

## STANDLAKE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Standlake Parish Council, held by Zoom conference call on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 7.30pm

Present:

Mr. B. Parnham Chairman

Mrs. A. Knipe

Mrs. L. Burton

Mr. D Jeffcoat

Mrs. J Macdonald

Mr. D. Bevan Clerk

Cllr. C. Mathew (OCC), Cllr. S. Good (WODC), Dr. G. Dooley and 7 members of the public.

1. HRH PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH - Mr. Parnham said that, on behalf of Standlake parish council and the people of Standlake, he wished to express the deep sadness felt on the death of HRH Prince Philip and expressed condolences to Her Majesty and the Royal Family.

2. APOLOGIES - Mr. Rippin

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - there were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC ITEMS - No members of the public wished to speak.

5. COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Mr. Mathew has spoken to Thames Water (TW) regarding their non-objection to planning applications for developments in an area with known sewage problems but received no satisfactory reply. He referred to the recent BBC Panorama programme which was condemnatory of TW's whole approach to residential sewage problems and the release of untreated sewage into watercourses. Mrs. Macdonald noted that in TW's latest update to the council they referred to introducing chemicals into the Standlake system and asked what they might be, regarding the already high pollution levels in the Windrush. Mr. Mathew and Mr. Parnham will ask TW for more information.

Mr. Mathew said the approval for proposed gravel extraction at Stonehenge Farm was still current but, in his opinion, it was unlikely that Hanson would go ahead with the project.

Mr. Mathew concluded by saying he had meetings with the candidates standing for his position as OCC councillor for the Eynsham Division and had briefed them on the issues facing Standlake and the other villages.

Mr. Good noted that Mr. Mathew would be standing down as a county councillor in May and thanked him for all his work over the years. As to the issue of sewage and planning applications, Mr. Good said that he would suggest to the WODC planning committee that, in considering future applications, they should consider requiring developers to install a self-contained sewage treatment system on site. This should be complimented by rainwater collection and recycling 'grey water' at each property. He suggested that the parish council, in objecting to applications on grounds of sewage capacity, should request this if planning were to be approved. Mr. Jeffcoat said that he had experience of the on-site sewage treatment and it worked extremely well with the only effluent being clean water.

6. PLANNING -

21/00511/HHD: Erection of single storey and first floor rear extensions: The Cottage 7 Church End Standlake: Mr And Mrs Fredericks. No objection.

21/00622/FUL: Residential development comprised of the erection of five dwellings together with associated works and construction of new detached garage to serve existing property, no 77 Abingdon Road. Alterations to existing and provision of new vehicular access: Land North East Of 77 Abingdon Road Standlake: Chesside Homes Ltd. Objection - effect on listed building, access, precedent, sewage.

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7. MINUTES - Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021, copies of which had been previously circulated to all members, were agreed as a true record and will be signed by the chairman at a later date.

### 8. MATTERS ARISING

*Sewage/Flooding* - Mr. Parnham reported the latest update from TW. Teams have now gathered data on groundwater infiltration and this will be shared by the end of April. Work on the Sewage Pumping Stations (SPS) at The Downs and Rack End involve a chemical dosing unit to reduce odours and septicity; refurbishment work at the High Street SPS includes, among other things, replacing pumps and ensuring any spillage is confined to the compound, though no spillage is contemplated.

OCC have confirmed that a scheme for Woodlands has been included in the 21/22 budget; currently investigation work is suffering a backlog of 3 months and a further update will be available in 2 weeks.

*Roads/Traffic/Speeding/Traffic Calming* - Mrs. Knipe reported that she and Mr. Bond-Smith had made further speed checks now that the school has re-opened. It was noted that Pulham's buses were often the culprits; an email will be sent to the company requesting that drivers be reminded of the importance of adhering to the speed limit.

*Playground/Recreation Ground & Maintenance* - Mr. Parnham said there was nothing to report regarding either Rack End or Windrush Way.

*Environment* - Mrs. Burton and the sub-committee have identified a number of activities that can improve the environment in Standlake. They include: planting of 3 trees in the High Street; change in management of verges and hedges; enrichment of wild flowers and restricting the cutting of the western bank in the recreation ground; leaflet drop to all households; creation/management of a Standlake Nature Recovery Network website for information and advice. Mrs. Burton produced cost estimates for the above amounting to approximately £650 and asked for council support. The clerk suggested a budget of £700 for the project to be taken from the community fund budget; there were no objections to this suggestion.

Mr. Jeffcoat has produced a wide-ranging report on sewage issues, the impact on the environment and their impact on planning decisions (see below). In brief: The UK Government is planning to compel water companies to improve their drains so that rubbish and sewage is not discharged into rivers during times of flood. Persistent offenders will be fined; Current legislation requires that planning authorities should take the impact of pollution upon health and the local environment into account in making decisions; Thames Water has no real incentive to spend money on major new drainage infrastructure because of the way that its profits are controlled. Higher spending on new drains simply reduces the money that is available to pay dividends to shareholders; We should join forces with local lobbying groups such as Windrush Against Sewage Pollution to press Thames Water to make more money available to invest in new drainage systems, not just in patching the existing pipes. Mr. Parnham thanked Mr. Jeffcoat for this report and said that the council would continue to press for remedial work to be done specifically in Standlake while engaging in the wider efforts through groups such as WASP.

*Planning approval 'moratorium'* - Mr. Jeffcoat's report addresses the planning aspects as follows: Water companies do not have the powers to refuse or approve new build planning applications; West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) is concerned that, if they reject applications, then developers will simply appeal, resulting in additional scarce staff time being used and extra cost being incurred; the priority for Standlake Parish Council should be to continue to apply pressure upon WODC to reject new build planning applications which threaten to increase the load upon our drains. Mr. Good stressed that WODC would never approve an application for fear of a challenge on appeal simply on the grounds of cost: nevertheless, they must judge if the prospect of fighting an appeal was in the best interests of council taxpayers. It was agreed that the council continued to make an objection regarding sewage capacity.

*Hornsway Bench* - Nothing to report at this meeting.

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*Bus Service* - it was agreed that this would be removed from matters arising until further communication was received from the proposer of this service.

*May meeting/APM* - the clerk confirmed that no further guidance has been received regarding the continuation of remote meetings and therefore, as discussed at the March meeting, the next meeting will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> May. The clerk and Mr. Parnham have discussed the desirability of holding the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) and concluded that the remote format was not really satisfactory, in part because of the uncertainty of numbers. Mr. Jeffcoat asked how many residents attended the APM and the clerk said it had been as low as zero and as high as 25 plus. It was agreed the APM should be delayed until face-to-face meetings were possible.

9. CORRESPONDENCE - email from Mr. List regarding the state of Martins Lane. The clerk reported that he had recommended that Mr List should contact Standlake Drainage Board directly about his concerns as Martin's Lane is their property. They are responsible for its maintenance. Mrs Macdonald said that she disagreed with the suggestion that the Lane should be widened and levelled like Croft Lane as this was not beneficial to maintaining its natural environment: also this might encourage vehicles to use the bridleway as they had frequently done in the past. However, she believed that the worst potholes should be filled in, especially from the middle towards The Downs. Mr Jeffcoat commented that, as a runner, he was concerned about the dangerous state of the lane and believed, like Mrs Macdonald, that it should be filled in and the surface levelled where it was subject to flooding. He agreed that there was no need for the vegetation at the edges to be cut back, however. The clerk said that he knew Mr Townsend, the Head of the Standlake Drainage Board, and that he would discuss this issue with him and report back to the Council.

10. ACCOUNTS - The clerk tabled the Financial Report as at 13th April 2021. Total income and expenditure were still expected to be broadly in line with the budget. It was currently forecast that the closing bank balance in March 2022 would be £5000, the minimum reserve required by the Council. However, this assumed that all the Community Reserve Fund of £8454.57 would be spent, which is very unlikely. He reported that he had completed the 20/21 Annual Return and it would shortly go to the internal auditor. Following his inspection and approval, the clerk will distribute the form to councillors for their information before presenting it for formal approval at the May meeting.

The following accounts were approved for payment:

FY 20/21 (paid)	
Absolute Solutions - hedge cutting	£600.00
Oxford Fencing - wood treatment fluid	£154.20
Absolute Solutions - p'ground wood treatment, repairs	£670.00
Oxford Fencing - wood treatment fluid	£61.68
Wileman & Sons - bus shelter cleaning	£30.00
Absolute Solutions - mowing	£375.00
FY 21/22 (for payment)	
OFPA - subscription	£42.00
OALC - subscription	£304.89
Community First - subscription	£70.00

11. CHURCHYARD MOWING - the clerk explained that the council had supported the cutting of St. Giles churchyard for many years, particularly as a public footpath passes through and the churchyard could be considered as a public space. The parochial church council (PCC) pays a contractor, the parish council then reimburses the PCC on a half yearly basis. The original Local Government Act of 1894 prohibits civil parish councils from paying for upkeep of the fabric of a church or for other 'ecclesiastical purposes'. There have been many interpretations of this restriction in the past and lawyers have taken differing views; it should be noted that this has never been tested in court. To regularise the situation the clerk suggested that, starting this FY, the council pays the contractor directly, without passing money through the PCC; the overall cost to

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the council will not change. Mr. Parnham, proposed that this be done, seconded by Mrs. Macdonald and passed unanimously.

12. DEFIBRILLATOR AT SCHOOL - Mrs. Macdonald spoke as vice chair of Standlake School governors. She reported that the defibrillator at the school needed maintenance including a new battery and the cost would fall on the school. The clerk said that the defibrillator was provided by FOSS not the parish council, as was the unit at the village hall. Mrs. Macdonald made the case that this was a village facility and unlikely to be required by the school; she proposed that a contribution be made to the maintenance and upkeep. It was decided that Mrs. Macdonald will obtain an estimate of the full costs and put this to the council at the next meeting.

13. REFURBISHMENT OF VILLAGE 'GATES' - the clerk said that he'd been approached regarding the state of the traffic calming 'gates' at the entrances to the village; however, after briefly looking at the gates himself, he was not convinced that full refurbishment was needed and asked councillors to look at the gates and discuss at the next meeting.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS - The next meeting will be by Zoom conference call on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 7.30pm. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Chairman ..... Date

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