

Bix and Assendon Parish Council

Clerk - Mrs. Jane Pryce, 56 Galsworthy Drive, Caversham Park Village, Reading, Berkshire RG4 6PP
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The minutes of Bix and Assendon Parish Council held on 11th January 2016

Present:

Ms. L. Thiesen (LT), Mr. R. Aitken, (RA) Mrs. I. Chantry (IC), Mr. M. Beesley (MB) and Mr. W. Murdoch (WM)

Also present: Cllr. D. Bartholomew (DB), Mrs. J. Pryce (JOP - Clerk) and 5 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

David Nimmo-Smith sent his apologies.

2. Members declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None

3. Confirmation of the minutes of 2nd November 2015

The minutes were declared true and accurate and signed by the chairman.

4. Report from Cllr. D. Bartholomew

REPORT TO BIX & ASSENDON PARISH COUNCIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

Oxfordshire County Council has now received details of future grant funding from central Government and the levels are even worse than feared. The council had been preparing for up to £50m of savings from 2016 to 2020 (on top of the £292m it is already in the process of making for the period from 2010 to 2018). However, on the basis of figures provided by central Government last month, OCC will have to make £20m further savings on top of the £50m, bringing the total saving to £70m over the next four years. Central Government has changed the formula for funding councils, and it seems shire counties, particularly in the south of England, have come off worst. The list of proposed savings for £50 million was already controversial, with many members of the public opposing them. To achieve the additional £20 million savings, no area of the council can be exempt other than those where there is a statutory obligation to provide for the most vulnerable in the county. This means other areas will suffer disproportionately, which will involve some very difficult and controversial decisions. By law, the Council has to pass a balanced budget with no revenue borrowing. The Cabinet recommendations will be published 18th January for decision 26th January, before the budget goes to Full Council on 16th February.

DEVOLUTION

OCC Leader Ian Hudspeth, District Leaders, LEP representatives and health colleagues attended a meeting with the Secretary of State in December to put forward the case for Oxfordshire devolution. The meeting was very positive, however Government has not yet said what it will ask for or offer. Any move towards a Combined Authority is very much dependent on this and will be

preceded by a governance review. All aspects of the offer and governance have to be agreed by each individual council before a Combined Authority can be created.

FLOODING

Oxfordshire's High Volume Pump has been deployed to flood-hit areas in the North to assist with operations. The pump is crewed by seven fire-fighters, all of whom volunteered to go and help – thus missing out on New Year celebrations with their own friends and family. OCC Leader Ian Hudspeth personally thanked them for their commitment.

OXFORD FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

A public drop-in event will be held on Tuesday 19th January in Oxford Town Hall. This event is running from 2:30pm to 7pm and is taking place as part of the consultation on the route options. All interested parties are invited to attend this event, or any of the other four local events:

- Wednesday 20th January – Abbey House (Council Offices), Abingdon, OX13 3JE
- Friday 22nd January – South Oxford Community Centre, OX1 4RP
- Wednesday 27th January – Kennington Village Centre, OX1 5PG
- Thursday 28th January – West Oxford Community Centre, OX2 0BT

The consultation is an opportunity for the public to view and comment on the various options that have been developed for the channel. It will be also be available online.

NEW OXFORDSHIRE LIBRARIES APP

Oxfordshire Libraries can now be accessed from smart phone or tablet. People can:

- manage their account
- search the catalogue
- renew and reserve books.

Bar code scanning is available on devices with a front-facing auto-focus camera. Search for 'Oxfordshire Libraries' at the App Store or Google Play.

APPLICATIONS DEADLINE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES

Families with children due to start primary school this year are being urged to ensure they don't miss the 15 January applications deadline. Parents or carers of children born between 1 September 2011 and 31 August 2012 should visit the primary school admissions pages and apply online where possible.

Primary or junior school applications also need to be made for children currently attending an infant school who were born between 1 September 2008 and 31 August 2009.

COUNTY'S YOUNGSTERS IMPROVE IN CORE SUBJECTS

Oxfordshire's eleven-year-olds have surged ahead in reading, writing and maths tests, according to the latest figures.

The proportion of the county's pupils reaching Level 4+ in all three core subjects at Key Stage Two increased to 81 per cent in 2015 – up from 79 per cent last year. It means the county has moved above the national average of 80% on this measure. The proportion of children making expected progress between the ages of seven and eleven is also higher than the national average for reading and writing, and in line for maths.

The recent Oxfordshire Reading Campaign, backed by the Oxford Mail and delivered by the National Literacy Trust, helped targeted primary schools make significant improvements in literacy attainment at Key Stage One and Two in recent years – with many schools intending to carry on using the programme. Melinda Tilley, OCC's Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families, said: "This campaign work has helped create and sustain a real culture of reading and writing in participating schools, and I think it's fair to say we are seeing this reflected in these improving results."

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BIX & ASSENDON BIX DUALS KERBING

As advised at the last PC meeting, OCC officers attended a site meeting mid-September to assess the loose setts. During the visit, loose setts were removed from the carriageway and placed safely behind the footway. A meeting with the sub-contractor to schedule repairs took place in November. It was planned that the repairs would take place before Xmas, but this has been delayed until early this year.

BIX DUALS HEDGING

At the last PC meeting I was asked to investigate whether the new hedging was under warranty as some sections were dying. I was advised by officers that it is under warranty, so I asked that the sub-contractors be instructed to inspect the site. I am still awaiting a report on this.

5. Report from the SODC councillor.

No report was received from a SODC councillor.

6. Broadband

Update from Chris Chantry - The superfast broadband cabinet will be up and running by the end of this month, subject to power being connected - the trench was dug last week. A member of the public asked about how near to the cabinet you would have to be to get superfast broadband. A mile and half was estimated to receive some improvement in speed. DB promised to email an update.

7. Spring Clean for the Queen Sunday 6th March

This national clean-up coincides with the Queen's 90th Birthday and the clerk will register the parish council's intention to join in on the 6th March. The clerk will organize the necessary equipment and it has also been suggested that road signs will be cleaned and some cutting back of overhanging vegetation will also take place. People will be encouraged to bring cloths and secateurs. JOP to put notice out through the Bix & Assendon Grapevine website.

8. The Queen's 90th Birthday celebrations June 2016

The weekend of 11th and 12th of June 2016 is national celebration of the Queens 90th Birthday. It has been stressed by Tim Stevenson, The Rt Revd The Acting Bishop of Oxford not to overlap any activities with similar ones being organized by the church. With this in mind the idea is to combine the two village events into one – the village fete and the Queen's birthday celebrations. As this would have to be a free event the parish council will donate to match the loss of income the fete generates from entrance fees.

It was felt that the fete had to have something extra to mark it out from the usual village fete. A suggestion of a good live band was put forward. Food would need to be organized as the usual caterer was unavailable.

MB provided the following information:

For background, the Village Fete was held in June last year too, moved from its second weekend in July date simply because of the clash with the Henley Festival, which was seen by many of those of us involved in organising/running the day, as a challenge. With this also being towards the end of the school summer term, the timing was increasingly seen as not ideal. The fete last year was the first Saturday in June and it worked very well, with funds raised up significantly, helped by a shift in timings too (to incorporate lunch). The first Saturday in June this year is the end of school Half Term, hence it was decided not to go for those date (the 4th). It was in fact our intention to target the 11th June but unfortunately the Village Hall has already been booked out for a wedding that day. It is for that reason that we have opted for Saturday 18th June. MB

The proposal needed to be further investigated and more suggestions for attractions. The village hall and village fete committees would be consulted.

9. Allotments

The clerk informed the members that the allotments have been measured for new fences. An estimation of costs and materials needed have been included into the forecast for 2016/17.

After consulting with the allotment holders, the need for water was their most pressing need. It was agreed to put water butts on each plot. Seven 250 litre water butt at a price of 45.17 (inc VAT) each was agreed on for the first stage in the allotment site refurbishment.

IC confirmed that she had given up her allotment plot due to deer and rabbits invading and eating any crops. There is a need for better fencing and to make maintenance easier.

10. Planning

a) Applications received

The following planning application has been received:

| Reference Location/Description | Date Registered Target Decision date |
|--|---|
| P15/S4357/FUL Orchard House, Bix, HENLEY-ON-THAMES RG9 6DB Existing detached residential house to be converted to two semi detached residential houses Paper plans received 9 January 2016 Response deadline 28 January 2016 | 23 December 2015 17 February 2016 |
| P15/S2154/FUL Fawleyfields Road Running From Round Hill to Crockmore Farm, Fawley RG9 6HU Proposed erection of a replacement dwelling with linked leisure building and detached | |

triple bay garage block (with annex over), as an alternative to the scheme approved by application P14/S1825/FUL. 15 December 2015
 Paper plans received 19 December 2015 17th January 2016
 Response deadline 14 January 2016

There were questions about the high pressure gas main. WM and JOP to investigate further.

P15/S4239/FUL

Witness Farm, Lower Assendon, Henley
 Two lean-to structures (Retrospective) – please see below – previous application withdrawn 23 December 2015
 Paper plans received 9 January 2016 17 February 2016
 Response deadline 28 January 2016

P15/S4124/FUL

Walnut Cottage, Assendon Spring, Middle Assendon RG9 6AX 10 December 2015
 Erection of new 4-bedroom dwelling with attached garage. Demolition of existing garage & office and erection of replacement garage to existing dwelling.
 Response deadline 18 January 2016 4 February 2016

P15/S4101/HH

The Studio, Mulberry House, Old Bix Road, Bix 4 December 2015
 Single storey extension 2 February 2016
 Response deadline 14 January 2016

The above planning applications will be reviewed again shortly and responses sent to the clerk for submission to SODC.

b) Decisions

P15/S3236/LB & P15/S3235/HH

Button Cottage 4 Middle Assendon Henley on Thames RG9 6AX 7 October 2015
 Replace conservatory to the rear, and replacement of two front elevation windows
 BAPC response SHOULD BE APPROVED
 SODC APPROVED 12 November 2015

P15/S2298/LDE

Witness Farm Lower Assendon Oxon RG9 6AW
 Two lean-to structures (Retrospective) 8 September 2015
 BAPC response – more time was requested to collect information WITHDRAWN

P15/S2774/FUL

Land north of Old Bix Road, Bix RG9 6BY
 Change of use from agricultural to equestrian in respect to land north of Old Bix Road, Henley-on-Thames. 13 August 2015
 BAPC response SHOULD BE APPROVED with conditions
 SODC GRANTED with conditions 12 November 2015

11. Correspondence

The Queens 90th Birthday celebrations – please see above

A cheque from the Bix Common Field Holders – see below

Barclays bank – notice of bank charges – see below

Precept 2016/17 request form – see below

The Pensions Regulator – staging date warning – OCC again requested to response to request to set up employer contributions and quote for cost.

Meetings between Parishes and commercial bus operators – Bus number 139 (Thames Travel) and 800 (Arriva the Shires). Deadline for interest in attending is the 11 January for the meeting on 19th January. The councillors were unable to attend.

The Chilterns Conservation Board - A letter of request for support. A contribution of £50 will be made in 2016/17 as detailed below. The donation was agreed on by the members.

External Audit Commission (BDO) - As of 1st April 2015 the above body ceased. There is a choice to opt out of the new External Audit that the NALC/OALC has put forward. If the parish council opts out, External Auditors will need to be appointed in March/April as well as an Internal auditor. There is no fee structure in place for small parishes but is likely to be under £200. The members agreed to stay opted in.

Thames Valley Air Ambulance - Letter of thanks from Thames Valley Air Ambulance for the donation of £100.

12. Finance.

a) Cheques for payment

Jane Pryce – Wages/office rent £453.54

Chris Chantry for domain name £30.40 and hosting of the Bix & Assendon Grapevine website £100.80. Total £131.20.

b) Payments received

A cheque from the Bix Common Field Holders for £2,263 was received and banked. JOP thanked them for the generous donation towards to cost of the defibrillators that have been installed at the two public houses in Lower and Middle Assendon.

c) Bank account change of format

Barclays Bank has started to charge for the unusual system of transferring money back and forth from current to saving. This service is not available anymore and if charges are made each month the clerk would like to change the account to an ordinary system of manual transfer of funds when needed. The councillors agreed with the change if it proofs necessary.

d) Change of Internal Auditor

The clerk requested a change of internal auditor for the accounts 2015/16 from Roger Symes to Keith Jefferies. Distance was factor especially when they have all the paperwork, cheque books and the minute book. Keith Jefferies has an office in Henley so more convenient than Brightwell cum Sotwell. Both LB and RA decided to speak to Mr. Jefferies.

e) Year 2015/16

Estimated costs 2015/16

Payments £12,865.44

Receipts £12,964.71

Income less Expenses = £99.27

f. Forecast and precept 2016/17

The budget forecast 2016/17 is attached

A summary of the budget/forecast for Year end 31 March 2017

Payments £10,812.00

Receipts £8,902.68

Income less Expenses = **£-1,909.32**

Estimated bank balanced 1 April 2016 £11,395.80

The major project is the allotment refurbishment. It may be necessary to contribute to the Fair Mile Cemetary.

The budget and the precept amount was voted on and agreed. The budget was signed by LB and JOP.

Grass cutting may be taken over from the OCC but with grant. JOP to investigate.

13. Village Hall Report

Village Hall Committee Meeting minutes attached.

I would like to have the mandate of the Council to contact McQueen Turner, the solicitors who handled the purchase of the village hall, to clarify the legal position of the Parish council and the Village Hall Committee. This was agreed to by the members.

The Montessori contract is up for renewal (31 August 2016) and needs to be in line with the advice received above. Would like to have the solicitors' advice on this.

May I suggest that the Parish councillors attend the next village Hall committee meeting on 23 February at 7:30.

Funds have been allocated for legal procedures to be carried out if necessary, for a possible change in remit of the village hall.

14. Footpath Report

From Maggie Templeman – Chiltern Society Representative for Bix & Assendon Parish. Maggie@swimmingwithlabradors.com

Nettlebed Estate

At the beginning of December, a large party of Chiltern Society volunteers met at Bromsden Farm on the Nettlebed Estate, at the request of the landowner, to reinstate a number of paths following major forestry work. On Bix 13, debris was cleared and the waymark post was reinstalled. On Bix 10, a new waymark post was installed. On Bix 25 bridleway, the section nearest to Bromsden Farm was cleared of young trees which were invading the path and overhanging branches were cut back to give clearance for horses. Bix 26, another bridleway, was substantially widened to the minimum requirement of 2 metres and, again, overhanging branches were removed. Three

gates on the estate were re-hung to make they close correctly, two fallen trees were removed and brambles were cut back.

15. Any other business

MB informed the clerk that all the notices from the Bix parish council noticeboard had blown away. JOP to forward replacement notices.

LB requested the clerk post the minutes of the November 2015 to publish via the website email alert service. This would be done after the minutes have been approved at the parish council meeting.

16. Public Comments

Two members of the public had concerns about a planning application but would like to remain anonymous. It was agreed they would discuss their concerns with the planning sub-committee at a later date.

Also questions were asked about the parish council having a Neighbourhood Plan. LB explained the cost was too much for the precept to bear.

Next Meeting – Monday 7th March 2016 at 7.30pm

The meeting ended at 9.00pm