

Weston on the Green Annual Parish Meeting

held in the Village Hall on 18th April 2023

Minutes

Attendees:

Members of the parish.

Parish Councillors: Diane Bohm, Susan Davis, Robin Stafford Allen, Tracy Rowan, Jack Maxton, Ben Lanham.

Diane Bohm (Chairman of Parish Council) welcomed all to the Annual Parish meeting.

23.1 Resolution To Approve: Minutes of 2022 Annual Parish Meeting held on 27th April 2022

The minutes of 27th April 2022 Annual Parish meeting were moved by Diane Bohm and seconded by Susan Davis. The motion was supported unanimously by attendees at the meeting.

23.2 Opening Comments – Diane Bohm (DB), Chair Weston on the Green Parish Council

DB provided an introduction of new councillors – Jack Maxton, Ben Lanham and Tracy Rowan – providing a great breadth of skills and experience to add to the Parish Council. We very much appreciate their agreement to work with the existing team.

Work in and for the village cannot happen without all of us sharing the burden. Sometimes it is a small job, sometimes it is a regular commitment: mowing the field (Mark East), or editing the Village News (Alex Reid), delivering the Village News through all types of weather, organising events and caring for the Village Hall (Andrew and Jordie), preparing and serving lunch for Golden Leaves (Peter and Eric), serving at the monthly lunch, endless care of the Oak Tree pond (Mark and Jane), litter picking, flowers in the church, Neighbours Natter, wood carvings or baking to sell at the shop with the proceeds to go to the Village Hall and the Church.

DB went on to mention and thank two volunteers that have done extraordinary work for the village over the past several years.

- Roger Evans has been a tremendous support to the Parish Council and has been at the forefront of both the Neighbourhood Plan and latterly the efforts to save the Oak Tree from damage.
- Graham Barnett quietly gets on with a wide range of roles from early morning Speed Watch, footpath warden to Weston Society. We want to thank Graham for his tremendous work in securing a public bus for the village – the 24 service - which has given opportunity for villagers to travel from Bicester to Oxford. Graham has also taken on the leadership of the Transport Van donated by another villager.

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All of this happens outside of the formal groups: the Village Hall Committee, the Parish Council, the Garden Club, the Weston Society and the WI. We are rich with opportunities and it a good idea to remind ourselves that we are fortunate to belong to such a village and support those activities that can be enjoyed.

As a village, we always face both opportunities and threats and Susan Davis, Planning Lead and Vice Chair of the Parish Council is going to present some planning developments that are both.

23.3 Speaker: Dr. Susan Davis (SD) “Development in our area and the impact on our village”

SD is lead of the Parish Council’s planning group. The aim of the presentation was to provide background to the planning process in Cherwell District Council, to discuss developments in a broader context than just in our parish and to explain some of issues taken into account when responding to applications on behalf of the Parish Council.

Key strategic themes in the 2040 Local Plan and their impact on Weston were discussed:

- Oxford - Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework
- Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine – from south of county towards Bicester

In the draft Cherwell Local Plan Weston on the Green is currently classified as a smaller village, which means that little or no strategic development is expected for the village and the Local Plan currently indicates that the village will not be required to provide any target housing numbers (2020-2040). This is still currently under review by the Council and we await further information if this will remain the case.

A map highlighting major proposals in the wider area potentially impacting the village was shown:

- Bicester Housing allocations
- Great Wolf Resorts, Chesterton
- Chesterton new housing development application
- Siemens Healthineers technology site, A41
- Heyford Park housing
- Ardley Rail freight interchange – linking railway to M40 motorway via a spur straight into large scale development site. Potential diversion route around Middleton Stoney but still expecting impact on B430.
- Baynard’s Green – large warehouse development
- Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine pressure
- Botley West Solar Farm (3 sites)

The Parish Council’s job is to manage the impact of development in and around our parish to support and protect our values and way of life. SD also highlighted that a new survey is to be undertaken in the village shortly in order to update our Neighbourhood Plan.

Oxfordshire Treescapes Project – <https://www.oxtrees.uk/>

The Oxfordshire Treescapes Project has created the Oxfordshire Treescapes Opportunity Map, a powerful tool that shows the right places to establish treescapes (woodland, hedgerows, orchards, meadows, public spaces etc.) to help address biodiversity loss, capture carbon, reduce flooding and contribute to human wellbeing.

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The Parish Council are working with Oxfordshire Treescapes to develop a report on the parish with the aims:

To identify areas in the parish that could enrich biodiversity.

To provide information on current use and land ownership.

To help engage with landowners to see what could be achieved within productivity parameters.

For more information on these topics please do not hesitate to contact Susan Davis on 01869 350426.

23.4 Weston Save Our Shop (SOS) Committee – Sam Sharp (SS), Chair

SS outlined the progress by the Save Our Shop committee, committee operations are being formalised and various options for the future are being discussed.

A SOS website has been launched (<https://weston-sos.org>), flyers are to be sent out to residents and an article will be placed in the Village News. SS also highlighted that they have liaised with the Ben Jonson Community Interest Company.

The deadline for the expression of interest to the Government's community asset fund for £250k in match funding was 14th April 2023.

The Committee have agreed to circulate a village survey in online and paper form and requested that as many people as possible fill it out.

SS thanked the committee members for stepping up, support from the Village Hall and Parish Council and Yasemin and all the shop staff.

SS also mentioned if anyone wished to be involved or could provide administration support, legal advice or had commercial property contacts to please contact committee@weston-sos.org

23.5 Ben Jonson Inn update - Ian Jones (IJ), lead of Ben Jonson Community Interest Company

IJ discussed the Community Interest Company (CIC) which had been developed in order to purchase the Ben Jonson Inn.

Offers to Punch Taverns and with new owner (Bearmont Homes) have all been refused, the property is not valued as highly as an operating pub compared to a residential property. Discussions with the Save Our Shop committee have been held.

An online auction is to be held on 27th April 2023 with a starting bid of £575k. The CIC is planning on submitting a bid.

The Parish Council is preparing another application to be submitted to Cherwell District Council to try to register the Ben Jonson Inn as an Asset of Community Value.

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23.6 Oak Tree Footpath – Roger Evans (RE)

The oak tree path issue is moving forward with the completion of the new permeable path behind the tree. The next stage is the demolition of the original path by Oxfordshire County Council. The Parish Council has employed an arborist to oversee the work of demolishing the footpath by the oak tree and to ensure remedial action is undertaken.

RE commented that overall the issue has come about because there is not a chance to comment on infrastructure surrounding developments as a result of the Local Plan system and therefore there is a gap between the District Council planning system and what County Highways approve.

RE thanked our Councillors from Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council who have been extremely helpful with the process.

23.7 Gigaclear Update

DB confirmed that Gigaclear have been working in the village for the past couple of weeks, with the installation of full fibre starting sooner than was indicated in the presentation provided to the village.

DB also highlighted that the Parish Council have complained about unmarked vans working in the village and asked Gigaclear for signs to be placed on the vans.

DB concluded the meeting by thanking the Parish Councillors and all the volunteers for the many hours of work that are utilised in supporting the village.

Should you wish to find out more information or offer help in any way at all please do contact one of the Councillors or email the Parish Clerk on: clerk@westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk