**Notes from**

**Outreach meeting - Monday 23rd November 2015**

**Held at The Fox & Hounds, Christmas Common**

Those present included Ian Hill, ,Matt Reid, Tony Williamson, Bob West Tom Bindoff, Jo Read, Terry Jackson, Jeremy Bell (all Watlington Parish Council), Kristina Tynan (Clerk to WPC), Stephen Harrod(Oxfordshire County Council), Anna Badcock and Peter Canavan (South Oxfordshire District Council), and 36 residents.

This is not intended as a formal record of the meeting, but aims to capture the key points of what was discussed. The format of the meeting was that, after initial introductions, a flip chart was used to list all issues raised from the floor of the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Tony Williamson, Matt Reid and Ian Hill.

Tony Williamson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1. Neighbourhood Plan**

**Peter Canavan – SODC Planning Policy Officer**

PC said that he has been working with Watlington on the NP for the last 2 years. In 2012 part of the Planning Policy identified more houses need for sustainable larger villages which meant 79 houses for Watlington which obviously has effects on transport and traffic. Areas were then looked at in the community where development may be acceptable and appropriate. These areas are now being reviewed within the NP current framework. People who work and live in the town all need to be engaged in this process. There may be things that you would like to see in Watlington and it is important to get all views through the new NP Forum that has been set up. The number of 79 houses is likely to rise because of the strategic housing document which is projecting population to increase and we need to see employment growth to maintain housing. Your local views are very important to the NP

**Gill Bindoff** – Chair of the NP Co-ordination Forum

There has been a few months hesitation period since April 2015 but now the Parish Council has put in place a different structure. There is the NP Steering Committee which is made up of 6 Parish Councillors which has a scrutiny role. There is then the NP Forum which is community based and is made up of a number of working groups who have specific tasks e.g. checking through the work done so far and looking to see if any more work/surveys need to be done. Three groups have already met and started working on Traffic, Housing and Development sites. GB said that we do not have any members from the outreach areas of the parish and urged people to think about joining one of the groups. Peter Richardson from Howe Hill is providing volunteer administration help. It would be very good to have a greater breadth of people and it is important to get the views of residents outside the Town.

Tony Williamson said that in the latest South News on the NP areas, Watlington had been omitted. PC said he was not aware of this but will check this when he returns to the office.

**Q:** Does and can broadband feature in the NP?

**A: PC**: No it is not in the remit at the moment but could be in the future. It could be put in the NP as an aspiration as development occurs which could then pay for a community led project. The money from development is CIL money (replaces Section 106 funding) which is 25% for communities with a NP (15% if no NP) so there will be access to money. This money will only be available on new build. CIL is also paid on every house built whereas 106 money was only paid on large development so this is much better for Watlington.

**Q:** Has SODC implemented CIL?

**A: PC**: SODC has had the independent examination and the Inspector asked that some more work be done on employment costs. It will be implemented next year. CIL will be paid based on the application date.

**Q:** Do you think that smaller parishes such as Pyrton and Cuxham should have a NP?

**A: PC**: A NP is about facilitating development if it is the aspiration of the community to do this. If a community want some more houses than it is worth them doing a NP. There is also a route through doing a Parish Plan. AB said that doing a CLP is much more affordable.

AB stated that SODC are in the process of re-doing their Local Plan because of the new housing numbers and that more houses have to be planned for. Most will be in Didcot and some scattered in Market Towns and larger villages however this is also being reviewed and they are also looking at the smaller villages. SODC have to have a 5 year housing supply which is judged on the amount to houses built in the last 5 years. If SODC are found to not be delivering the 5 years supply they would lose control of Planning Systems and all developments would be allowed. There would be an open season for planning if the 5 year housing supply is not delivered.

**Q:** If there was an open season how would the AONB stand up?

**A: AB**: That would still stand. Certain national areas are protected. Developers could try but there is a level of protection.

**PC:** A good example of a NP is Woodcote who spent less than £10,000 of their NP. This was a test case and they received grants from SODC and from Locality. You should not let the money aspect put you off doing a NP. SODC is urging towns and villages to do a NP.

**GB** stated that Peter Canavan is coming to a meeting in Watlington on Housing on Wednesday 25th November at 7.30pm in the West Room if anyone here would be interested in attending. **MR** said that we are looking for more people to join the NP Advisory Groups and it is important to engage now with the NP.

**2. Broadband**

Peter Richardson and William Perrin gave an update on broadband and on the work being done by the Connect8 Group. The progress has been summarised below.

There remains a situation where large parts of South Oxfordshire are suffering from poor or intermittent speeds and in some cases no service at all. There are a lot of people in the rural areas around Watlington who are very unhappy with the slow speed of broadband. There is a high percentage of people who work from home.

Connect8 started as a result of fast broadband being high on the list of needs identified by residents in the rural areas of our Parish and Connect8 was formed to present a louder voice than would otherwise been the case. Our District Councillor, Anna Badcock is also involved with Connect 8. There are now 10 parishes involved in Connect8. AB stated that Ed Vaizey, Minister of State for Department of Culture, Media and Sports has been very helpful with this issue.

It is unrealistic to expect that BT will ever dig up roads and lay fibre to premises in our area. BT are looking at alternative technology, but in partnership with Village Networks, we have formulated a proposal to provide a radio solution to premises that have line of sight to a significantly tall starting point. With this in mind, Connect 8 approached Thames Valley Police in respect of their telecommunications masts at Britwell Hill. There is permission in principle but there are some technical issues to overcome and agree. It was hoped to use a mast at Christmas Common but the owner, after showing initial support, declined to participate. It is envisaged that the existing masts should be sufficient for this project.

Village Networks expect to offer super-fast speeds to match BDUK fibre specifications at a cost of £30 per month including VAT with installation cost of £185 and full details will be available shortly on the website [www.connect8.org](http://www.connect8.org). The masts at Britwell Hill would support Phase 1 of a radio solution from Village Networks (a proposal is on the Connect 8 website). There would need to be between £10-15K raised for the start-up Capital Costs but there are some grants available. It is hoped that this could be achieved in 2016 but just when depends on sorting out some technical matters. It was noted that this is a very reliable system. Village Networks are a small company but well-funded and have done a similar installation in Hambleden.

It was stated that Cabinet 2 in Christmas Common will be cabled up and it was asked when this would happen?

[*Post Minute Note from Stephen Harrod – This will be cabled up in June 2017*]

Anna Badcock said that the further away you are from a cabinet the broadband speed weakens. For a good speed one needs to live within 1 mile of a cabinet. Peter Richardson stated that Connect8 are constantly badgering OCC to advance the enablement of the cabinet as need to see both the cabinet working as well as having the radio based broadband solution. A cabinet costs £40-50K.

**Q:** Is there a hybrid solution from BT?

**A:** BT has done one in Devon and one in Ed Vaisey’s constituency. William Perrin said one could be done but would be very expensive and would need bespoke equipment which would also be very expensive. BT do not like doing hybrid schemes.

Peter Richardson, William Perrin, Anna Badcock and all the Connect8 team were thanked for all their hard work on trying to get a solution to improve broadband.

**3. Speed in Christmas Common**

Ian Hill presented the results of the October 2015 speed survey through Christmas Common. These were given out to residents in a graph format. These show that there has been little change in the speed of through traffic since the last detailed survey five years ago, but that there has been a 10% increase in the number of vehicles using that road. Over the week that speeds were monitored, more than half of passing vehicles were exceeding the speeding limit.

The Speedwatch team have also carried out a survey with the SID and found that in 1 hour, more than half the cars passing were over the speed limit.

There was a request that another survey is carried out in April and October 2016 which would cost a total of £200. This request will be sent to the Operations Committee for them to consider this within their budget.

With the Speedwatch data this will enable us to request that the Police Mobile Speed Vans come to this location as they are sent the evidence from the Speedwatch surveys. The Clerk will do this.

One resident said that with the faster speeds this is eroding the grass verges and there are lots of road repairs in Christmas Common that need repairing. This is OCC’s responsibility. It was asked if residents have reported these on the FixmyStreet website.

**Q:** Could traffic enforcement be included with the Neighbourhood Plan?

**A: IH:** No it can’t be included within the NP. The Henley NP had included it in theirs but they had to take it out.

AB said that CIL money could be identified to do enforcement work. The NP process however is a good indicator of what things are important to the community.

Robert Barber said that the raw data needs to be compared on a day by day basis and he agreed that there is definitely more traffic now. RB has got traffic data from the 1990’s to the 2000’s.

It was stated that when the Ecotec work was being done in Watlington this resulted to a lot more traffic using the Christmas Common road and this is another reason why the roads have deteriorated badly

A resident stated that she cannot take her granddaughter out for a walk as the verges are in such a bad condition.

The verges used to be 18” but now are 4”. The road is being broadened and there are lots of potholes.

**Q**: The logs outside a property on the verge were brought up and it was asked what could be done about these. It was noted that an OCC officer has visited the resident concerned. Another point raised was that a resident parks his car on the roadside to try to reduce the speed but this has also led to other problems.

Peter Richardson said that the same traffic problems exist in many villages and the Speedwatch initiative is trying to help with this. The increase of housing in Benson and Chinnor will mean extra traffic in this area.

**4. Hill Road Car Park in Watlington**

A few residents complained that there is a lack of available parking spaces. It was noted that when the car park is full people tend to park up Hill Road. The NP is looking into other areas for a car park in Watlington but that there needs to be evidence that this is needed. Phil Crockett said that he thinks that the 2 hour spaces are working well. Robert Barber said that 10 years ago there only used to be about 6 cars parked at about 11 o’clock at night but now there is a high number of cars parking overnight.

One resident mentioned that the recycling clothing skip by the Air Ambulance is often full with bags left around it. The Clerk stated that as soon as it is full Air Ambulance are contacted to empty it.

**5. Lay-by on Cuxham Road**

The lay-by which had a load of soil (50 tonnes) put on it a few years ago was brought up again. This issue has been bounced back by both OCC and SODC but nothing has been done.

Steve Harrod said that he would follow this up and he needs to be given solid proof of who did it and then the Council can deal with it, OCC have no funds to pay for this to be done.

The resident will get in touch with SH direct.

**6. Post Office in Watlington**

Howard Griffiths said that the shops are the lifeblood of the town and that the Post Office is central to the community. IH stated that the Post Office are looking at alternative premises but that we cannot stop the current owner leaving if this is what she wishes to do. The sorting office will be closing so there will be no subsidy for this but there will be a post office service in some form. Two local businesses have expressed an interest in also running a post office. TW said that the Post Office will continue to pay the subsidy until the owner leaves.

**7. Age Concern**

A resident had asked for this to be discussed but it was noted that he had already left the meeting and no question on it had been notified in advance. Not discussed.

**8. Any Other Issues**

**Burglaries** – L Hawesraine reported that there has been a spate of these in the village recently and asked everyone to be vigilant. AB said that it is very important to report these to the Police so that they have a record of it as this helps statistically to see what resources areas need.

**Junction of A40/Christmas Common Road** - This junction is in a dreadful condition. It was noted that this is in Bucks not Oxfordshire and it needs to be reported to the Bucks FixmyStreet website.

**Oakley Wood Recycling Centre** – Robert Barber asked SH if there was any news on this. SH said that he felt that OCC should be able to charge a small fee for the use of it eg 50p but at the moment they cannot legally do this. Central Government are being lobbied so that a small charge could be applied.

[**Post Minute Note:** OCC will not be closing Oakley Wood]

**Flytipping** – if anyone notices any this needs to be reported to SODC.

**THERE BEING NO OTHER ISSUES RAISED FOR DISCUSSION, IAN HILL THANKED EVERYONE FOR ATTENDING THIS MEETING AND IT CLOSED AT 9.25PM,**