

Vale and South Oxfordshire Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on 1st February 2023 at 7pm

Present: Chris Hancock (Appleford PC WG), Chris Neill (Burcot & Clifton Hampden PC), Greg O'Broin (Appleford PC/Chair), John Peters (Nuneham Courtenay PC), Rita Atkinson (Sutton Courtenay PC) (from c7.25pm) and Vicky Shepherd (Appleford PC).

1. Apologies for absence

Sam Casey-Rerhaye (Culham PC) and Geoffrey Ferres (Clerk to the Joint Committee).

2. Minutes of last Meeting

GOB circulated on 31st January 2023 amended minutes summarising the fee budget for work by the expert advisors agreed at the last meeting. This included the record of the approval for fees to Charlie Hopkins and Alan James. These amended minutes were approved.

Action: GOB to sign and forward to GF

3. Status – assessment of consultation responses

a) Joint Committee

The Regulation 25 reply 'Further Objection' prepared by Charlie Hopkins was submitted to OxonCC on behalf of the Joint Committee along with following appendices:

- Appx. 1. Assessment of Alternatives
- Appx. 2. Objection on Landscape grounds
- Appx. 3. Independent Transport Assessment
- Appx. 4. TA Reconciliation of Modelling
- Appx. 5. Air Quality and Health
- Appx. 6. Noise
- Addendum A Bridge & Road Design and Landscaping,

b) Others

Further objections on the Regulation 25 response, were submitted by Sutton Courtenay Parish Council, Nuneham Courtenay Parish Council and Garsington Parish Council.

Other objections submitted included; the Oxford Friends of the Earth paper by Ng Chien Xen (Transport Economist) on climate damage; CPRE and the POETS group. Notably VoWHDC and SODC have also submitted critical further comment.

Initialled:



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4. Developments/Updates OxonCC Planning Portal (HIF1)

a) Updates posted on OxonCC Planning Portal

The objections in response to Regulation 25 were posted on the planning portal on 23rd January 2023.

b) Recent Cabinet/Council meetings

GOB presented the breakdown of scheme costs (previously circulated) contained in Cabinet papers for the meeting of 24th January 2023.

The original budget of September 2021, without any inflation uplift, is shown divided between the four sections of the proposed road.

A4130 dualling is budgeted at £33.5m. The remainder of the scheme from science bridge to Clifton Hampden is budgeted at £262m (88% of budget). The meeting agreed that the scheme cannot be constructed within this budget.

VS noted that Cllr Webber said there were questions on the deliverability of the scheme, and that no infrastructure schemes are completed on time and on budget.

RW also opined that the A4130 dualling was the only standalone part of the scheme, able to be completed independently. The implication was that the remainder of the scheme would be compromised unless more funds were used to meet the construct cost.

GOB noted inconsistency in recent comments from Cabinet members. Recently, Cllr Leffman criticised the proposed reservoir on grounds of climate and effect on communities but fails to apply the same criticism to road schemes.

c) Updates from local Councillors

It is anticipated that the planning committee for HIF1 will require a three-day session.

RW has reported that in recent discussions with Cllr Saul, it was noted that none of the Planning Committee members have been notified of arrangements for the HIF1 hearing to be scheduled for 27th Feb 2023. This may imply the HIF1 road may be scheduled for a meeting in March 2023.

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CN suggested that Councillors should be asked if they have been notified of the date for planning consideration of HIF1.

There was discussion that certain Councillors on the Planning Committee may need substitutes due to possible conflict of interest. These might include Cllrs Rouane (Leader) and Bennett (Housing) in SODC.

It was noted that Parish Councils now await sight of the planning officers' report for the Planning and Regulation Committee to judge their further action.

5. Developments (for information or discussion)

a) Next Actions

There was a discussion on the OxonCC documents on Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and Side Road Order (SRO) recently issued to landowners, Parish Councils and others. Responses required before 22nd March 2023.

Landowners are key. GOB has been advised that if one landowner objects the process must be referred to a planning inspector. OxonCC must prove a compelling case in the public interest, which is a high bar to reach.

Parish Councils and individuals are free to object to the CPOs and they can cite such matters as climate change, traffic, environment and community as well as being premature in the light of financial and other unresolved issues.

(RA joined the meeting – minutes of meeting of 7th December 2022 as tabled by GOB confirmed as accurate.)

It was agreed that Parishes would not seek to influence or represent the opinions of landowners but could present Parish Council views on the wider common good and object to the SDO and CPOs on principle.

The complexity of the documents was acknowledged. GOB suggested that if Parish Councils are approached for guidance, enquiries could be directed to the Joint Committee objections prepared by Charlie Hopkins available on the OxonCC planning portal.

It was acknowledged that the CPO process is running in advance of a clear identified funding to meet whole scheme costs

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RA advised that as the Traffic Modelling was inadequate SCPC would be exploring the opportunity to make a legal challenge on the basis that the HIF1 is not in the public interest.

It was thought that a public enquiry could be triggered by public concern even before the scheme goes to planning committee.

GOB acknowledged that SCPC may use the £1,600 retained for traffic modelling to pursue this and discuss the matter with a barrister. RA raised that a letter to OxonCC legal department would be considered and queried any previous contacts.

6. Mitigation Strategy

a) Mitigations Identified

In the event that the HIF1 scheme is approved, the only mitigation works offered are those within the planning documents (mainly acoustic screens and low noise road surface).

CN commented that Cllr Bennett had stated that there was no budget for mitigation. There was scepticism that even the planned mitigation measures may not be delivered.

b) Mitigations to be pursued jointly and individually by parishes.

7. Administration

a) Budget Update

A Budget Update was presented to the meeting

b) Approval of Invoices

The invoices below were presented for approval:

- £3,600 Charlie Hopkins
- £757.50 Alan James (re Stage 2)
- £1,500 Alan James.

GOB advised that the travel expenses claim most recently submitted by Alan James was the only item outside of the budget agreed by NPC-JC.

It was recognised that Charlie Hopkins and Alan James had provided invaluable service beyond budget restraints.

GOB advised that NPC-JC would wish to keep them alongside in the event of further advice being needed.

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Culham and Appleford Parish Councils are prepared to meet the cost of Alan James's expenses claim.

Representatives of Parish Councils have confirmed, by prior e-mails and at the meeting that they are authorised to approve expenditures within and above the agreed budget.

GOB said he wanted to clarify possible misunderstandings on recent email exchanges. Instructions to advisors were all in accordance with the terms agreed by the Joint Committee (Charlie Hopkins attended the last meeting) and there is no cause for any concern regarding transparency or governance.

RA agreed and said emails did not reflect on individuals.

It was agreed that there was no cause for concern on governance.

8. Next Actions

Discussion on the role of local MPs. Interest in parishes representing to MPs that the HIF1 process has not been followed as required. Scepticism that the two local MPs would be prepared to challenge HIF1 unless it directly affected them politically.

CN noted that proposed boundary changes would affect the Henley constituency and bring the entire length of the HIF1 road into the Wantage constituency.

Local residents have advised that Wantage MP David Johnston has defended the need for the HIF1 road in email responses to them.

9. Next Meeting

Date to be agreed.

Signed:



Date:

Thursday 25th May 2023

Initialed:



Date:

25/5/23.