

**ROTHERFIELD GREYS PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE APM AND FULL COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT 7.30PM ON MONDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2015  
IN GREYS VILLAGE HALL, GREYS GREEN**

**PRESENT:**

Terry Dudeney (in the Chair)	TD
Sue Fulford-Dobson	SFD
Peter Lloyd	PL
John Hill	JH
Richard Ovey	RO
<i>For part of the meeting:</i>	
David Bartholomew (OCC councillor)	DB
Judith Nimmo-Smith (SODC councillor)	JNS
Jane Pryce – Clerk	JOP

<p><b>Prospective councillor for the new SODC Ward of Woodcote and Rotherfield</b> Charles Bailey (for part of the meeting)</p> <p><b>Prospective councillors for Rotherfield Greys Parish Council:</b> Susan Hems and Michael Pearey</p>
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Members of the public/parishioners present for part/all of the meeting	None
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**1. APM MINUTES:**

Minutes of APM held on 10th March 2014 were signed and dated by TD, as an accurate record.

**2. ANNUAL PARISH OCC REPORT**

**Responsibilities**

In addition to representing the interests of residents in nine parishes, and my place on the full Council, I have a place on the Audit & Governance Committee and the Planning & Regulation Committee. I am also Whip of the County Conservative Group (one of six Group Officer posts). As a Group Officer I attend Informal Cabinet. I chair the Caversham Quarry Liaison committee, which seeks to reduce negative impacts of the scheme.

**Parish Council Meetings**

Most of the parish councils I am responsible for meet every month and I attend almost all meetings. If ever I can't attend, I send a written report. At each of the parish meetings I attend, I give a general report on County matters, then follow this with a report on matters specific to that parish. I am pleased to have been able to attend every single Rotherfield Greys Parish Council meeting over the past year.

**Key County Issues during year**

- Ofsted Report
  - o Good in all six categories:
- Children who need help and protection
- LAC
- Adoption

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- Experiences and progress of Care Leavers
- Leadership Management and Governance
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board
- Budgetary Pressure
- New ways of running local government
  - o Tri -County Initiative
  - o Unitary Authority
  - o Chief Executive
- Local Transport Plan
- Serious Case Review

**Key Local Issues during year**

- Rebuilding of Bix duals
- Village traffic calming
- Third Thames bridge
- Broadplat Lane flooding
- Coning off of junction to Satwell

**3. SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015**

**Local Housing**

Despite it only being just over two years since the current Local Plan was adopted, work is well underway on the next version. A Strategic Housing Market study suggested that as many as 5,000 extra homes were needed in the district (above the 11,000 already planned) by 2031. The council believes that this figure is high and so is currently consulting residents on a lower number. However, whatever the outcome of that consultation more homes will be needed.

The good news is that new houses have helped keep the council tax down. In the year to October 2014 1,355 new houses were built in South and Vale, leading to the government giving the two councils nearly £6m in extra funding. This money goes directly to funding new infrastructure projects in the districts and keeping council tax down.

Encouragingly, there is strong support for new house building in our area. A recent MORI poll of South Oxfordshire residents reported that 68% of residents supported or strongly supported new house building within the district. That figure dropped slightly (to 54%) when the same people were asked if they supported that building in their own village or town, but that is still a high number.

Support was higher still if those homes could be affordable to local people, were well designed, had good car parking or were provided as a priority for people with a local connection. These are all policies that the council will be seeking to deliver in the new local plan.

**Neighbourhood Planning**

Localising planning decisions has been a key focus of the year with Woodcote became the second parish to adopt a neighbourhood plan (following Thame). 11 other parishes have started planning for their area so more plans will be adopted next year. Neighbourhood plans give local people a

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strong voice in the type and location of new housing in their area and SODC will be looking to further develop these ideas in the coming months.

### **Leisure**

The repercussions of the 2012 Olympics continue to be felt in the district. Extra cash was made available to councils to encourage participation in sports and healthy activities. SODC has laid on new sports such as nordic walking, pickleball and roller skiing to entice people to lead more active lives. And there was a good take up of over-55's table tennis at Thame Leisure Centre.

Investment in the district's leisure centres continues with money being spent on pool improvements, gym equipment and maintenance.

Residents have also benefited from the ability to use their leisure passes at centres in Vale of the White Horse as part of our further combining of services.

### **Corporate Services Project**

SODC has spent several years reducing its costs (our council tax is down by over 10% since the last election). That process had further impetus this year with a new project looking at joining forces with other councils to award larger, more cost-effective contracts for some of the services we provide and tasks we carry out. Five councils - ourselves, Vale, Hart and Havant in Hampshire and Mendip in Somerset are seeking to jointly award contracts within the next two years. If the project goes ahead – there are several legal and process issues to resolve first – we are looking to save at least a further half a million pounds a year and potentially much more. The sorts of activities involved include accountancy, debt recovery, car park administration, data capture, human resources, IT applications and helpdesk support and buildings management/maintenance.

### **Didcot progress**

Two major schemes in Didcot made some forward progress this year. The Orchard Shopping Centre became a key retail destination for many in the area as soon as it first opened. SODC always intended to have a second phase, but those plans were put on hold due to the recession.

Now, however, Hammerson plc (the centre owners – they also own the Oracle in Reading, Birmingham's Bullring and Brent Cross Shopping centres) are moving forward with a number of new stores, including a Marks & Spencer. It is expected that the new shops will be open in time for Christmas shopping 2016.

In addition to the new shops, work has begun in earnest on the redevelopment of the area in front of Didcot railway station. Although the plans are more long term than the shopping centre ones, it all adds up to an exciting future for the town.

### **Capital & Revenue Grants**

The significant capital grants awarded each year by SODC continued in 2014-15. Chinnor Rugby Club were awarded £100K towards new changing rooms as were Wallingford Sports Trust. Thame Sports Club received nearly £12K toward new tennis courts. Chinnor (clearly some good funding bid writers in Chinnor!) was given over £45K for help with upgrading the village hall. Decisions on a number of other village hall bids are due before the end of the civic year.

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Nearly half a million pounds was given to voluntary organisations across the district to help with their day-to-day budgets. This is a relatively recent innovation, brought in in response to requests for revenue money to help smooth fund-raising efforts. The awards included £25K for Berinsfield

Information Centre, £21.5K for the Didcot Youth Project, £21.5K for Age UK Oxfordshire, £10K for the Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre and £165K for local Citizen Advice Bureaux. Over 60 young achievers were each given £250 to help further improvements in their chosen activity. The money supported local talent in a range of sports include rowing, rugby, swimming, cricket, athletics and basketball as singers, dancers, musicians and youth leaders.

### **Fuel Poverty Grants**

The council launched its first grant scheme aimed at helping those households living in fuel poverty. The grants will enable householders struggling with heating bills to make essential energy efficiency repairs and improvements to their homes. Residents can apply for a grant through the free Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Helpline (0800 107 0044) where applicants will be guided through the process.

### **Budgets**

South Oxfordshire remains a financially sound council. Having cut our council tax by 2% last year, we've followed up with a further 3% this year – one of the biggest cuts in the country. And yet our sound and prudent approach to money has still allowed us to add over a million pounds on new money to the budget this year, including money for extra street cleaning, community safety, better planning enforcement and more recycling.

### **Broadband**

The council has added £2million to the County Council's broadband project so that 4,000 extra households can benefit from superfast broadband within the next 2 years. In total, 95% of South Oxfordshire's residents will have access to speeds of 24Mbps by 2017.

### **Recycling**

For 4 years in a row, South Oxfordshire has had the 2<sup>nd</sup> best recycling rate in the country. Last year, we came 1<sup>st</sup>! This achievement is directly as a result of the efforts of residents who separate out their waste each week so that we can collect it.

### **SODC Fire**

Not the sort of highlight we wanted, but 2014/15 will now be remembered for the fire that destroyed a significant part of the council building at Crowmarsh. The fire was caused by a car full of gas canisters being driven through the front doors. Fortunately – since it was the middle of the night – no one was injured. However, the building is destroyed beyond use in the short-term and it will be at least 2 – 3 years before it is re-occupied. There is a possibility that it will never be reused, but that is a matter for the insurers and the new council in May 2015 to make decisions on.

The good news is that the councils (the building was home to both SODC and Vale of White Horse staff) had a sound recovery plan which kicked in before the fire had even been put out. Key services such as housing were provided on day 1, with staff working in cramped conditions from

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Vale of White Horse offices in Abingdon. Within a week, all services were being provided again in some form.

Temporary offices have been leased near Didcot to house the council whilst the rebuilding work proceeds.

A contract to relocate the offices to Milton Park for the next 3/4 years was about to be signed but this move would not commence until after 7<sup>th</sup> May. Howberry Park would continue to be used for public and committee meetings so that element would remain in the district.

**Cllr Ann Ducker and Cllr Mike Welply**

The council lost two dedicated servants during the civic year. Cllr Ducker was Leader of Council for over 10 years and was instrumental in creating the current shape of South Oxfordshire DC. Cllr Welply represented Thame with vigour for a number of years. Both are greatly missed.

**An SODC Year in Numbers**

£82.9million of council tax collected (includes County, Parish and Police precepts)  
6,415,598 wheelie bins emptied  
380,000 swimming sessions  
106,927 voters registered  
10,832 postal votes issued  
6,765 benefit claimants helped  
2,619 planning applications registered  
2,042 incidents monitored on CCTV  
745 miles of road “deep cleaned”  
658 restaurants & pubs inspected for food hygiene  
589 taxi licences issued  
387 families housed from the housing register  
10 Benefit fraud prosecutions

**4. Highways Issues:**

Broadplatt flooding has had the ditches dug out but this is only a temporary measure and still needs to be addressed.

The coned off corner at junction to Satwell and Shepherds Green was cleared and cones removed.

**5. Other business:**

None.

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**FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

**801/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

None.

**802/15 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL & PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS:**

None.

**803/15 RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (10/03/2014):**

The minutes as an accurate record and duly signed and dated by TD.

**804/15 OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BUSINESS:**

**THE ANNUAL BUDGET**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> February, Oxfordshire County Council met to discuss and agree its annual budget. From 2010 to the end of 2015, the council will have achieved savings of £204 million, and savings are set to reach £292 million. The Council relies on grants from Central Government and with the Chancellor of the Exchequer indicating a further £49 billion reduction for Whitehall departments; Councillors expect a need for further savings. In this context, the Authority has decided that the council tax will rise by 1.99%, equivalent to 46p a week for a Band D property.

**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

At the same meeting, the Council agreed to make the post of Chief Executive redundant, which would result in savings of £250k pa. There have, however, been questions regarding the process from Councillors. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Ian Hudspeth, still believes the Council can operate effectively without a Chief Executive but is to review the process before implementing the redundancy.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/feb/statement-chief-executive-position-council-leader>

**POTENTIAL TRI-COUNTY COUNCIL ALLIANCE BEING EXPLORED**

The County Council is exploring ways in which further powers can be devolved to local authorities. On 16<sup>th</sup> December, the Leaders of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire jointly signed an offer to Government to unlock further economic growth and significantly build on the £45 billion value of goods and services that the area already generates. In the offer, called 'A shared approach to driving prosperity', the three councils call on the Government to work with them to develop a brand new 'combined authority' alliance focused on their common economies of innovation, science, technology and creative industries. This is not about a super Unitary authority, as each council will have its own sovereignty and will make the final decision regarding any proposals. There is no intention of merging councils.

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*For more information please see:*

*<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/dec/new-tricounty-council-alliance-rev-local-prosperity>*

**REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC FINANCIAL CASE FOR A UNITARY COUNCIL**

The Council's Leader, Cllr Ian Hudspeth, has commissioned an independent report to explore the potential savings that could be made in Oxfordshire if there were some form of unitary structure of local government. He has called publicly for a local debate about the need to look radically at new ways to make savings. The report assesses three potential models of council reorganisation covering county and district / city council functions:

- a single unitary council for Oxfordshire;
- two unitary councils, based on the city of Oxford and the rest of the county; and
- three unitary councils covering the city of Oxford, north Oxfordshire and south Oxfordshire

There may be other options that people wish to propose, and these suggestions will be considered as part of the debate.

**SERIOUS CASE REVIEW INTO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

The Independent Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Oxfordshire was published on Tuesday 3 March 2015 by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and attracted considerable attention in the national press. The serious case review followed a trial in 2013 in which seven men were imprisoned for a total of 95 years for their crimes that took place from 2005-2011.

It is important to remember that these are historical issues and that action was taken several years ago to address the very serious problems:

- A specialist unit known as 'Kingfisher' has been set up.
- 7500 staff (including police, teachers, care workers) have been trained to spot warning signs of CSE and take action.
- Around 18,000 school children have seen a drama about child sexual exploitation and discussed the risks of grooming in class.
- School nurses are in place in every secondary school with role in identifying children at risk
- Four new children's homes are being built to house the most vulnerable children in Oxfordshire.

An inspection by children's services inspectorate Ofsted in 2014 rated Oxfordshire's child protection system as 'good' and described its approach to tackling child sexual exploitation as 'high quality'. Jim Leivers, Oxfordshire County Council's Director for Children, Education and Families, said:

*"If we knew then what we know now about the grooming process, this would have been stopped much sooner. Before Operation Bullfinch people didn't believe something this horrible could happen. We are under no illusions about child sexual exploitation now."*

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**PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT PRAISES OXFORDSHIRE SCHOOL NURSE PROGRAMME**

A joint report by Public Health England and the Local Government Association has outlined the achievements of councils since responsibility for public health returned to local authorities. The report, *'Local leadership, new approaches: how new ways of working are helping to improve the health of local communities'* uses OCC as its key example for promoting public health in schools. When the County Council took over responsibility for commissioning the school nursing service from the NHS, the Cabinet decided it wanted something altogether more ambitious: a dramatic ramping up of the service to promote public health in a way that hadn't been tried before, throughout all of Oxfordshire's secondary schools. The vision was not only to expand the service, but also to ensure nurses were really part of the fabric of the schools.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/407060/2014712\\_Local\\_leadership.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/407060/2014712_Local_leadership.pdf)

**CONSULTATION ON CONNECTING OXFORDSHIRE OPENS**

OCC is inviting the public, businesses and stakeholders to contribute to the final consultation for Connecting Oxfordshire. This sets out the council's ambitions for transport improvements across the county to 2031, over which time up to 100,000 new homes and 85,000 new jobs are likely to be created. The plan features a range of short, medium and long-term solutions for road, rail, bus, cycle and foot, which have been shaped by discussions over the last year. This includes the Oxford Transport Strategy, which sets out ambitious plans for transport in and around Oxford city, including looking at mass transit solutions like rapid bus services along strategic routes, integrating transport modes by transforming the park and ride network and making it easier to cycle by introducing cycle super routes across the city. There are also strategies aimed at all the main conurbations across the county including Witney, Bicester and Banbury as well as plans for the Science Vale and key strategic routes like the A40 and A420.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/connecting-oxfordshire>

**SPECIFIC REPORT FOR ROTHERFIELD GREYS**

**BROADPLAT LANE: USE BY FOREIGN LORRIES**

I have again been asked if there is anything the County Council can do in respect of foreign lorries being directed down Broadplat Lane by sat nav devices. Unfortunately this is outside the council's remit and its powers are limited to erecting 'Unsuitable for Heavy Vehicles' signs and this has already been done.

**TRAFFIC CALMING**

I met with members of the PC on site last November to discuss traffic calming measures near the 'new' bridle path. I agreed to approve an application from the PC for a £500 grant from my Councillor Community Fund to assist with signage for the project. The PC subsequently changed its position on the matter and the closing date for grant applications has now passed.

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**805/15 SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL BUSINESS:**

Cllr Nimmo-Smith introduced Charles Bailey the prospective Conservative Councillor for the new SODC Ward of Woodcote and Rotherfield which will have 2 councillors. The other candidate is David Nimmo-Smith, Judith's husband. Cllr. Judith Nimmo Smith would not be seeking re-election and the chairman thanked her for her outstanding work and contribution she had made to the parish of Rotherfield Greys.

The election nomination forms were due mid march and nomination forms would be accepted from 25<sup>th</sup> March up to 4pm on 9<sup>th</sup> April by hand delivery. The return address has since been confirmed as Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abington OX14 3JE.

Consultation is ongoing on 20131 Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy.

The budget had been passed with a 3% reduction for 2015/16. This was the fourth year in a row when a reduction had been passed while still retaining full services.

**SPECIFIC REPORT FOR ROTHERFIELD GREYS**

JH reported that Broadplat waste collection vehicle was too large for the road. JNS to investigate. TD reported that Dog Lane collection was not being separated as regard to recycling and general refuse. JNS to report back.

**806/15 PUBLIC FOOTPATH/BRIDLEWAY REPORT**

Jane Warren, Rotherfield Greys Chiltern Society Representative, provided a footpath report for the meeting. It highlighted the paths/bridleways which either had issues or issues that have been resolved. JOP will undertake to help with the discs. Item number 18 on report.

South of Lime Tree Farm	Marker discs would be helpful on new stile	To be reported
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Sue Hems reported that the stile from Dog Lane to Lime Tree Farm is unusable for dogs. JOP to inspect the stile with Jane Warren. Item number 21 on report.

Cross Lane Farm	Signs needed	Reported to OCC
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**807/15 PLANNING APPLICATION RESPONSE(s):**

**a)**

P15/S0410/HH	Yew Tree Cottage	Single storey front extension to provide a new entrance porch	<b>No strong views</b>
P15/S0611/HH	2 The Maltsters Cottages	Single storey rear extension and front porch	<b>No strong views</b>

**The Lamb at Satwell:** Enforcement had issued a notice on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014 for change of use from use of public house to residential/business use. Appeal lodged 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015. Comments must be submitted by 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015. PL passed a letter, to be submitted to object the appeal, to JOP.

A planning Enforcement officer is to come to a future meeting to clarify the situation.

The Highmoor response of ‘NO STRONG VIEWS’ was a computer glitch. This will be rectified by SODC planning department.

**Caravan at 3 Oaks Orchard:** Enforcement officer, Ian Severn, has received no response from the owners of land. A Planning Contravention Notice (PCN) will be needed to be issued.

Michael Pearey asked about an abandoned caravan and the safety of a partially collapsed barn on the north edge of the Greys Green village green. JOP to notify the Enforcement Team.

**b) Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan:**

TD attended an exhibition, at Harpensden Village Hall, for the proposed 140 houses and some light industrial units at Highlands Farm. TD has written to the JHHNP, as agreed by the parish council, to make the following representations.

‘We are concerned about increased traffic flow as a result of at least 140 new dwellings at Highlands Farm. Already Greys Road, and particularly the section from Sage Lodge to the War Memorial in Greys, passing St Nicholas’s church and The Maltsters Arms is dangerously overloaded with domestic vehicles, school buses and commercial vehicles using this route to ‘by-pass’ Henley. Additional housing will only add to the danger of accidents.

We cannot see how Gillott’s Lane, the road through Harpsden village and Sheephouse Lane will cope with what is already a ‘rat run’ for access to Tesco and the Reading Road. As things are this route is totally inadequate and with an additional 140 plus homes using it, we foresee serious problems. Having spoken to the Chairman of Harpsden PC we gather that there is a plan being considered to help with traffic flow in Gillott’s Lane but not through Harpsden village or Sheephouse Lane. It would have been helpful if some indication of this limited scheme had been mention in the draft plan.’

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We think it important that the traffic survey being commissioned (at considerable expense) to study the impact of the various proposed development sites in Henley should include the impact on the section of Greys Road mentioned in our first paragraph.'

**808/15 FINANCE:**

(a) **Donations/Subs:** Cheque to continue OALC subscription, below.

(b) **Accounts paid:**

Clerk's salary	£ 268.68
Clerk's expenses	£ 41.68
Subscription to OACL	£ 133.07

(c) **Precept:** Precept has been agreed and first payment of £3,990.00 will be paid on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. Second payment (also £3,990.00) will be made on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015. The total Precept will be £7,980.

**809/15 MISCELLANEOUS:**

(a) **War memorial:** JH informed the council that a post had been knocked over but had been reinstated.

(b) **Correspondence:** Transparency code will come into force on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015. This means that the agenda, minutes and accounts for the parish council must be published on a website. The SODC website has confirmed that Rotherfield Greys Parish Council can submit this information to them to be published. JOP to send relevant paperwork to SODC for publishing on their website.

Confirmation of outstanding Horse Warning Sign has been installed.

JOP is expecting notice of internal audit from BDO so it was resolved to again appoint Keith Jefferies to be the auditor.

(c) **Telephone kiosk:** JOP will be able to purchase and pick up primer and paint during the first week of April for the restoration.

(d) **Future members of Rotherfield Greys Parish Council.** Sue Hems and Michael Pearey were both welcomed and JOP to email nomination forms and 2015 meeting dates to them both. TD informed the prospective new councillors about the procedure followed in the next parish meeting for election of the chair and vice-chair.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 9.30 PM

Next meeting is the Annual meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015