

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 8th April 2009 commencing at 7.30 p.m.

The Chairman, Cllr K Bryan, presided; present were Cllrs. M Day, C Hill, M Stevenson and M Williams with G Russell in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were fifteen residents, District Cllr John Cotton and Lorraine Lindsay-Gale representing County Cllr John Howell MP.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Margot Metcalfe and Stuart Gibbons who were away and Cllr Jenny Nudds who was unwell

2 Public Participation: The Proposed Energy from Waste Facility at Sutton Courtenay

The applicant, Waste Recycling Group, had sent three representatives, Paul Green, Dan Smythe and Nicola Barrow. Mr Green and Mr Smythe presented the case in favour of the application being granted, covering both planning and environmental health issues. After this the Chairman opened the meeting for questions and several residents raised their concerns and made comments.

Paul Green said that anyone who would like to find out more about the project would be welcome to join a trip to one of his company's existing facilities at Maidstone in Kent on Thursday 30th April. The maximum number of people who could be accommodated was 20 and any interested party was invited to contact the Clerk.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from WRG for their presentation and said that their comments would be taken into account when the Parish Council comes to decide upon its response to the consultation process.

3 Declarations of Interest

None.

4 Minutes of the Meeting held 11th March 2009

The Minutes as circulated were approved and signed as a true record.

5 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- i. The Clerk is seeking additional quotations for providing posts upon the bank by St Birinus RC Church as a way of keeping cars away from the wall.
- ii. The Clerk will use Dorchester News to see what interest there is from residents in joining in with a "Village Tidy" programme perhaps combining with the Abbey. Help for such things is available from SODC and CPRE.
- iii. The Council noted the letter from Dr Peter Pritchard about the Parish Council's representation on the Hurst Water Meadow Trust. The matter will be discussed again at the next Council meeting.
- iv. Newcomers Evening; the Clerk reported that the Rector is supportive of this taking place in the autumn. A date has yet to be agreed.
- v. Letters from Miss Bowditch; Cllr Mrs Metcalfe has corresponded with both Miss Bowditch senior and junior and there have been no further complaints about the orientation board. Miss Bowditch snr. is, however, much concerned about trespass, including teenage boys being on the Dyke Hills and using the farm road to cut through to the Abingdon Road. It was suggested that this matter should be brought to the attention of the Police Community Support Officers.

- vi. The invitation for parish councillors to visit to Culham on 22nd April is about to close and the final list of names is required. It has not yet been possible to find a date for the visit to see what Hallidays Developments has achieved at Dandridge's Mill, East Hanney. Perhaps there will a chance to do this in late May or early June.
- vii. Following Cynth Napper's presentation at the March Council meeting (of which a hard copy has been circulated) the Council is to consider at its next meeting whether to sign the NERC Declaration.

6 District Councillor's Report

District Cllr John Cotton said that there was little to report but that he hoped the Council would respond to the consultation on the District Council's Core Strategy document.

He has been in contact with officers about the pollution problems being experienced by residents of Queen Street and Crown Lane.

7 County Councillor's Report

The Clerk told the Council that County Cllr John Howell had recently told him that there will soon be news about the status of the proposed kissing gate at Overy. The matter has been receiving the attention of senior officers in the County Council and their legal advisors.

Speaking on behalf of Cllr Howell, Lorraine Lindsay-Gale said that an announcement about the future of the green belt around Oxford is expected very soon.

The County has been trying to cope with the problems for higher education caused by recent announcements from the Skills Council. Abingdon and Witney College are amongst the institutions that have been badly affected.

The County Council has now held its last major meeting before the elections which will take place on Thursday 4th June.

8 Finance:

Balance on NatWest Current Account at 30th March £8,224.09

The first half precept of £18,875.00 has been received since that date.

The following accounts were approved for payment:

Oxfordshire County Council (new Street Light)	£4,344.30
SODC Cemetery Rates for year	£162.47
OALC (annual subscription)	£189.41
GGD Russell – Clerk's salary	£450.11
GGD Russell – admin (March/April)	£84.20
Geoff Willis Handyman – 4weeks - (Feb. £225)	£270.00

9 Correspondence and Other Business:

i). Sports Club Pavilion & Playground;

The Clerk reported that Peter Keable's recent tractor breakdown means that the perimeter hedge cannot now be cut until the end of July.

ii). Footpaths;

Wood chip has been spread with assistance from Hurst Trust volunteers and the new anti-dog fouling notices have been posted.

Cllr Williams said that he thought that the Council might be contacted by Warborough Parish Council concerning a path which lies with the Dorchester Parish but is being cut at the expense of the Warborough Parish Council.

iii). Cemetery;

The Council noted the diagram of a modern system to fasten a stone cross memorial into the ground - much improved stability being the result. The Clerk will confirm to Mrs Lammer that she may proceed with her proposed memorial to her daughter.

iv). Allotments:

Nothing to report

v). Other letters to Chairman and Clerk

a. A letter has been received from the Lord Lieutenant thanking the Council for its assistance towards the organisation of the 'Land Girls' service in the Abbey.

b. The Council has been invited to take part in the local primary school review. Cllr Mark Stevenson will try to attend the consultation meeting on Tuesday 28th April at Larkmead. There is also the possibility to comment by post.

c. The Council has been invited to send representatives to the CPRE Oxford Green Belt Walk & Rally on Sunday 19th April but no-one is available to attend.

d. The Council has been invited to send representatives to a workshop on 'Volunteering and Good Neighbourliness in a Flu Pandemic' but no-one is available to attend.

10 Planning:

a. Applications

None

b. Other Planning matters

The Council noted the following planning decision:

P09/W0064 92 High Street

Two storey rear extension and internal alterations

Planning permission granted 11th March

11 New wheelie bin waste collection service

Following the door to door leaflet drop by the District Council some residents have made direct contact with the waste management team to explain the particular problems that the introduction of wheelie bins will have for them. The Council seems to be being sympathetic and helpful in such cases.

The Chairman and Clerk will complete their house-by-house survey by 30th April. A recent burglary in Rotten Row has illustrated the additional security problems that can be caused if the wheelie bins are sited in places where they may assist intruders.

12 Definitive Public Rights of Way – notice of Modification

The Council noted that the recent (2008) agreed widening of a path running across land at Bishop's Court Farm (which Cllr Metcalfe says makes it safer and drier) has been included in the annual County Council's Modification Order to the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way. No further action is required

13 Car parking provision

There have been two entries to the competition for the best name for the new car park field. The Council agreed that 'Abbey View Meadow' was the winner.

The Council noted that the contractors have not yet finished the grading of the land. After this is done seeding will follow.

At this point (10.20 p.m.) the Chairman adjourned the meeting.

It recommenced at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 15th April at which time all councillors were able to attend.

13 Car parking provision (continued)

It was agreed that the Council should purchase 50 new cones and six new direction signs – the compact type most recently acquired, which are easy to store and to move around while still retaining legibility from a distance. The Clerk estimate that this would cost around £1,000 and this expenditure was approved.

14 Environmental Permit Application for an Energy from Waste Incinerator at Sutton Courtenay

Following a long discussion which took into account presentations from speakers both for and against the proposal on three occasions over the past six months, the Council agreed that the Clerk should submit the following opinion:

The Council recognises that there is considerable concern about the impact on environmental safety that may result from this proposal receiving permission to proceed. This concern includes not only the possible direct impact on the human population but also the possible contamination to the locally-grown food chain, both animals and crops, and to the rivers. There is a specific concern about the storage of hazardous alkaline dust in pits which lie within the River Thames floodplain. The need to move away from so much material going to landfill is fully recognised as are the benefits that flow from turning waste materials into energy but my Council would like to be assured that the proposed facility, and the processes within it, can be adapted to meet all the new safety guidelines which will be issued during the lifetime of the project, which is understood to be 30 years. The Council also believes that there will be changes to the type of waste which the facility will be processing over this period and so, again, there is a foreseeable need for the technology to be capable of adapting to changing circumstances.

Given these concerns, my Council believes that it is of paramount importance that there should be independent auditing of the air quality prevailing in this district now. If this is not done there will be no benchmark against which the results of future air quality surveys can be measured. Furthermore it may be found that due to the presence of Didcot Power Station and the high levels of car-ownership in this area the prevailing air quality in the Vale and South Oxfordshire Districts is not good even before the proposed incinerator is built, so that to proceed with a project which may make a bad situation even worse will be seen to be misguided.

The Council is concerned to note that most of the on-going monitoring of the incineration process is carried out by the operating company itself. This ‘self-policing’ protocol will not be robust enough to remove the fears of local residents. The penalties that are applied if the operating company should be found to be in breach of its licence do not seem to be so severe that they will act as a major incentive for such practices to be avoided.

Not only that, the Council believes that it is essential that the local population can have full confidence that the monitoring processes and procedures will remain robust throughout the period of the contract, no matter what pressures there may be in the future to reduce operational costs.

My Council is puzzled that the application refers to meteorological data gathered at RAF Brize Norton. How can this be relevant to Sutton Courtenay when the source of that data is so far away and located close to the Cotswolds rather than in the Thames Valley? Surely data gathered at RAF Benson is more relevant and useful.

During the life of this contract there are bound to be significant changes to the availability of materials that are suitable for incineration and the likelihood, in my Council’s opinion, is that in order to keep the Sutton Courtenay facility running

efficiently this will require waste to be imported over distances of many miles – hardly an environmentally-friendly outcome.

Finally, my Council has noted that, faced with the serious opposition of their residents, some counties have decided to reject altogether the option of energy from waste incineration and to pursue different solutions to the problem of landfill. This does not fill us with confidence that Oxfordshire County Council is pursuing the correct policy.

The Clerk will submit this opinion before the deadline which has been set as Friday 17th April.

15 Part-night street lighting

In an attempt to save energy costs the County Council is suggesting that some street lights could be switched off between 12.30 a.m. – 5.30 a.m. as they might be considered to be not needed during that period. A map showing all the lights in the Parish has been circulated by email. It was agreed that no decision about this matter should be made without village residents being consulted.

16 Core Strategy – Consultation period ends 1st May

All of the information relating to the core strategy is on SODC's website, including the Sustainability Appraisal, www.southoxon.gov.uk/corestrategy. Councillors were asked to look at this or at the hard copy which would be circulated. The proposals relating to Berinsfield are particularly relevant since there would be impacts upon Dorchester on Thames, some good and some probably not good. Comments can be made direct to SODC or sent to the Clerk so that a response can be made on behalf of the Council as a whole.

17 Tourism marketing

Cllr Mrs. Metcalfe said that since she wrote her original proposal the Abbey, Wallingford and Pendon Museums have joined forces to become members of the River Thames Alliance Marketing Partnership. So far there has been no response from the PCC. It was agreed that the matter should be left until it is possible to see what benefits the museum grouping receives from RTAMP membership.

18 Other Urgent Business

a. The Clerk reminded Cllr Day that although he had been unsuccessful in the recent Annual Parochial Meeting's ballot for membership of the PCC he was still the Parish Council's representative on the PCC having been selected to fill that appointment at the Parish Council meeting on 13th August 2008. News of this appointment had been sent to the PCC secretary by email and he was therefore still entitled to attend PCC meetings.

b. The recent number of break-ins and attempted break-ins is a great worry. The Chairman asked if the village network of warning residents about such incidents is really as good as it should be.

c. Cllr Stevenson asked councillors to look out for funding possibilities to assist the school with its project to install solar panels. The usual parish sources are not available to schools projects.

d. Cllr Hill said that with reference to the EfW proposals at Sutton Courtenay it would be a good idea if there could be air quality testing now, since this would provide a benchmark against which the results of air quality testing in the future could be

measured. He has made contact with District Cllr John Cotton to see if SODC would be able to help with this testing in the near future.

The meeting closed at 8. 55 p.m. on Wednesday 15th April.