug 2021 min 2021/60vi) – to receive an update and further discussion.

Clerk has written to New College. Cllr Waite Brown wrote an entry for 4 Parishes Newsletter and is applying for a new SODC grant.

**Ongoing.**

**iv) Ground repairs to cricket net area**

In the absence of Cllr Hobbins this item will be carried forward to the next meeting.

- 81. CEMETERY** - To receive a report, updates and matters for consideration.

**i) Burials for non-residents** – to review current procedure and charge.

After consideration, before a decision can be made, it was agreed to check the legalities of refusing the burial of non-residents or a person, or family in the case of a child, currently living in the parish or having resided in the parish in the past for longer than 12 months. The charge for non-residents which is currently on the website will be removed.

**Action:** Clerk

- 82. ALLOTMENTS** - To receive a report, updates and any matters for consideration.

**i) All plots are now taken.** A combination lock has now been placed on the gate due to recent instances of thefts of crops.

- 83. COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESILIENCE PLAN** – To receive an update

**i) Community Emergency Planning Survey – response requested** (since April 2021 min.2021/188i).

Cllr. Massey is completing the survey but needs contact details of volunteer residents. A request will be put in the 4 Parishes Newsletter.

**Action:** Clerk, Cllr Massey

**ii) Government Consultations 2021** – Cllr Leeding's comments – previously circulated.

In Cllr Leeding's absence was no further discussion.

84. **OALC / NALC** - To receive a report.  
i) OALC August newsletter – previously circulated
85. **INFORMATION and CORRESPONDENCE** – all circulated when received  
i) Email from resident regarding the lighting of bonfires.  
The Council advises the resident to refer to the SODC website.  
ii) Clerks & Councils Direct, September issue.  
iii) The Garden Club are planning to plant native hedging at the bottom of Church Hill where the Elm hedge has died.  
The Council advises them to seek permission of the landowner.
86. **DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**  
Thursday 4 November 2021 at 7pm in Forest Hill Village Hall.

The Parish Council wishes a speedy recover to Cllr Leeding.

Councillors send sincere condolences to the family of Gordon Shepherd who was a long serving member of the Parish Council. Flowers will be sent or a charity donation will be made in his memory. His family will be consulted.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed as a true and accurate record

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Cllr. Andrew Waite Brown, Chair

Date.....min.....

## **Report from Cllr Tim Bearder for Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 23 September 2021**

### **Brown Bins is the big one....**

The previous administration outsourced South Oxfordshire's bin collections to Biffa. In Eastleigh, where I am a Borough Councillor, we kept the service in house and, whilst there is a strain on the service we are managing.

Sadly, Biffa approached SODC to say that because of Brexit, Covid and other reasons that have been well rehearsed in the press, they could not continue to provide the previous level of service. The least worst option offered to us was to allow them to stop Brown bin collections to allow their staff to concentrate on other areas of the service. I would like to offer my profound apologies for this to your parishioners.

I have spoken to the cabinet member responsible, David Rouane, who agrees with me that when you outsource a service you should also outsource the risk and there is a legal process taking place with Biffa. I sincerely hope that it will result in some level of compensation.

We also recognise that our Communications haven't been up to scratch.

David added: "Ideally, we would have then pushed the button and emailed all of our customers directly to inform them of the suspension of the service. This was not possible. The handling of the customer management for this service was outsourced by the previous administration as part of the 5C's Project, and at that point they chose not to purchase the CRM system, presumably to save money. We recently decided to bring this service back in house. In doing so we discovered that the data needed a thorough cleanse and that we only had email addresses for 37% of our customers. Most invoices are generated on paper using the accounts system. In order to write to all of our customers we would have had to undertake a huge manual exercise of downloading and manipulating contact data, and then posting letters. We estimated that this would take about a week to do, and so it would be about 10 days before customers received the letter, and that it would cost about £30,000 to do."

Obviously if you are running a professional service these costs are unavoidable and we are poised to send out letters to your parishioners - even those not on email, just as soon as we know when the service will be resumed.

Again, David says: "This is currently a matter of negotiation. Once we know the details, we will undertake to communicate directly with customers the nature of the service and the compensation which will be due."

I don't anticipate that will be very far off and so we don't feel that skips in village hall car parks are the right route to take at this juncture. If things go well, we will have restored the service before we'd manage to get them installed. But thanks for the Councillors who raised this sensible suggest. It would be something that would have made sense if this was likely to drag on longer.

The Conservatives have been making much about this administration's competency over the matter and have called an Emergency Meeting on Friday which you can watch online. I'll leave you to decide whether Brexit and a series of outsourcing decisions might have played its part. But with firms like Ocado spending millions on paying more to HGV drivers, the pressures on finding anyone to drive bin lorries will continue to be immense.

### **Highways I finally get to look behind the curtains and things aren't great....**

I get a regular stream of correspondence about Highways and the general state of the roads. Now I am Cabinet Member for Highways Management I've been able to build up a good picture of the problem and I thought I'd take a moment to Communicate that here:

Oxfordshire's road network would cost about £6.1bn if we were to build it from scratch today. It costs roughly £36m per year to maintain it to the current standard.

Unfortunately, the national Government doesn't provide anything like enough money. Last year they gave us £16m. This year they've cut it by 28% to just £11m which leaves us with a £25m gap! Which is why you are seeing an increasing number of potholes and why we can't spend money on the safety measures the community wants.

Recognising the problem, the previous Conservative administration borrowed £80m against future housing growth and have been using it to plug the gap to the tune of £15m borrowing each year + £11m from the Government still leaves a £10m black hole and it's not sustainable and leaves us with roads in these conditions.

But it is worse. Because at the same time the Government and the previous administrations running the Districts and County signed up to the Oxfordshire Growth Deal, Housing Infrastructure Funds and other shiny new road building schemes to facilitate the ridiculous numbers of new houses that they have imposed on Oxfordshire.

Close to £1bn of new infrastructure is being put into Oxfordshire over the next four or five years - there is an increase of the estate of 16%.

So, as we are being forced to spend £18m on roundabout upgrades to Junction 10 of the M40 or £104m on dualling the A40 from the Woodstock Roundabout to Eynsham and millions more putting in bridges and bypasses around Didcot, we are unable to maintain the roads we've got!

The question now is do I borrow another £80m like my predecessors and cut council services elsewhere to make the interest payments? Or do I cancel these schemes and hand the money back government and leave the new houses without any infrastructure? Some impossible decisions.

To help, I am trying to empower the community to take action and enhance the work of Oxfordshire Together. You might find some useful advice on how your parish can take charge and get things done you want to see in your villages. <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/OxfordshireTogether.pdf>

### **Horspath events.**

I am aware that there have been a number of events/parties on Sandy Lane and residents are concerned about the noise. Cllrs Kantor and Gillespie are leading on this as local District Councillors, which is where the responsibility falls. An environmental health officer has attended, and parishioners are being encouraged to keep noise diaries to build a case. If approached, please ask them to contact [env.health@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@southandvale.gov.uk).

### **Heavy Goods Vehicles**

Another constant complaint, particularly in Wheatley, is HGV movements. As it stands, I am powerless to do anything. The police don't have the resources to act, and residents are asked to contact trading standards with photographic evidence. This is very difficult, but I can assure you there have been fines as a result.

The long-term solution is to set up enforcement cameras, but current legislation does not allow these on anything other than bus routes outside London. That is apparently going to change in December although details were meant to be sent to local councils in the Summer and nothing has arrived. Even then it will take at least a year to implement any changes. It also could prove to be expensive and impractical on certain roads to make exceptions to allow legitimate deliver lorries and farm vehicles. None of the detail is clear at this point.

I feel very strongly about it and recognise it is one of the top issues in the villages and I will keep pressing for action as soon as the government allows.

#### **Changes to Parking**

From November we will be taking over the enforcement of the lines and signs from the Police. This will make it possible to fine illegal parking and ensure that the rules are kept to. In future we could also create residents permit holder zones and pay and display bays. I have not had any of the local parishes express an interest in these measures and I can't see that they'd be necessary in our patch. In reality I think there won't be much change in our villages, but Wheatley's unofficial Park and Ride status could well be at an end. More details in the attached pamphlet.

#### **National Insurance Changes**

This is set to cost the County Council £1.6m in contributions through staff wages and the money raised looks likely to be swallowed up clearing the NHS backlog and will do almost nothing to tackle the Council's Adult Social Care problems.