



Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of North Hinksey Parish held in the Seacourt Hall and via Zoom at 7.30pm on Thursday 16th March 2023

Those present:

37 attendees in person and a further 10 on Zoom video conference. Attendees included Parish Councillors Potter (Chairman), Bastin, Berrett, Church, Dowie, Dykes, Fairclough, Jones, Kay, MacKeith, and Rankin; District Councillor Emily Smith; County Councillor Judy Roberts; Shafiul Islam and Esther Evans (Thames Valley Police PCSOs); John Flood and Darcy Wright (CANVAS); John Ashton and Chris Sugden (Botley and Kennington Patient Participation Group); Tim O'Hara (Hinksey and Osney Environment Group); Laurie Michaelis (Sustainable Botley); and John Magrath (Hinksey Heights nature reserve volunteers).

Slides from presentations (agenda items 4, 6, 8, 11) were made available before and after the meeting at this link:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gn0REoXILglvVB6UhFtexN91gmpjYkcZ?usp=sharing>

1. Welcome and Introduction by the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone and noted that it was a full agenda owing to recently arising local issues, with priority given for questions submitted and agenda items raised by the public. She clarified that only parishioners would be able to vote and asked for a show of hands; 28 in-person attendees and 10 online attendees were counted as voting parishioners.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 17th March 2022

The Chairman asked those who had attended the APM last year to consider approval of the Minutes, available in the Dropbox folder and in hard copy. Amendments were proposed by Cllr Dowie, seconded by Cllr Potter to attribute three statements to named individuals and to remove the word 'dishonourable' in relation to the anonymously distributed Christmas card, approved unanimously. Approval of amended minutes proposed by Cllr Potter, seconded by Cllr Berrett. APPROVED by 22 voting in favour, 0 voting against, and 1 abstention.

3. Questions submitted by the public

Seven questions had been submitted prior to the published deadline and were read out with answers provided. A further question was submitted after the deadline and was discussed.

1. *What representations has the Parish Council made to Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Councils, Network Rail, the bus companies and Network Rail's contractor Kier to minimise the effect on North Hinksey parishioners of the proposed Botley Road closures, now expected to start on 11 April, and what were their responses?*

Response from Cllr Potter: The Parish Council submitted its representation on the Oxford Travel Plan consultation in October 2022 (available publicly with the papers for the November Parish Council meeting), highlighting concerns about needed access to shops, doctors' surgeries and other services for local residents and calling for a joined-up approach to enable sustainable alternatives (e.g. cheaper fares on all buses). We have not made a separate representation on the proposed road closure at the

railway bridge owing to the timing of the announcements; we were informed at the November meeting about the closure planned for January and a public consultation planned for early December, but by the December meeting this had been postponed with no confirmed new start date or consultation period. The new closure date was announced on 2nd March, and the consultation on this is running tonight in the adjacent meeting room, so the Parish Council can now consider any representations that it might make. I encourage parishioners to contact councillors to express their views on this issue ahead of our meeting next week on Thursday 23rd March.

Cllr Church further response: In response to concerns raised by members of the public, he has raised two issues at the consultation on the need for through ticketing for bus routes interrupted at the rail station, and a need for buses that go directly from the Seacourt Bridge into the city via the A34 and Abingdon or Woodstock Road. He was given verbal assurance by the bus company that through ticketing for travel beyond the station would continue, and he noted that other groups including Oxford 50+ are also calling for a direct route from Botley to the city centre.

Proposed and seconded that Cllr Church make representations on these issues as concerns raised by the Parish Meeting. APPROVED by majority.

2. *How much money has actually been raised (not promised) towards the £2.7 million cost of the proposed pavilion/community centre on the Upper Louie Memorial Field during the more than three years since planning permission was originally granted in 2019? What were the costs of employing a professional fundraiser, and how much have they raised?*

Response from Cllr Potter: A professional fundraiser was commissioned to provide a fundraising strategy and draft case for fundraising support for the Pavilion project in January 2022. This work was completed by April 2022 at a cost of £2,926.84. This was a discreet piece of work, not an ongoing contract, and there have been no further costs towards professional fundraising. The focus of the pavilion project this year has been refreshed consultation ahead of an amended planning application, which is currently under consideration. Fundraising actions will only be taken after planning permission is granted and updated costings are obtained, since the previous costs of £2.1m were based on the larger footprint of the original plans.

3. *Why does the budget for 2023-2024 contain an item of £6,000 interest payment on a £100,000 loan for the proposed skatepark, when it does not have planning permission, which is a key condition before any application for funding can be made? Should such a loan to the Parish Council be made, what will happen if a future Parish Council decides that it does not wish to burden parishioners with interest payments?*

Response from Cllr Potter: In setting its budget for the next financial year, this Parish Council wanted to ensure that the next Parish Council would have appropriate resources for continuing with current major projects should it choose to. Costs for a public works loan were explored to inform budgeting, but no application for a loan has been made at this point; this would only occur after planning permission for the skatepark has been granted and other fundraising options have been explored first. If the next Parish Council chooses not to pursue this funding option then the budget can be re-diverted to the contingency and grants funds, which were reduced for next year in order to maintain a balanced budget.

In response to follow-up from the questioner, Cllr Potter re-iterated that the precept was not raised for this budget item, which was created from reducing other grant and contingency funds.

4. *In view of the resignation of our parish clerk, the third to leave in 4 years, what implications does this have for recruitment of a new parish clerk, and how does the council intend to change its working practices to ensure a new clerk is retained?*

Response from Cllr Potter: We were of course disappointed to receive the Parish Clerk's resignation, which was given in the context of ongoing discussions about the Council's operations and the workload for staff and councillors. An operational review has been carried out, the results of which will be reported at next week's Parish Council meeting. The Council has informally discussed streamlining its committee structure to reduce work load and has been considering which tasks may be done by Councillors rather than the Parish Clerk. In preparing for recruitment of a new Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, councillors are revising the Job Description after input from the Clerk and have reviewed the Job Descriptions and Person Specifications presented in other adverts for Parish Clerks in Oxfordshire, to ensure that we are clear in the Council's expectations of the role and that these are in line with sector-wide expectations.

5. *How much money has North Hinksey Parish Council spent on evicting the 4th Oxford Scouts from the Scout Hut?*

Response from Cllr Potter: An almost identical question was asked and answered at the 2021 Annual Parish Meeting, and there have been no further costs in connection to the scout hut since then other than the £3000 of public money spent on the 2021 parish poll. Total costs reported previously were around £20,000, although £7,500 was subsequently recovered because judges ruled in favour of the Council when an individual connected to the 4th Oxford Scouts attempted to initiate a judicial review, which by itself cost the Council around £13,000 to defend. The costs reasonably anticipated by the Council to formally end the previous lease and to offer the 4th Oxford Scouts a new lease to remain on site until the new pavilion would be available to them were in line with the Council's budget for legal fees (approximately £4000 per year), but costs accelerated in response to ongoing threats of legal action from the 4th Oxford Scouts executive committee. No further communications, and no further costs, have accumulated since the Parish Council's offer to gift the scout hut to the scout group, and the subsequent anonymous 'Christmas card' that received public backlash, in December 2021.

6. *How much money has been raised toward the £180,000 cost of the suggested skatepark on the Upper Louie Memorial Field, which currently does not have planning permission, and when are those living near it going to be consulted about its impact?*

Response from Cllr Potter: We have a presentation tonight from Canvas, who were selected to design and deliver the skatepark, so tonight is one opportunity for expressing concerns about impact. The parish council will consider the planning application materials at its meeting next Thursday 23rd, and once submitted there will be a public consultation run by the District Council. Some grant schemes for funding were previously identified by the Skatepark Working Group, but fundraising will only begin after planning permission is granted.

7. *Why, at a time when many households are in financial difficulties, is the Parish Council raising the precept? What is the percentage of the precept devoted to purely administrative costs and what measures have been made towards reducing it, instead of increasing it?*

Response from Cllr Potter: Most of the parish precept is used for core administration costs: 51% for staff, and a further 29% for general administration including insurance, professional fees, local events and grants. Some of the Council's costs increased this year in line with inflation, and following a staffing structure review the Council also decided to increase the Clerk's pay for the next financial

year as recommended. Council also considered appointing a deputy/assistant member of staff as per the report's recommendations, but this alone would have increased the precept by a further 19% and Councillors did not feel that this could be justified in the current economic climate and prior to completion of a full operational review (which is currently being done). In spite of this year's increase our precept remains very low compared to the national average: £51.20 per Band D household in 2023/24, compared to an average figure of £71.86 per Band D household for the 2021/22 financial year.

In response to follow-up from the audience, Councillors noted that the percentage increase of the parish precept was similar to that of the Police and was low in absolute terms (less than £5 per household per year). The County Council budget forms the largest portion of council tax to fund roads, education, and social care and so most of the increase stems from its increased costs.

8. *Is there anything that can be done to prevent cars from parking on the double yellow lines at the junction between Seacourt Road and Poplar Road? It's dangerous to other road users because there's no visibility coming round the corner, and it sometimes forces pedestrians with pushchairs or mobility scooters onto the road.*

A parishioner in the room confirmed that this junction was dangerous owing to bad parking. District Cllr Smith noted that civil parking enforcement was introduced a few years ago, which puts responsibility for parking on double yellow lines with the County Council. If multiple reports are received through its online platform, it will be seen as a 'hot spot' and is more likely to get a response. If cars are blocking access to the pavement, this is a Police issue. Parishioners were encouraged to continue reporting the issue. County Cllr Roberts confirmed that this could be done online through the County Council website or by phone: 0345 337 1138. She reported the issue at Seacourt recently and encouraged parishioners to contact her directly so that she can continue to raise it with the relevant officers.

4. **Presentation on proposed Botley Skatepark by CANVAS** (<https://canvasspaces.co.uk/>)

John Flood (design director) and Darcy Wright (design engineer) gave a presentation outlining the Parish Council's brief for replacing the old Botley Bowl with a new skatepark and key features of the selected design. Particular attention had been given to blending the skatepark with its green surroundings, resulting in a low-level design with green banks at the sides which also enhanced safety. The drainage scheme is designed to collect water in the immediate area, using the crushed stone sub-base of the skatepark as a filtration system to prevent run-off to the wider area. The construction phase is expected to take 12-14 weeks and would involve fencing and a path to enable continued use of the rest of the field. Presentation slides at:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1w2Kf0AWKTgbn68QGYNm4Sk8uRNYF2PTU/edit#slide=id.p8>

Q&A:

Will the specification of the new skatepark prevent the kind of damage that made the former Botley Bowl unusable?

Modern construction is much more robust and would stand up to most damage, even intense damage like arson. They expect that almost any kind of damage to a current skatepark would be repairable. There will be a 25 year warranty on this skatepark against damage.

Would there be additional security measure such as CCTV?

The skatepark and pavilion planning teams have been working together on shared issues such as drainage and secure design. CCTV is being considered for the new pavilion but not separately for the skatepark. The orientation of the skatepark makes it clearly visible across most of the field.

Were other activities or facilities considered besides a skatepark?

Previous councils did surveys in 2015 and 2018 on current uses of the playing fields and preferences for any new facilities. A replacement skatepark was a supported option and built on the history of the previous skate bowl.

Is the skatepark project dependent on the pavilion project going forward? People have been waiting a long time for a skatepark and don't want any further delays.

No, they are separate projects. The project teams have done some aspects of the planning such as the drainage survey together to save costs, but the two projects will be separate planning applications with their own timescales depending on when funding becomes available.

Will there still be access to the back of the playing fields and walking paths during construction?

Yes, the site is self-contained so no other facilities will be affected. Brief interruptions could happen as construction vehicles are moving up the path from the road to the site, but these are generally early in the morning.

Is the £180,000 a fixed price, and how long is it valid for?

Yes, this is a fixed price to cover all costs up to completion and handover, and the price will be honoured even if building costs increase. The design was revised during consultation to ensure that it stayed within this budget.

Will the skatepark be suitable for competitions, to build on enthusiasm from the Olympics?

Yes, you can run events at a skatepark of this size. Olympic-standard skateparks are dotted around the county and have a more limited draw. Parks of this size cater to a wider range of abilities, up to professional standard, and so could be used for competitions.

The Chairman reminded parishioners that the Parish Council would formally vote on submitting the skatepark planning application at its meeting next week, and parishioners can contact councillors to express their view on it ahead of that meeting.

Owing to some speakers' time constraints, the items on the future of Botley Medical Centre and Sustainable Botley's home energy assessments were moved forward with consent of the meeting.

7. The future of Botley Medical Centre – update and discussion

John Ashton (chair of Patient Participation Group - PPG) was informed this week that the GP partners at Botley Medical Centre were handing their contracts for the practice back to the NHS. The Deputy Director of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) responded immediately to say that they are fully committed to keeping health services running in Botley and Kennington for the long term. John Ashton stressed that the practices are NOT closing and that the PPG will be involved in the process of finding new doctors to take on the practice. An Emergency PPG meeting was held this week, and they are putting information out on their Facebook page about what's happening. They met with the practice manager who said that services will carry on as normal. The annual meeting of the PPG is happening next Tuesday at 6:30pm at Kennington surgery, with Dan Leveson (ICB lead) and representatives from Healthwatch coming to clarify how services will continue. Any patient at Botley or Kennington is welcome to come to the AGM. Current practice staff will be able to stay,

with their contracts carrying over with the new practice leadership once it is chosen. Councillors can help spread the message that the practice is not closing.

Q&A:

Is there a fall-back plan if new doctors have not been appointed by September when the current doctors leave?

There is confidence that we will not be in that position. Practices are already talking to the ICB to informally express interest in taking over the management.

How can we be more proactive about getting the message out that medical services will continue? There is a perception that people are panicking and looking to change practices.

An article has already been drafted for all the local periodicals, the PPG is constantly updating its Facebook page, and the PPG is happy to come back to subsequent meetings to give updates.

What can the community do to attract good doctors in these difficult hiring circumstances?

Councillors can think about any incentives that can be offered to key workers – loans, cheaper mortgages, etc. It is a difficult climate, with other practices trying to hire staff but not able to.

What is the process for a new practice being chosen?

The ICB are responsible for providing primary care services throughout the county. They will choose based on their criteria. The ICB will be at the PPG AGM next week, so people can ask them directly.

Chris Sugden clarified that the AGM is in person only. He urged everyone to discourage people from trying to change to other practices; this will be a waste of time since our local practice is not closing. The aim is seamless transition.

8. Sustainable Botley – first results of home energy assessments

Laurie Michaelis outlined recent work in response to energy prices increasing so much. Sustainable Botley ran an event focused on home energy and got funding from the Parish and District Councils for two parts of the project: home energy advisers for giving general advice, and specific advice on home improvements such as retro-fitting a heat pump. He shared highlight results from their energy assessments of four typical housing types in Botley (1930s small semi, 1950s semi, Seacourt Bungalow, 1930s large semi). Loft insulation is the best thing you can do to prevent heat loss, followed by wall insulation. Heat pumps will save carbon but are unlikely to save money. The full report is available on their website ([Sustainablebotley.uk](https://www.sustainablebotley.uk)). Slides available at: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1hLV_hrVLaO-DtpHgc4eiWV-lqyCS6fdZ/edit#slide=id.p1

5. Community Police update and Q&A

Local PCSOs Shafiul (works in Botley area, based in Abingdon) and Esther (based in another area) gave a summary of crime in the area. There is a very low anti-social behaviour (ASB) rate in Botley, aside from some shoplifting incidents in the Seacourt Tower shops. The crime rate overall is low.

Q&A: *What is your attitude to graffiti, and what can parishioners do about it?*

You can report it online. It is a crime to make graffiti in a public space (classed as ASB). If offenders are caught, the Police can issue a community order for them to clean it. Reports and descriptions of potential offenders help the Police to do this. *In response to follow-up question:* Shafiul has not been called to any graffiti-related incidents in Botley. Police patrol the area

frequently but need help from the community in reporting problems. Call 101 or go online (<https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>) to report.

Shafiul demonstrated a water-marking system to help lost or stolen items to be returned to their owners. These can be used on personal items like mobile phones, and there is a separate one for catalytic converters. He is happy to be contacted by anyone interested in having one and will show them how to use it.

Historically there were concerns about anti-social behaviour around the parish playing fields. What is the current situation, and are there any particular concerns we should be aware of?

There are not big issues in Botley currently around ASB and property damage, only minor issues such as flying drones. Graffiti around the new skatepark would be expected, so CCTV is encouraged as a deterrent.

6. Update on proposed solar farm by Solar2 and Q&A

John Magrath (local resident and Hinksey Heights wildlife site volunteer) gave an update on key developments in the plans by Solar2. Vale District Council have ordered Solar2 to do an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This is a change of direction highlighting concerns about hydrology and biodiversity. The area contains a rare alkaline fen which is a particular concern; it contains protected species and is a major carbon sink. There is a sense that Solar2 have been unwilling to engage on the ecological importance of the nature reserve. Parishioners were encouraged to lobby the Vale to engage on issues such as the access road, which is not designed to take heavy vehicles and will impact the bridleway. There will be visual impact, although the plans have changed to not cover the entire field up to the Beacon.

There will be guided tours of the wildlife reserve on Saturday 10am-1pm run by the Freshwater Habitat Trust. More information is available on their website.

The Chairman confirmed that Solar2 had been invited to this meeting in anticipation of public consultation around this time, but in response to being told to do the EIA they have delayed plans for any public engagement until after the May elections.

Q&A: Who owns the land?

It is thought to be owned by All Souls College.

Who is advising Vale Planning officers on this application?

Check the Vale website. A consultant company from Edinburgh is listed.

Will the EIA be part of the planning application, or will it be a separate process?

A scoping opinion must be submitted before the main planning application is submitted. This is subject to consultation.

The Chairman thanked John Magrath for raising the key issues and reminded parishioners that there are opportunities to engage with the planning process when the Parish Council considers the application once it is submitted and when it goes to the District Council for approval.

9. The King's Coronation celebrations – call for volunteers

Cllr Church outlined possible plans for events over the long weekend between 6th – 8th May, which could be similar to last year's events for the Jubilee. There was support for lighting the Beacon again. Tap Social is happy to run a stand again as part of a public BBQ on the playing fields. It was expressed that the event should be open to all, irrespective of people's feelings

about the monarch. The Parish Council would welcome volunteers to plan the event and will have a small budget to support the celebrations.

10. Update on Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS) proposal

Tim O'Hara gave an update since last year's presentation by the Hinksey and Osney Environment Group (HOEG). Around 300 objections against the scheme were submitted, including by the Parish Council. Objections focused on the environmental impact of the proposed channel on the Hinksey Meadow, the loss of access to land between Botley Road and Kennington during the 3 years of construction and longer term, traffic impact of the high volume of vehicles moving spoil using the A34, and nuisance from dust and noise. There was the sense that the level of protection that the scheme would provide during a rare extreme flooding event was too small to justify such high negative impact. In response the County Council raised concerns with the Environment Agency (EA) and asked for more information. Recently the EA provided additional information and issued compulsory orders for purchasing land including Hinksey Meadow. Ten months on from the initial application, there is still no agreement in place, and there are concerns that the environmental impacts might be worse than originally thought. Tim O'Hara encourages those who objected last year to do so again since nothing has changed. Objections can be submitted to the County Council by their deadline of 20th April, or direct to the case officer Matthew Case up until the planning application is considered in May/June. Cllr Rankin confirmed that the Parish Council had received a compulsory purchase order (CPO) for a small piece of land by the river. Tim O'Hara stated that owners and users of the land can object to the CPO, and if enough objections are received then an inquiry might be launched. Some information leaflets have been distributed to local residents. Tim O'Hara reiterated that for local residents there is no real gain for the very high costs of the proposed scheme. More information is available on the HOEG website (<https://hinkseyandosney.org>).

11. West Way Phase 2 development update

Cllr Berrett gave an update on the second phase of development now underway. A community liaison group meeting was held last week by the construction contractor Gilbert-Ash. They are currently 16 weeks into a 2-year build scheduled to finish in November 2024. Issues raised by community members focused on traffic impacts: mud on the road, changing lorry routes, placement of hoardings which will block some pavement, historical problem of contractors parking on local road. It was confirmed that the ground floor is planned for retail units. The site office is open for people to speak with the site manager Sandra Duggan. Parishioners suggested that there should be contacts and other information on a board outside the site office. Slides provided by Gilbert-Ash showing the projected phases of the build were shown and are available online: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/105DaDlsmapr38XhqY9sHqWD-OOb-RU_G/edit#slide=id.p2

12. Update on local traffic issues

Cllr Bastin recalled the decision at the 2021 Annual Public Meeting to request that the parish becomes a 20 mile per hour zone. The Parish Council worked with the County Council and bus companies since that time, and the decision was made three weeks ago by the County Council to implement the reduced speed limit. West Way will remain 30mph, but all other roads in the parish will be 20mph. This is expected to come into effect in July.

Cllr Potter stated that no direct notice had been given to the Parish Council about the planned Botley Road closure scheduled for 11th April or the associated consultation happening this evening. A parishioner had attended a previous event at West Oxford and confirmed that people will have to get off the bus at Osney Island and walk through to stops beyond the rail station. Cllr Rankin confirmed that the bus companies say that they are aiming to keep the roads closest to

the station as a 'sterile zone' free of bus traffic, meaning that there will be some distance between the last bus stop at Osney and the city centre that people will have to walk through. Parishioners expressed frustration at the lack of integration with other works in the area and a complete lack of communication by Network Rail with the community.

13. Public art update

Cllr Berrett noted that the mosaics for the first West Way art project have been installed, which will be officially unveiled at an event on Saturday. This project involved a lot of community members including local primary schools in creating these. The large sculpted standing stones are completed and ready to be installed subject to final confirmation of their position on site. The third West Way project will be a further mosaic, and the artist will be at the event this Saturday to get local input. All were encouraged to come along, and all those who had been involved in the art projects were thanked.

14. Pavilion project update

Cllr Potter gave an update on progress since last year. A re-consultation was held last May in anticipation of submitting a refreshed planning application. In response the design was amended to reduce the footprint of the building, to have fewer car parking spaces, and to make changes in landscaping. An updated environmental assessment was done which demonstrated a projected 24% biodiversity net gain for the site following redevelopment. A more detailed drainage assessment was done earlier in the process in response to concerns about possible impact of water run-off on the nearby fen and woodlands. The assessment concluded that all drainage from the building would be contained on site and would not affect the fen. The amended planning application is open for consultation by the District Council until 21st March, with all of the plans and supporting reports in the public domain.

15. Any other items for information

Cllr Church announced the dedication of a circle of memorial trees in the lower Louie Memorial Playing Field on 25th March at 2pm. The semi-circle of trees and bench are being installed in remembrance of all those whose lives were lost and who were affected by the Covid pandemic. The trees will be installed by the Hinksey Heights volunteers, and Rev Clare Sykes will lead a short service of dedication. Cllr Potter confirms that the circle of trees includes the Jane Chapman tree which was requested at the last year's Annual Parish Meeting.

The Chairman thanked all attendees for their questions and participation.

The meeting closed at 10.01 pm.