

Minutes of the Annual Electors' Meeting for the Parish of Sutton Courtenay held at the Village Hall, on Tuesday 9th April 2024, commencing at 7.15pm.

Present: Councillor Rita Atkinson (Chairman of the Parish Council) and 9 members of the public. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

County & District Councillor Richard Webber; Parish Councillors Hugo Raworth and Jason Warwick had sent their apologies.

Councillor Richard Webber had advised the Chairman that due to ill health he would be resigning his District and County positions from 30th April 2024. The Chairman, on behalf of the Parish Council, thanked Councillor Webber for his dedicated to the roles and all his assistance.

Minutes

The Minutes of the last Annual Electors' Meeting held on 4th April 2023 had been circulated and read by those attending. These were confirmed as a true record of the proceedings.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman had provided printed copies of her report at the meeting:

For the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

This report presents the highlights of the Parish Council's activities over the year.

Planning and Consultations

Responding to planning applications, for which the Parish Council is a statutory consultee, has continued to form a major part of the Parish Council's work. Over the year, the Parish Council has responded to over 40 planning applications of which about 19 were related to modifications to dwellings by house owners. Others were substantial developments or approval of reserved matters on previously approved outline applications.

The Parish Council remains particularly concerned with the myriad of Section 73 applications submitted by Hanson, FCC and Sutton Wick Quarry. These are applications where the applicant applies to vary the planning conditions stipulated by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC - as the minerals and waste planning authority) on the original planning applications to minimise the impact of the operations on residents and protect the environment. The process has been used, for example, to extend working hours, increase vehicle movements, extend plant life, etc.

These are particularly difficult applications to address as they tend to be variations on variations approved over several years with a changing referencing system, so trying to trace back the history of the variations to demonstrate potential inconsistency is not straightforward – it takes up a lot of time of the Members of the Parish Council's Planning Working Party.

Through the Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Committee (NPCJC), we have continued to address the several issues raised by the proposed HIF1 (Thames crossing) project. This is now being considered at a public inquiry and has formed another major part of the work of the Parish Council's Planning Working Party. The collaborative work is with Appleford, Culham, Burcot and Clifton Hampden, and Nuneham Courtenay Parish Councils.

After successive refusals, by the Vale of the White Horse District Council, for applications for the Hobbyhorse Lane North site (next to the Village Hall), the developer finally went to appeal. The Inspector found in favour of the appellant and outline planning permission has now been given for the site. The Parish Council made a strong representation at the inquiry and has all along maintained that this was an extremely unsuitable site for building houses.

There have also been consultations on Local Development Orders submitted by Milton Park and the enterprise zones as well as developments in the other local business parks (e.g. Trident).

Attendance at Liaison Committees

The Parish Council appoints representatives to many local liaison committees – notable of which are:

- Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- Sutton Courtenay Village Hall Management Committee
- FCC - Appleford / Sutton Courtenay Liaison Committee
- RWE Local Liaison Committee
- Milton Park Liaison Committee
- UKAEA Technology - Culham Local Liaison Committee
- UKAEA Technology - Harwell Local Liaison Committee
- Millennium Common Management Committee

Community Activities and Recreational Amenities

Recreation Ground

This has been the first full year of use, by the village, of the upgraded play facilities at the Recreation Ground. Our Clerk, Jennie Currie, has been successfully pursuing the snag list with the company that supplied and built the new facilities. We are very grateful for the s106 funds, Community Infrastructure Levy money and a grant from FCC Communities Foundation that together funded the bulk of the expenditure on the project. The installation of football/rugby posts for use by all is complete – this was a major request during the pre-project consultations. Further improvements, particularly to the cricket strips, will be considered in the new financial year.

Footpaths

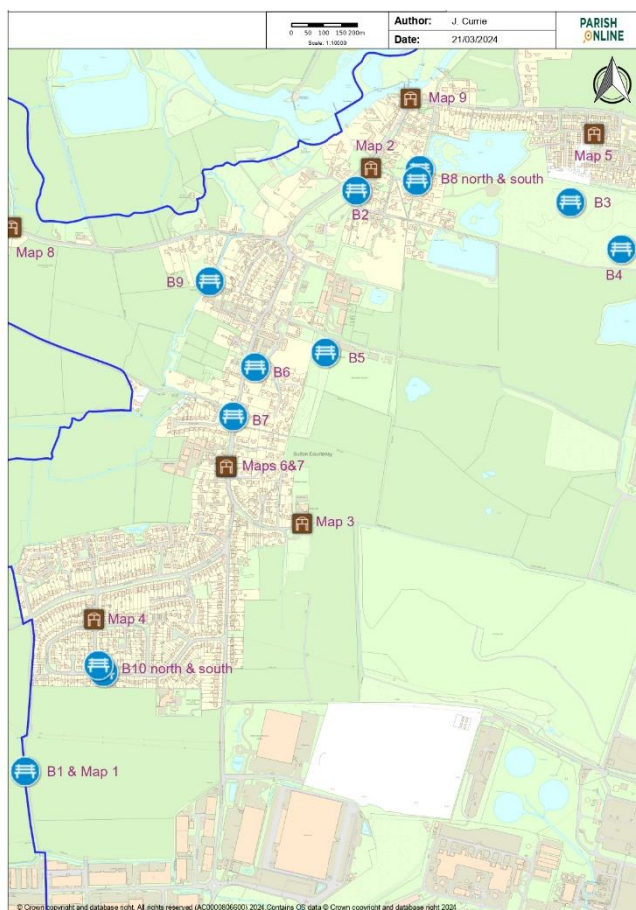
The Parish Council also considered the footpaths in the village (important to remember that this is an OCC responsibility not the Parish Council) as we are all aware how important these paths are to the village. We contracted OCC to do the work but contributed some of the parish's s106 allocation (fortunately we met the criteria for the s106 from the warehouse at the top of Harwell Road):

- Upgrade the Right of Way: footpath 27 between the cemetery and Lady Place and the footpath at the southern end of the recreation ground.
- Replacing a stile and a gate on footpath 2 (south-west of the river from near the Mill House along the river bank to Abingdon Road)
- Replacing two wooden stiles on footpaths 14 and 15 (north of Mill Lane) with metal version complete with dog gates

Previously, the Parish Council also accessed TOE (Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment) grant to replace some stiles. That work is also complete now. Thank you to the landowners involved as their permission was needed.

Art Trail

Hopefully, you will now see the benches, maps and noticeboards installed right across the village. There have been several housing developments extending the parish's built-up area in recent years. It was felt important to have a trail of benches, maps and notice boards designed to 'reflect the rich history and rural setting, enliven the public realm, and support the new and existing community to thrive together'. These are located in strategic places across the village to provide a unifying feeling for all. Please see the map below.



We have just submitted a Flood Risk Assessment for Map 8 (Peep O’Day Lane); Map 9 (Church Street by Mill House) and Bench 9 (by Ginge Brook on lane of the same name) due to their location - maps in Flood Zones 2 and bench in Flood Zone 3. This is ring-fenced s106 money from developers to be used for art projects in the parish. The Parish Council wanted the project to be of practical use to residents as well. Jennie Currie did an excellent job of pulling the project together as it had been rolling along for a few years. Thanks also to the District Council’s Art Officer and s106 officer and Cllr. Joanna O’Callaghan.

There is still work to be done for the wider amenities across the parish, particularly the southern end which will be a focus of the Council’s work in the 2024/25 year. The council has been quite determined to use its allocation of s106 to improve the facilities as our village grows in population.

Litter Pick

The Parish Council also organised a litter pick – it was wonderful to see families and many young people take part in the litter pick. It is also noted that there are many others who, as they walk around the village, also help in picking up litter.

Cemetery

There has been a slight increase in the number of burials at the cemetery compared to last year. The weather during the summer was kinder to the grass and the new maintenance programme has improved the overall appearance of the site.

Neighbourhood Plan

This project has been ongoing for some time for perfectly valid reasons, and it is with great relief that the Parish Council has now been able to hand the process to the District Council. The referendum takes place on 11th April 2024. It has been many years of hard work and

deployment of specialist planners to turn the feedback from residents in to policies that that the District Council’s planning department will have to acknowledge and subsume in to their planning decisions for our parish. We await the outcome of the referendum.

Acknowledgments

We are very fortunate to have residents supporting the work of the Sutton Courtenay Parish Council through its working groups. In particular, the Planning Working Party could not have drafted the Parish Council’s responses to several ongoing major planning applications without the expertise of residents Robin Draper and David Hignell. Their historical knowledge of the evolution of FCC and Hanson operations has helped tremendously in the Parish Council being able to respond robustly to the many applications for variations of the conditions stipulated in the original planning permissions for the two operators. Special mention should also be made of Joanna O Callaghan, Sarah Eccles, Kathy Whittaker and others on the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group who have steadfastly worked to ensure the production of the draft Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the District Council.

The District Council’s officers have been tremendously supportive in progressing the Art Trail project as well as with drawing down s106 funds allocated to Sutton Courtenay. A huge thank you to fellow councillors. There are of course many more who, quietly behind the scenes, do a lot of work for the community – I can think of many who pick up litter while walking.

Finally, and not least, a huge thank you to Jennie Currie, our Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. In the short time (since July 2022) Jennie has been with us, we have made tremendous progress on the many actions on the Parish Council’s to-do list since Jennie’s appointment.

The Parish Council is in the process of finalising its work plan for 2024 to 2027 when a new council will be elected and to support the new council, a plan for 2027/28 will also be drafted.

Matters raised by Electors

- A resident advised that they would like this meeting to become a larger event to showcase the Parish Council. With more reports, including a finance report, and details of what the Parish Council does.
- The Recreation Ground is amazing. There has been a lot of criticism of the Neighbourhood Plan which has been unfounded. The Parish Council should be more proactive in promoting what it does.
- Over the past 3 years the Parish Council has completed several projects and this has been a distinct change from 20 years ago. The Parish Council should consider doing a mailshot to all households to raise its profile.

The Chairman thanks residents for their comments, she advised that the meeting was not a Parish Council meeting but that as a number of Parish Councillors were present, they would take note of the comments made.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.45pm.

Signed

Dated.....