

Letcombe Regis Parish Council

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Letcombe Regis
OX12 9LD

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held in the Warborough Room of the Village Hall on Monday 18th November 2019 at 8.00pm

Present: Loretta Light (LL) Vice Chair, Councillors, David Barber (DB), Paul Batchelor (PB), Michelle Benton (MB), Kristine Hitchcock (KH) and Elizabeth Jenkins (EJ) Parish Clerk

County Councillor Yvonne Constance (YC) was present for item 4 County Council Matters and Mark Bradfield attended to update Councillors on the Millennium Green (MG) and the Letcombe Brook Project (LBP)

One member of the public attended the meeting.

Item	Action
<p>1. Apologies for Absence: Apologies were received from Chairman Cllr Lapsley who was away, Cllr Frewer due to illness and District Cllr Paul Barrow, attending another Parish Council Meeting.</p> <p>2. Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest.</p> <p>3. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on Monday 23rd September 2019 and actions arising:</p> <p>Item 6 Meeting with Barclays Bank to discuss changing from HSBC – Arranged for 16th December 2019 with the Business Manager, Abindon. - Completed</p> <p>Item 7 Website update and support, Meeting with Pete Bellis - 16th November 2019 - Completed</p> <p>Item 10 Fete - to be held in 2021 on the last Saturday in the school term in 2021-17th July 2021 - Completed</p> <p>Item 11 BOAT meeting with the Challows see Item 6 viii) - Held 22nd October 2019- See Item 6 iv) - Completed</p> <p>Item 12 Transport, Chairman writing to local Taxi Service re possible trial service. - Awaiting reply</p> <p>Councillors then approved the Minutes which were signed by the Vice-Chair Cllr Light.</p> <p>Mark Bradfield (MB) of the Letcombe Brook Project Mark Bradfield attending the meeting to update the PC on the Millennium Green (MG)</p>	

	<p>and the Letcombe Brook Project. Richmond had previously requested the return of the S106 grant for the MG Information Board which had not been claimed before the expiry date. Since the last PC meeting MB had spoken to Richmond asking them to reconsider and is hopeful that they will come to an agreement.</p> <p>MB and the Clerk met on the MG the previous week to discuss general maintenance particularly the trees. The Sycamore in the north east corner of the MG whose branches are growing above the power cables, there is a broken branch which could cause problems in a wind. The tree also shades the stream and parts of the hedge dividing the MG from the Bassett Road hedge which limits its growth. There is also a very tall Willow which is starting to lean towards the Electricity cables and the road. MB recommended that the Sycamore should be cut down and the Willow either pollarded or removed. Either tree could damage the cables or possibly fall across the road endangering pedestrians and traffic. This was discussed by Councillors at the meeting and it was decided to apply to the District Council for permission to remove both trees. Meanwhile the Clerk would request estimates for removal/pollarding the trees and the 'Chinese Elm' which needs cutting back periodically. MB would also forward the information for the correct classification of the tree currently known as a 'Chinese Elm' The information was subsequently received and it is believe. Since the meeting I have heard from Mark Bradfield that his contact has tentatively identified the tree as a Southern Beech (<i>Nothofagus procera</i>) or Raoul (old English name), which are native to Chile and Argentina.</p> <p>MB had been made aware of silt and water being washed onto the Bassett Road and into the Letcombe Brook at the Cress beds. On investigation he discovered it was as a result of the pipeline work carried out by Thames Water. He has spoken to them and Contractors have now installed a bund to resolve this. On a separate issue silt continues to be washed into the tributary running alongside Warborough Road.</p> <p>MB also reported that LBP are removing Himalayan Balsam from areas along the brook. They are also carrying out natural flood management and Mink control in some areas.</p> <p>4. County Council Matters: Cllr Constance (YC) reported that OCC having recognised the vulnerability of walkers, horse riders and cyclists using Public Rights of Way have revised relevant parts of their policy called Public Rights of Way but she didn't feel that this would be implemented until the following year. - Management & Prioritisation of maintenance and access issues. Copied below</p> <p>MMVP2 Oxford County Council recognises the vulnerability of walkers, horse riders and cyclists compared to motor vehicles on PRoW. OCC will therefore repair, maintain and improve PRoW to benefit these vulnerable users, ensuring access is maintained for lawful motor vehicles.</p> <p>MMVP6 Oxford County Council will, at its discretion, act to control or prevent access by vehicles using seasonal or permanent restrictions where this access causes, or is likely to cause conflict with walkers, horse riders, or cyclists as vulnerable PRoW users, damage to the route, or to the character of the site or local environment, or where improvements are being developed to promote walking, cycling or horse-riding access.</p>	<p>MB</p> <p>EJ</p>
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MMVP8

Oxford County Council will not rule out the immediate use of a Temporary TRO (TTRO) to restrict use of a PRoW where the safety of users is at imminent risk, or in circumstances where the extent of physical damage, or the likelihood of it, is so severe that a TTRO is necessary.

Cllr Constance said that reports from villagers who had experienced safety issues with vehicular traffic, which had been forwarded to her, were a great help in getting the changes made and approved.

Cllr Light drew Cllr Constance's attention to the problems of a disabled villager in using the footpath between Mill Paddock and Hamlyn Close, due to the gravel surface, in order to access the centre of the village, pointing out that the only other route had no foot way and was narrow and dangerous to use. The Clerk had written twice to Lee Turner at Highways about traffic on Court Hill Road but to date had not received a reply. Cllr Constance agreed to follow this up with Geoff Barrell and also said that Resurfacing cost would have to be borne by the Parish Council

Cllr Benton mentioned that she had seen motorbikes using local fields but had not been able to identify their registration numbers.

Report for Parish Council sent from Cllr Constance

Last Tuesday at full Council the Leader announced OCC's ambitious Climate Action plan which follows.

- We will set target to be carbon neutral by 2031 in our own estate (doubling the carbon reduction rates in our own property);
- we will replace all 400 m/v fleet with electric vehicles;
- we will complete street light programme to replace 50,000 lamps with LED;
- we aim to recycle 70% of waste, and will soon announce arrival of new officer funded with OCC/City/District Councils to lead the County' reduction of plastic use, increase
- separation of food waste and drive the whole programme.
- we will continue to support all 65 organisations in the Community Action Group;
- we are working with SSE and EdF on radical new Local Energy distribution for renewable energy within the County: (LEO)
- we are pressing Gov to raise the building standards for energy efficiency to Code 4 a.s.a.p - before we build another 25,000 house or more at lower standard than is achievable.

Highways continues to repair and resurface roads west of Wantage and we see great improvements in maintenance of our local roads.

5. District Council Matters:

In his absence Cllr Barrow had sent the following report which was read out at the meeting.

The normal activity of the VWHDC has slowed down in the last few weeks because of effort being diverted to the general election. As the Vale representative on the Council of Partners (CoP) supporting the North Wessex Downs AONB I attended my first CoP meeting on Nov 12th. This is for me very much a learning process. It might be useful to feed some information back from the meeting as Letcombe Regis falls within the AONB.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The AONB and AONB's generally are going through a period of change. A review has been carried out by the journalist Julian Glover (it does seem a good review! See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>). The report was published in September and makes a number of suggestions which (apparently) the government regards favourably. AONBs will be designated as National Landscapes and will be better resourced to bring them up towards the level of support currently provided for National Parks. A detailed response from the government will be forthcoming in autumn 2020.

The North West Downs (NWD) AONB is being pressed into looking more imaginatively at funding sources and is currently exploring sponsorship. They are also being pressed to explore other ways to bring into the AONB sectors of the population who would not normally think of AONBs for relaxation etc.

One of the interesting activities for me was farmer clusters where group of farmers are brought together to begin to act as custodians of individual environmental areas – a river, stream, set of meadows etc and I feel that this is something which could be explored out with the AONB.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants are available to projects that bring economic, social or environmental benefits to the North West Downs AONB.

Please let me know of any issues that you feel are relevant for Letcombe Regis in its setting within the AONB if you wish anything to be fed back to the AONB management team.

Cllr Barber reported that he attended a meeting of the NWD a few months ago where it was proposed to set up a wild life corridor on the Ridgeway. He had not heard much since however which could be due to lack of funding and also Brexit.

Health

It is worth mentioning that at the recent OX12 group meeting the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were quizzed about progress. We are concerned that the decisions on the nature of the services provided to Wantage and surrounding villages are not being made on a completely rational basis. We have not seen the data on which decisions are being made. We are told that these will be posted on their web site. This and the final decision are being delayed because of the general election. We did ask about the likely services and no final decision has been made but this could include rehabilitation, chemotherapy and dialysis to take the strain off the major hospitals. Minor injuries are unlikely to be included. You may know that health provision is moving towards coordination between Oxfordshire, Bucks and West Berks (Integrated Care System) with some shared provision where this would be an advantage. It has to be said that the main driver is cost saving! As a part of this, additional paramedic support will be provided to GP practices so that minor injuries will be dealt with by the local practices. We have no idea of the timescale for this.

Cllr Light questioned whether the CCG would continue to cover the whole of the area however Cllr Batchelor believed that the CCGs would be wound up and there would be a local Primary Care Network of GPs for Wantage and Faringdon which would be important in providing integrated health cover for the local population.

6. Parish Councillor Updates:

- i) **Parish Council Website - Cllr Batchelor**

Cllr Batchelor and the Clerk met with Pete Bellis the website designer. The meeting held on the 16th of November was to discuss the contents and purpose behind the website. Cllr Batchelor felt that it was important to ask village residents what they would like included on the website suggesting that this could be done in a future edition of the Letcombe Register.

The government have introduced accessibility regulations for public sector bodies websites and the PC needs to be compliant by September 2020. Advice as to how to produce an accessibility statement for the Parish Council Website from the OALC was given to Cllr Batchelor to examine and report back at the next Parish Council meeting.

So as not to restrict storage on the website the question was raised as to how far back items such as the Minutes and The Letcombe Register should be linked to the website. Cllr Batchelor would suggest a draft policy for the Website to be brought to the next Parish Council meeting for discussion. The Clerk confirmed that there are electronic copies going back to 2012 and would be available to anyone wishing to view them. Pete Bellis confirmed he was happy to add items to the website.

Health Transport Questionnaire

PB had volunteered to put a questionnaire together and would send a draft round for discussion at the next meeting. He asked for confirmation of the number of journeys made between Wantage and the Oxford hospitals. The September PC minutes stated that "During a 2 year period over 46,000 hospital journeys from OX12 had taken place".

ii) **Burial Ground - Cllr Frewer**

In Cllr Frewer's absence the Clerk reported that she had approached four contractors and to date had received two quotes of £55,820.00 (excl VAT) and £63,367.00 (excl VAT). She had sent a reminder to one other who has now promised to get the quote to the PC by the 20th November. She had also met with another contractor the previous Friday who had suggested that a shallower foundation would be sufficient for the weight of vehicles normally using the car park as well as occasional use by anything heavier. One of the other contractors had also made the same suggestion. At PB's request we will get further advice on this and inform all the contractors who were approached for quotes. This has since been overtaken by the comments of Plannings Forestry Officer reporting that the current car park plans are in the Tree Root area of the two Beech trees in the Burial Ground and one on the Recreation ground.

iii) **Roads and General Highway Matters – Cllr Benton**

MB is in constant contact with Gordon Kelman (GK) of OCC Highways and reported on the following items.

Dead trees on the bank at the bottom end of Court Hill Road. MB had forwarded the plan received from the VOWH showing areas which OCC were responsible for and GK was passing this on to the Tree team to follow up.

South Street retaining wall/high foot way is being looked at by the Bridge Technical Officer and GK will get back to MB with the findings

The foot way in South Street is down for resurfacing but is not expected to be done any time soon.

Drains and gullies

Lining is being arranged to stop root ingress in the pipes leading from the drain directly in front of the defibrillator in Main Street.

PB

EJ

The jetting crew are going to carry out a full survey of the drainage at the bottom of Windmill Hill and this is ongoing.

Highways will be checking on the flooding outside Mill House, blocked gullies in Court Hill Road, Warborough Road and the Main Street/Court Hill Road one.

GK has pointed out that Highways are running out of their budget for this financial year so were having to prioritise their work.

iv) **The Fete – Cllr Hitchcock**

The date to hold the Fete was discussed and it was decided to go for Saturday the 17th July 2021. Where to hold the fete was discussed and the Millennium Green was discounted as it is too small and it was agreed to hold it on the Recreation Ground subject to confirmation by the Trustees. KH will be organising the first meeting early next year to start organising the fete and agree who should be contacted. (Group name?)

v) **Letcombe Regis, East and West Challow BOATs**

A combined meeting had been held between Councillors from Letcombe Regis East and West Challow and District Councillor Paul Burrow. The notes are attached as Appendix B. However it looks as if the decisions made at the meeting have been overtaken by the changes announced in item 4 by Cllr Constance concerning the OCC's revision of Public Rights of Way.

vi) **Transport – Cllr Light for Cllr Lapsley**

Cllr Light reported that Cllr Lapsley had written to local taxi firms to see if they would trial a service part funded by the PC and was awaiting replies.

JL

vii) **Millennium Green – Cllr Barber**

Cllr Barber had placed four of the Benches on the MG with the fifth one in store which was originally going to be put on the PC Burial Ground. The Clerk had purchased fixings to secure the benches and these would be implemented once the final positioning of the benches on the MG was done. DB had replaced the broken posts for the apple trees and secured them to the new posts.

viii) **Health Issues & Letcombe Brook Charity – Cllr Light**

Covered by item 5 and Mark Bradfields report.

7. **Financial Matters:**

i) **Clerks Report**

Our Insurance Brokers Came & Company Local Council Insurance who are a division of Stackhouse Poland were recently acquired by the Arthur J Gallagher group of companies. We have received assurance that there will be no change in the way the business is conducted on a day-to-day basis and our contacts will be the same just under the name of Gallagher as our broker.

Our current three year contract with the Came & Co runs out on the 2nd August 2020 and I will be looking at costs from other insurance companies starting in June 2020.

EJ

Denis Stock who looks after the football pitch on the Recreation Ground has been mowing the Millennium Green for the past three years at £500/year and I have written to Des Williams to ask if they will cut it again the coming year. This has been agreed but due to the rise in the cost of petrol they requested an increase the cost to £550.

This was discussed and Councillors agreed to the increase.

Auditors certificate and opinion The Auditors have made the following comments on the External Auditor Report and Certificate. (Auditors comments in italics followed by my comments)

Announcement of the Notice of Public Rights period was made on the same day that it commenced rather than a minimum of one day prior to the commencement as is required by the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015. The announcement was placed in the village Notice boards the day before the announcement so conformed with the Regulations. I took it from the wording on the form that it should state the date the Public Rights commenced.

The prior year figures in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return have correctly been restated due to errors noted with the computer system of the Council. However this change should have been identified on the Return – i.e. showing ‘Restated’ above the comparative figure column. Agreed

The computer systems errors noted in relation to this that have been identified and corrected/changed, however this suggests the Council did not have an adequate system of internal control or accounting system in the year and so should have answered ‘No’ to Boxes 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance Statement. Disagree The accounting program DO\$H is the same one used for the past 8 years and we have not had a problem before. It was only when a payment code was changed that a potential problem was identified.

The Councils initial Return was agreed on 9th May 2019 however significant errors were identified by the Clerk and corrections were made and the Return was re-completed on this basis. The revised Return was submitted for approval by the Council on 16th September but the dates on sections 1 and 2 were not revised to reflect this which is contrary to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. This re-approval of the Return was after the statutory deadline of 30th June 2019. The auditors had been made aware that the problem with the DO\$H accounting program had not been apparent until after the PC meeting on the 9th of May when the original figures had been approved by the PC. The Clerk had confirmed that the figures would be re-presented to the PC for their approval at the PC’s September Meeting. The Auditors had also been informed that due to the problem the return would be delayed and they had raised no objections at the time. The new figures had been checked by the Chairman before sending off to the Auditors and the Explanation of Variances had been signed by both the Chairman and RFO. The PC had approved the changes at the September meeting.

The Return provided for public inspection was the initial version; therefore not all the appropriate documentation was available to the public during that period, contrary to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Agreed, however the corrected accounts were available for public inspection on completion of the audit by the Auditors.

The Council prepare their accounts on a receipts and payments basis and so outstanding cheques at the year-end should be included in box 6 as a payment made and should also reduce cash held as reported in Box 8. As a result we would expect boxes 7 and 8 to agree. At 31 March 2019 an outstanding cheque for £188 has been included in Box 6 for the year but not deducted from Box 8 and so there is a difference of this amount between Boxes 7 and 8 on Section 1 of the Return this year in error. This information was covered by the Explanation of Variances when it was reported that the recipient some time later reported that he had lost the cheque which was cancelled immediately.

Current Account

Some time ago I reported that I had moved the bulk of the Parish Council finance from the Current account into the Deposit account and going through the accounts with Cllr Light we have decided to move more over and I suggest we only need to keep £7k in the current account as transfers made on the internet are instantaneous.

Burial Ground Fees

On the 8th November the Burial Ground superintendent forwarded cheques in payment of burial ground fees. These were banked on the 13th November at HSBC Didcot branch however I have since received a letter from HSBC to say that payment for one of them (£60.00) had been refused as the drawer had advised their bank not to pay the cheque. I have copied the letter to the superintendent to follow up with the payee. I understand that the bank will charge the PC £4.00. Subsequent to the meeting – the matter has been resolved satisfactorily.

VH Project Account and BIG Lottery Account

I have agreed with Richard Taylor that as there is still finance available for the village hall in both accounts it should be used to purchase items for the Village Hall and to date I have purchased items such as toilet rolls, hand wash etc from the VH Project account and ordered a commercial Dishwasher, Janitor Cupboard and CCTV for the hall from the BIG Lottery account. The PC can claim back the VAT on these items which the Trustees as a charity cannot do.

ii) Ratification of invoices

Planning Application Fee £231.00; Clerk - Location plan from the Vale £15.00; Trustees-Hall hire for PC meetings £32.00; Clerk-September salary £428.91; HMRC-September PAYE £145.65; Green & Stripey- Burial Ground maintenance £135.00; Mark Bradfield- Millennium Green maintenance £605.00; Artisan Litho-electronically reducing the BG plan and printing £36.00; Clerk- mileage in connection with PC duties £31.05; Moore-Audit charges £240.00; Direct Debits for Mobile phone-October £22.98.

Councillors ratified the above invoices.

iii) Summary of costs to date against budget

These had been updated and given to Councillors for information

iv) The draft budget paper was presented for discussion and agreed in principle, it was noted that the final budget cannot be confirmed until the tax base for 2020/2021 is agreed which is subject to approval by the District Council at their meeting on Wednesday 18th December 2019. Once confirmed the Tax Base will determine the precept and set the amount of the PC grant to the RG & VH Trustees. The final budget will be brought to the next PC meeting.

v) Audit

Included in the Clerks report.

Cllr Batchelor to sit in with the Parish Clerk before the next PC meeting.

vi) Grant requests

The PC had not received any requests for grants up to the date of the meeting.

8. Village Items:

Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of VE day 8th May 2020

Cllr Light asked Councillors to bring forward ideas to the next meeting for next years Commemoration of the anniversary. She would contact the Rector to see if the PCC had any plans. She also suggested purchasing a bench to go in the field at the top of the

EJ

Councillors

<p>bridleway leading to the Nature Reserve which overlooked the Ridgeway.</p> <p>Footpath between Mill Paddock and Hamlyn Close This had been mentioned to Cllr Constance who would pursue Highways. We have since heard from Geoff Burrell of Highways email forwarded to Councillors for discussion at the next PC meeting.</p> <p>9. Planning Applications:</p> <p>LRE/4783/6-X, Antwicks Stud, Main Street, Letcombe Regis. Outline application for the erection of an additional thirty stables with associated store and tack room. New indoor riding school and manège. Conversion of the existing bungalow on the site into two residential units. Martin Deans of VOWH Planning had an initial meeting with the Applicant with a view to resolving the issue. He has since had further correspondence and the applicant is considering the application and will get back to him within the next month. FOLLOW UP</p> <p>P19/V0855/FUL, Mill Cottage, Letcombe Regis OX12 9JD. Demolish dwelling. Erect new dwelling. Consultation 2nd to 24th May, Target decision date 24 June 2019. Registration date 29 April 2019, End of consultation period 2nd May 2019, Target decision date 24 June, (no decision as of today's date). PC's comments to the Vale. Letcombe Regis Parish Council have no objections to this application, subject to Planning Authority constraints. Approved</p> <p>P19/V1917/FUL, Letcombe Bowers Farm, Letcombe Regis OX12 9NG. Alterations to the existing farmhouse and replacement of the self contained east wing. Consultation ends 25 September, Target decision date 23rd October. Approved</p> <p>P19/V2283/FUL, Courtyard Stud, Court Hill Road, OX12 9JQ. Conversion and extension of existing stables to single dwelling. Following clarification from the VOWH the PC response has been submitted as "The Parish Council has no objections to this application but expect this to be the final development on this site."</p> <p>P19/V2316/FUL, Proposed improvement to include new entry and car park, Bassett Road, Letcombe Regis. Consultation period 11th October 2019 to the 6th November 2019. Target Decision date 28th November 2019. The PC Response has been submitted as "The Parish Council has no objections to this application". Currently querying with the Vale as to whether we should actually comment.</p> <p>Other planning issues (if any) There were no further planning applications.</p> <p>10. Deed of Dedication dated 17th March 2016 between the Parish Council and the Big Lottery. The restriction imposed on the title by this Deed ON 319053. Expires twenty years from 17th March 2016 so 17th March 2036.</p> <p>Agreement between the Vale of White Horse District Council and the Parish Council dated 6th September 2016. There is a restriction for this grant for a ten year period as above which ceases on the 6th September 2026. Both agreements secure the investment of public money and ensure that the site continues to be used as a village hall and associated parking. All legal documentation which applies to the above is held in the official Parish Council Records.</p> <p>It was agreed at the Parish Council meeting held on the 21st November 2016 that the countdown for this needs to be recorded annually in the Parish Council minutes until the end of the period on 17th March 2036.</p>	<p>EJ</p>
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- 11. Parish Council meetings: Dates approved by the PC but are subject to change, 2020:** 20th January, 16th March, 18th May APM followed by the APCM, 20th July, 21st September 21st 16th November.

The meeting finished at 10.35.

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APPROVED

Elizabeth Jenkins
Parish Clerk
1st December 2019