**GARSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Monday 1st February 2016, commencing at 7.30pm. The Chairman Chris Wright presided, present were Cllrs Anne Eastwood (vice chairman), Paul Bolam, Richard Betteridge, Ian Dickinson, Matthew Dovey, John Hieatt, Mike Patrick, Judith Westgate, with J Eden in attendance. Also present were four members of the public, for parts of the meeting District Councillor Elizabeth Gillespie, County Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale and Tim Shickle from Oxfordshire County Council were also present.

2/16/1 Apologies for Absence

None

2/16/2 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Mike Patrick declared an interest regarding the Disabled Ramp for discussion under Village Maintenance.

2/16/3 Mr Tim Shickle- Oxfordshire County Council – Oxfordshire Together

See separate report attached.

2/16/4 Public Participation

A resident asked why the draft minutes were not available prior to the meeting, Cllr Judith Westgate explained that they were only in draft format and subject to change they could not be released generally until they had been approved by the Parish Council as a true record. Cllr Matthew Dovey added that recently an issue had arisen where confidential information had inadvertently been referred to in the draft minutes.

2/16/5 Minutes of the Monthly Meeting held on 4th January 2016

1/16/3 change average speed of 34mph to 85 percentile

1/16/12 Trees in Combewell change ownership to” responsibility for the land”

2/16/6 Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the Agenda

Big Clean Up – Cllr Richard Betteridge reported that the surface of the path alongside The Hill in Oxford Road had been damaged when this general clean had been carried out, Cllr Anne Eastwood gave District Cllr Elizabeth Gillespie photographs of the damaged area. District Cllr Gillespie will look into this and report back.

Cllr John Hieatt reported that although the rubbish at the Elm Drive Shops had been moved to roadside it had not been collected. District Cllr Elizabeth Gillespie said she will contact the Waste Team.

Cllr Paul Bolam reported that he had spoken with the Conservation Officer regarding removal of the wall behind the Old Stone Cross, to open up the area. This was still at the discussion stage, he had asked Cllr Westgate to assist with the history of the wall, and village photographs showed that it was definitely there in 1890. It was generally felt the quality of the stone wall was not of any real value and removal would improve access to the whole area. Cllr Bolam would be making arrangements for the Conservation Officer to meet him at the site to discuss this further.

2/16/7 County Councillor’s Report

Report had not been received.

County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale joined the meeting at 8.40pm; she apologised for the late arrival but had been attending another Parish Council meeting in Berinsfield.

She apologies that her report had not arrived in time for the meeting, however, the main news was the reduction in monies available and the cutbacks that were being proposed. In many ways Garsington was lucky it would not suffer as badly as some of the areas that she represented. She acknowledged that any cutbacks, however small the effects might appear to be were a cause for concern.

County Cllr Lindsay-Gale reported that the County Council was proposing to raise the council rate by 3.9%, they were legally allowed to increase it by 1.9% and the Government had allowed an additional 2% increase which will be ring fenced for the social services. It is hoped that the final budget will be approved on 16th February 2016.

All back office facilities have been outsourced to cut costs. It will also be necessary to sell some of the properties owned by the County Council to fund shortfalls in the budget.

Garsington is less affected than other areas, but will be losing the weekend bus service due to cuts in the bus subsidy.

County Councillor Lindsay-Gale said she was really sorry, but all services would be cut. All the Shire Counties had been constantly raising the issues with the Prime Minister, there was no doubt that the proposed cuts from Central Government would adversely affect the Shire Counties and the Government had got it wrong.

Central Library will be closed for approximately 18 months whilst the Westgate project is being completed, it will move to temporary premises in the Castle area.

Chairman Chris Wright advised the County Councillor that earlier in the evening Tim Shickle had presented to the Parish Council the Oxfordshire Together scheme, giving details of various maintenance work that the County Council are hoping to outsource to the Parishes. These proposals needed further discussion before any decision can be made on what or if the Parish Council might consider taking responsibility for.

“Garsington” sign at the beginning of Oxford Road just after the Unipart Junction, this has still not been replaced although it was knocked down several months ago.

The County Councillor left the meeting at 8.55pm

2/16/8 District Councillor’s Report

District Councillor Elizabeth Gillespie wanted to assure everyone that the district council do not want to cut services, the finances are in good order and they have several projects in the pipeline. Devolution is still being considered.

District Cllr Gillespie said that part of her portfolio was dealing with the refugees that South Oxfordshire District Council had volunteered to take, currently there were two Syrian families that would be housed by SODC, and this housing would not come from the council’s own housing stock it would be provided from the public sector with public sector funding.

Kiln Lane planning application, the district councillor reported that SODC were aware of the recent flooding and blocked drain problems at the site. All previous discussions regarding this site were currently being reviewed, it was unlikely that this would come before the planning committee until at least March, but could be later. District Cllr Gillespie said she will keep everyone informed of any developments.

Green Belt Study, 20 sites had been identified for possible development when this study was carried out. These areas will be looked at when the Local Plan consultation takes place to examine if these areas are justified.

Applications for new grants can now be submitted, this is a new grants system and will allow two applications to be made per year, all the details of this system can be found on the SODC grants website, District Cllr Elizabeth Gillespie said she would be happy to speak to any organisation that was considering applying for a grant to explain the process and if the proposed work would be eligible.

District Cllr Elizabeth Gillespie advised the meeting that David Buckle the SODC Chief Executive had resigned.

District Cllr Gillespie left the meeting at 8.30pm

2/16/9 Finance

Barclays Bank Current Account at December 2015 £34,454.61

PC to note DD payment to Grundons for £26.53

Receipts for Newsletter Advertising £1192

The following cheques were approved and signed.

Positive Tree Care (Combewell) £550.00

Southern Electric £17.54

Go Ride CIC – January 2016 £67.92

HMRC/PAYE £69.00

Mrs J Eden – clerks salary £275.62

Mrs J Eden – admin costs, stamps, envelopes and printing paper £26.05

BGG Grass cutting (final cut in Oct 2016) £457.50

2/16/10 Planning

None

2/16/11 Correspondence to Chairman and Clerk

Steve Lockey had emailed the Chairman to express his concerns at the loss of habitat for butterflies and moths in the field below the church. He made the point that some of the species were rare some only present in this location in the village.

Chairman Chris Wright reported that several residents had made contact with parish councillors regarding the problems that had arisen with the horses currently occupying this field, there were problems with the fencing being inadequate, this was not only a problem for near neighbours but the horses had also caused problems in Southend.

Cllr Mike Patrick said surely the owners were responsible for keeping the fencing in good order.

It was suggested that maybe negotiations could take place with the landowner with the possibility of securing a protected strip of land down the side field which could be fenced off from the horses to encourage the habitat regrowth.

Chairman Chris Wright said he would make contact with the owners and discuss the concerns which had been raised by residents. It was understood that the owner of the field was Jean Osbourne (daughter of Arthur Parsler) and due to ill health her daughter was dealing with any issues. The field was currently being rented by a charity called HopethruHorses. Clerk will try and obtain contact details for the Chairman.

A request had been received from Barbara Engstrom requesting a £100 donation for Garsington Voluntary Drivers to help with costs. This was agreed.

Mr Surman had emailed the Parish Council regarding the problem hedges in the village and the drainage issues in Pettiwell.

2/16/12 Playground

Cllr Paul Bolam reported that he had recently visited the playground and apart from the issues that the council were already aware of there were no new issues.

The grass in the play area was long, but this was unavoidable due to the very wet weather in recent months.

A date had been arranged to redistribute the bark and weed under the aerial slide, weather permitting this would take place between 10am-12noon on Saturday 6th February, Cllr Bolam said he would bring rubbish sacks, rakes would also be required.

Cllr Bolam reported that on his most recent visit to the Playground the lower gate was locked, preventing visitors to the Playground from parking off the road, this is a real problem. Cllr Mike Patrick reported that the Sports Club committee had advised that they would not be able open and close the gate if they did not have any events in the building; they no longer had any of the club volunteers going to the premises on a daily basis who could undertake this task. After many suggestions a decision could not be reached, Cllr Bolam felt strongly that a resolution to the problem needed to be found, perhaps consideration should be given to leaving the gate unlocked making parking available.

2/16/13 Village Maintenance

**Disabled Ramp** – Cllr Ian Dickinson had supplied a drawing at the previous meeting, however, it would appear that there were problems with the intended site location, original plan was to take the ramp across the grass from the existing footpath it was considered however that this might be a problem, there was a waste bin which would need to be moved, there were also concerns that the specified gradient for the access might not be achieved. Several councillors voiced concerns about the proposal to put the disabled access directly alongside the building they felt that the access might be difficult due to the concrete steps leading to the domestic dwellings above the shops. Cllr Dickinson said the proposal needed to be looked at again. Clerk will provide Cllr Dickinson with Rob Jeffery’s details, he had provided the original quote for the work and Cllr Dickinson will arrange to meet him at the site and discuss the options. Cllr Richard Betteridge said if he was available he would attend the site meeting.

**Kissing Gates** – Cllr Richard Betteridge said work was due to start this week.

**Old Stone Cross** – Chairman Chris Wright had now received the quote from Oxford Gardens and Dry Stone Walls, renovations work had been quoted at £836, this was considerably less than the quote from Inspire and did not include the power cleaning. It was generally agreed that the lower quote should be accepted. The Clerk had received a confirmation letter from Historic England that work could be carried out. Four weeks notice had to be given to Historic England prior to commencement of the work in case they wanted to visit the site prior or during the restoration work. However, as the Parish Council wanted to take the lower quote, the Clerk would have to refer the matter back to Historic England. The permission received was for Inspire to carry out the work, and this was the only quote available at the time the application for permission to repair the monument had been submitted to Historic England.

**Defibrillator** – Cllr John Hieatt reported that he was having experiencing difficulty getting a commitment from the Electrician used by Rob Jeffery, he asked if he could use an alternative company and said he would like to approach Taylors in Wheatley. This was agreed.

**Burial Ground Fence** – Concerns had been raised about the exposed bank and the long drop to the footpath on the boundary of the burial ground, following the work undertaken to exclude the badgers. It was agree that the Clerk would get quotes for a fence and in the meantime Chairman Chris Wright would discuss with Dr Wood the possibility of suitable planting instead of a fence. To be discussed at the next meeting.

2/16/14 Village Bus Service

Cllr Matthew Dovey reported that the Go Ride weekend service would finish at the end of March, sadly with the proposal to withdraw the bus subsidy, it was no longer a viable option for the operator, who was already experiencing difficulty in recruiting drivers.

Cllr Dovey also reported that at the present time it was unlikely that any changes would be made to the Thames Travel service until at least June. Consideration was being given to terminating the off peak timetable at Cowley Centre, passengers would be able to continue to the City Centre using another service and it would be possible to purchase a ticket for the whole journey, there were also other options being discussed, reductions to the off peak service timetable, Garsington becoming a terminus, however, no agreement had been reached at the present time.

2/16/15 Police/Speed Monitoring

Latest Police report had been circulated.

Cllr Dovey had circulated the latest speed data for Southend.

It was hoped to move the Speed Indicator Device to the Wheatley Road shortly.

Cllr Dovey reported that a number of other Parish Councils were interested in the data that had been collated and were considering the possibilities of purchasing their own machine.

2/16/16 Broadband Cabinet – The Green

Cllr Matthew Dovey had circulated all councillors with his recent communications with Harlequin/BT Open Reach and their proposal to install a second cabinet on The Green by the telephone box. Cllr Dovey had suggested to Harlequin that a larger cabinet should be installed to replace the existing cabinet, however, it was understood that this was not the option favoured by BT Open Reach, they say it would disrupt the faster broadband services to households who currently have the upgraded service for possibly 10 days, demand from residents for the upgraded service had been much greater than expected.

Chairman Chris Wright said that the installation of the existing broadband cabinet had been a real issue with residents. It was already considered that this green space in the conservation area was overcrowded with street furniture of various types. In his view a second cabinet was not an option and no concessions should be made. He also added that the length of time that had been indicated users would be without the service if a larger single cabinet was installed as a replacement was probably overestimated. Cllr Dovey agreed to continue the dialogue with Harlequin/BT Open Reach. He would also copy in the Planning Department and Conservation Officer at SODC to make sure they were aware of the concerns.

2/16/17 Unipart Entrance

Cllr Paul Bolam said he had been in contact with the Head of Corporate Affairs at Unipart and also with the County Council regarding the safety issues particularly for cyclist and pedestrians at this junction.

He would be putting an item in the next Newsletter asking anyone who had experienced problems at the junction to provide information.

Unipart have indicated that they might be prepared to make a contribution to improving this junction.

The County Council needs more positive information on incidents that have occurred to cyclists and pedestrians before they will consider making any further changes to the junction. Some work had been carried out when double yellow lines had been installed to prevent parking this had not been totally successful and was not really enforced.

Cllr Paul Bolam and Cllr Richard Betteridge will meet at the site to discuss what proposals could be put forward to improve the situation. To be discussed further.

2/16/18 Any Other Business

Cllr Mike Patrick had been contacted by residents about the damaged verges in Denton Lane, this had been caused by a resident constantly parking a lorry on the verge. This should be reported to Highways, it was also agreed that a letter would be sent to the resident who owned the vehicle. Clerk to action.

Queen’s Birthday Celebration – June 2016

Clerk had received an email from Emma Pennington asking if there were any plans to celebrate this event. The Parish Council have decided not to make any plans for this event.

The Meeting closed at 9.20pm

Presentation from Tim Shickle from Oxfordshire County Council on Oxfordshire Together.

The presentation was to assess the interest of Parish Councils to take on some of the highway services that the County Council will no longer be able to deliver in the future or will only deliver the statutory minimum requirement.

1. Rural and Urban Grass Cutting.

Currently the Parish Council receives from the County Council an annual contribution of £198.23 towards the cost of grass cutting within the village. If the Parish Council decided to increase the area of grass cutting they manage in both the Urban (within village) and Rural (Outside the 30mph limits but within the parish boundary) areas around the village this annual contribution would increase to £378.24. This amount is not guaranteed for the future.

The County Council would continue to cut visibility splays at road junctions.

Cllr Westgate asked what would happen if Garsington agreed to do this, how would the grass cutting be managed for instance on the Wheatley Road, where part of verge is within Garsington parish boundary and the rest falls in Horspath Parish.

Mr Shickle suggested that parishes would need to speak with their neighbours to try and negotiate a contract to cover the whole area. Parishes could obtain quotes from contractors they know who might already be handling grass cutting or they could approach Oxfordshire Direct Services.

2. Weed Control

Not funded.

3. Epicormics/basal tree growth (Lime and Sycamore Trees)

Mr Shickle said this mainly applied in City Centres where the County Council currently cut back the basal tree growth at the base of lime and sycamore trees.

4. Salt Bins

Salt Bins will no longer be filled free of charge, Councils will be able to buy salt from OCC, however OCC will maintain and fill bins where they consider them a priority. (It was not clear what the priority areas will be). OCC will continue to carry out road gritting and will have a duty of care to maintain safety.

Cllr Matthew Dovey asked if salt bins were a statutory requirement, Mr Shickle said he was not sure but the County Council do have a duty of care and the legal responsibility remains with OCC.

5. Public Rights of Way

OCC are currently talking to the Ramblers Association and Parish Field path Officers regarding the maintenance of rights of way. It was unlikely that any funding would be available.

6. School Crossing Patrols

£3000 grant funding per year, this funding only applies to new appointments. OCC responsibility to ensure Crossing Patrol person competently trained. Parish Council would be the employer.

7. Signage Cleaning

OCC will continue to fund traffic management and will have a legal obligation for speed and hazard signs.

8. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) – mapping of highways street furniture

OCC would be looking to form a partnership with councils to keep this information up to date. No funding.

9. Vegetation Cutback

OCC will no longer cutback overhanging vegetation, in the first instance councils will be expected to make contact with the landowner/homeowner, where it is apparent that this communication has not been successful, then, the County Council may step in to get the vegetation cut back, particularly if it is considered a hazard to road users. In the event that OCC takes action the costs for the work will be passed on.

10. Public Highway Drainage Inspection.

OCC have a responsibility for highways drainage inspection, this does not include bridleway or non-metal roads, any problems in these areas should be referred to the private landowners whose responsibility it is to mitigate any flooding issues.

11. Roundabout management and sponsorship

This does not affect Garsington Parish Council.

Cllr Matthew Dovey asked what would happen if the Parish Council decides not to take on any of this work, would the outcome be that it is just not done. Mr Shickle confirmed that this would in all likelihood be the outcome.

Cllr Mike Patrick asked if we have to use OCC Contractors. Mr Shickle confirmed this was not the case.

Cllr Richard Betteridge asked when these changes would take place, Mr Shickle said they would start to be rolled out in April 2016.

Chairman Chris Wright said it was a large burden for Parish Councils to maintain these services, particularly as only two of them would be funded.

Chairman Chris Wright also said regarding the services which came with elements of funding, if we took these over would there be any statutory duties, Mr Shickle replied that the County Council would remain the statutory body. Would there be any inspections. Mr Shickle replied no.

Mr Shickle said that OCC were preparing maps of both the urban and rural areas. Copies should be available next week, he agreed to provide the Parish Council with the maps relevant to Garsington.

Chairman Chris Wright thanked Mr Shickle for the presentation, and concluded that there is a great deal for the Parish Council to consider before any decisions are made.

Mr Shickle then left the meeting.

JDE 22/2/16