# KIRTLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

# Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held in the Village Hall (Hazel Room) Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 6.30 p.m.

Present: Kay Chacksfield, Briony Enser (Vice Chair), Jan Harwell, Christine Marsh (Planning Sub Committee and MCNP representative).

In attendance: Mrs A Banks, Mr J East, Mr N Fry, Mrs C. Hawkesworth, Ms J Leeming, Mr D Moore, Mrs A Mowat, Mr J Nicholson, Mr D Richardson, Mr P Shellens, Mr W. Twiddy.

# 1. Apologies

Cllr Jean Conway.

Cllr Enser advised that she would Chair the meeting as Cllr Conway, had sent her apologies earlier in the day. Also, as she would now be chairing and minuting the meeting, it would be recorded, solely to assist her in writing the Minutes.

# 2. Declarations of pecuniary interests / other conflicts of interest

Cllr Chacksfield: Other interest Item 11(a), planning application 23/03096/LB.

# 3. Approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 27th November 2023

Cllr Enser advised that the Minutes of the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November and a transcript would be provided to KPC for approval as soon as possible. Once approved, these would be posted on the village noticeboards and website.

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# 4. District & County Councillor Reports / Members of the public

There were no oral District or County Councillor reports.

Members of the public were asked to indicate if they wished to speak. There were two requests to speak later in the meeting; Mrs A. Mowat and Mr D. Moore.

5. Parish Council vacancies (Cllr David Grimshaw resigned on 9th November 2023)

#### **Co-option of Councillors**

Four applicants were considered for co-option to the three vacant positions on the Parish Council following the protocols laid down for this purpose. All the applicants were invited to introduce themselves, to indicate what their interests were in the village and what they believed they could bring to the Council. All were also asked if they had any potential conflicts of interest to declare and, if so, to state what these were and how they would address them.

Three applicants were then formally co-opted on to the Council. These were: Mr Nick Fry, Mr James Nicholson and Mr David Richardson. The fourth applicant, Mr John East, was thanked and invited to participate in the Council's business in some other capacity, if he wished to do so, such as joining one of the Council's Sub-Committees or participating in any of the Council's future working parties in the village.

All new Cllrs were asked to indicate any areas of KPC's responsibilities in which they had a particular interest. These were noted so that the responsibilities formerly held by Cllr Grimshaw and the various other KPC roles could be reallocated between all seven Councillors in future.

All the new Cllrs signed their Declaration of Office forms and then participated in the remainder of the meeting.

# 6. Highways (including road safety, place-making and traffic calming)

- (a) OCC 20mph Steering Group: Meeting Wednesday 25th October JC. No update
- (b) KPC Traffic Subcommittee, update on traffic calming proposals for village: JC. No update.

A member of the public asked if anything was being done about HGVs in the village. Cllr Enser recalled that Cllr Duncan Enright, OCC, had emailed KPC about HGVs in late September and would add his information to the minutes. His email advised that he had met representatives of the Mid Cherwell villages to discuss the issue of HGVs and he appreciated the problems in Kirtlington. He had advised that an HGV strategy was being prepared for the whole county to include working with haulage firms, satnav companies, town and parish councils and local residents to identify in detail the problems and solutions to bring relief on inappropriate routes and to residential areas. Cllr Nigel Simpson might be able to update this from OCC at a future KPC meeting. Cllr Fry indicated that he would be interested in addressing the traffic issues in the village.

BE/ NF

## (c) Roadside grass verges and environment: To consider: OCC verge cutting.

Cllr Enser advised OCC sought KPC's formal confirmation for 2024/25 for OCC to cut Kirtlington's grass verges. This would be a single cut without grass collection. Junctions and visibility splays would be cut in May, with other areas cut from August onwards. In 2023/24 the amount of £724.57 from OCC had only been sufficient to secure a partial cut by a private contractor and the amount would not be increased for 2024/25. The sticking point was the cost of additional insurance (in excess of £2,000pa) for any private contractor to cut verges on the public highway. Cllrs agreed the situation left KPC with little choice but to approve OCC cutting Kirtlington's verges in 2024/25.

Resolved: KPC to sign and return the relevant OCC agreement (under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972).

#### 7. Parish Council-owned assets and community assets

Allotments: Cllr Enser advised that the £500 granted by the Fete Committee to upgrade rainwater collection on the allotments was now being put to use in part payment for the building in progress of a large new water catchment point. Community Orchard: Cllrs noted the forthcoming Wassail! on 20th January.

8. Maintenance (Parish Council and community assets): priority actions

- (a) (Kirtlington Conservation Area and village centre (protection of public amenity and heritage; protection of central village area from vehicle erosion of public grassed areas at North and South Greens).
- (i) South Green update:

Cllr Enser advised that OCC had yet to fill in the potholes in Church Lane as KPC requested or respond on the residents' request for white 'stop' lines at the junction of Church Lane with the South Green tracks. KPC would consider reseeding the worn areas of grass on the Green in the spring.

A member of the public advised that the large rock protecting the grass at the eastern extremity of South Green had been moved and further erosion was taking place there as a consequence. Cllrs noted this and would check the position.

Replacement tree planting/tree surgery. Boward's remedial work to Parish Council-owned trees. To be resolved: Payment for work done by Bowards in September, repair of damaged fencing along Molly Minns Lane and assessment of further remedial tree work required, as reported by Mr Draper and Bowards. Cllr Chacksfield would attend to the immediate issues and the outstanding payment owing to Bowards in Cllr Conway's absence.

#### 9. Village Hall, Sports Field and Play Areas

- (a) KVMHC Committee meeting, 20th November. Minutes were not yet available. Cllr Enser reported that KVMHC had submitted a grant application to refurbish the kitchen. A KVMHC member said they had resolved to press ahead with this much-needed refurbishment, whether or not the grant application was successful.
- (b) To consider: Update / handover note from David Grimshaw
- (c) Sports field outfield maintenance: Scout Hut, other
- (d) Play Areas (Sports field and Roman Close)
- (e) Fence at Roman Close

Cllrs expressed thanks to former Cllr Grimshaw for providing a comprehensive handover note and agreed to append it to the Minutes. Cllrs Fry and Nicholson expressed an interest in taking forward these areas of KPC's responsibilities and Cllr Nicholson advised that he would declare an interest where appropriate with regard to the sports field and Scout hut. Cllr Harwell reported the key points from Cllr Grimshaw's note and advised that the bark in the play area had since been renewed with Cllrs' assistance. Cllr Chacksfield confirmed that KPC had now safely received the Councillors Priority Fund grant. To be resolved: Repairs to the fence at Roman Close. An additional key for the sports field gate to be given to Mrs Mowat, KVHC might also put one in a key safe.

#### 10. **Parish Services:**

# (a) *Update:* Community Shop/ correspondence re provision of cycle racks:

Cllrs noted CDC's decision to grant permission for Planning application 23/02523/F on 20th November 2023. An OCC condition specified the provision of a covered bike shed. The Shop Steering Group sought KPC and KVHC approval for this in principle, to enable them to submit a grant application towards the cost. (KVHC had already expressed views on its location).

Cllrs had no objection to the provision of a covered bike shed, but expressed a wish for it to be integrated with the shop building and a strong preference for a rustic design that would be in keeping with the setting.

**Resolved:** The inclusion of a covered bike shed in the scheme was approved in principle.

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# 11. Recent Parish Events, Correspondence

(a) *Update*: Lamb Ale 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024: Funfair provision for village event in 2024. Cllr Enser advised that a reply from the Showmen's Guild Committee reported that Hebborns Fair had failed to renew its licence. Some of the former licenced stall holders might be willing to attend Kirtlington in 2024, but would only accompany a larger fair, if one was interested. Wendy Brock planned a direct approach to Hattons Fair to see if they were interested, as they provide the fair at Bletchingdon.

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(b) *To Consider:* Kite Festival, 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024, *Invite Kite team to discuss feedback on 2023 and 2024*. Cllr Nicholson advised that the organisers had achieved only 12,000 of their target audience of 15,000 in 2023 and plans for 2024 were, as yet, uncertain.

**Resolved:** Kite organisers to be invited to the KPC meeting in February 2024 to feedback from 2023 and clarify Kite's expectations for the future expansion of the event in 2024. Also, to raise again the possibility of the Kite Festival making a donation to the village in view of noise levels and traffic to and from the festival through the village.

JH/ JN

**12. Planning (**Cllr Chacksfield left the room.)

(a) **Monthly Parish planning application report:** Other than as noted below, there were no Councillor comments on the applications listed as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

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23/02338/OUT: Manorwood Consultancy Ltd, Land West of Oxford Close and North of Corner Farm, Station Road, 23/02471/F (Abbeymill Homes) Erection of 14 two storey dwellings, Heyford Road

Cllrs noted that both these applications would be determined at the CDC planning Committee meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

Mrs Marsh had circulated a draft for speaking at the CDC meeting for timely KPC approval which would enable her to register for attendance on 7<sup>th</sup> December. It was agreed that this would now also be forwarded to the three new Cllrs to consider, and all comments would be sent by close the following day.

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### 23/03181/TCA: St Mary the Virgin Church

Cllrs noted this tree work planned in the Churchyard. Mrs Marsh and Mrs Mowat discussed various issues concerning the trees in the churchyard. Cllrs agreed Mrs Marsh would submit an appropriate comment to CDC on this application.

(Cllr Chacksfield re-entered the room.)

- (b) To note: Consultation Draft Cherwell Local Plan 2040 Review: Consultation ended Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023.
- (c) *Update*; Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (MCNP) Report and dates of forthcoming meetings Cllr Chacksfield provided an update from the extraordinary KPC meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November, which had been very well attended by parishioners, with some 63 signing the register. Cllr Chacksfield outlined again the decisions voted on by KPC on the four recommendations presented at that meeting. These were:
  - i. How many homes it would be reasonable to accommodate in Kirtlington the proposal is for 35 KPC vote: For 3, Against 1
  - ii. To agree the recommended allocation of sites KT7 and KT8, Jersey Cottages south and north KPC vote: For 3, Against 1
  - iii. To agree that sites KT1,2,3,4 (Corner Farm east and west and Rye Furlong east and west) should not be recommended for allocation.

KPC vote: For 3, Against 1

iv. To support the ranking of sites, proposed in order as follows: sites KT7,8,1,2,3,4. (Required by the MCNP, because the recommended sites may fall away, in which case the next most suitable sites would be considered). KPC vote: For 3, Against 1.

An indicative vote requested by the audience at the same meeting endorsed these decisions by the Council. Cllr Chacksfield had notified the Chair of the MCNP Forum of the decisions the following day. Cllr Chacksfield advised that the next meeting of the MCNP Forum would take place on 13<sup>th</sup> December.

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#### (d) To consider: Planning Sub Committee membership and review of protocols.

Cllr Enser advised that a review of protocols for handling planning applications was needed in the light of the Parish Clerk's retirement as the Clerk was no longer available to record and vet these, or to dispatch KPC's agreed responses. The situation had been less than ideal over the last two months and lines were not as clearly drawn as they should be. Now the Council was up to full strength, there were also options for spreading the load, which had been falling too heavily on Ms Marsh of late.

Cllr Harwell had expressed an interest in joining the Planning Sub Committee and she and Cllr Enser offered to liaise with Ms Marsh to draw up a draft protocol for handling planning applications, with a view to this being considered at the next KPC meeting.

BE/ JH

**Resolved:** A draft handling protocol would be prepared for consideration at the next KPC meeting.

# 13. Parish Council priorities

# Website and Facebook and other communications with the village:

Cllr Enser reported that KPC was using the village website much more (with links to Facebook) to ensure that all relevant information about the MCNP site assessment work was widely available to as many people as possible throughout the village. This was likely to continue as the various stages of the MCNP consultation progressed.

BE/ KC

Cllr Chacksfield advised that the new proprietor of the Dashwood Arms, James Kirkham, had offered KPC the use of a noticeboard there to supplement the other paper noticeboards in the village. Cllrs welcomed this.

# Correspondence: To consider: Vexatious requests

Cllr Enser advised that in the light of the amount of vexatious correspondence received by KPC in recent months, KPC needed to develop a protocol for addressing it, as it was distracting KPC from other business. She had found two which KPC might consider adopting; one from OCC and one from Bloxham Parish Council. Cllr Chacksfield had found another from Goring Parish Council. Cllr Fry asked that these be circulated to see if these could be easily adapted for KPC to implement as its own and said there should be consequences for such correspondents.

**Resolved:** A draft protocol for vexatious correspondence would be prepared for consideration at the next KPC meeting.

ALL

#### 14. Finance

(a) *To consider*, **Revised payments schedule** (schedule for the end of November as presented to the meeting and published on the village website).

Cllr Chacksfield advised that the large outstanding invoice from Bowards on the schedule was accounted for, but as yet unpaid. She would arrange this in Cllr Conway's absence. The Council approved all the proposed and anticipated payments. Cllr Chacksfield mentioned that the Finance Sub Committee should comprise at least three Cllrs and invited any new Cllrs to express an interest. Cllrs Nicholson and Fry said they would be pleased to join the Sub Committee.

- (b) To note: payment options and bank mandate. No update. Cllrs Fry and Nicholson offered to look into this.
- (c) To consider: Assets, future costs and possible revenue sources

Cllr Chacksfield advised that a donation of £500 from KPC funds to the Youth Club had been proposed.

**Resolved:** Cllrs agreed the donation.

Cllr Chacksfield asked Cllrs to approve seasonal gratuities for the non-Council members of KPC's sub-Committees and the sports field volunteer groundsmen.

Resolved: Cllrs approved as in previous years. Cllr Enser would arrange these.

Cllr Chacksfield advised that the cost of Kirtlington's membership of the MCNP Forum (currently £598) would be recalculated for 2024/25 due to Heyford Park's departure from the Forum. A significant increase was likely.

### (d) To consider: Precept request sum for 2024-2025

Cllr Chacksfield explained that the deadline for setting KPC's 2024/25 precept was in mid-January, although a time extension could be requested. In 2023/24 KPC had requested a 5% increase, but this had been outstripped by inflation and Cllrs had agreed to expenditure from KPC's reserve for some larger outgoings. This year, the consideration of whether or not to track inflation would be more significant.

The new Cllrs seeking to join Cllr Chacksfield on the finance sub-committee discussed the need to be educated on the KPC finances, not least in the absence of a Clerk and RFO and resolved to meet and seek advice from Ruth Powles as soon as this could be arranged. Cllr Fry said that, in addition to understanding how KPC spent its precept, he would be interested in options for raising other monies to supplement it, e.g., crowd funding.

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# 15. Dates of next Parish Council meetings

Dates provisionally agreed: 11th January, 26th February, 18th March 2024.

## 16. Other matters for information not elsewhere on the agenda (not for debate/decision)

### Request to speak: Mr D. Moore, (Manorwood Consultancy Ltd)

Mr Moore requested information on FOI requests he had made, which he stated were outstanding. Cllr Enser asked for the details, as KPC replied within the 20-day deadlines and were aware of none outstanding. KPC were, however, aware that Mr Moore had often not been satisfied with the replies he received.

Mr Moore asked about particular correspondence sent to the Information Commissioner's Office in the summer. Cllr Enser advised that the ICO had acknowledged receipt of this, but, to date, KPC had received no further news.

Mr Moore stated that his questions at the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November were not answered and asked again about the 'Locality' review of the MCNP site assessments. Ms Marsh advised again that this review is a standard part of the process being undertaken for Kirtlington and Steeple Aston. It is paid for by a 'Locality' grant to the MCNP Forum. This review feeds into the reporting and might, or might not, agree with the site assessments undertaken in each village.

Mr Moore asked again whether site visits had taken place in Kirtlington. Ms Marsh confirmed again that site visits had taken place. Cllr Chacksfield advised that as a transcript would be published, this could be checked for any other possible unanswered questions.

Mr Moore requested a copy of the KPC recording from 27<sup>th</sup> November, stating that he did not trust the Parish Council. Cllr Fry cautioned him for this inappropriate statement. Cllr Enser declined the request for a recording, as the Council had made clear that the recording was solely for the purpose of producing a transcript of the MCNP business transacted at the meeting and this would be published. Cllr Harwell advised that the transcript would be lengthy and would take time to prepare. Cllr Chacksfield suggested that further consideration should wait for the transcript.

Mr Moore reasserted that his questions on 27<sup>Th</sup> November were not answered and said he was shouted down and bullied. Cllr Richardson advised he would not want anyone's right to be heard jeopardised, but disagreed that Mr Moore was bullied. Cllr Nicholson advised that, while there had been some unfortunate reaction to Mr Moore from the audience, the terms of reference for the discussions had been made clear and, in his judgement, Mr Moore had not been bullied. Mr Moore did not accept this and repeated that he had been bullied, but apologised for saying he did not trust the Council. Cllr Enser thanked Mr Moore for his apology and reminded him it was important for people to treat each other with respect at Council meetings. Cllr Nicholson advised that any unanswered questions could be addressed when the transcript was published.

Mr Moore asked what Constitution and Standing Orders governed the way KPC had responded to planning applications. Cllr Enser advised that this was another question answered previously. The Parish Clerk had written that Parish Councils do not have a constitution and KPC has only one standing order, relating to finance, and PCs are governed by the Local Government Act. Cllr Chacksfield added that KPC aimed to set up its own protocols for planning applications in future.

# Request to speak: Mrs A. Mowat

Mrs Mowat asked to whom correspondence should be addressed in the absence of a Parish Clerk. Cllr Chacksfield advised that an automatic forwarding system was being set up. Cllr Enser advised that now KPC had the manpower, this was one of a number of systems to cover the Clerk's duties that would be set up until a new Clerk could be appointed.

# Other matters for consideration on the next KPC meeting Agenda:

- (a) Allocation of roles for new Councillors
- (b) KPC's tasks for the next two to three months

# The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.

Signed Briony Enser Vice Chair Date 11th January 2024

# Annex to Minutes of KPC meeting 4th December 2023.

Handover notes from former Cllr David Grimshaw. (Meeting minutes at Items 9(b) – (e) refer).

**Play Bark** - A delivery of 6 bags arrived on Monday pm, and I'm in the process of transporting over to the play area - aiming for one bag per day, and to be distributed to the relatively higher risk falling areas. The aim perhaps would be to do a fuller top up (e.g. 14 - 16 bags) later next summer when the ground is dry enough to receive the delivery lorry. I recall you mentioned you would lend a hand, thank you, Kay, but I appreciate you will have enough on your plate currently so I'm happy to handle this and I do have another offer of help or 2 should I feel it to be necessary.

- **Dog Fouling on sports field** A name was given to me and a letter subsequently done. We should send a similar letter to any other repeat offender who is identified and we should be treating everyone the same in this respect. I think this is particularly relevant to avoid any accusation of discrimination. I attach a copy of a template of the letter sent for further usage as appropriate.
- **Dog Fouling on sports field** I will likely set up a meeting with the new school head in the new future wearing my hat as a trustee of the school endowment fund, and will (if opportunity allows) bring up the concept of involving the school in designing some kind of sign to put up to deter dog exercising in this area. I don't want a new head to feel under undue pressure to feel obliged to do this right at the start of his/her time as head teacher, but I guess I can at least make it known that this is something the school could consider supporting when the time is right.
- Football I think this is going well. Bob Wilkes was going to organise a meeting to review how it was all working in the near future. He is aware I have stepped down, as he did write to me to ask about supporting the use of the grass area for car parking this coming weekend (it is busy). It will already have been used last weekend for fireworks. I deferred him to Jim Draper but cc'd Jean into my reply. By way of personal opinion, I suggested probably fine to use on a very occasional basis if dry enough, but should not become a regular thing in that the area will soon become churned up and muddy if not controlled.
- **Groundsmen**. Unfortunately, Brian had an accident a couple of weeks ago, so is out of action for a while. Jim is therefore on his own pro tem. I have had an email exchange with him, including saying I would be happy to help him out if he needs support, Happily, he feels they are generally pretty much on top of jobs currently. The fence will need repairing in due course. He had put some taping across the Molly Minns area last weekend to narrow the access for fireworks.
- Gate Key. There was, I understand, a little bit of a near miss at the weekend when a key could not initially be located for the gate (needed to set up fireworks etc.). The parish council doesn't hold a key to access a field it leases, and Bob is also concerned the VH does not have easy access to a key in terms of a potential contractor, for example, needing to access the rear of the VH. I did relate the exchange we had at the last parish council meeting, and the plan was that Ann Mowat would also hold a key.
- Trees current dealings with Bowards remain with Jean, thank you. There is a spreadsheet which Ruth has developed over the year which neatly catalogues the trees in the village and associated work done, and the plan had been that Ruth and I would update this at some point following the recent work and I'm thinking we should still be able to do this.
- VH play area I had been planning to arrange for Playdale to come down after the winter to review the equipment as comment was made again of rotting in the summer RoSPA report and the equipment remains under guarantee.
- VH play area I note a post on Facebook yesterday from a parishioner (I assume) who has spotted some emerging "spruge" in the distant corner of the play area by the unused entrance (it has long since been secured as shut), and has requested that someone goes down and removes it. It is spurge, which is euphorbia, and we have it in our back garden as well. It is true, however, that if it is cut there is a white sap which can be potentially irritant, so I will go down and dig it out accordingly when I am moving some bark later on today.
- Roman Close play area Jean and I visited and met Adam, the fence he seemed particularly concerned about was actually on the housing side of the play area, and a repair, I understand, had been under consideration prior even to Covid. I think Jean was in the process of obtaining an updated quote from Jake. We did indicate that we would be happy for the wooden fence in the area behind the play area to come down in due course (there is a substantial high solid wall behind this. Adam indicated, if I understood it correctly, that he might put together a working party at some point to do this. It is possible some wood from this could be used to repair the fence which he is more concerned about.
- Councillor's priority fund grant. I note this has now been approved and I think £2500 has even come into the bank account. I will write again in the near future to provide some further background information about this.

# Dog fouling template letter

Kirtlington Parish Council

Date

Dear						

In a recent parish council meeting we discussed the issue of dogs being exercised on the sports field. This letter is a consequence of this discussion with members of the public, and the provision of specific information provided to us following this meeting.

In essence, we have been informed that you are someone who has been observed using the sports field to exercise your dog, and we would strongly request that you stop doing this. We apologise in advance if this is a case of mistaken identity, but we would stress that this is what we have been told by what we believe to be a reliable source, and we are consequently acting on this in good faith.

The Parish Council leases the area of the sports field from local landowners. It is specifically designated for recreational use, including sports such as football. We are fortunate in having the services of volunteer groundsmen, who take a pride in maintaining the area to a high standard and safe to play sport on.

We continue to ask that any dog being walked in this area is on a lead/under control and sticks to a path-like line between the Molly Minns gate and the area of the pad-locked gate adjacent to the village hall. There is clear signage at either end to bring attention to this.

Our prime motivation, as you may appreciate, is to prevent dog fouling in this area. As well as being simply unpleasant to encounter for anyone playing sport in the area, it also has potential health hazards, including to children. Though we understand that any one individual who may choose to exercise a dog in this area will clear up after their dog as appropriate, and according to the law, none-the-less any use of the sports field for dog exercising will portray an impression that it is acceptable to do this, and others will follow suit. At which point, dog fouling will inevitably occur, and, indeed, we have found evidence of this.

Please note that as we have been alerted to this matter as an ongoing and potentially escalating problem, we have specifically sought the advice of the council dog warden about how most appropriately to proceed.

If you would like to respond to this letter, then the most appropriate way to contact the Parish Council is via kirtlingtonclerk@gmail.com, and it can be forwarded accordingly.

The Chair and Members of Kirtlington Parish Council