

## **HARPSDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held in Harpsden Village Hall on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025 at 7.45 pm**

Present: Cllr Kester George (KG) Chairman  
Cllr Catherine Rubinstein (CR) Parish Councillor  
Cllr Matt Leeman (ML) Parish Councillor  
Cllr Dominic Day (DD) Parish Councillor

In attendance:

Cllr Leigh Rawlins. (LR) SODC & OCC  
Cllr Mike Giles (MG) SODC  
Anne Marie Scanlon (AMS) Clerk

#### **5015 Apologies for absence**

Cllr Nick Young (NY) Parish Councillor

#### **5016 Declarations of pecuniary interests and/or requests for dispensations from Members regarding any item on this agenda:** There were none.

#### **5017 Approval of Minutes of last Council Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

The minutes were approved.

#### **5018 Oxfordshire County Council Report:** (attached at Appendix i)

LR had distributed his report in advance of the meeting.

He gave his general report and invited questions from the Council.

Council expressed relief that the construction of the soakaway at the bottom of Gillotts Lane would go ahead at the start of August, especially as the area was currently flooded as were some other parts of the road through the village.

CR asked LR if the work would take four weeks as the official road closure notice stated. LR said it was not possible to know exactly how long the work would take but that OCC would have set aside four weeks in case they needed more time for unexpected issues.

The Council had some questions regarding recent planning decisions and applications see **Min 5120** below.

#### **5019 South Oxfordshire District Councillors Report** (Attached Appendix ii)

LR had distributed his report in advance of the meeting.

MG spoke about local government reorganisation. He and LR favoured the Ridgeway plan and were glad to hear this was HPC's preference too.

He said that the Housing Department had withdrawn their support for the funding of Neighbourhood Plans (NPs). If local councils were to continue with NPs SODC would still support these efforts with advice but without financial subsidy.

MG said the Capital Grant Scheme would be open for another 4 days. And SODC would be introducing a Performing Arts Grant soon.

**5120 Planning Matters:** (attached Appendix iii)

The complete Planning Report is attached and available on the website.

The Council reserved comment for the following

**P25/S1880/HH**

**The Old Barn Kings Farm Lane near Harpsden RG9 4JG**

Construction of three dormer windows to existing roof structure.

**Planning Officer** Mark Pullen

**Target Decision** 11<sup>th</sup> August 2025

**Consultation Ends** 29<sup>th</sup> July 2025

*The Council had no objections subject to any raised by residents.*

**P24/S2642/FUL**

**Thames Farm Reading Road Lower Shiplake**

Engineering operations associated with ground stabilisation works. (as amended by plans and information received 9 January 2025 and 14 March 2025 and additional information received 9 May 2025).

**Planning Permission Refused 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

LR had attended SODC's Planning Committee meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025 and had objected to this application on three grounds:

1. The entire site was based on chalk and was riddled with voids, many of which stood above the aquifer. The developer's plans to fill them could not be guaranteed to succeed and gave rise to other objections.
2. In the first place the concrete grout to be used to consolidate the subsoil would be vulnerable to erosion at the edges of the voids, thereby letting in contaminated water that would cause further erosion.
3. Then, the 30,000 tons of grout needed to fill the voids would have a very marked impact on the environment which had so far been ignored: drainage and sewerage raised questions that had not been answered by a full Environmental Impact Assessment as required by the Secretary of State.

KG thanked LR for his report but asked why SODC officials had seen fit to recommend the application for approval in the face of these apparently overwhelming objections. In reply LR said it was mainly due to a quirk in planning law: once a planning permission had been, or could be said to have been, given, there was no obvious way to rescind it even when new facts emerged that undermined the case for the permission in the first place. The relevant planning permission had said that no works should commence before certain conditions had been discharged and these included drainage. However, SODC officials had decided to grant the applicant, Taylor Wimpey, a "non-material" amendment to

allow access works to proceed before discharge of conditions. While he had had widespread support for his claim that the conditions had not been fulfilled, the Environment Agency and Thames Water had withdrawn their objections, leaving SODC officials with what looked to them a weak case.

DD said that an argument that could be used at Appeal was the environmental impact, which had been largely ignored to date. He said the use of 30,000 tons of concrete would have a vast carbon footprint.

LR said that the amount of concrete Thames Farm intended to use would indeed have a carbon footprint far in excess of what it should be for a development of that size. DD said Thames Farm was unique and essential for drainage into the aquifer. LR suggested that the TFAG group could commission studies into erosion and dissolution on the site, ahead of a possible Appeal.

Action KG to contact TFAG with LR's suggestions

### **P25/S1104/HH.**

#### **Maysfield Mays Green Harpsden RG9 4AJ**

Pursuant to a refusal of planning permission (P24/S2888/HH) on 5th November 2024, this application seeks approval for alternative as-built design changes, including the siting of a new package treatment plant and the retention of the former garage at Maysfield (retrospective).

**Planning Officer** Simon Kitson

#### **Planning Permission Refused.**

LR explained that Enforcement was a complicated process. The first part was for the householder or developer to apply for retrospective planning permission (as above). If that was refused, then an Enforcement notice would be issued. The HH/Developer could Appeal and if that were to happen the Enforcement process would not take place until the Appeal was heard. If an Appeal finds in favour of SODC an Enforcement notice could then be issued to destroy the property or parts of the property, (depending on what had been built without Planning Permission).

LR noted that many objections had been raised both from residents and planning officers about the unauthorised build (**P25/S1104/HH Maysfield**) and suggested HPC write to Emma Turner, the Head of Enforcement to reiterate the objections they had previously made.

Action KG to write to Emma Turner

### **5121 Financial Matters**

The Clerk informed the Council that the AGAR had been returned in good time. The external Auditors (Moore) had some queries, which the Clerk had answered. As nothing had been received since the Clerk assumed that the next contact from the EA would be their acceptance of the AGAR.

The Clerk said that she had been trying to sort out the NIC issue and had several unsatisfactory conversations with HMRC before getting the aid and advice needed. It would be up to the Clerk to proceed with this matter as paperwork relating to it had only arrived a week before the meeting.

#### **5121.i. Bank Balances and Reconciliations** (attached at Appendix iv a & iv b)

Community Account:	£101.53
Business Saver Account:	£302,321.17
<b><u>Total of both accounts' a/o 30th June 2025</u></b>	<b>£ 302,423.17</b>

AMS had previously circulated by email the bank reconciliations for the 2 months to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 for the Community and Business Saver Accounts.

The bank reconciliations noted the following income.

CCLA Interest (May)	£1,467.08
CCLA Interest (June)	£1,471.53

Expenditure for the two-month period was as follows.

Clerk's Salary (May)	£491.00
Clerk's Salary (June)	£491.00
Luke Hooker (CIL)	£257.50
OPC Drain (CIL)	£441.60
Zurich (Insurance)	£295.09
Webhosting (CIL)	£23.98
Mulberry Internal Audit (pt 2)	£189.00

Both bank reconciliations were accepted and approved by Councillors and signed by the Chairman. The Clerk retains the permission of the Council to transfer all funds in excess of £100 from the Community Account to the Business Saver Account.

**5121.ii Approval of Payments** (attached iv c)

AMS had previously circulated the schedule of payments for May. The following payments were approved.

Shiplake PC (TFAG)	£709.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>£709.33</b>

**5121.iii Review of Budget vs Actual Spend** (attached appendix iv d)

AMS had circulated the Budget vs Actual Spend prior to the meeting and it was accepted by the Council.

**5121.iv CIL Reconciliation**

AMS had been reviewing all financial transactions from July 2018 onwards to ascertain where the discrepancy between CIL funds and the total of bank accounts arose. The CIL

reconciliation was deferred until the next meeting when the difference would be accounted for.

KG asked ML for an update on the proposed investment agreed at the last meeting. ML said that Fidelity, the investment company, were having trouble assigning a category to the PC. HPC was not a charity, or a business and the online form-filling was hard to complete as a result. KG suggested that ML get in touch with OALC for advice on how to find a solution.

ACTION ML to contact OALC.

#### **5121.v CIL Budget**

The CIL Budget revision was postponed until the September meeting when the correct amount of CIL money would be known.

#### **5122 Parish Matters**

##### **(i) Noticeboard**

DD had previously circulated information on four noticeboards. The Council voted to accept the purchase of the one they thought best served the needs of the Parish. DD would liaise with Luke Hooker about the removal of the old noticeboard and the installation of the new one.

ACTION. AMS to purchase the agreed product and liaise with the Trust caretaker to see if it could be delivered to and stored at the Hall until LH could erect it.

#### **5123 Dates for 2025 meetings:**

15<sup>th</sup> September

17<sup>th</sup> November

**Approved: .....**

**Date: 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

**Kester George, Chairman**