**Crawley Parish Council**

**Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting**

**held at 7.45pm on 17th May 2023**

1. Present: Cllrs Colin Dingwall, Mark McCappin, Tony Connell, Graham Howkins, Heather Northam; Sue Bremner-Milne (Treasurer); Sheena Derry (Secretary); Liam Walker (OCC and WODC); Parishioners Jo Butler-Parker, Jill and Richard Kerr, Lewis Ross, Keith Harris, Philippa and Rob Helyar, Joyce and Roy Parkinson, Cathy and Chris Funnel.
2. Apologies: Frank and Janet Thompson.
3. Chairman’s report for 2022-23.
   1. CD thanked Gill Hill, who has now retired from WODC, and welcomed newly elected LW. He thanked all the parish councillors, and SB-M and SD for their work as Treasurer and Secretary respectively. Special thanks went to MM for his ongoing work with Highways and Thames Water, to the new river pollution testing team, to Jane Harris for auditing the accounts, Mary Valentine for upkeep of the war memorial, and to Sebastian and Lana for hosting parish council meetings.
   2. CD will remain as parish councillor, which he has been for over 30 years. He reflected on some of the many changes he had seen in the village in that time, including the traffic calming measures on Dry lane and Leafield Hill, and the introduction of drainage grips to improve drainage, particularly on Dry Lane and Foxburrow Lane.
   3. CD is making enquiries as to whether the parish council could erect a hut to use for meetings etc. on the small triangle of land opposite the Industrial Estate.
4. OCC report – LW reported that it had been another busy year. He hopes that by standing as a District Councillor as well as a County Councillor he will be able to better bridge the gap between County and District.
   1. The development of a strategy to deal with HGVs in the county is progressing, albeit slowly.
   2. Implementation of 20mph speed limits in towns and village across the county is also progressing. Crawley’s request has been submitted and is likely to be done in 2024.
   3. There are ongoing issues in Witney, particularly in relation to improving the High Street, which has remained pedestrianised despite local opposition [SD: WODC currently has a Market Town survey, open until 31st May].
   4. Work on the Shores Green junction to the east of Witney is scheduled to start this year. This will provide west-bound access to the A40 for traffic from the north and east of Witney without going into the centre of town.
5. WODC report – CD.
   1. WODC have lost their 5-year land supply and are working on a new one, leaving the district open to speculative development again.
   2. WODC want to stop the proposed Witney North development (included in the previous 5-year land supply), which would mean that the long-promised West End Link Road bridge would also be lost. CD noted that there is three times more traffic through Crawley than Hailey because of people using Crawley to cross the river and avoid the congested Bridge Street crossing. WODC think that the Shores Green junction will remove the need for the new river crossing.
   3. WODC plan to employ additional officers at a cost of £650,000 pa.
   4. WODC have reviewed their approach to community funding. The Community Facilities Grant (which has provided funding up to 25% e.g. for village halls and playparks, and brought in extra investment) will be withdrawn. They plan to use crowdfunding as an alternative.
   5. Parking charges have been introduced in Woodstock, bringing in over £300,000 net profit. CD thinks that areas within Witney are at risk of the same happening.
   6. MM asked if there was another way to progress the West End Link Road, perhaps through OCC. CD and LW thought this unlikely.
6. Botley West Solar Farm – SD gave a short explanatory talk to draw people’s attention to the scale and significance of the proposed Botley West Solar Farm.
   1. This is a huge installation (3,400 acres) in West Oxfordshire, one of the biggest in Europe. Others are mainly in semi-arid places with lots of sunshine and all are in areas with low population. This one would directly impact 15 parishes and many other smaller communities with a population of >50,000. It would be within 1.5km of 11,000 properties.
   2. 75% would be on the Greenbelt – this is allowed because it is “temporary”, i.e. 40 years. There is no guarantee it would be returned to agricultural use afterwards.
   3. An estimated 7,000 tons pa of food supply would be lost.
   4. There are questions about Photovolt Development Partners, the company who would install and run the solar farm.
   5. SD urged people to go to the Botley West and Stop Botley West websites to find out more and respond to the proposal (botleywest.co.uk and stopbotleywest.com)
7. Questions – none.