

Sonning Common Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting for the
Village Centre and Environment Committee held on
Monday 20th September 2021 at 19.30 hrs in the Village Hall.

Present: Mr Howe; Ms Boorman; Mr Bidgood; Ms Diwell; Mr Stoves; Mrs Underwood (Finance and Office Administrator).

- VCEC 21/053 Apologies for absence: Mr Giles; Mr Cann; Mr Rawlings; Mr Hargreaves
- VCEC 21/054 Declarations of pecuniary interest: None received.
- VCEC 21/055 Public Question Time: Mr Douglas Kedge attended the meeting.
- VCEC 21/056 Minutes of the previous meeting were presented and approved.
- VECE 21/057 Ms Boorman presented the proposed Environmental Strategy Work Streams paper to the committee and explained that she had broken the sections down into manageable areas and that these were ideas of things we might want to do. Ms Boorman discussed the possibility of planting wildflower verges which would require less mowing and would increase the biodiversity in that area. It has been piloted in Berkshire but not in Oxfordshire. Ms Boorman suggested setting up a working party to investigate these work streams and she was happy to lead the working party. Mr Howe agreed and that he would like to be part of the working party. It was proposed and resolved that a working party would be set up to investigate these items of the Environmental Strategy work streams.
- VCEC 21/058 Ms Boorman opened the discussion of should we support Henley Town Council and many other Councils in the private members CEE bill and to send a template letter to our MP asking him to support the bill from the council.
- Mr Howe agreed to let Mr Kedge to speak. Mr Kedge informed the committee that whilst he understands the reasons for wanting to send the letter and to sign the bill in support it felt that it was outside the remit of the Parish Council to get involved in national politics. For example, the council never discussed the issue of Brexit and that as the Parish Council represents the village do the residents want us to send this letter on their behalf.
- In response to Mr Kedge, Ms Boorman informed the committee that she felt from our perspective that the Parish Council, SODC and OCC should come together to act on the climate emergency and every area must take action in the places that we value. All we are asking for is that it is highlighted to our MP that we value our local environment, hence the support and need for an Environmental Strategy in Sonning Common.
- Ms Boorman acknowledged Mr Kedge's point that we needed to seek the opinion of the village and that she would undertake a straw poll of villagers to gain their feedback on this matter. Mr Stoves raised that this is will be in the Agenda for the Parish meeting which is available to the public.
- After a discussion amongst the councillors, it was resolved that we should support Henley Town Council, the CEE Bill, send a letter to our MP and that this matter should be discussed at the next Parish Council Meeting.
- VCEC 21/059 Ms Boorman informed the committee that her report on Old Copse which she compiled and wrote is about the history of the woods, public rights of

way and about the future of the woodland management and what we would like to do. The committee all agreed that it was a good report and well compiled. Mr Howe informed that committee that The Woodland Trust has now appointed Steve Want as the Warden of Old Copse woods.

- VCEC 21/060 Ms Boorman opened the discussions about the possibility of a footpath from Old Copse to the Allotments. The councillors viewed a map showing the current Rights of Way. It was discussed that the most viable footpath would run along the edge of land owned by The Poor Lands Trust by the hedge adjacent to the road. It was discussed that a gate would then be installed to allow access into the allotments. It was resolved that Ms Diwell will ask the Trustees of The Poor Lands Trust at the next meeting to ask for their approval. The Parish Council would consider the best way to clear the way for the footpath and install a gate in the fence to enable this.

Standing items:

- VCEC 21/061 **Youth Club:** Mrs Underwood informed the Committee that Youth Club has returned after the summer break.
- VCEC 21/062 **Village Halls:** Mrs Underwood updated that she has contacted 2 further flooring contractors for quotes and has not heard anything back to date. Also, that a new booking system is being looked at which would include the bookings of the MUGA once it is operational.
- VCEC 21/063 **Village Centre:** Mr Howe informed the committee that he has attempted to speak the landowners effected by the proposed Village Centre development but had not heard back from them at present and hoped to have more news at the next committee meeting.
- VCEC 21/064 **Allotments:** Mrs Underwood updated the Committee that an inspection had taken place and it was intention to ask one plot holder to vacate as they had failed to maintain their plot. She also informed the committee that she was awaiting a quote from the Parish Council contractor about tidying up with allotments for Winter.
- VCEC 21/065 **Widmore Pond:** Ms Diwell informed the committee that during her research about registering the pond with the Land Registry she came across a document from the Chief Commons Commissioner who stated that under the Commons Registration Act 1965 the Parish Council remain the custodians of the pond. It was agreed that no further action is required in this matter.
- VCEC 21/066 **Traffic Management:** Mr Bidgood updated the Committee that there are now 5 members of the Cycle Path Working Party and will have their first meeting on Thursday 23rd September. Mr Bidgood has met with Mr Philimore of Philimore Estates and got a positive response to the proposed Cycle Path. Mr Bidgood also informed the committee that a resident of Kennylands Road as made a complaint to the police regarding the speeding on the road. Mr Bidgood said that he will contact the resident to listen to his concerns and see if there is anything the Parish Council can do to help. Ms Boorman asked if there was an update regarding the Widmore Pond Triangle. Mr Bidgood informed the committee that he had emailed David Bartholomew regarding the collaboration with OCC on the proposed drainage works but to date had had no response.
- VCEC 21/067 **Budget/Finance:** Mr Howe had no issues to report.

VCEC 21/068 **Environmental Matters:** Ms Boorman had no further updates to offer other than those already covered in the meeting.

Meeting Closed: 8.34pm

Date of next meeting: Monday 25th October at 19.30

Signed (Chairman):

Date: