

MIDDLETON STONEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2022

Present

Cllr J Rees (Chair), Cllr R Makari (Vice Chair) Cllr W Champion, Cllr J Cornford, Cllr A Fulljames and Cllr A Grenfell.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Dunne and the Clerk, Mr S Marshall.

2. Declaration of Interest

None were declared.

3. Minutes of previous meeting for approval

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 26 September 2022 were approved with a small amendment relating to discussions with OCC on Rights of Way.

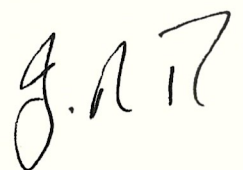
4. Matters arising

It was noted that all actions were complete except for the following :

1. Cllr Grenfell to apply to OCC for new 20mph signage for village roads
4. Chair to follow up planning application MW.0076/22 with Cllr Corkin
8. Clerk to follow up Chair's email to Victoria Prentis MP for a meeting
9. Clerk to invite new Leader of OCC to January 2023 meeting
15. Cllr Grenfell to make a request to Chair of VHC to obtain quotations for electrical upgrading for Village Hall

5. Highways

The Chair reported on the lack of progress having been made regarding the 'speed signs' that had been agreed with OCC. The Council expressed its disappointment that its County Councillor had not provided more help. Further pressure would be required to extract the funding and to have the project progressed.



Cllr Grenfell noted that he had submitted an FOI request to OCC on expenditure of S106 funding. Cllr Cornford noted that at a recent meeting of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum, several Parishes had expressed concern on S106 funding. It was also reported that discussions were underway with Cllr Bearder who led for OCC on transport issues.

Cllr Makari raised the proposed bus gate to the west of the village which had been proposed as part of the mitigation for new development at Heyford Park. She realized that up to now the Parish Council had opposed this but thought we should review our position in the light of other possible developments (e.g. potential relief roads). Other Councillors noted they continued to oppose the bus gate because of its implications for traffic in other parts of the village. The Chair concluded that he expected CDC to convene the Transport Working Group which had been a condition of Heyford Park 2 approval, and to consider the bus gate as part of an overall traffic plan.

Cllr Makari and Cllr Cornford raised the future of the 250 Bus: it was planned to end the Bicester/Oxford service and replace it with a more frequent Heyford Park/Bicester service. The Chair pointed out that Middleton Stoney was less affected than villages like Kirtlington and Bletchingdon by the plans since it would still have a bus service. After some discussion, the Council concluded that it should support those opposing the cutting of the service to Oxford.

Cllr Fulljames reported on his concern regarding car transporters passing through the village. Cllr Fulljames had liaised with the Clerk regarding the matter who had in turn contacted a Mr Toby Mepstead, Regional Manager of BCA Ltd, who had agreed to investigate the matter.

Cllr Fulljames raised his continued concern about the dropped drain on the Ardley Road which was causing a noise disturbance to residents.

The Chair noted that the Clerk had reported these concerns to OCC: it might help to get others affected to write in support.

6. **Planning applications**

The Chair noted that there were no new planning applications for the Council to consider. He also referred to the update on the OxSRFI proposals from Richard Gibb which had been circulated before the meeting. The council expressed its thanks to Mr Gibb for his considerable work on the village's behalf and noted that Cllr Makari had arranged a meeting with the promoters on 11 November to discuss the transport implications.

Cllr Fulljames asked why the Council had not been informed about the outcome of the planning permission sought to extend a garage on Ardley Road, and the Chair said he would ask the Clerk to follow up.

7. **Budget and Precept for 2023/2024**

The Chair introduced this item, noting that the Council would need to notify CDC of its final decision in January 2023, but that he and the Clerk agreed an earlier decision would help planning. The proposal was to increase the precept by 5% and to cover any deficit (up to about £3000) from reserves as shown by the proposed budget circulated. As context, the Chair noted that:

- The Council had raised the precept by 57% last year primarily to cover the significantly increased costs of employing an experienced Clerk;
- The Council has significant funds at its disposal, in excess of the £13,500 total stated as appropriate to maintain in its Reserves policy;
- There were considerable uncertainties about future expenditure given the need to recruit a new Clerk, and an unknown variable about salary;
- There was also the possibility to draw down some of the ringfenced funds to support projects for greening the village.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Although the current cash position was healthy, this included £9,750 from the lottery fund which needed to be spent by June 2023;
- There was also a potential need for significant expenditure on the playground & some of the Smiths funds could be used for this purpose;
- Although the total amounts of the precept formed only a small proportion of the Council Tax charge, it was clear that next year would be very difficult for many people.

Summing up, the Chair noted that the Council agreed an increase to the precept of 7.5% for 2023/2024.

The Council then discussed the quote of over £4,000 for necessary repairs to the playground, excluded repairs to the fencing and missing gate. Cllr Cornford noted she was preparing a bid to Valencia for a total overhaul of the playground which would be of the order of £90,000. This would, even if successful, take 12 months or so to be processed. The issue was whether we should proceed with repairs in meantime After some discussion, the Chair concluded that we would not accept the quote for repairs until the position was clearer on the application for a major overhaul. In the meantime, as a matter of urgency we needed to install a gate between the playground and School Lane.

8. Revised Councillors' Code of Conduct and Register of Interests

The Chair noted that the new Code was intended to replace the Council's existing Code from 2013. It was noted that CDC was encouraging all Councils to sign up to it. After a brief discussion, adoption of the Code was proposed by Cllr Cornford and seconded by Cllr Grenfell. All Councillors present voted in favour.

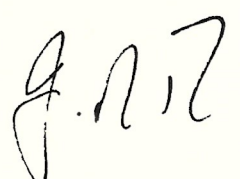
9. Reports

The Chair

- **Clerk:** The Chair noted that the Clerk had tendered his resignation but expressed a willingness to continue in post until a successor was identified. After a short discussion it was agreed:
- The Chair would approach individuals in the village who might be interested, as well as existing Clerks for neighbouring Parishes;
- Cllr Dunne would advertise again on Indeed, and the Chair would advertise via OALC

- **Flooding:** The Chair reported that he had yet to receive a response from the landowner of the field behind the Village Hall to the proposal that he agree to further desirable remedial works to be paid for by CDC. The Chair would continue to pursue a response. Cllr Grenfell reported on his exchanges with Tony Brummell (CDC) about possible enforcement action.

- **Gates to Middleton Park:** The Chair reported that he had just received a response from Mr Davenport to the proposals the Council had put to him 12 months previously. In essence Mr Davenport accepted these proposals, and in particular:
 - That both the main gate and pedestrian gates would be on a timer;
 - That the proposed hours for vehicular access to All Saints' Church would be 7.30am to 8.00pm, and for pedestrian access 8.00am to 8.00pm
 - That there would be an explanatory notice at the main gates
 - That Middleton Park owners would not oppose the Parish Council's application for a statutory right of way from the boundary with Villiers Park to the Church.



There then followed a lively discussion with some Councillors expressing concern that any such arrangements should not unduly restrict access to the Church.

The Chair concluded that he would write back to Mr Davenport agreeing to the proposal subject to understanding whether it was better to reach a formal agreement with OCC on the permissive right of way from the front gates and seeking more flexibility on the pedestrian gate's opening hours in summer months.

Following the meeting, it was agreed to await the formal views of the PCC before responding to Mr. Davenport, and to discuss again at the January 2023 meeting.

Lottery Funding Project

Cllr Cornford reported on the schedule of events planned because of the receipt of lottery funding, and that the pre-Christmas events had been circulated to all in the village.

She then outlined proposed expenditure on round tables, a wall mounted electric screen and projector, and a sound system. The Council supported all these items which had been part of the original bid, although some of the indicative costings had changed.

Cllr Cornford also reported on discussions about a Village Plan and agreed to circulate a draft which residents had prepared. The Council supported the concept and agreed to discuss at its next meeting.

10. Recess

There were no members of the public present. Cllr Fulljames commented that he thought this session should be earlier in the agenda. He also thought it important that members of the village should be allowed simply to turn up, and not be required to contact the Clerk in advance. The Chair said that it was helpful to know in advance if people wanted to come but there was certainly no bar to people simply turning up on the night.

11. Financial Statement

The Barclays Community Account of the Parish Council stood at £385.00, and the Barclays Business Account of the Parish Council stood at £20,623.05.

12. Accounts for approval & payment

Mr A Fulljames – Payment of Remembrance poppy wreath - £20.00

Mr S Marshall – Clerk's salary November 2022 – January 2023 & expenses - £1510.09

13. Communications

Cllr Makari agreed to send a message on the WhatsApp Group, and the Chair would prepare a contribution for the ABC magazine.

14. Dates of the next meeting

This was confirmed for Tuesday 17 January 2023.

The meeting closed at 21.25

ACTION POINTS FOLLOWING THE MEETING & PENDING

1. Cllr Grenfell to apply to OCC for new 20 mph signage for village roads - AG
2. Chair to follow up planning application MW.0076/22 with Cllr Corkin - JR
3. Cllr Grenfell to make a request to Chair of VHC to obtain quotations for electrical upgrading of Village Hall – AG

