

Sydenham Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 10th May 2018

Present: Alison Isherwood
 Rachel Blake
 Janet Potts
 Mike May
 David Wilkins
 Stephanie Johns (clerk)

The meeting was pleased to welcome ten members of the parish.

Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council - Alison Isherwood:

Rachel provides a very comprehensive and chatty report in the village newsletter and our Clerk sends out regular newsletters so I will not provide detail, just a summary of projects worked on this year.

Planning

We have considered 12 planning applications this year with one now going to appeal.

Sydenham Grove

SOHA submitted plans for the site in August and the PC discussed these at their September meeting which they encouraged parishioners to attend. Objections based upon what was voiced at this meeting were submitted to SODC although the planners recommended approval of the plans. The application was therefore referred to the planning committee where both the PC and parishioners were able to speak. A huge amount of preparation went into these presentations and the committee rejected the application. The PC has subsequently attended a meeting with SOHA to propose a modified layout which is being considered, although SOHA advise that they will take the original application to appeal.

Neighbourhood Plan

A group of villagers have now formed a Neighbourhood Plan Steering group, have had the designated neighbourhood plan area agreed as the whole parish and have commissioned a housing needs survey. The village meeting in February was very well attended and the proposed methodology for the plan wholeheartedly supported.

Village classification

Currently, Sydenham is classified as a 'small village', but this would suggest we have more facilities than we actually have so this has been challenged. Under our current classification we would be required to accommodate 10% growth without a Neighbourhood Plan and 5% growth with a Neighbourhood Plan. However, if we are classified as an 'other village' we do not have to take any housing due to our lack of facilities.

Undergrounding of electricity supply by SSE

This project is in the final stages of implementation, much of the work already undertaken and should be completed by the end of June.

Broadband

The properties at the Emmington end of the village are still awaiting a high speed connection but the cabinet to connect to fibre has been installed. The project has been stalled by a dispute over land access which we are working with Better Broadband for Oxfordshire to resolve ASAP.

Emergency Plan

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The generator has now been installed in the Crown pub where villagers should go in the event of a power cut.

Speeding

We have reached the end of the road with OCC Highways, 2 years of wasted time, after their verbal quote of £5k all in for the pinch point near Box House became £24k when confirmation was insisted upon 8 months after the site meeting. The cost of the temporary pinch point has not yet been paid and will be challenged as this method of speed reduction would not have been pursued if the actual cost now given was known. The PC will explore other speed reduction methods that do not involve Highways and will keep the village informed.

From the data retrieved the change of VAS display on the sign near to Park House is effective and we propose to replace the obliterated sign on the B4445 with one with a similar display, and change the display on the other VAS sign in the village. The VAS sign on the approach from Chinnor has recently been repaired.

Playing Field

Sydenham Fayre kindly agreed funding for replacing the A-Frame and also re-instating some of the loose surfacing which over the years has diminished together with additional clamber ropes to the new climbing equipment at a lower level for younger children to enjoy this equipment too. Completion of this project has been frustrated by the installer.

Ditches and drainage

The ditch clearing undertaken last year was tested this winter and worked well with no flooding in the usual places.

Dave has continued to liaise with OCC Highways regarding a collapsed drain near to Sewells Lane and liability with British Gas has been accepted. Works are scheduled for June.

Potholes

The national problem continues to be reflected in the village. Parishioners are encouraged to report any problems with Highways via the County Council website, www.oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Footpaths

A TOE2 (Trust for Oxfordshire Environment) grant was received to replace 2 stiles on the path that runs behind Manor Farm and joins up with the allotment path with two gates which makes the route more accessible and the works have been completed. The bridleway in front of the Jays at the end of Brookstones has been cleared and widened opening up this overgrown route.

Village Clean up

The twice yearly clean up continues co-ordinated by the PC.

Communication

The website www.sydenhamvillage.co.uk has all up-to-date PC information whilst the Facebook page is a community forum. The two types of newsletters supplement communication.

Clerk vacancy

Steph has become familiar with the village and we have very much enjoyed working with her but other work commitments mean she does not have time to continue in the role so we are looking for a new clerk.

Report from District Councillors Lynn Lloyd and Ian White – the councillors were unable to be present due to a meeting at SODC but sent the following reports:

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SODC A Conservative District Councillor's View

(Or What The Council Is Doing)

May 2018.

Ward Specific

We continue to deal with a significant number of resident enquiries and issues regarding building matters, the regulations and requirements and the on-going issues around developer applications and appeals. For Chinnor we have two Public Enquiries; for Perssimon and Cala Homes, together with several written Appeals.

We have worked with Aston Rowant Parish Council to successfully obtain a refusal of Planning Permission in respect of the Rectory Homes Application.

We are both actively involved in the development of the Local Plan which is at a critical phase in its development.

We have other on-going work, but this covers some of the main areas for this month.

Planning

Land Supply Figure.

Under government planning rules set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), all local planning authorities should have an up-to-date deliverable five-year housing land supply.

Our latest housing completion survey shows that 967 homes were built and finished in 2017/18, a third more than the previous year's figure of 722, when the council was unable to demonstrate a five-year supply. This means that our Housing Land Supply now stands at 5.4 years.

Cllr Felix Bloomfield, South Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet Member for Planning, said: "It is good news for South Oxfordshire that we can currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. This will help us to fight speculative development on sites which are not the most suitable or preferred, whilst continuing to deliver on housing growth.

"While this is not a significant over-supply and there are outside forces that can affect supply, we are working hard to ensure that this can be sustained moving forward."

Monitoring Progress March 2018

- Majors: 65% decided within 13 weeks against local target of 70% (national target 60%)
- Minors: 83% decided within eight weeks against target 75% (national target 65%)
- Others: 91% decided within eight weeks against target 90% (national target 80%)
- Appeals dismissed: 63% against our local target 74% (national target 60%)

Enforcement action March:

- 29 new cases opened
- 36 cases closed
- 14 cases closed were more than six months old

Our six week performance improved significantly this month rising to 91 per cent (target 80 per cent) which is great news.

13 cases were closed as no breach of planning control. Of the breaches identified 5 cases were closed after retrospective planning permission was granted and 9 cases were resolved through voluntary compliance. 7 investigations were found to be not expedient to pursue.

We currently have several cases with enforcement action pending – these include the re-service of an enforcement notice at Long Wittenham, and service of enforcement notices at Mounthill Farm Tetworth and Little Hill Cottage Harpsden. We are also continuing to work with both OCC and Wokingham Borough Council to resolve the illegal display of lights on Henley Bridge

Appeals - Public Inquiries

Results awaited

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- Benson – an appeal relating to site known as BEN5 for 120 units (to the north of Blacklands Road) was heard at an Inquiry which opened on 20 February. The appeal has been recovered (called in by SoS).
- Crowmarsh – an appeal relating to a site off Benson Lane Crowmarsh Gifford for 150 units opened on 27 March and sat for 3 days. Following legal advice, we did not defend our reasons for refusal – however the Parish and a local action group appeared as Rule 6 parties. The appellants have submitted a costs claim for £225,000 and a revised planning application for the same development.
- Emmer Green – an appeal relating to a site off Kiln Lane for 245 units is scheduled to open on 27 March.
- Sonning Common – an appeal relating to a site off Kennylands Road for 90 units is scheduled to open on 10 April and will be held at Henley Rugby Club.

Forthcoming Inquiries

- Tetsworth - an appeal for a traveller site comprising 12 pitches originally was deferred in November 2017 and is now scheduled for August 2018.
- Further inquiries are scheduled for sites in Didcot, Chinnor and Shiplake

Neighbourhood Plan updates

Following the vote at Full Council, we have now adopted the Dorchester Neighbourhood Plan into our Development Plan, and we will use it to help decide planning applications in the village.

An examiner has recommended that Benson and Watlington Neighbourhood Plans proceed to referendum on 28 June 2018, subject to modifications.

The public hearing for the Warborough and Shillingford Neighbourhood Plan was held on Monday 30 April and we are now awaiting the examiners report.

The publicity period on the Goring Neighbourhood Plan began last week and people have until 5pm on 7 June to submit their comments.

The Little Milton Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted and we are hoping to launch the publicity period next week for residents to comment on the Plan.

Neighbourhood Planning workshop

The next workshop for neighbourhood planning groups takes place from 10am to 3pm on Tuesday 15 May. This session will help groups prepare, carry out and analyse surveys, as well ensuring they are aware of data protection and confidentiality issues.

To book a place Neighbourhood Planning Groups should call 01235 422620 or email Jessica Wilmshurst.

Waste and Recycling

Food waste trucks called Munching Molly and Trashosaurus made special stops to two primary schools to visit pupils who came up with their names. Children at John Blandy School in Southmoor and Manor School in Didcot were delighted to see the trucks with their suggested names printed on the side and front.

The trucks are part of a fleet of 12 that have been named by popular public vote after South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils challenged primary school children in both districts to come up with a list of suggestions.

Trashosaurus – was voted most popular in South Oxfordshire, and Munching Molly – came out top in the Vale.

The children who put forward these names each won a family swimming pass for the councils’ local leisure centres, courtesy of the councils’ contractor GLL, and £150 of book tokens for their school.

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The naming challenge was set to celebrate the introduction of the new food waste trucks by the councils' contractors Biffa. Local residents will get to see the trucks, with their names printed on, out and about collecting food waste across the two districts.

Cllr Caroline Newton, South Oxfordshire's Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment, visited Manor School and met Trashosaurus along with the winner and his class.

Cllr Newton said: "It has been wonderful to visit the Manor School and see the children's reaction with the name 'Trashosaurus' printed on. They had lots of questions about the trucks and food waste recycling, and were clearly very excited to see the truck named.

"This whole initiative has been a great way of spreading the recycling message and raising awareness about food waste recycling and why it's so important for people to do this."

During 2017/18 the food waste trucks collected more than ten tonnes of food waste,

Cooking oil collected

We are now collecting cooking oil alongside food waste. Residents just need to empty the oil into a plastic bottle (no bigger than 1 litre) then put it in inside their food waste caddy when they leave it out for collection. We will only collect from plastic bottles and will not accept oil in glass bottles/jars or any other container.

We'll be promoting this new service to residents over the coming months.

First community lottery draw

More than 800 tickets were sold prior to the first So Charitable Lottery draw last weekend.

The first draw saw 15 people win three free tickets each and raised £430 for local good causes and supporting the voluntary sector.

This is a great start for this initiative!

Enforcement.

South Oxfordshire District Council has successfully prosecuted the owner of a boarding kennels in Cane End, following a number of complaints from pet owners including one about the death of a dog.

Simon Herbert pleaded guilty to running an unlicensed animal boarding establishment at Oxford Magistrates' Court on Tuesday (1/5) and was fined £300 with a contribution to costs of £700 and a victim surcharge of £30.

Mr Herbert of Simon's Pet Services was first licensed by South Oxfordshire District Council to board dogs in 2012. During 2016 the council investigated four complaints from dog owners whose dogs had boarded at Simon's Pets Services.

The complaints related to the death of a dog, the escape of two dogs from the premises, and the physical and emotional care of a puppy. Investigation of the complaints subsequently identified several breaches of the licence conditions.

Simon Herbert applied to renew his animal boarding licence in early January 2017, but in the light of the concerns identified in 2016, the council was satisfied that it would not be appropriate to renew the licence.

In September 2017, the council was contacted by a dog owner whose dog had boarded at Simon's Pet Services during August and September 2017. Simon Herbert later admitted to the council that although

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he was aware that he needed a licence to board dogs overnight, he had cared for between four and six dogs overnight since the council had refused his licence in January 2017.

Cllr Caroline Newton, cabinet member for Housing and Environment at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "Anybody looking after animals has a legal and moral duty to provide a decent level of care. I hope this case will act as a warning that we aren't just here to process licence applications – we will prosecute anybody who doesn't maintain the levels of care expected by the council and by the pets' owners."

Housing team win silver award

Well done to our housing needs team who have achieved a prestigious silver award from the National Practitioners Support Service for the work they do to help prevent the most vulnerable people becoming homeless.

We are only one of 24 councils, out of the 326 councils in the country, to achieve silver or gold and it builds on our previous success of winning a bronze award last year.

The team will pick up their silver award in July.

Superfast broadband almost complete

More than 96 per cent of homes and businesses in the Vale and just over 95 per cent in South can now access superfast broadband.

The latest communities to benefit from the upgrade have been in Wantage, Rowstock and Coleshill in Vale and Russells Water, Maidensgrove and Stonor in South.

Improving broadband has been a long-term priority for us and we have contributed £25,000 from Vale and £1 million from South to the second phase of the plan.

The remaining funds have come from BT, county council, government and local enterprise partnerships.

For further details on the partnership go to the BBfO website.

Thames Valley Police.

Doorstep crime

Following a recent incident involving a suspicious door-to-door jewellery buyer, our community safety team has sent out the following advice from the police. Please would you help spread the guidance to your communities:

- look through the door viewer or window to see who is outside
 - if you decide to open the door keep the door-chain on
 - check the caller's identity
 - call the organisation's phone number (by independently looking up first) to confirm their identity -
 - remember official visitors will wait while you check
 - do not feel pressured into buying any items or services at the door
 - do not let them into your house or give them access to any private rooms
 - do not give them information on where valuables are kept
- For more information on how you can protect yourself and others, please visit the Thames Valley Police website.

Action Counters Terrorism (ACT)

Thames Valley Police has urged local communities to help tackle terrorism and has asked for our help to spread the word.

There is a new quick and easy online form at www.gov.uk/ACT or people can phone 0800 789 321.

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Grants application dates confirmed

REMINDER - We've confirmed the dates that groups can apply for community grants during 2018:

Capital grants - £811,000 available:

20 June to 30 July (round two - budget permitting)

15 October to 30 November (potential round three - budget permitting)

Councillor grants - £5,000 available per councillor:30 May (estimated) to 3 January 2019

Reaching thousands on Facebook

REMINDER - Keep up to date with the latest news from both councils by following our South and Vale Facebook pages.

During the recent snow a post telling people about disruption to bin collections reached over 24,000 people and details about the emergency support available for those sleeping rough reached over 37,000 people.

We've also had significant success for posts about fly-tipping, a food safety investigation (see South News), recycling advice, and announcements for major projects such as the Orchard Centre and Abbey Meadow pool.

Please help to spread the news by sharing our posts with your Facebook friends.

Editor - Cllr Ian White (Ian.White@southoxon.gov.uk) Twitter feed: @IanWhite_DC

COUNTY COUNCILLORS' NEWSLETTER

April / May 2018

from Nick Carter & Jeannette Matelot

CARE REVIEW

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has completed a review of Oxfordshire's social care system, and its final report provides areas of action for senior managers in the NHS, social care and other bodies to make the whole health and care system work better.

Across all areas of health and social care, an above-average proportion of services achieve a 'good' or 'outstanding' CQC rating, compared with the national average.

Following its visit to the County Council, the CQC report says: "People were treated with kindness when they moved between health and social care services.

"Frontline staff were dedicated and provided person-centred care, going the extra mile for people they cared for."

However, there remain significant challenges to join up services across different organisations in the county. All of the CQC's recommendations for action have been agreed by the five organisations involved, which are:

- The County Council
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.

CQC inspectors found the problems of recruiting care staff in Oxfordshire were holding back improvement. Incompatible computer systems also hampered integration of services. The inspectors did find that Oxfordshire had made progress in tackling 'delayed transfers of care'. Health and social care leaders from the five organisations involved in the inspection have met the CQC to develop an action plan. The key points of this are:

- Making services more local by using a 'place-based' approach to design and deliver care;
- Improving information available to people who fund their own care so they get the support they need more quickly;

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- Investing more in recruitment and retention of care staff so that more care packages can be delivered, particularly for older people.

GENDER PAY GAP

The County Council released its 'gender pay gap' figures ahead of the recent Government deadline, showing a 'mean' gender pay gap of 3.5% and a 'median' gap of 0.1%.

The median gap is the difference between the midpoints in the ranges of pay for men and women. The mean gap is the difference between the average of pay for men and women. Oxfordshire compares favourably to neighbouring county councils and other councils in the South and Midlands. Comparisons can be made using this website: <https://gender-paygap.service.gov.uk/>

OCC's Gender Pay Gap Report provides additional details such as:

- the balance of men and women in the different organisational levels;
- the difference between a gender pay gap and unequal pay, and information on its Equality Policy;
- plans to improve gender equality and other forms of equality in the workforce.

GROWTH DEAL

The Oxfordshire Growth Board has now finalised a long-awaited Housing and Growth Agreement (known as the 'Growth Deal') with the Government.

This will see an additional £215m of investment over the next five years to build infrastructure, support the delivery of new homes and boost economic productivity across the county.

The Growth Deal has now been signed by the six local authorities in Oxfordshire, which make up the Growth Board, and countersigned by Housing Minister Dominic Raab. Along with the County Council, the Board also includes the five district councils and the county's Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP).

March saw the Board announce the first year of projects to be funded by an initial release of £30m for infrastructure projects as part of the Growth Deal.

Government road money is for major improvements and cannot be used for day-to-day maintenance, but the County says the investment will help to improve the overall standard of the road network.

VILLAGE UNDER SIEGE

Villagers in Tetsworth are feeling besieged by a number of proposed developments, some of which may have an impact on a wider area.

1) An appeal into a proposed new housing estate resumes at the end of April. Tetsworth Parish Council and residents are opposing the plan to build 60 houses on a field in the village.

Campaigners comment: "Should the Inspector uphold the developer's appeal, it would result in Tetsworth being committed to housing growth of around 40% in a period of just a few years, taking into account houses already delivered or in the pipeline.

"Such a rate of growth would dramatically alter the character of our village."

The appeal hearing takes place on 26-27 April in the village's Memorial Hall.

2) A 12-pitch 'traveller' site is proposed on the western edge of the village. Planning permission was originally refused after overwhelming opposition by residents and the District Council's planning officers.

But the applicant lodged an appeal, which is due to be heard in August, and has also submitted a second planning application for a similar development on the site. SODC will have to decide on the new application by mid-June, and meanwhile, donations from villagers have enabled the Parish Council to engage a barrister and town planner to fight the appeal in August.

More than 300 villagers lodged objections to the original planning application, and the parish council is anticipating similar opposition to the developer's new proposal.

3) Tetsworth Parish Council has joined a campaign by more than 30 other parishes in East Oxfordshire to influence the Government's plans for an Oxford-Cambridge Expressway.

The campaign is lobbying Highways England, before this Government agency decides on the likely corridor in which the new motorway will be routed. The so-called 'expressway' would

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run from Didcot to Milton Keynes, and one of the possible corridors would cross the M40 and A40 near Tetsworth.

The Parish Council comments: "Such a route would pass close to the strategic development sites in SODC's emerging local plan and could be attractive to the District Council and to the Oxfordshire Growth Board on the grounds of its growth potential.

"But another motorway just to the west of Tetsworth would result in far greater noise and air pollution affecting us and would further erode the attractiveness of our village."

The multi-parish campaign, called the Expressway Action Group, is calling on Highways England to choose a corridor for the new motorway that would create the least possible harm to the environment, wildlife and heritage. However, the biggest parish in this area, Thame Town Council, has decided not to join the group.

4) Tetsworth is also supporting a campaign called the Haseley Brook Action Group, which is opposing plans for a massive new town to be built on agricultural fields between the village and Great Milton.

The proposal, known as Harrington New Town, would consist of around 6500 homes as well as schools, shops and other infrastructure. If it were to go ahead, the eastern edge of the development is likely to be just yards from Tetsworth.

The Parish Council warns: "If it were to find its way into SODC's final Local Plan, it would utterly destroy the character of Tetsworth and result in a decade-long building site on our doorstep."

HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE

The Government has announced 44 bids which have made it to stage 2 of its Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for major infrastructure projects.

Two of the three HIF bids submitted by OCC last autumn are on the list and will now progress to a co-development stage:

1. Didcot Garden Town – £171m is sought for transport improvements including Didcot Science Bridge and A4130 dual carriageway, a new river crossing at the Culham and Clifton Hampden bypass. This would support the delivery of over 22,000 homes in Didcot, Culham, Harwell and Berinsfield. Additionally, up to £70m of cycle and other sustainable transport improvements are proposed for inclusion in the bid plan.

2. West Oxfordshire Garden Village – £135m is sought for further upgrades to the A40, building on existing schemes and based on a strategy which includes development of the Rapid Transit network and additional highway capacity on the A40 corridor. This would support the delivery of over 10,000 homes in Witney, Carterton, and around Eynsham.

Detailed business plans are now being developed for the £300 million of transport infrastructure investment behind these two bids.

The Growth Board partners expect to hear this autumn whether the two bids have succeeded.

FUND FOR COUNCILLOR PRIORITIES

A £1m 'councillor priority fund' will run for two years, allocating £15k pa to be spent on community projects at the discretion of each of the 63 county councillors.

The funding will go to projects or services which meet a recognised community need and pump-prime an activity, rather than fund an on-going commitment.

Jeannette and Nick will be discussing their priorities with a range of organisations including the local town and parish councils. Resources could be pooled in the Thame & Chinnor area, or within a wider locality in order to address priorities in a sustainable way.

The funds are intended to address recognised needs of local communities and projects with defined costs and timescales. They cannot be used for a project that duplicates an existing service, or that is the responsibility of a statutory body.

For further information, see:

https://m.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/councillor-priority-fund?utm_source=FURL-1&utm_medium=councillorpriorityfund&utm_term=90432&utm_content=&utm_campaign=couNcillpriorityfund

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HEALTHWATCH SURVEY

Healthwatch Oxfordshire is the county’s health and social care watchdog which looks after the interests of patients.

It collects patients’ opinions and experiences in order to inform and influence those who run the local health and social care services.

Healthwatch is currently gathering people's experiences of using NHS dental services in Oxfordshire.

It says: “We want to hear if using an NHS dentist has been good, bad or just impossible.”

It explains: “We listen to your experiences of health and social services in Oxfordshire so that together we can help to improve the services upon which most of us rely.

“We also provide information in plain English so that you can find your way round the health and social service system.”

All responses to the survey of NHS dental services are anonymous, and the survey takes less than 5 minutes to complete. It’s at the following link:

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/filling-the-gaps-your-views-on-nhs-dentistry-inoxfordshire/>

Healthwatch adds: “We have the strength of the law behind us. That means that those who run and pay for the services must respond to your concerns and our recommendations.

“They must explain what actions they will take or why they are not taking action. We get your concerns heard by those who shape our vital services.”

Healthwatch Oxfordshire is seeking additional trustees to help lead the organisation through the next phase of its development.

The role of a trustee requires people with a strong commitment to improving local health and social care services, who have the skills or experience needed to direct and oversee the setting and implementation of the organisation’s strategy and work programme.

Further details are here:

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/news/healthwatch-oxfordshire-is-looking-for-new-boardmembers/>

ROAD CLOSURE

The main B4445 road from Thame to Chinnor will be closed from 4-8 June while a section of the road at Emmington is being resurfaced.

Access will be maintained for emergency service vehicles and for those frontages within the closure area, subject to liaison with the works supervisor. Access to Sydenham for everyone else will be via Postcombe or Kingston Blount.

Further information regarding the works may be obtained by contacting Tim Belton or Mo Clark, Oxfordshire County Council on 0345 310 11 11.

SME GRANTS AWARDED

A Thame firm is one of the latest beneficiaries of a grant scheme aimed at boosting growth and jobs amongst Oxfordshire’s small businesses.

The grants are part of the Elevate programme run by Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

Long-established tree contractors, Four Seasons Tree Care from Thame, were awarded £4,500 to rebrand their business as part of an ambitious growth plan which could create six new jobs.

MD Matt Vaughan said the firm plans to grow by 20% every year.

He added: “This award means we can kickstart a marketing campaign including a new website, logo and livery as well as new branded workwear for our staff. Without the grant, we would have taken much longer to bring about the changes necessary to move the business forwards.”

Almost 90% of businesses in Oxfordshire employ fewer than a dozen people, and their continued success is important to growing the local economy.

In addition to grants, OxLEP’s Elevate programme offers help to SMEs through a series of free workshops and one-to-one support.

Helen Brind, who manages Elevate, said: “The latest awards are part of the third round of grants, and we have three more rounds to come, so there is still time for people to apply.

“The scope of ambition amongst the county’s businesses, including start-ups is incredible.”

The Elevate grants are available to start-ups, new businesses and established SMEs. New

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businesses can get up to £3,000, while more established businesses could secure up to £8,000. The grants are awarded for up to 33% of project costs.

The next round of grant applications is now open, and the team can offer advice to new businesses on how to make a good application. Requests for guidance must be submitted before 21st May.

The deadline for Round 4 applications is 31st May. Details of Elevate grants, workshops and support are at: www.oxfordshirebusinesssupport.co.uk

POTHOLE FUND BOOSTED

The Government has announced a further £100 million to help repair potholes and storm damage after the severe winter weather.

Nationally, this money will help repair almost 2 million potholes and help protect the roads from future severe weather.

This is on top of £75m in government funding to councils as a Pothole Action Fund this year, as well as a £46m boost for highway authorities announced before Christmas.

Oxfordshire’s share of these funds comes to nearly £3m.

Nationally, the estimated highways maintenance backlog has fallen by almost 23% this year to £9.3bn from £12bn.

Figures compiled as part of the Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey, commissioned by the asphalt industry, represent the best result for local authorities in roughly a decade, according to a report in the Municipal Journal.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES

More than 7,000 Oxfordshire children were allocated primary school places on 16th April.

With over 8,600 places available and a smaller cohort than last year, the County was expecting a large proportion of first preferences to be met this year.

Last year nearly 94% of Oxfordshire families were offered their first preference school.

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Ofsted has been inspecting the County’s Children’s Services in mid-April. This was what Ofsted refers to as a “short inspection”, meaning that it has only spent three days in the County Council offices.

The inspection has been carried out under Ofsted’s new 'Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services' (ILACS) framework and will result in a rating of Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate. The outcome will be known in May.

FIRE SERVICE TRIAL

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (OFRS) is considering a number of new initiatives in a review of its Community Risk Management Plan.

One of these is the possibility of creating ‘community safety wardens’ as a trial project.

OFRS says its focus is increasingly on emergency calls and new roles such as responding to medical emergencies. As a result, it needs to help communities and individuals to be more involved with the prevention activities and resilience which underpin community safety.

A support system of wardens is likely to be trialled through local fire stations which are located in the heart of the community. It would enable OFRS to explore the potential for local ‘safety advocates’ to coordinate a number of the service’s efforts and initiatives in market towns.

PLASTIC POLLUTION

Residents in Oxfordshire have been amongst the best at recycling (including plastics) and composting for a few years now, and the countywide recycling rate is around 60%, one of the best in the country.

However, the ambition is to do better, particularly with plastics. OCC’s Recycling Team offers the following tips to kick the plastic habit:

- Remember your reusable bags when shopping.
- Invest in a reusable water bottle (stainless steel bottles are more sustainable than plastic).
- For takeaway coffee, use a reusable mug. Collapsible ones that fit easily in a bag are obtainable, or there are ones made from bamboo to avoid more plastic. Disposable coffee cups are lined with plastic and hard to recycle.
- Look for products with less packaging, or no packaging, especially when buying fruit and

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vegetables.

- Buy concentrated products and refill packs instead of fully packaged products, such as fabric conditioner, washing powders and some beauty products.
 - Recycle the packaging where possible. While 90% of packaging is recycled in the kitchen, only 50% is being recycled in the bathroom. Shampoo, conditioner, make-up, hand-wash and cleaning product bottles can all be recycled (pump triggers must be removed).
 - If possible, buy larger or economy sizes of goods such as breakfast cereal, tomato ketchup, toilet rolls and soap powder. This saves money and creates less packaging in the long run.
- Householders are encouraged to give their views on reducing waste and increasing recycling via an online consultation here: www.recycleforoxfordshire.org.uk

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (aka TOE2) was established in 2011 as an environmental funder for Oxfordshire, supporting local community environmental projects. Three examples of recent projects are set out below.

TOE2 is both a grant-seeking and a grant-making organisation, working closely with the key environmental organisations in order to 'put people and places together'. This role has been endorsed by the Bishop of Oxford, who says:

"TOE2 performs the crucial task of making connections. It connects the strategic with the local, vision with practicality, and funding with need. By working with three key areas it has focus; by responding to local energy it has flexibility. It seems to me that everyone is a winner."

In the face of a massive house and road building programme over the next 20 years, the environment is under more pressure than ever before, with loss of habitat and changes in land management.

In Oxfordshire, there are more than 150 local environmental community groups, a very high concentration compared to other counties. TOE2 estimates that hundreds of thousands of people of all ages regularly play an active part in the protection of Oxfordshire's countryside. Local volunteers are involved in hands-on, practical community projects ranging from village pond restoration and woodland planting, to the management of commons and meadow creation.

TOE2 is well placed to provide these groups with support and funding. Further information at: <http://www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk> and <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/countryside>

RECENT TOE2 PROJECTS

1) The footpath between Aston Rowant and Kingston Blount has benefited from a recent grant from the Trust for Oxfordshire, with funds from Grundon Waste Management. The footpath is heavily used by parishioners and by children walking to school. It now has a new all-weather surface and base layer and sides bordered with recycled plastic. The work took place during dry weather, when contractor's vehicles could travel across the field without damage and the path could stay open during the work. The result is that children can now walk to school throughout the year, reducing their carbon footprint. The path was officially opened at the end of last year, with schoolchildren, parish council representatives and funders all attending.

2) Access around Chinnor has been improved by replacing stiles with five new gates on the Lewknor 4 footpath. The aim of this project was to make the footpath more accessible to walkers of all capabilities whilst ensuring the safety of any livestock (currently Shetland ponies and horses) in the fields.

A mobility gate was also installed to allow access for OCC's mowing team, to ensure that the path remains in a good state of repair.

The Lewknor 4 path not only provides a link between Postcombe and Copcourt, but also to a number of other public rights of way.

The Trust for Oxfordshire provided a grant of £1792 for the project, also with funds from Grundon, to complete the works over the course of several months in the latter half of 2017.

3) If you've visited Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve recently, you will have seen a hive of volunteer activity, supported by TOE2.

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They have been working hard to improve the biodiversity of the site and to improve access for more people to enjoy this wildlife haven in the middle of Thame. One example is a fishspawning bed that has been created below the rail bridge.

These works were supported by TOE2 with funds from South Oxfordshire District Council.

There is more to be done, and more volunteers would be welcome. Please contact:

<http://cuttlebrook.org.uk/what-we-do/> and <http://riverthame.org/cuttlebrook-conservationvolunteers/> and <http://riverthame.org/upper-river-thame/>

OXFORD ROAD FLOODING

Residents in and around Oxford Road, Thame, have been plagued by leaking water flowing down the road and pooling near the bridge.

By early March, OCC had achieved a partial solution to the problem by ensuring that Thames Water repaired its water main (completed in February).

The gulleys and drains were cleaned out in early March, which left one further problem - water continuing to flow from a British Telecom chamber in the road. BT has been sent a 'Section 81' notice to get it fixed.

AWARDS FOR VOLUNTEERS

The County Council sponsors the Charity of the Year Award in the annual awards scheme run by Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action (OCVA).

The Charity of the Year Award is aimed at charities that are rooted in their communities in Oxfordshire. They can be large or small, with either a rural or urban focus, and with a local or more wide-ranging impact.

This year a new award is also being sponsored by South Oxfordshire District Council for charitable, voluntary or community groups in the area to demonstrate and publicise the impact that they have made on their local community.

The OCVA annual awards also recognise a dozen other categories of charitable and voluntary activity. The judging takes place in May and the presentations in June. Further information at:

<https://ocva.org.uk/oxfordshire-charity-and-volunteer-awards-2018-what-you-need-to-know/>
IN BRIEF

FORMER DEPUTY LEADER DIES

Rodney Rose, the County's deputy leader until last year, died on 17th March.

Nick Carter, in particular, will miss him greatly as a friend and colleague, having worked together on OCC's Cabinet for several years.

Rodney represented the Charlbury & Wychwood area from 2005-17. Latterly, as Deputy Leader, he worked on several major projects that will benefit Oxfordshire residents, including the east-west rail scheme and the planned flood alleviation scheme around west Oxford.

These will be his legacy as a public servant.

'LIVE WELL' WEBSITE

OCC's Adult Social Care team is raising awareness of its 'Live Well Oxfordshire' website.

Live Well Oxfordshire brings together over 2,000 services and activities in one searchable online directory – from residential care homes and care services that help people stay living at home, to transport services and new hobbies.

Details are here: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/livewell

SOCIAL CARE RECRUITING

A recruitment drive to encourage more people in Oxfordshire to consider a career as a care worker has attracted more applicants in five months than in the previous two years.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has warned that the Government's plan for council financing risks leaving adult social care inadequately and inconsistently funded across England.

The think-tank warns that, unless funding is addressed, social care could account for half of all taxes raised by local authorities by 2035, squeezing other local services and resulting in inconsistent access to care.

The IFS commented: "The Government has to decide whether adult social care is ultimately a local responsibility, where councils can offer different levels of service, or a national responsibility with common standards."

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MAY DAY CELEBRATION

New measures have been introduced to tackle the large crowds during Oxford's annual May Day celebration after a record-breaking 27,000 people descended on the city last year, with large numbers congregating on the High Street and Magdalen Bridge.

One-way channels are to be introduced to help the crowds flow more easily, after people were blocked in when they tried to leave in 2017, while bicycles, either ridden or pushed, will be banned from the bridge.

FLY-TIPPING PENALTIES

Fixed penalties of up to £400 are to be introduced for illegal dumping of household waste.

The Government says the move is to deter the use of unlicensed operators, who undercut licensed tradesmen and illegally dump waste, with councils rarely prosecuting due to the high cost of court cases.

Incidents of flytipping were up 7% last year to more than 1m, with two thirds involving household waste.

Report from The Old School Rooms – Roy Harrison:

Thank you for inviting me to update you on the OSR. We are very lucky in the village to have both a well-maintained village hall and a lovely church at which I am actively involved.

The Main highlights from the 2017 accounts are as below - please note that the figures are rounded as the accounts haven't been finalised:

- Income totalled around £5,750 with the main sources the money from hiring charges (£2,460) and the 200 Club (£2,640). The balance came mainly from £550 in donations (£500 from the PCC and £50 from a local donor).
- The amount received in income from both hiring charges and 200 club receipts was slightly up on 2016.
- Expenditure totalled £3,760 and was split between utilities (£830), cleaning (£550), repairs and maintenance (£570) and 200 club prize money (£950). In addition we spent around £430 on mugs which are sold on at a profit. We still have 65 available to sell at the Fayre next month and a further 192
- The amount spent over the year was less than that spent in 2016 (£5,660) largely because we spent less on maintenance and gas/electricity.
- Overall therefore, the amount of money held in cash and at the bank increased by just under £2,000 for the year.
- Bank balances at the end December stood at £7,313 in the current account and £7,250 in the savings account making total reserves of 14,563

A major expenditure this year of nearly £1800 for Insurance purposes, we had to satisfy them that we hold a valid commercial electrical certificate and everything had to be tested and updated where required.

At some stage in the next year the floor will require re sanding.
Siobhan is keen to replace the curtains

I would like to thank Ken Hardiman for handling the maintenance and to Pat the bookings and also maintaining the cleaning standards. Ken can be relied on in emergencies and certainly throughout the winter was called upon to handle heating difficulties resulting in boiler servicing.

I would also like to thank Jim Kendall as the OSR Treasurer and for the above figures.

The OSR 200 Club is the major fundraiser and this year we have increased the numbers purchased to 214 at £12 each which brings in £2568. Minimal expenditure is involved amounting to around £50. As a charity, we give back half the annual receipts through 7 prizes each month equating to £85, and two special Christmas prizes of £100 and £50 = £1234.

The Sydenham Newsletter

8 issues are published each year keeping the village up to date with reports of events and activities including Parish Council News, Church Services, The WI, cricket club, book club, Pub News, weddings, funerals, and any number of activities, comings and goings and whatever gossip we can legally include. It

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is funded largely by advertising which Fi Kermack handles and from annual support from the Parish Council. Paul Stancliffe is heavily involved in handling the pictures and printing and I have the easy task of putting it all together. I'm pleased to announce that Geoff Isherwood has also kindly agreed to replace Jason as the unpaid 'type-setter'.

We value your continued support. Thank you.

Report from Sydenham Cricket Club - Toby Roe:

Toby reported that the club's members are now 80% represented by members of the Parish. The main focus currently is to get new cricket nets built. The website is now up to date.

On 19th August 2018, the club are playing a fixture at Blenheim Palace and a coach may be booked if enough people would like to go along and support the club.

Toby finished by thanking everyone for their continued support.

Report from Sydenham WI - Siobhan McKee:

We have an active WI in Sydenham, currently with 28 members, mostly from within the village, but some from Chinnor, Postcombe and South Weston. The meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month either in the OSR or someone's house. Events this year include: The story of Andrew Carnegie, a talk on Blood Bikes, modern day thatching, an introduction to self defence, an art workshop, the RNLI past and present and of course the social events: the summer garden party and Christmas dinner. We also have other activities such as a willow weaving workshop, a visit to a donkey sanctuary, a wild flower walk at Christmas Common, a visit to the Chiltern Open Air Museum, a summer walk followed by supper and a lunch at Harding's Restaurant at Aylesbury College.

A lot of people might think of the WI as being a gathering of very elderly ladies, but really it's not like that - we're pretty youthful (at least at heart!) and we love having fun. Come along and see for yourself!

Report from St. Mary's Church - Siobhan McKee:

We have a large number of people who support the church in Sydenham both by coming to the services and also for the work behind the scenes. These include all those on the general cleaning rota and the person who organises it, the brass cleaner, churchyard care, bell ringer, handyman, clockwinder and many more.

The church always has beautiful flower arrangements and thanks for that must go to Rosemary and her 'assistant' Adèle. They ensure that there are flowers for each of the regular services as well as for weddings and funerals.

The 'special' services continue to attract large congregations, but the regular services tend to hover around ten to twelve each week. The special services have included the Pet Service, Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest, Crib Service and Christmas Carols.

We're delighted that more children are coming into the church from time to time and we would like to see that continue. To that end, we are making the larger vestry more comfortable with much improved heating, a carpet and toys so that children can, if bored, go in then and occupy themselves. The vestry can also be used for various meetings.

The choir has grown in numbers and now has 3 men! Now with Hugh Mackay as the accompanist, Chris Hood, the (long suffering!) choir master can focus solely on the singers. As well as singing at the weekly services, the choir has been involved in weddings, funerals and, of course, the wonderful concert in September. They also held a surprise birthday party concert for Chris's 'big' birthday in January in the church which was a wonderful event.

Our thanks must go to Joan DeVal who leads most of our services and continues to encourage us to move forward. She was responsible for suggesting the changes to the vestry and getting us copies of another hymn book, meaning that we now have a wider selection of hymns to choose from. In addition, her work supporting and visiting many villagers is widely appreciated.

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Report from Sydenham Fayre – Geoff Littlewood:

The 2017 Fayre was the last one with Jason Benfield as chairman and we would like to extend our thanks to him for all his efforts over the past few years. He was responsible for creating the splendid backdrops for the coconut shy, skittles and beat the goalie and for maintaining and enhancing the web site. Profits from the Fayre to the tune of £3300 were allocated to the playing field, church hedge, newsletter, St. Mary's choir, cricket club, church and church hedge, WI, Thame Lions (in appreciation of their car park stewardship) and Aston Rowant and Lewknor schools.

The balance in the Fayre bank account after all beneficiaries had been paid was £3774, but £1500 of this has already been pledged to John Heathfield for work on the playing field equipment, which leaves £2,274

It costs a surprising amount to put the Fayre on each year, which is why we need to retain a healthy balance to finance the next year's event. The approximate main upfront costs are:

Programme printing	£440
Raffle ticket printing	£60
Supplies (BBQ, etc.)	£900
Cash for raffle prizes, band, suppliers	£875

So that comes to £2,275 but we still need to be able to provide floats to each stall to the tune of about £950 so you can see that the retained amount of £2,274 wouldn't suffice. However, the whole thing works because the people who pay for things such as programmes, raffle tickets and supplies are content to wait until proceeds from the Fayre have been banked before being paid back.

Planning for this year is well advanced. New attractions are a car show, suggested and arranged by Jeff Ludgate and a Sydenham Bake Off organised by the WI.

All our other regular attractions will be there, assuming we get enough volunteers to man them. Despite numerous requests, we are still well short of having enough people but hopefully there will be the usual surge nearer the date.

The big road signs are being updated courtesy of John Ashfield and will be set up a couple of weeks in advance. Parking will be opposite Slade farm and thanks go to Murray Graham and Ian Harbour for allowing us to use their field.

A thank you must go to Steph Johns for suggesting that we use the PC public liability insurance instead of buying a separate policy. This will save us in the region of £500!

The programmes will be delivered to the village, Towersey and Kingston Blount within the next few days. We also have a number of social media experts on the committee now so hopefully our publicity machine will draw in a bumper crowd. Just need a nice, sunny day.

Report from the Neighbourhood Plan – Mark Kermack:

Neighbourhood Plan Group Report for PC AGM May 2018

On 20th February the first village meeting for the Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan was held. It was very well attended, with over 40 residents present. At the meeting, the Neighbourhood Plan Group (Mark Kermack (Chair), Tara Glen, Mike May, Mark Oliver, Toby Roe) presented the rationale for a plan, the steps involved and the approximate timeline of 18 months.

A neighbourhood plan sits alongside the wide Local Plan for a whole planning authority, in Sydenham's case – South Oxfordshire District Council. Currently, the Local Plan has been rejected and is being resubmitted. Whilst there is currently no formal input from the Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan on development decisions in the parish as it is not yet included within the Local Plan it is felt that the fact the process has started does offer some protection with current development discussions. This is reinforced by the confirmation that SODC now have demonstrated sufficient housing stock for the next 5 years. Whilst a neighbourhood plan can be broad in scope encompassing business/ retail premises, transport, and development of amenities, it was agreed at the meeting that the focus for Sydenham should be on housing only - an approach agreed with SODC.

Since the public meeting, the Group has progressed several activities. These include:

- A dedicated section on the Parish Council website has been set up – <http://www.sydenhamvillage.co.uk/neighbourhood-plan.html> The website contains an overview of the Neighbourhood Plan, stores the minutes of all meetings, and provides a regular update to

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residents on the various steps of the plan. A dedicated email, sydenhamnpg@sydenhamvillage.co.uk has also been set up.

- The Group has met with SODC on three occasions. These meetings have been to clarify the elements and procedures that need to be included in the plan, and to seek advice on any specific technical matters, and appropriate approach. Feedback from SODC has been very encouraging, relaying that the intended process for Sydenham is well thought through and includes all the necessary elements.
- The Group has made an initial application for some limited funding to cover elements such as surveys which need to be undertaken as part of the plan. This has just been granted, and allows appointment of consultants over the next few weeks to progress the reports needed for the next phase
- Meetings have also been held with adjacent parishes to find out about their experiences of the neighbourhood planning process, to inform the process in Sydenham.
 - . The NPG continues to meet on average fortnightly in order to maintain momentum and continue progress in line with the schedule.

Report from Munday's Charity – Paul Stancliffe

Paul reported that the purpose of the charity is to support the poor of the village and anything within the village which is of benefit to the community.

The income for the charity comes from the rent of the upper field. In 2017 / 2018 the income was £381.50. Expenditure was £71.00 which was for hedge cutting and the hire of the hall. Currently, there is a balance of £2158.87 and the charity are looking for suggestions for things to spend the money on.

The Chair thanked everyone for coming and the meeting closed at 9.30pm for refreshments.

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