

Sydenham Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Meeting 2nd May 2013

Present: Paul Stancliffe
Roy Harrison
Alison Isherwood
Janet Potts
Rachel Blake
Heather Mullins

John Ashfield, Phil Archer, Sue Archer, Mike May, David Read, Adele Stancliffe, Jim Wood

<u>Matters Arising</u>		
Election of Officers	<p>The officers of the council were elected as follows: Chairman - Paul Stancliffe was proposed by Roy Harrison and seconded by Alison Isherwood Vice Chairman - Alison Isherwood was proposed by Roy Harrison and seconded by Rachel Blake</p> <p>Heather Mullins to remain as Clerk and RFO</p>	
Minutes of last meeting	These were approved and signed, together with the minutes of the meeting on 3rd May 2012.	
Sydenham Voice	<p>The village clean up was very well supported. Otherwise a quiet period, the main item of interest being Broadband, but due to the elections there is a moratorium where no further action can be taken. It has been confirmed that BT have been given the Oxfordshire contract, so they will now be putting together a rollout plan. In due course the MD of Openreach will be coming to speak to the Chinnor exchange group consisting of the '35' numbers. If Sydenham is not included with the first phase of the Broadband rollout, we may need to apply for Defra funding to be included with the extension to rural areas in Summer 2015. More information should be available within a month, and in the meantime the project has been suggested as a potential beneficiary of Sydenham Fayre. There are no other action plans, although the group may speak to the parish council about some more signage. As part of the Coronation celebrations there will be a flower display in the church, and the Historical Society have been asked to provide a display of photographs.</p>	
B4445 footpath	No further progress - Chinnor Parish Council to be asked to tackle the weedkilling.	PS
Brookstones pumping station	<p>Mike May gave a summary of the situation to date, and this was followed by a general discussion:</p> <p>There have been problems with sewage flooding in Brookstones since 1973, and hundreds of voluntary hours have been spent trying to achieve a solution. About two years ago a few of the residents escalated the problems with Thames Water (TW), the campaign to get them resolved gained momentum, and our MP John Howell got involved.</p> <p>At this point the idea of a relief sewer was suggested as a permanent solution. This will mean that the Brookstones pumping station will only deal with waste from Kingston Stert and Sydenham, and the whole flow from Crowell, Kingston</p>	

Signed Date

Blount and Aston Rowant, where the water gets into the sewers in times of heavy rain, will go directly to Henton, by-passing Sydenham. The total costs of this project are still being assessed but are probably over £2.5m, which is marginal for TW to justify to Ofwat. However the relief sewer is being driven forward as a good long term solution to the current problems.

The harsh reality is that some houses in Brookstones and Emmington are currently unsaleable. Due to the volume of complaints and feedback from villagers and the MP, this bypass scheme is high on the agenda at TW who have given verbal assurances that it will happen. However final financial approval still has to be given so it is at a critical phase.

In the interim we have to accept that there will be incidences of flooding until the relief sewer can be built, due to unavoidable naturally occurring events. Overall, progress has been made with TW in the last two years, who have put in every possible measure to improve the existing pumping station in Brookstones. They have installed a standby generator, replaced the pumps, improved the way the high level alarm system works, and placed Brookstones on the highest possible priority for tanker response. This doesn't mean that there won't be an overflow before the tankers arrive, but it will be the shortest period of time achievable. Thames Water have agreed to reinstate the verges that have been damaged by the tankers this winter, and will be building them up and turving them, as well as carrying out protection works to the floodbanks.

Originally TW gave 2015 as the date for completion of the relief sewer, as published on their website. In December 2012 when a progress report was asked for it turned out that the route had been incorrectly planned and that not much headway had been made. By the time of the January meeting with John Howell, TW had accepted the route that had previously been recommended at a site meeting in 2011. When they were pressed for faster implementation, they suggested that, dependent on environmental studies etc, they could start the work when the crops had been harvested in 2013. It was also agreed at this meeting that monthly progress meetings would be held with TW and two representatives of the residents plus the two Parish Council Chairmen. In the last month TW reported that it might be the following year before the scheme could proceed. They were asked to return a week later with Optimise (the contractor for the scheme) to explain the delays.

TW accepted that they had been overoptimistic in giving a start date of 2013. Land acquisition was taking longer than expected, the weather had caused delays and if the scheme was started late in the year there could be problems completing it over the winter. They have experienced this on other projects and want to complete the project in one go. Therefore a start date of Spring 2014 is more likely, which is 6-9 months later than hoped. One good piece of news is that all the environmental survey work has been completed and there are none of the anticipated problems. At present discussions with landowners are going well, including with the location of the new pumping station.

The final financial decision is absolutely critical, and will be taken in the next 2-3 months. Due to the horrendous winter weather there has been a major increase in tanker activity, provoking even more complaints, and this has added weight to the argument in favour of the scheme. When there is a flood situation in heavy rain, the sewer pipes can run at a capacity of 40 litres per second, but the Brookstones pumping stations can only cope with 25 litres per second. The vast majority of the volume is rainwater as the sewage content remains the same. This is not raw, concentrated sewage but is very diluted. As a result of the complaints to TW, they have responded by putting in an overflow near the Brookstones pumping station. Thus when there is a high water flow that the pumps can't cope with, the overflow can go directly into the brook if a TW engineer decides that properties are at risk of flooding. TW took this decision to mitigate flooding impacts on the local residents under storm conditions. Flooding has always washed into the brook anyway, and this new procedure is allowed by the Environment Agency as long as there is a permanent long term

Signed Date

	<p>solution in hand. This way the flooding is stopped, the residents can use toilets etc without them backing up, and it gives a window of time to get the tankers here to pump away the excess flow. Power failures have also caused problems in the past but due to the remedial measures taken at the pumping station these have been dramatically reduced. The short term situation is not ideal, but there is no miracle fix and the only solution is to get the relief sewer scheme approved and working as soon as possible.</p> <p>Concerns have been raised regarding the construction of an overflow into the brook, the content of the discharge, and whether such a procedure is permitted by the Environment Agency. Predominantly this overflow will be groundwater in times of heavy rain, and the Environment Agency have issued a licence and a consent form to TW to overspill into the brook in times of high flow rates. The overflow is manually operated, and TW have to justify that it is an emergency before the overflow can be used. When the alarm in the pumping station goes off, it allows approximately an hour before a spill (this is the lowest possible setting). Because of the volume of water it is unlikely that a tanker will arrive before there is a spill, so there will almost always be flooding.</p> <p>The question arose as to why residents haven't been consulted on the installation of the overflow. TW did not discuss the overflow widely in advance, and the Parish Council were not consulted in any way. The monthly meetings with TW have been reported on at each Parish Council meeting, and minuted, and these minutes are public knowledge and are published on the website. TW did not mention the new overflow at the monthly meetings until the installation was almost complete. It was described as a system for getting rid of storm water, so any disadvantage was not seen as significant and therefore not reported at the subsequent Parish Council meeting.</p> <p>However enquiries have been made regarding the content of the overflow into the brook. Based on tests for effluent into the flooded ditches, road and sewer at Emmington, carried out by an independent body, results show barely detectable levels of sewage. At Brookstones, when the pipes are running full bore, it is estimated 90% of the content is fresh water from the catchment area below the Chiltern ridge, and 10% is household waste. Of the household waste, it is estimated only 10% is sewage, so overall the effluent content of any overflow into the brook would be about 1% with a small amount of household detergent. As stressed previously, this overflow has always reached the brook, but via the road and across private property. Ten years ago, after complaints about the content flowing out of the manhole covers in the road in Brookstones, TW carried out tests and the amount of contamination was found to be negligible.</p> <p>The overflow system can only legally be used for short periods of time, and can only be used in genuine emergency conditions. The tripping point for operating the overflow will be the avoidance of sewage inside houses, and as above, the Brookstones pumping station is on the highest possible priority for tankers. To prevent any accidental spill from the overflow a bung has been installed which means the overflow will not operate without manual intervention from a Thames Water engineer.</p> <p>Improved communications have been requested and it was suggested that the minutes of the monthly meetings with TW are attached to the Parish Council minutes. A Sydenham Mail message is to be circulated to allay fears where villagers may have unintentionally been misinformed, and to set out how the overflow will be used. After the next TW meeting on 17th May a further presentation on the latest position of the new sewage scheme will be given, either as a presentation at a special village meeting or as part of the Annual Parish Meeting in June.</p>	06
Big Society Fund	<p>The grant payment of £300 has been received. Having assessed various quotes, the decision was taken to purchase two goals with locking corners from Samba, which will be the same size as the existing goals. These are available on a short lead time, and will be installed in a matter of weeks.</p>	PS RH

Signed Date

Sewells Lane road surface	An expert in this field has made a site visit, and his advice is that the Parish Council should create a village maintenance fund to cover this cost and other maintenance issues that may arise. The road surfacing may be an issue that our newly elected councillor could assist with. The next step would be to obtain estimates for the cost of resurfacing - to be carried forward.	07
Power cuts	A positive response has been received from the Performance Manager at Scottish and Southern Electricity. The defects work will be carried out using a 'live-line' technique that does not require an interruption to the supply. The issue of supply switching has been referred to another team, who will report back to the parish council. Thames Water to be contacted regarding the supply to the new pumping station of the relief sewer system.	HM PS
<u>Finance</u>	<p>The insurance renewal was discussed as alternative quotes have been obtained. Aon, the existing insurers, have agreed to match a lower quote, and so their renewal quote was accepted by the parish council, and the payment of £465 was approved.</p> <p>The annual accounts return for the year ending 31st March 2013 was examined and approved. The Parish Council members acknowledged their responsibility for the preparation of accounts, and confirmed, to the best of their knowledge and belief, with respect to the council's accounts for the year ending 31.3.13 that the points of the Annual Governance Statement had all been completed satisfactorily.</p> <p>The PAYE will now be paid quarterly, and the monthly amount of £42.70 for the period to 05.05.13 was approved.</p> <p>A VAT refund claim will be submitted for £322.01.</p> <p>The direct debit form for SODC was signed.</p>	HM
<p>NatWest Current a/c: b/f £1,105.44</p> <p>Natwest Reserve a/c: b/f £7,733.33</p>	<p>Payments:</p> <p>£133.07 OALC subscription £170.79 Clerk's salary £360.00 J M Wallington - ditching £150.00 Will Munday - footpath clearance and ditching £44.80 HMRC PAYE to 5.4.13 £24.40 SODC dog hygiene bin</p> <p>Receipts:</p> <p>4000.00 SODC precept part 1 300.00 Big Society grant from SODC for laying field goalposts 294.49 SODC</p> <p>No transactions</p>	<p>Closing balance at 30.04.13</p> <p>£4,816.87</p> <p>£7,734.07</p>

Signed Date

<u>Planning</u> P12/S2390/HH and P12/S2391/LB	2 Holliers Close Amended details <i>Planning permission GRANTED</i>	08
<u>Correspondence</u> SODC Thame CAB TVP	Proposed sustainability appraisal scoping report for local plan: sites and general policies Donation acknowledgement Monthly report, and 2012/13 performance assessment	AI circulated
<u>Any Other Business</u> Risk Assessment Road Cleaning Next meeting	Due for annual review, together with Standing Orders. HM to send relevant documents to JP and RH. The Biffa cleaning truck did not make any noticeable difference - the team to be contacted and a request for a more thorough clean before the Fayre to be made. The June meeting could be held as the APM and the newly elected councillors invited - to be confirmed.	HM HM All
<p style="text-align: center;">There being no other business the meeting closed at 10.30pm. The next meeting will be held on 6th June 2013 in the OSR at 8pm.</p>		

Signed Date