

A.P.M. Question and Answer Session with County, District and Parish Councillors

Parish Council

Recreation - Provision of a Skatepark

Darren Blaze

In late 2010 the old skate bowl was filled in after extensive damage from vandalism. The parish Council has a sum of £12,604 insurance money that it has failed to add to with regards to providing a replacement skatepark. I understand the Parish Council is currently investigating options for additional leisure facilities through a Leisure Working Group but what progress has it made in terms of a skate park or a multi-use facility for BMX, scooters, skateboards etc on currently owned land, and what opportunities are there for the Botley Skatepark Campaign to get involved in this process?

Jacob Stanley

Hi my name is Jacob and I'm going to say some questions for the skatepark meeting, currently I have to ride to the other side of Oxford to get to a skatepark. If we do get a skatepark will I be able to help with the design and how long will it take to build.

Answer to Darren Blaze & Jacob Stanley

The Parish Council's Leisure Working Group is indeed currently investigating options for additional recreational facilities within the parish, including facilities suitable for teenagers such as an adventure playground or a multi-use type of skatepark. At this stage we have considered a number of important criteria to narrow down the number of possible suitable locations and identify what additional information is required in order for Council to make a properly informed decision about which types of facility and which locations should be progressed further.

The next stage of the review will involve consultation with potential users over the next few months to better understand the level of demand and likely usage, and to identify preferred design features. So Botley Skate Park Campaign members and others will be able to take part in that part of the process.

Overall this is a complex and lengthy process and after the review and consultation phase there will need to be a full report written on any facilities being progressed, then agreement obtained from NHPC to allocate land for this purpose, a planning application would need to be submitted and then approved, funds raised, and only then could the facilities be built. If a skatepark does meet all of the criteria and progresses right through the whole process without any major delays it would still probably be some time in 2018 at the earliest before it opened for use.

Darren Blaze

Confirmed that the Skate Park Campaign would be willing to help out in the process of asking the community their views on a skatepark.

Highways Issues

Road Safety

Orit Sarfatti (Read out by Emily Smith)

Following the recent accident on the West Way crossing where a 4 year old was hit by a car, a group of Botley School parents have joined together to call for a safer crossing. Dr. Avishay Sarfatti, who witnessed the accident with his own children, wrote to the County Council and was told that there was no budget for improvements but hinted that the redevelopment of West Way could provide the opportunity for the crossing to be resigned.

Will the Parish Council join us in calling for the County Council to provide a safer crossing in

the medium term, and the creation of a 20mph speed limit for the stretch of West Way around the crossing and Elms Road junction in the short term?

Answer to Orit Sarfatti

The Parish Council would support the introduction of any appropriate further safety measures within the parish. Our understanding is that both Thames Valley Police and Oxfordshire County Council have undertaken investigations into the accident and appropriateness of the existing crossing, and Councillors are not in a position to comment further on this topic until we have seen those reports in order to be aware of identified issues.

It would also be helpful if you could indicate what you think constitutes a safe crossing and your opinions about what Mace are suggesting in their plans (which includes re-siting of the crossing nearer to Elms Road and having no central holding area) so that this could be discussed with other Parish Councillors.

Emily Smith

Explained that they were keen on a 20mph being imposed and were aware that the crossing equipment was in working order, but came during the half-term not during the school term. They have no set ideas on improvements, but would like to talk to the Parish Council at some time. The Chairman of the Parish Council agreed that once the Parish Council was aware of the relevant reports then it could be appropriate to have a meeting.

Bus Shelter in Lime Road

Emily Smith

With most of the homes on Harcourt Place now occupied the number of people using the first bus stop on Lime Road - which is very exposed to the elements – is increasing.

Does the Parish Council still support the installation of a bus shelter on Lime Road as part of the developer's section 106 agreement and are you happy to accept responsibility for maintaining this additional shelter? What is the Parish Council's approach to maintaining bus shelters and seating across the Parish? Is there a schedule of maintenance work and a budget allocated for this?

Answer to Emily Smith

The conventional bus shelters in North Hinksey parish are, as far as we know, owned and managed by either Oxfordshire County Council or a local private company called Primesite Media, who use them for advertising purposes and maintain those they own. As the Parish Council are not responsible for those bus shelters it has no need to budget for their repair or maintenance.

Our understanding is that the County Council asked the District Council to include a Section 106 bid for the Lime Road shelter in the contract with the Lime Road developers, so unless the District Council as the planning authority know otherwise, the shelter is owned by the County Council and they are responsible for its maintenance. If the District Council are aware that the County Council doesn't want to accept responsibility for the shelter then it seems sensible that our District Councillors talk to the Vale's Section 106 officer to ask that she resolves ownership responsibilities. One possible option would be for the Vale and County Council to approach Primesite Media to see if they would be willing to take on responsibility for that shelter's ongoing maintenance.

Emily Smith

Stated that as the Parish Council was responsible for bus shelters in North Hinksey would it maintain this one as the bus shelters were owned by the County Council and maintained by the parish council (that was what happened in Cumnor). She understood that as the parish council had supported the call for a new bus shelter it would maintain it.

The Parish Clerk explained that the parish council had been asked by the VWHDC if it agreed with a request they had received from the County Council for a Section 106 contribution for a bus shelter at the new Lime Road development and it agreed to support their request. At no stage was there any mention of the parish council being expected to pick up future maintenance costs, nor did the Parish Council indicate at any stage that it would do so.

Both the Chairman of the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk again explained that in North Hinksey, apart from the bus shelters put in by the County Council, all other bus shelters were owned and maintained by Primesite Media.

County Councillor Mrs. J. Godden

Considered the debate was coming from the wrong angle, there were 400 new houses at the top of Lime Road and an extremely exposed bus stop and the residents wanted a bus shelter there. Bus shelters were not the responsibility of the highways authority or the County Council and in fact they were not the responsibility of anybody. In Oxfordshire and all shire counties she knew, bus shelters were the responsibility of Parish and Town Councils.

The deal was a win, win situation, being that the shelter would be put in and maintained for 5 years under the Section 106 money, to allow the parish council has time to put money in its budget to maintain it. If the Parish Council did not agree to put money in its budget to maintain the bus shelter then alas, the money would have to be returned.

Darren Blaze

Made reference to the shelter in Lime Road which the parish council cleaned.

The Parish Clerk explained that the parish council put this shelter up many years ago to protect residents from the wind as neither the County Council or Primesite Media were willing to put a bus shelter there. It was not a recognised bus shelter but more of a wind break.

Chris Church

Made the point that as it was Primesite Media who maintained local bus shelters and had all the money they should have been involved in the process from the start.

The Parish Clerk will continue to investigate this issue further to clarify ownership and maintenance issues relating to bus shelters.

Graffiti

Debby Hallett

When a resident reports to the NHPC (or a member of the NHPC notices) graffiti on property owned by the PC, or on one of the bus shelters, what happens?

I've noticed enduring graffiti on grit bins, bus stop shelters, the buildings of the Louie Memorial Pavilion and the play equipment in the upper fields. I've also noticed long-lived graffiti on other buildings (not owned by NHPC), and utilities cabinets in the parish.

I'm interested in what scheme/strategy/policy has been set up to manage graffiti removal, and what budget the PC has put aside for this. I'm also interested in how the NHPC considers ways they could encourage private property owners to clear up graffiti on their property. It's not the PC's responsibility, but it's something that would help make this parish a nicer place to live.

Answer to Debby Hallett

The Chairman, Councillor D. Kay explained that the Parish Council adopts the VWHDC policy in

relation to graffiti, and summarised the following details,

- a). The VWHDC are responsible for the removal of graffiti on all the properties and buildings they own. We are told they generally only remove graffiti if it is either offensive or racist.
- b). This is the policy that the Parish Council also adopts on its building and property (e.g. the Pavilion and sports equipment). It has no specific budget for removal of graffiti from its own buildings or property. To my knowledge the Parish Council and the current management committee at the Louie Memorial Pavilion do not consider any of the graffiti to fall into those categories.
- c). Private households are responsible for removing graffiti from their properties, but if the owner does not remove it and it is deemed to be offensive or racist, then the Vale will remove it and recharge the owner.
- d). The removal of graffiti on bus shelters in the parish is the responsibility of the owners (either the County Council or Primesite Media).
- e). Highways England (old Highways Agency) own and maintain both underpasses (A34), the A34 sound and crash barriers and the West Way flyover bridge and as such are responsible for removal of any graffiti there. The Parish Council has tried on a number of occasions to get them to do something to remove graffiti on the underpasses, but they do not consider it to be a priority.
- f). The removal of graffiti from utility cabinets (e.g. GPO, Virgin etc.) is the responsibility of the owners.
- g). The removal of graffiti from grit bins is the responsibility of the County Council. Perhaps Councillor Hallett could approach appropriate representatives of the District Council and ask if they as a principle authority had any initiatives that would be helpful in addressing the local problem.

Alternatively the emerging Neighbourhood Plan will contain comments (and possibly community actions or even planning policies) which are intended to discourage anti-social behaviour, including graffiti, and any parishioner can feed into that process.

District Councillors Question

West Way Re-Development – Provision of Plans and Documents

Philip Stevens

Would the District Councillors please explain why the Vale, as the planning authority, failed to provide in the Botley Library (which is open for many hours a week), copies of the plans and documents for the re-development to allow the public to inspect them.

I understand that the Parish Council's Planning Committee asked the Vale to do this, but it would appear that the only place for the public to examine the documents is in the shop used by West Way Community Concern, open only for only a few hours between 11am and 3pm. On several occasions when I have arrived there to see the plans the shop has not been opened on time and I also discovered that they had duplicate copies.

Answer to Philip Stevens (Given by District Councillor E. Smith)

The following answer was circulated at the meeting.

District Councillor E. Smith informed the meeting that the following response was based on information given to the local District Councillors by a member of the Vale's Planning Department. Vale of White Horse planners provided three copies of Mace's full West Way planning application for the public to see.

One copy is held at the Vale offices.

One copy was provided to Cumnor Parish Council, and it can be viewed at the home of one of their parish councillors, Cllr Steve Viner.

One copy was provided to North Hinksey Parish Council, but the district councillors don't know where the parish council decided to make that available for people to see.

The copy of the plans held by West Way Community Concern was given to them directly by Mace,

not by the Vale. WWCC's intention is to provide people with more options to see the plans. When your district councillors asked the Vale planning officer about why there wasn't a copy in the Botley Library, he said he had been advised sometime before the application was filed that the library didn't have enough room to be able to accommodate the plans for public viewing. When we pressed as to who advised him of this limitation, he said it was some members of the North Hinksey Parish Council. Perhaps this question should go to them?

She now had further information and confirmed that no copy had gone to the library. There was a copy at the Vale, a copy at both North Hinksey and Cumnor PC's and a copy in the WWCC shop. She had heard differing stories as to why the library had not received a copy. It was not the VWHDC who made that decision and she had heard differing stories as to why it was claimed that there was insufficient space to do so. WWCC had two copies, one from Mace and one from the VWHDC. She wondered whether one of the two copies held by WWCC could be put in the library and if not would be willing to ask the Vale's Planning Department to arrange for a copy to be put there.

Philip Stevens

Requested that the Parish Clerk investigates what was a serious claim that some members of the North Hinksey Parish Council had said that the library did not have room to display the plans.

Parish Council

Councillor D. Kay (NHPC) wished to clarify a number of issues since the printed response was known. There had only been one meeting with planning staff from the Vale in recent months which was attended by himself, Councillors Mrs. Carr and Pritchard and the Parish Clerk. At that meeting that the Parish Council requested that an additional copy of the plans should be provided for the library, after being told by the planning officer that no copy would be put in the library as their staff had advised him there was insufficient space, rather than the other way round. At no other point prior to that meeting had parish councillors acting in an official capacity as representing the council made a statement to the officer as to who should or should not have plans.

The Parish Clerk informed the meeting that he was at the said meeting and clearly recalls that Councillor Pritchard, when the officer said that no copy would be going to be put in the library, complained that the one public place should be deposited was the local public library. The Parish Clerk asked District Councillor E. Smith to go back and take up the incorrect statement with officer.

Councillor A. Pritchard (Chairman of the NHPC Planning Committee) had also taken the opportunity of following up the comment within the reply that one copy was provided to Cumnor Parish Council, and it can be viewed at the home of one of their parish councillors, Cllr. Steve Viner. He had spoken with Cllr. Viner who had told him that he had not agreed to allow the plans to be viewed at his home.

Philip Stevens

Asked whether WWCC would allow one of its copies to be placed in the public library.

Caroline Potter (WWCC)

Explained why they had got two copies and would be happy to share the earlier copy from Mace with the public library. Although it was not a full copy it would contain all the important documents including the Design and Access Statements and Visual Impact Statements. WWCC had also raised the same issue with the Vale's planning officer as to why there was not a copy in the Botley Library and were also under the impression he been told that it was because the library staff had said there was insufficient space to display them.

Councillor D. Kay closed this part of the agenda by asking District Councillor E. Smith to take the issue up with the Vale's planning officer to try and work out what has happened. An updated copy of the questions and answers would be put on the council's web-site.