



Minutes of The Annual Parish Meeting of North Hinksey Parish held via videoconference at 7.30pm on Thursday 18th March 2021

Those Present:

Parish Councillors: Cllr David Kay (Chairman), Cllrs Allen, Bastin, Berrett, Blase, Bolder, Church, Dowie, Dykes, Fairclough, Jones, MacKeith, Potter, Rankin,

Others Present: Sylvia Buckingham, Chris Sugden - Patient Participation Group, County Cllr Judy Roberts, District Cllr Emily Smith. Approximately 97 members of public, including some sharing devices and some non-parishioners.

In Attendance: Sharon Henley, Clerk/RFO

1. Welcome and Introduction by the Chairman (5 minutes)
The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that there had been no APM meeting in 2020 due to Covid-19, which had also forced this year's meeting to be held on Zoom. The system for voting on Zoom was outlined, along with a need to ensure that all those voting were parishioners so attendees had been asked to send their name and address to the Clerk to register to vote.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 21st March 2019. The Chairman asked only those who attended the 2019 meeting to vote and the minutes were APPROVED by 16 parishioners.
3. Update on NHPC Key Objectives. Councillor Lorna Berrett updated the meeting on progress with the seven key objectives. A report to be added to the North Hinksey Parish Council website. The Seacourt Hall had been up and running but was closed at present due to Covid and would open in line with the government 'roadmap'. Covid emergency support to be extended into longer-term plans for community resilience. Mace had committed £42,000 to public art for the Botley Centre and submissions from artists had been considered in line with the art brief issued. Councillor Laura Jones outlined plans to form a working group to attract additional funding and help co-ordinate a mural art project for the A34 underpass.
4. Covid Actions Update. Councillor Lorna Berrett reported on the Covid Community Hub that had been set up along with the Botley Responders. They had worked with the Cumnor Covid Group, the District and County Councils and other local organisation and had distributed leaflets and posters and information had been published on the website.
5. Climate Emergency Update. Councillor Chris Church said that a climate emergency had been declared two years ago and outlined an Action Plan and environmental statistics for the parish. The Oxford-Cambridge expressway project had recently been cancelled, which was welcome news. An on-line Green Spaces Workshop to discuss ideas was planned for 22nd March and all were welcome. Also a Botley Health Routes Map of walks was being created.
6. Community Police Update and Q&A. PCSO Rich Osborn had sent his apologies.

7. Patient Participation Group update and Q&A (10 minutes). Sylvia Buckingham and Chris Sugden attended on behalf of the group whose role was to liaise with Botley Medical Centre and healthcare providers on behalf of patients. Sylvia reported a much-improved relationship with Botley Medical Centre. A group of 61 Volunteer drivers had been co-ordinated to enable parishioners to attend the Kennington Health Centre for their Covid vaccinations. They had also taken equipment to patients' homes and arranged lifts to enable visits to those in care homes. The group had arranged monthly on-line speakers on matters of interest.
8. Open questions submitted by the public. The following questions had been submitted prior to the meeting and were read out and answers provided.
 - a. "Should North Hinksey Parish be a 20mph zone?" This was proposed by Councillor Bastin who outlined that the reasons for this request were road safety and air quality. He recommended that 20mph signage was erected, which would be self-enforced and requested that the Parish Council should consider holding an online survey in order to gauge parishioners' opinions more widely. A poll was taken with 87 in favour and 8 against so it was agreed to include this proposal as an agenda item at the March Parish Council meeting.
 - b. A representative of the 'Girl Skate Oxford Facebook Group' submitted the following questions:
 - i. Do you have a project manager?
 - ii. Is 2023 the completion date or beginning of process?
 - iii. Do you have an idea of square footage available?
 - iv. Do you have a designer in mind?

Councillor Caroline Potter responded:

Thank you for these questions prompting progress on NHPC's Key Objective 2.3 of delivering a skatepark. May 2023 is the end of this Parish Council's term, so we plan to start the process now with the aim of completing the project by then. We do not yet have a project manager. The area designated for a skatepark is over the site of the previous Botley Bowl, similar in size to the nearby sports court (approximately 600 sq m). In 2016 we received suggestions from Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association of skatepark companies to consider, but these were not progressed at the time and we remain open to all suggestions. In line with my response to another question about the skatepark project, we will discuss the request to establish a skatepark working group at our next full Council meeting on 25th March. If approved we will then engage with a range of parishioners and potential project partners; we would welcome further input from you and others with knowledge of skatepark design and use.

- c. A representative of the 'Botley Skatepark Project' group asked:

Members of the Botley Skatepark Project request the Parish Council to begin work now on one of your key objectives "Engage young people in the design and provision of a skate park". There is a group of parishioners happy to support the council in making this long awaited skatepark a reality. We suggest a working group is set-up that includes representatives from the skatepark project team as well as local youth representatives.

Councillor Caroline Potter responded:

This is a fantastic suggestion, which the Parish Council will consider at its full Council meeting next week. Thank you for your offer to support the council in meeting this key objective. We look forward to engaging with members of Botley Skatepark Project and young people to design and deliver a skatepark that the whole community can enjoy.

- d. What percentages of the Parish Precept were spent on the main expenditure items, and why was there a more than 9% increase in the precept last year, when inflation was below 2%.

Councillor David Kay responded:

Employee costs including training made up 37%, general admin including grants made up 25%, and playing fields plus playgrounds a further 23%, with 15% being other costs. Full expenditure figures are available on the Accounts and Budgets page of the Parish Council website so you can calculate yourself in detail whichever specific figures you require.

The precept sometimes rises at a level below inflation such as this year when it only went up around 1%, other years it rises above the inflation rate in order to cover expected additional costs.

For the rise that you are querying in the previous year the main factor was a significant increase in the grants budget as previously we were not in a position to provide major grants to local charities and other community organisations. We thought that an increase on this category of expenditure would be both appropriate, and supported by parishioners.

Over the past 6 years during which I have been Chairman the actual cost per household has increased on average by less than 2% p.a.. We are still well below the average for precepts both in Oxfordshire, and nationally, and our precept for next year is still less than three quarters of the national average figure.

- e. All residents of North Hinksey are stakeholders of the fields. Many enjoy the fields as they are and over 1,000 people feel the scout hut is an important facility for the young of this area. The presentations tonight are all from 'stakeholders' who support the building of a large new Pavilion. No time has been allocated for similar input from those who object to these plans. How can the Parish Council justify its totally undemocratic management of this meeting?

Councillor Caroline Potter responded:

Tonight's presentation on the new Pavilion will be given by two parish councillors to update parishioners on the current plans, consistent with NHPC's adopted Key Objective 2.1 ("Gaining funds for and building a new pavilion by 2022 in line with our approved planning application"). Other community stakeholders have been involved in this process at previous stages, and Agenda item 10 provides space for people representing other groups to comment on the plans if they wish. The longer Q&A that follows then allows for individual parishioners to express their views. Please also note that the motion following the Pavilion presentation and discussion is open to debate from everyone, whether or not they support keeping the scout hut. In creating this space for public debate NHPC is seeking a full range of views to consider in making its decisions, just as it has done at all previous stages of public consultation on the Pavilion plans (for example at the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting, where the planning application was presented and parishioners were advised on how they could submit their comments to Vale planning officers). This is how our healthy representative democracy functions.

- f. NHPC has spent over £30,000 of public money on solicitors' fees to get the 4th Oxford Scouts out of their Hut, which NHPC now values at only £1. When will the "Councillors for the Community" re-imburse the Parish for this waste of money?

Councillor David Kay responded:

Firstly the total spend on these legal fees to date is just under £25,000, which is still regrettably high, but somewhat lower than you are stating, probably because you were unaware that we claim back VAT, which makes up the bulk of the difference. We are also expecting to have a proportion of the fees reimbursed in relation to a failed request for a Judicial Review, but that matter has yet to be concluded. That will probably reduce the final legal costs to a total well under £20,000.

Councillors will not be personally paying those fees any more than we would expect either Councillor Dowie or yourself to pay several thousand pounds to cover the costs of the parish poll that you have requested.

Regarding the £1 valuation of the Hut on our assets register, that is a nominal value that has to be applied by us in line with the current official guidance. The Hut would have shown a value of £1 even if the Scout Group had signed the new lease offered to them and remained there. Roughly 40% of the items on the assets register show that nominal value of £1 including the Louie Memorial playing Fields themselves, the copse and fen, the nature reserve, and our allotments. I'll ask the Clerk to send you a copy of the assets valuation guidance so that you can fully understand how that process now works.

- g. Why is there no mention of the takeover of the Scout hut by the Parish Council in the Annual Parish newsletter and the cost of this to parishioners?

Response by Councillor David Kay:

Your term 'takeover' is slightly misleading as firstly the Scout Hut was always the property of the Parish Council, not the Scout Group, and secondly we have just spent 7 months trying to encourage them to sign a rent-free lease. They chose not to do so, but to vacate the Hut instead.

The newsletter was printed before we knew what decision the Scout Group were going to make, as they didn't tell us prior to their deadline. When the content was written we were still hopeful that they would sign the new lease, as it seemed to make no sense for them to do otherwise. Also as stated previously we don't actually know the final legal cost to the Parish Council yet, but it is likely to be a significant reduction from the figure already paid out.

- h. Is there any interest on the part of councillors in creation of a community outdoor gym?

Councillor Caroline Potter responded:

The 2018 consultation launched had asked about this and an outdoor gym had been included as an option. The results showed that there was no clear enthusiasm for this project at that time and elsewhere similar facilities had not been used very much.

The member of public asked whether the situation may have changed since the pandemic with this type of facility perhaps now being more popular. Cllr Potter agreed that this could be included as an option in any future consultations. The Chairman asked any parishioners with any similar suggestions to email the Clerk.

There was a 10 minute meeting break at this point.

9. Pavilion Presentation and Video. Councillor Caroline Potter gave a presentation about plans for the new Pavilion for which Planning Permission had been secured in 2019 following extensive public consultation. Attention was drawn to the very poor condition of the existing Pavilion and Scout Hut and feedback from the consultation had been that parishioners were keen for the

project to be developed as one building. Sport England had given their input on suitable facilities to create the current plans. This was followed by a video showing further detail on the project and input from parishioners highlighting the value to the local community and organisations.

10. Comments from invited stakeholders – current and potential users of the Pavilion, District and County Councillors.

Representatives of 4th Oxford Scouts shared a presentation and spoke outlining their views on the development of the new Pavilion and the importance of retaining the Scout Hut for their use.

11. Q&A on Pavilion

A parishioner asked what other stakeholders would be interested in using the new facilities if the Scouts were not using them. Cllr Potter shared the draft Business Plan which gave a breakdown of this information.

A parishioner raised whether the financial model would still be viable now the Scouts could no longer be included as building users. Cllr Kay responded that many groups were planning to use the facilities as they would be brought up to Sport England standards. Cllr Potter advised that the projected income from the Scouts was relatively small and it was hoped that the new facilities would be more desirable for daytime use by a wider variety of other groups.

12. The motion as follows was proposed by Martin Dowie (of 26, Poplar Road, Botley, Oxford OX2 9LB), and seconded by John Marriott, both on the electoral roll of this Parish:

'Should North Hinksey Parish Council offer 4th Oxford Scouts a new lease of the Scout Hut, restoring their previous rights and ensuring that they can continue to invest in young people and thrive as a large multi-section Scout Group with over 100 members?'

Cllr Kay requested clarification on whether the proposal was to offer the Scout Group a lease under exactly the same terms as their former lease which expired in July 2020 and Cllr Dowie confirmed this.

Cllr Kay also asked whether the Scout Group would want to sign such a lease now and move back into the Hut given that they wouldn't have any rights to use the rooms in the extension at the back of the building, and they also wouldn't have rights to exclusive access of any land outside of the Hut, neither of which were included in the previous lease. A Scout Group trustee indicated that they would like to do so, but disputed that this would not allow use of the rooms in the extension.

Cllr Kay highlighted that an on-line poll could be used rather than a Parish Poll which would be at no cost to the parish. The Parish Poll would cost the parish £2,500 to £3,000 and could not take place until May or June due to Covid restrictions. Also the Parish Poll results would not be legally binding on the Parish Council.

During the debate another Parishioner, James Poyser, proposed the following amendment for the motion to read as:

"Should North Hinksey Parish Council offer 4th Oxford Scouts a new lease of the Scout Hut, restoring their previous rights".

Before voting occurred, all attendees not on the electoral roll for this Parish (who therefore did not qualify to vote) were removed from the meeting.

A vote was held on the amendment, which was APPROVED with 54 votes in favour and 24 against, therefore the amended version became the substantive motion.

A further vote was then held on the amended substantive motion and this was NOT APPROVED with only 36 voting in favour and 43 against.

Subsequent to this vote on the substantive motion Martin Dowie requested that the motion be put to a Parish Poll, despite the fact that the motion had failed. He also stated that he could request the Parish Poll on either the original wording of the motion or the amended version, despite the fact that the amendment had been approved by the meeting.

This interpretation of the legislation did not match the understanding of the Chairman (Councillor David Kay), however the request for a Parish Poll was allowed to be put forward, with the results to be recorded in the minutes. The Chairman agreed to allow requests for a Parish Poll to be registered as occurring in the meeting on both the original motion and the amended motion, with those results to be passed on to the Monitoring Officer for her department to adjudicate on whether or not they were valid requests based on the voting results prior to these requests.

Martin Dowie then requested a Parish Poll on the amended motion as follows:

'Should North Hinksey Parish Council offer 4th Oxford Scouts a new lease of the Scout Hut, restoring their previous rights.'

31 parishioners indicated that they supported this request for a Parish Poll on the amended motion. 43 parishioners voted against the motion.

Martin Dowie further requested a Parish Poll on the original motion as follows:

'Should North Hinksey Parish Council offer 4th Oxford Scouts a new lease of the Scout Hut, restoring their previous rights and ensuring that they can continue to invest in young people and thrive as a large multi-section Scout Group with over 100 members?'

37 parishioners indicated that they supported this request for a Parish Poll on the original motion. 44 parishioners voted against the motion.

In both of the above cases the number of Parishioners supporting the request for a Parish Poll was not a majority of voters present, but it did exceed the required level of 10 normally necessary for a Parish Poll request to be passed on to the District Council. The Chairman to inform the Monitoring Officer of these request for a Parish Poll and the results of voting at the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.30pm.