

## **Burford Town Council**

### **Annual Town Meeting** **Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 6.30pm,** **Warwick Hall, Burford**

## **Reports**

### **Mayor's Annual Report** **Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

#### **Planning**

Fortunately, the appeal on Cole's Field was withdrawn by the applicant in July, and at present we have no major planning applications in Burford.

#### **Recreation**

The success of this year was the planning, fundraising, construction and opening of the new Play Park. Our Play Park committee, Cllr Jo Rushton, Cllr Jennie Craven, Cllr Jane Westmacott-Tunnell with Lynne Agg, Clare Silvester, and Lucy Staveley and Kirsty Kilburn worked incredibly hard to put the whole project together to become a reality. My thanks to them, and all the residents, businesses and local organisations who contributed so generously.

#### **Burford Bridge**

Another year, and the bridge has not been repaired by OCC. The damage was caused in June 2022. Last year OCC could not retrieve all the stone from the river, and then could not source replacement stone to match. Then the weather was too cold to do the work. The problem now is the possibility of Bat roosts under the bridge. We still have no anticipated date for the repair. In addition, after much lobbying, we have persuaded OCC to improve the pavement over the bridge by marking it in "Goldmac" to match the pavements in the town, and to direct traffic in a straight line across the bridge to stop them running over the pavement area. However, OCC still need to apply for listed building consent, so, we have no date for this improvement either.

#### **Guildenford Car Park.**

A number of meetings have been held with WODC, who are now carrying out a 12-month survey of the car park usage. We have requested better marking and a much better drainage system to alleviate the flooding. The project has now been handed to a project manager in WODC.

#### **Coaches**

As of January 2024, Bourton-on-the-Water Coach Park closed, and coaches are banned from entering the centre of the town. This appears to have led to an increase in coaches visiting Burford. There are currently only 4 coach parking spaces in Priory Lane, but they are only 7 metres long. Coaches are now up to 15 metres long. Initially we have requested OCC to change one parking space to a turning space to allow long coaches to turn round to leave, and to restrict coach length to 12 metres maximum. We will monitor the situation over the summer.

#### **And finally**

My thanks to Maggie Andrews our Town Clerk up to December 2023 when she retired after 26 years, to Christina, our new Town Clerk, to John Yeatman, our Financial Officer, and to David Buckland, who have all served the Town and Council so well over the year, keeping everything running smoothly, to David Cohen who has retired as a councillor after 30 years service with as 8 years as Mayor, and to my fellow councillors who give their time and expertise and experience to serve Burford and help make it such a desirable place to live.

Cllr Peter Higgs, **Mayor, Burford Town Council**

## **Traffic Committee**

### **Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

#### **(1) HGVs**

The saga continues. There was some movement during the year on the project to find a regional (or any!) solution for controlling HGVs. OCC eventually received the report they had commissioned from Atkins – external consultants – who opined that it was all very difficult. Faced with having to make a decision itself, OCC made the classic bureaucratic move and formed a sub-committee or “task force”. This has now been constituted and comprises some OCC councillors, a rep from Gloucestershire CC, reps from the haulage industry and, thank heaven, our WODC Councillor Hugo Ashton. Its first step is to gather yet more information county wide with the aid of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras. That will happen this year and I hope to have something more concrete to report next year.

#### **(2) The Bridge**

Sadly this saga also continues. OCC’s excuses were that they could not find the right contractors at the right price and at the right time. Just after Christmas we thought we were making a little progress when it was discovered that bats were living under the bridge! We now have to wait while OCC gets a bat survey and a plan for rehousing homeless bats – there is plenty of space in County Hall thanks to WFH.

As to the walkway, no progress has been made in the negotiations between OCC and Historic England.

#### **(3) The Coach Park**

We have agreed with OCC amendments to the coach park which will result in less and smaller coaches. This became urgent when we heard that Bourton-on-the-Water had banned all coaches. These changes will be brought into effect by a Traffic Regulation Order which is currently being drafted.

#### **(4) The Hill**

The need for a pedestrian crossing to replace the traffic island opposite the Catholic Church has been accepted by OCC. They are now looking for an acceptable contractor.

#### **(5) TROs**

Traffic Regulation Orders were obtained introducing a 40 mph limit on a stretch of Witney Street and imposing weight limits on Barns Lane and Tanners Lane.

#### **(6) General**

Potholes, faded white and yellow road markings, battered signs etc are all statutory duties of OCC. We are limited to nagging, begging and threatening without any power to back it up. We do all that constantly. The standard response from OCC is that they have no money. Actually, they have a little short of £1 billion but they have to prioritise and roads and the well-being of communities are well down the list. As a matter of law, it is no defence to a claim for breach of statutory duty that you have no money to do that duty. The reason is that

County Councils have tax raising powers so technically they can always be in funds. You can see what's coming – increased Council Tax. You have been warned!

Cllr John White, **Chairman – Traffic Committee, Burford Town Council**

## **Climate Change Committee**

### **Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

A newly formed Climate Change committee was created in the latter part of 2023. The purpose of Committee is to ensure that Burford Town Council responds appropriately to the climate and ecological emergency and plays its part in working towards a net-zero carbon Oxfordshire.

The aim is to recommend steps to reduce the environmental impact of Burford Town Council's activities and infrastructure by working with higher tier local authorities and other external organisations, such as Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Burford Environmental Action Group (BEAGles). It will also, through the Council, influence external stakeholders locally and nationally to incorporate sustainability into economic and strategic frameworks, strategies, plans and service operations.

A comprehensive action plan for 2024-2026 was developed including the key themes such as: Natural environment; Education, Communication; Community; Purchasing, Supply and Consumption; Water Supply and Flooding; Transport; Low Carbon development and Reduction of Energy Use.

Some of the first actions have been to work with WODC and OCC to identify potential locations in Burford and submit an outline map of these potential sites to install suitable Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) around Burford (plan submitted Nov 2023) for the WODC feasibility study.

The committee members have researched into what WODC, OCC are focusing on and ways to leverage what other local councils and parishes are doing. The importance of biodiversity and the natural environment has been highlighted with ways to action this. The committee completed and submitted the Local Nature Local Nature recovery plan survey.

A plan is being developed for which activities for the committee to prioritise and focus on over the upcoming year.

Cllr Jennie Craven, **Deputy Mayor, Chairperson - Climate Change Committee, Burford Town Council**

## **Recreation Ground Committee**

### **Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

Our focus over the past year has been the construction of our new playground, basketball / fitness area and access path. The new facilities opened on March 25<sup>th</sup>, and we are incredibly grateful to the Burford Community who were clearly invested in the project and helped raise the necessary funds. The new equipment has been well used since the opening and we hope this will continue.

Clanfield 85 FC will continue to use the football pitches on the rec for a further year. Rabbit damage to pitches is much reduced and we will continue our program of regular inspection and use of pest control professionals where necessary.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken on the trees, including removal of some dead trees and cutting back where there was evidence of dieback. SSE have also inspected and will cut back trees nearest the power lines.

The bonfire site is, and will continue to be, fenced off, to ensure the safety of those using West Field. There is a lot of metal in the ground from bonfires and, despite removing bucketloads at a time, whenever there is heavy rain more metal comes to the surface.

We are grateful to Burford Bowls Club for their efforts in improving the car park. Last summer they repaired the drainage to prevent flooding at the East side of the car park, this year they have cut back and raised the canopy of the conifers.

**Cllr Jo Rushton, Chairperson Recreation Ground - Committee, Burford Town Council**

## **Burford Ward District Councillor Annual Report Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

How time flies! I am surprised to find myself already halfway through my 4-year term as your District Councillor. The West Oxfordshire Alliance of Lib Dems, Labour and Green parties has worked well and constructively, and I hope this will continue through this year. (I have attached a list of achievements in the District for those who are interested in a glimpse of the wider picture.)

Progress has been slow on the main Ward issues this year, not for want of trying!

- Burford bridge over the Windrush: Trying to increase the pressure on OCC to repair the bridge and improve pedestrian safety on the bridge over the Windrush as we approach the second anniversary of the damage incident.
- Car parking: Working with Burford Town Council, seeking ways to expand Guildenford car park and make it more flood resilient, and to get publicly accessible Electric Vehicle charging points in Burford.
- HGVs: I am now a member of OCC's Windrush Valley HGV Study Steering Group. At least the subject is live and we meet every two months or so to review progress. The next step is the specification and implementation of a new data collection exercise to understand the movement of lorries across the Windrush Valley.

My main committee workload has been on the Uplands Planning Sub-Committee where we consider applications brought to committee as major planning applications or where they are controversial. The combined planning sub-committees also met once as the Development Committee to consider and approve WODC's consultation response on the Botley West solar farm application.

In addition, I am one of the Lib Dem representatives on the Local Plan Councillor Working Group which is monitoring the progress and reviewing the inputs to the new (2021-2041) local plan. This provides an opportunity to influence the direction of the Plan and have advance notice of what policies are emerging.

WODC's three scrutiny committees have been combined into one, which meets monthly a week before the Executive's monthly public meeting. This is a much more effective

arrangement than before. Although I have been a member of this committee, I have not been able to attend several of its meetings as it often clashes with BTC's monthly meeting.

My door (and email) are open to anyone wanting help with a District problem. It is easier for me to gain access to officers, than the general public, but not always! At least it is easier for me to demand a response!

For those who have a deeper interest in the workings of the Council, we have now upgraded the Council chamber and main meeting rooms to allow all our formal meetings to be followed live or available on-line afterwards. Do join us!

### **Some initiatives and achievements at WODC over the last two years**

Since taking control of West Oxfordshire District Council over the last two years, in addition to delivering on our core statutory responsibilities, we have:

- Produced balanced budgets that protect services whilst investing in the future
- Begun developing a new local plan that will contain more realistic housing targets
- Helped to deliver 267 affordable homes in West Oxfordshire in 2023, including 164 affordable rental properties, 99 shared ownership properties and four First Homes
- Required that new housing will not be occupied until adequate sewage treatment capacity is in place
- Supported residents through the cost of living and energy crises
- Kicked off Witney town regeneration by investing in Marriott's Walk and supporting other markets across the District
- Challenged Thames Water to stop polluting waterways at hot spots across the District
- Worked towards preservation and enhancement of the natural environment by securing funding and collaboration with other actors on a variety of projects across the District
- Partnered with the Environment Agency and community groups to make West Oxfordshire more flood resilient
- Stood up for the environment to ensure that Salt Cross Garden Village is built to net zero standard
- Launched Westhive, a new crowdfunding platform regime to channel Council funding to projects supported by the communities
- Made progress towards our net-zero goal through projects leading to decarbonisation of Council's property and expanding our electric vehicle fleet
- Worked closely with Town and Parish Councils to help them respond to proposed Botley West Solar Farm project
- Listened to young people and invested in youth support
- Engaged with local farmers and food producers and set up a Food Action Plan
- Refurbished the council chamber and main meeting rooms to allow full on-line streaming of meetings and flexibility for community use
- Made the work of your councillors more transparent by streaming meetings online or on catch-up and making the Executive more accessible by holding meetings around the District (including in Burford)

**Hugo Ashton, Councillor for Burford Ward, comprising Burford, Fulbrook and Taynton**

## **ANNUAL REPORT FROM CLLR NICHOLAS FIELD-JOHNSON**

### **OCC BUDGET 2024/25**

#### **COUNCILS SECURE £600M ADDITIONAL FUNDING PACKAGE**

Communities Secretary Michael Gove announced this year a total of £600m of additional funding for local authorities in England – including a £500m addition to the social care grant, and a £100m increase in core spending power. OCC is expected to benefit to an amount of approximately £5m.

#### **BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024/25**

This unexpected development noted above means that the Liberal Democrat/Green administration and opposition groups had to rework their Budget proposals. As previously reported, the minority administration cannot pass a Budget without support of the opposition parties. A meeting of Full Council on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February took place and a budget was approved.

Full details of the final budget are available on the council website. These show that the Budget will result in extra borrowing of £23.45m. The Budget continued to focus on Oxford-centric matters, including Oxford parking zones, Oxford ANPR cameras, Oxford congestion, Oxford 'Mini-Holland' project (at a capital cost of £2m per year) and an Oxford 'Citizens' Assembly' (at a cost of £150,000).

Despite repeated resident surveys and feedback from Councillors which show that roads and drains are near the top of the list of resident concerns, they still fail to get a mention and are not a budget priority. It is likely satisfaction with the council will continue to decline. (The latest 'Residents Survey' shows that 'Maintenance of roads' was rated by 67% of residents as one of their four most important council services, but just 19% were very or fairly satisfied.) I will continue to campaign for more funds to be spent on fixing the potholes and mending the sharp road verges which continue to cause tyre damage.

#### **SAVING OUR WINDRUSH - FURTHER TESTING EQUIPMENT IN PLACE.**

I am pleased to report that new river testing equipment is in place in the Windrush and I was able to contribute funding to WASP to purchase the equipment.

**Windrush Against Sewage Pollution** ("WASP") will manage the sophisticated testing equipment and will be responsible for the continual assessment of the river. This equipment will allow the local community, via WASP, to trace the releases of sewage from storm drains and elsewhere into our river and provide a comprehensive picture of the scale of pollution from what is described as the routine dumping of untreated sewage in some areas.

Thames Water continues to be criticised for its continual dumping of raw sewage into our rivers, especially for the long-term events which, when caused by groundwater infiltration (as many are) are not legally permitted. Now that we have professional testing equipment the Windrush can be monitored and excess discharges identified, effectively ensuring that there is a greater deterrent to pollution from any source in place. It may prove to be the case that Thames Water will have to file for bankruptcy this year and be placed back under public ownership

### **Ensured HGV ban in Burford was approved.**

After 15 years of stalemate and with the help of the Burford Town Council, one of my first tasks was to ensure that OCC approved and implemented the HGV ban which came into place in October 2020. It was on an initial 18 month trial period which was to become permanent.

HGVs have caused significant damage to buildings and the Victorian underground pipes which meant that action had to be taken. It was also seriously damaging the tourist industry in Burford.

**It is with great regret that the present OCC Administration reversed this decision.** However we will continue to campaign for a limitation of HGVs in our towns and villages.

In October, with BTC, we met the new Cabinet Member for Highways, Judy Roberts who fully understood the issues facing Burford: its economy, building destruction and pollution incurred by the HGVs. We still are waiting for the County-wide HGV report. However, funding is needed to be provided to fund the project and this was approved in the February OCC budget.

The County-wide HGV study continues and is now focused on the positioning of cameras and collecting data. The main focus is on the Windrush Valley (including the Burford area) and Henley. We are still hopeful that a ban on 18 ton HGVs will be approved for Burford.

### **Burford Bridge.**

In October, a meeting was held with OCC Officers to discuss the planned repairs to Burford bridge. They witnessed the HGVs on Burford bridge and lack of space for pedestrians.

Although progress has been slow (it is now almost two years since the original accident), repairs have at last started this month.

## **Speeding in our Villages – 20mph is plenty campaign.**

Speeding remains a major problem in our villages and I will continue to back the 20mph speed limit in our villages and have provided funding for the 20mph signage in Burford and also supported the campaign and signage in Swinbrook, Taynton, Shilton and Brize Norton.

## **Active user and supporter of Fix My Street and to repair potholes.**

OCC has drafted in more staff to carry out inspections and contractors Skanska are sending out more teams to carry our repairs. An additional Dragon-Patcher is now in action on the road network travelling round on an 'inspect and fix' basis on the rural network. OCC have pledged that defects that make roads hazardous will be dealt with within 24 hours. Remember, if a defect has paint markings around it then it has already been scheduled for repair and does not need a new report. OCC's own machine, along with the shared Dragon, has fixed over 21,000 potholes. It is expected that the new one, over the next twelve months, could fill up to 14,000 more.

## **Continue to support local charities through my Priority Fund.**

I support and fund various projects in my Division:

**Carterton:** Supported local bus service and two Food banks to assist residents.

**Brize Norton:** Supported speed limit signage and the Humble Bumble café.

**Burford:** Raised funds for HGV signage and 20 mph signage

**Swinbrook:** Provided funds for 20mph signage and also two CCTV cameras

**Asthall:** Provided funds for village signage and a community bench.

**Taynton:** Provided funds for village sign and support for 20mph speed limit.

**Shilton:** Supported 20mph speed limit in village.

**[OCC Cllr Nicholas Field-Johnson, Burford & Carterton North](#)**

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