

Minutes of the meeting of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF Bucknell Parish Council
held on
15TH May 2024

Councillors present	Cllr Alexander Bowden (Acting Chair)
	Cllr Derek Hedges (DH)
	Cllr Richard Johnson (RJ)
	Cllr James Alcock (JA)
Apologies received	Cllrs Chris Wells and Emma Evans-Roberts
County/District Councillors present	Cllr Barry Wood - CDC
Members of the public present	There was one member of the public present

05.24.01 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Chris Wells and Emma Evans-Roberts

- 05.24.02.** The minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2023 were checked for accuracy and content, agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

05.24.03 Chairman's Report

Due to work commitments the Chair (Chris Wells) was unable to attend the meeting and had not been able to prepare the Chairman's report. He will provide a report in due course to be added to these minutes,

Chair's report

2023 – 2024 has seen a period of stability with the council. Whilst we have been one Councillor short of the total number (7), all Councillors renominated themselves for election and were re-elected through a non-contested process.

Last year, we were delighted to welcome Cathy Fleet to the position of Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to the council. Having an almost full Council, supported by a dedicated and professional Clerk is a wonderful position to be in.

The familiar standing issues continue to drive the discussion of the Council; Thames Water, the Incinerator and Land Fill sites at Ardley, traffic and parking as well as more recently the proposed Cherwell 2040 plan which appears to mirror, somewhat coincidentally, the massive housing plans put forward at Hawkehill.

At the start of the year, the 20mph speed limit was put in place through the village. Not unexpectedly, this is widely ignored by most that use the village as a rat run. Speeding has been reported to Thames Valley Police as a crime; somewhat disappointingly, they recently telephoned me, as the reporter of the crimes on a daily basis, and asked me to stop reporting the crimes, saying nothing would be done unless someone was killed or seriously injured. We need to challenge this with TVP – it would be interesting to know

how many such issues occur at the Middleton Stoney crossroads, for example, that warrant the regular monitoring of the traffic light crossroads.

Flooding continues to be a relentless issue, with no organisation being able to take accountability for resolving the issue. Thames Water and Oxfordshire County Council both pass the 'buck' and so we are in a frustrating state of limbo. It is clear that investment is needed in the sewer system and further the issue is exacerbated by Viridor's discharges into the system (as confirmed by myriad representatives of Thames Water when they visit to deal with flooding events). The council is committed to escalate these issues to executive leadership at implicated bodies to build a remedial plan.

The Hawkwell development decision continues to be kicked into the long grass. Cherwell District Council continue to defer making a decision until some time in the future. We suspect that this is waiting for the Cherwell 2040 plan to be approved (which miraculously mirrors Hawkwell developer's plans). It could then be approved under the auspices of being in accordance with the local plan as well as being supported by a potential change in national government that would see a vastly different approach to building in the countryside. We will continue to fight and make representations against the scale and appropriateness of the development in the planned location, given the wide range of issues that have been raised during consultation.

We enter the new council year with the familiar issues on our agenda and with each of them presenting their own challenges. This will need the council to be agile in managing and responding to matters as they arise.

05.24.04. Public Participation

The member of the public had a particular interest in Hawkwell and wondered why the application had been delayed and what the PC could do about it.

OCC had sent documentation regarding the lack of energy capacity. Thames Water are also unable to supply adequate water for the development

There is concern that the 2040 OCC Plan is also delayed.

AB responded that he felt the PC cannot act directly to investigate the problems but a group of individual parishioners would be able to do that,

Cllr Wood informed the meeting that the process of monitoring applications is complicated and explained that there is a local development plan which runs for 20 years. For a long time traditionally the district council has a succession of plans which says 'develop on the edge of towns' – largely due to the facilities available and the fact that it is a sustainable location. This applies to Banbury and Bicester – this is no longer enough so Kidlington has been brought into the equation which is difficult as Kidlington is on the edge of the green belt. There is also the new settlement of Heyford Park. Urbanisation had occurred to protect villages from development. Some developers have found ways round this, e.g. in Chesterton. A strategic link road has been built round north west Bicester which is subject to S106 money. Bicester will have a completed ring road in due course. The current road works are not linked directly to Hawkwell.

AB commented that there is a similarity between the maps in the local plan and the Hawkwell map.

JA asked what has caused the delay and why the application has not gone to committee.

BW responded that the delays may be caused by 'developers' viability', the percentage of affordable housing and S106 contributions, or the developers not wishing the application to go to committee.

It was suggested that a meeting is requested with David Peckford (Head of Planning) to discuss the application and express the concerns of the PC and its residents. **CF to arrange meeting and inform councillors and Cllr Barry Wood.**

Cllr Nigel Simpson provided a report which is attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

Signed **Chair of Bucknell PC**

Date

Appendix 1

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS MAY 2024 FROM CLLR NIGEL SIMPSON

GENERAL OCC REPORT

OXFORDSHIRE 'PARK AND RIDE' SITE BUILT WITHOUT ROAD ACCESS

OCC has almost finished building a £51m 'park and ride' site with 850 spaces near Eynsham, but it remains closed because there is no access road. Concerns have been expressed that the site will sit unused for years until OCC secures funding to build the necessary road. However, the council stated that the park and ride site was intentionally completed ahead of the roadwork to save costs amid rising inflation and construction expenses. The broader A40 improvement plan, including bus lanes, is now subject to funding discussions with Homes England and the Department for Transport. OCC hopes to finalise funding agreements soon and to have the park and ride fully operational by 2027.

OCC SEEKS TO EMBED COMMERCIAL MINDSET

OCC has launched an authority-wide strategy to “get the organisation thinking more commercially” – which could lead to “bigger opportunities” in the future. An overview of the commercial strategy presented to OCC’s cabinet, states that the council “aims to optimise organisational efficiency and generate sustainable revenue through innovative and responsible commercial activities”. Some councillors have raised concerns around the council’s need to get the right balance between commercial endeavours and serving residents. Councils have a very mixed record when it comes to making investments outside their areas of expertise.

OFSTED JUDGES CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN OXFORDSHIRE AS “GOOD”

Ofsted has judged OCC’s children’s services as good as part of an inspection that took place in February 2024. The assessment took place as part of the government’s [inspecting local authority children’s services \(ILACS\) system](#). Inspectors praised the county council for a number of improvements across its services [since its last inspection in 2018](#), which were also judged overall as good, leading to even better outcomes for children and young people.

HEADS OF TERMS AGREED WITH OXFORD UNITED FOR STADIUM LAND

An agreement has been reached on heads of terms for OCC to lease land it owns near Kidlington for Oxford United to develop a new football stadium. The council’s cabinet agreed in principle for land known as the “triangle” to be leased at its meeting in September 2023.

Detailed negotiations have now led to heads of terms being agreed. Several other key legal and partnership agreements will follow to meet the council’s strategic objectives and also to ensure that the club fulfils its commitments to the local community and sports groups.

Collaboration agreement and lease option agreed for stadium land.

Following the recent agreement of heads of terms for the lease of council-owned land near Kidlington for a new football stadium, Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford United FC are pleased to confirm that all other legal documents have now been agreed by both parties.

These include a lease option for the land known as the Triangle and a collaboration agreement, which ensures the club meets its commitments against the council's strategic priorities and to the local community and sports groups in both the short and long term.

This represents a significant milestone in helping the club secure a long-term home in the county.

O UFC will now focus all its attention on securing planning permission from Cherwell District Council for the new stadium, which is a requirement before the lease of the land can be completed.

Cost of living support proposed for approval.

Residents struggling to meet basic living costs will continue to benefit from Oxfordshire County Council's cost of living support, with a new package of measures for 2024/25 proposed for approval by the council's cabinet on 14 May.

Following an allocation of £3,361,256 from the government's Household Support Fund, the council would be able to provide support for the next six months.

This funding is the fifth round of assistance provided by the government's Household Support Fund to support vulnerable residents. All funding must be spent by 30 September 2024.

The programme will provide support to the following groups:

- Children and young people in early years settings, schools and colleges will continue to receive free school meal equivalent support ahead of school holiday periods.
- City and district councils will receive additional funding for locally targeted support as in the previous year.
- The Residents Support Scheme funding will stay at the same level as 2023/24, ensuring anyone experiencing financial crisis can get assistance with basic household costs.

The Residents' Support Scheme launched back in June 2023 and helps residents with one-off short-term basic living costs such as food, credit for gas/electric prepayment meters and essential household items. During the first 10 months of the scheme, 5,238 applications were received, with 3,620 of those resulting in an award being made.

Residents can learn more about help available during the cost of living crisis at Oxfordshire County Council's dedicated webpage oxfordshire.gov.uk/living.

Foster Care Fortnight comes to Oxfordshire, 13 - 26 May 2024

Residents are being encouraged to consider becoming foster carers for Oxfordshire County Council in a campaign marking Foster Care Fortnight, 13 - 26 May 2024.

Samantha Allen, from Oxford, has been a foster carer for 14 years and is helping to raise awareness of what is involved and why the experience is so rewarding.

"There are so many fostering options," explains **Samantha**. "I've been a parent/child foster carer for the past seven years, that's when I support both the parent and their child, and I've done some emergency fostering in between. I love the happy endings, which come in many guises, such as seeing the children I've looked after maturing and growing in confidence as they prepare for life ahead.

"There are lots of other parts of the role that I love, things like watching the babies I have cared for develop and thrive and making them feel secure and loved. It's also great witnessing children going onto their adopted parent or parents, and mums going home with their babies once they've completed a 12 week assessment with you.

"Sometimes new mums can't see how well they're doing. In these cases, I see it as my role to empower them, to boost their self-belief, and you can never praise enough, so what I do is just keep doing it and that way I gradually instil confidence.

"It's wonderful to see them blossom, knowing that a mum has overcome her anxiety and she will cope as a mother. It's so uplifting for me, and, of course, wonderful for the mum and child as they bond ever closer."

Oxfordshire County Council provides foster carers like Samantha with lots of help, including access to a social worker and a host of other support services. The council aims to create a fostering community, a network where foster carers can seek assistance and guidance to help them make a positive difference to local children.

Samantha explains: "There are so many options to fit around an individual's time and availability, from respite, to short-term or long-term, emergency care and where you support both a parent and their child. You can be single, same sex or however your family presents itself. Age isn't a barrier either, because if you're 21 or over you can potentially foster.

"The children I have had the privilege of fostering have brought so much fun and purpose into my life. My advice to anyone thinking about fostering is to take your time to research and ask questions. There are lots of foster carers, like me, who would love to share our experiences with you, giving you a realistic perspective of what's involved. People should be reassured that there is loads of support available from Oxfordshire

County Council and they'll help you connect with other foster carers as part of a support network."

Oxfordshire County Council's foster carers receive:

- A welcome payment of £1,500, to help make the transition to foster carer.
- Generous fees, paid in addition to the child's allowance, based on experience and skills.
- Dedicated social worker support.
- Access to professionals involved with the child/children, linked with support groups and specialised training.

For further information visit oxfordshire.gov.uk/fostering, email fostering@oxfordshire.gov.uk or phone 0800 783572.

Local election results

Sixteen out of the 48 seats on the council were up for election on 2 May. The political make-up of the council is now as follows:

- Conservative: 11
- Green: 4
- Independent: 3
- Labour: 13
- Liberal Democrat: 17

The turnout was 30.58 per cent. The council's political administration will be confirmed at the annual council meeting on 22 May.