

## **Minutes of the Littlemore Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at Littlemore Village Hall**

The meeting began at 7.02pm.

**Present:** Councillors Maggie Willis (Chair), Susie Aldridge, Pete Carter, Michael Evans, Dorian Hancock, Sadiea Mustafa-Awan, Jan Pullen, Anna Railton, Anne Stares, Sue Stewart.

**In attendance:** Geoffrey Ferres, Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), present up to the end of item FC 72/22, Judith Godsland (Editor, Littlemore Local).

**Members of the Public:** Linda Elms, Jeanne Gardner, Harriot Evans, Jeanne Gardner, Mrs James, Sam Hardaker, Joyce Milligan, Kim Trinder, Peter White.

### **Public Forum**

Kim Trinder expressed concerns relating to two residences in Barnes Road creating gateways into Herschel Crescent Recreation Field and dumping waste. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Parish Council is already working with Oxford City Council Anti-Social Behaviour Team to solve these issues. The Parish Council Maintenance Team will continue regular collections of litter and waste. It was noted that one of the houses may be in use as an HMO.

### **FC 81/22 Chair's Welcome**

Cllr Willis welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **FC 82/22 Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Corais and Cllr Paule. The Council **agreed** to accept the reasons for absence given.

### **FC 83/22 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made by Councillors present.

### **FC 84/22 Minutes of the last Parish Council meeting**

The Council **approved** the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The Chair signed them and initialled each page.

### **FC 85/22 Minutes of Council Committees**

Minutes from both the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Planning Committee held on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022 were noted.

### **FC 86/22 Finance Update**

- i) The Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee had no report.
- ii) The RFO explained the need to change how the Unity Trust Bank current account had been set up by the previous Clerk to protect the Council against fraud. The Council **approved** a recommendation from the RFO Financial Officer to allow all signatories on this account to view, create and authorise transactions, enabling opportunities to check what each signatory is doing.
- iii) The RFO presented his review of the Investment Strategy. The Council now receives several hundred pounds of interest each month, compared with about £10 in the whole of 2021-22, which will allow reduced Council Tax.

Oxford City Council makes Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to the Council in April and October. In October the Council received an unexpected CIL payment of

£76,000 arising from the development of Plot 19 at the Oxford Science Park. As a result, the Council has more than £100,000 in its non-interest-bearing Unity Trust Bank current account, which is over the limit for the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

The RFO said the Council can expect to receive two further instalments of £38,000 in relation to Plot 19 in April 2023. Plans need to be developed as to how this CIL funding will be used.

The RFO reminded the Council that the deadline for spending its existing Section 106 funding is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. It has to spend much of this on sports and leisure facilities. The Finance & General Purposes Committee will discuss this further at its next meeting.

- iv) The Council **approved** the transfer of £60,000 from its Unity Trust Bank current account to its Public Sector Deposit Fund account.
- v) No quotations or invoices were received.

### **FC 87/22 Draft Budget 2023-24**

The RFO presented a draft budget for 2023-24. He said the Finance & General Purposes Committee hopes to reduce the 2023-24 precept and keep it down in 2024-25, The draft budget would reduce the parish council element of the Council Tax by 14.6% compared to the current financial year.

This remains a draft budget, and the amount of the Council Tax reduction will only be known when the City Council provides figures for the numbers of households liable to pay the Council Tax in 2023-24.

The Chairman thanked the RFO for the huge amount of work he had put into preparation of documents and advising the Parish Council on the reduction of risks and developing a productive financial strategy and realistic budget. Cllr Hancock seconded this.

The RFO left the meeting.

### **FC 88/22 Update on appointment of new Clerk/ RFO**

- i) The Chairman reported that the most recent advert for a Clerk/RFO had resulted in four applications, with only one applicant suitable for shortlisting.
- ii) The Chairman provided a description of the complex nature of the work required. Since the agenda was published, national pay scales for this year had been announced, providing an increased salary. In addition, an analysis of the characteristics of LPC was undertaken, re-grading the post in the higher LC2 range. The Personnel Committee recommended re-advertising with a higher salary to attract a suitably skilled field. The Council **agreed** to increase the salary on offer to SCP 29-32 depending on skills, qualifications and experience, with a full home working allowance and pension. The post is for 25 hours per week.
- iii) The Council **agreed** to re-advertise the post on Daily Info and the OALC and LPC websites, with a new closing date.

### **FC 89/22 Chair's Update**

- i) The Chairman reported on a meeting held with members of the Neighbourhood Police Team who raised concerns regarding anti-social behaviour (drug dealing and dangerous riding of motor bikes in Herschel Crescent Recreation Ground (HCR) and Oxford Road Recreation Ground (ORR). They asked the Council could

provide signage to state that motorised vehicles were prohibited from use in the parks and for kissing gates to be installed at the entrances to prevent access by motorised vehicles. The also recommended installing lighting to discourage anti-social behaviour and drug dealing.

The Chairman told the meeting that much of the drug dealing took place on the Long Lane extension cycle track which was outside the boundary of the HCR. Cllr Carter reported that when the City Council installed kissing gates at Spindleberry Park this prevented access from wheelchair users and adults wheeling double buggies. The gates have been vandalised and are now non-functional. **Action:** Cllr Willis will contact the City Council Parks Department and obtain further advice on these matters.

- ii) The Chairman advised that Swinbourne Road will be temporarily closed on January 23<sup>rd</sup> for up to five days. Households will receive letters.
- iii) The Chairman reported that Littlemore Community Partnership is to hold an open discussion meeting on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 10.00 – 11.00am on Zoom. **Action:** Cllrs Hancock and Mustafa-Awan will attend. Judith Godsland will forward the link and agenda.
- iv) The Chairman invited Cllr Mustafa-Awan to report on her meeting on Teams with City Cllr Emily Kerr who is seeking ideas regarding infrastructure needed in Littlemore which could be considered for funding from the Active Travel Fund. Cllr Mustafa-Awan had suggested a zebra crossing on Littlemore Road, pavements that need attention due to being uneven and dropped kerbs to support continuous walkways. **Action:** All Councillors are asked to send Cllr Mustafa-Awan locations of pavements that need attention. Cllr Carter offered to provide details of pavements that are difficult for wheelchair users to negotiate.

### **FC 90/22 Correspondence**

- i) The Chairman reported a request from an Oxford Road resident asking for shrubbery in Oxford Road Recreation Field to be cut back from close to her house.
- ii) Cllr Stewart raised the proposed boundary changes to Oxford East Constituency. **Action:** Cllr Stewart will forward her notification to the Parish Council.
- iii) Cllr Stewart was aware of a consultation regarding the future of Templars Square Shopping Centre on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 3.00- 6.00pm. **Action:** Cllr Stewart will forward the notification email to Cllr Willis who will make enquiries and circulate information to Councillors.
- iv) Judith Godsland reminded Councillors of the copy date for the December – January edition of Littlemore Local is Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November at midnight and requested Littlemore Local inclusion on the next Agenda. Cllr Stares mentioned that she did not receive Littlemore Local. Cllr Hancock stated that her home was just outside the parish boundary. **Action:** The Chairman will ensure that Littlemore Local is an item on the next Parish Council agenda, the Editor will advertise for new delivery volunteers, Cllr Stewart will notify the Editor of the roads where new volunteers are needed.

### **FC 91/22 Small Grants**

The Council **agreed** to a recommendation from the Small Grants Working Group to award £500 to Peeple for their Growing Minds – Littlemore project that takes place in St Mary & St Nicholas Church on Thursday mornings.

## **FC 92/22 Response to the Oxford Local Plan 2040 preferred options**

The Parish Council's response had been prepared by Cllr Pullen following discussion. Six Councillors voted in favour of the response which was accepted as a majority vote. Cllr Stewart offered thanks to Cllr Pullen for her hard work in connection with this extensive document. This was backed by Cllr Mustafa-Awan and Cllr Hancock who welcomed the balanced nature of the response and the range of views expressed within it.

## **FC 93/22 Transport & Connectivity Working Group**

Cllr Railton reported that the malfunction of the real time information board opposite the Catholic Church has been reported and repaired.

Cllr Railton presented evidence of parking in the bus bay adjacent to Dudgeon Drive, preventing buses from entering the bay and creating difficulties for people with mobility difficulties in mounting the bus. The County Council have refused to fund this but could offer a formal consultation costing £500. If a No Parking notice was to be installed and bus cage lines painted on the road, a further £500 fee would be incurred.

The Council **agreed** to request a formal consultation undertaken the County Council. Nine Councillors voted in favour of this action. **Action:** Cllr Railton will ask the RFO to identify which funds can be used for this purpose and contact the County Council Highways Department.

## **FC 94/22 City Councillor Reports**

The Council **noted** reports from Cllrs Corais and Bely-Summers.

## **FC 95/22 Hearing Decision Notice 0017352**

The Chairman explained that in August 2021 a grievance was submitted to the Monitoring Officer by Cllr Stewart, Chairman at that time, against Cllr Evans. This case had been investigated and heard by the City Council Standards Committee who found that Cllr Evans had been discourteous to a colleague in public office and was guilty of bullying. The Local Hearing Panel voted in favour of advising the Parish Council to impose the following sanctions:

- i) The Subject Councillor provides a formal written apology to the former Clerk, copying in those from the original email. **Parish Council Votes:** For 3, Against 1, Abstain 5. The reasons for abstentions were that these Parish Councillors were not Parish Councillors at that time, had limited information on this matter and were therefore unable to comment.
- ii) The Subject Councillor provides a formal apology to Littlemore Parish Council for breaching the code of Conduct. **Parish Council Votes:** For 4, Against none, Abstainers 5.
- iii) The Subject Councillor attends Code of Conduct training, either via the Parish Clerk or Monitoring Officer, within three months of the date of the decision notice (17<sup>th</sup> October 2022). **Parish Council Votes:** For 4, Against 1, Abstainers 5. **Action:** The Chairman will ask the Monitoring Officer for an evening training session to be made available.
- iv) The Parish Council consider whether it is appropriate for the Subject Councillor to be appointed to be appointed to the Personnel Committee, for the time being. **Parish Council Votes:** For 3, Against none, Abstainers 6. **Action:** The Chairman will report back to the Monitoring Officer the impact of the 15 months taken to

conclude this case, particularly in view of the number of recently appointed Councillors serving on the Parish Council.

Councillors **agreed** to extend the meeting at 9.02pm.

**FC 96/22 Next Meetings**

The next Full Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at Littlemore Village Hall at 7.00pm.

The next Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings will take place on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November and Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December. Councillors were asked to note that the date of the December meeting had been brought forward due to the Christmas holiday period.

The next Panning Committee meeting will take place on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November. The Planning Committee is not due to meet in December 2022.

Motions for Full Council are to be submitted to the Chair at least seven days before the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.05pm.

Signed as a true record:

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Cllr Maggie Willis  
Chair, Littlemore Parish Council  
Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022