

**AGM 2023**

**Cutteslowe Community Centre**

**7:30pm Wednesday 22nd November 2023**

**PRESENT**

**Committee:** David Nimmo Smith, [Chair], Bob Colenutt, Deborah Bryceson, Henk van Es [coopted], Natasha Robinson, Geoffrey Randell, Neil MacLennan, Chris Pownall

**Councillors:** Lawrence Fouweather, Katherine Miles, Louise Upton [guest speaker]

**Members:** Colin McDiarmid, Sam Clarke, Gareth Winrow, Philip & Julia Cresswell, David Sprigings, Mirella Beechey-Newman, David Keene, Peter Thompson, Catherine Shilston, Linda & Brian Houston, Jeremy Hudson, Siobhan Stead-Ellis, Don Anderson, Steph Jankovic, Gillian Morriss-Kay

**Apologies:** Tim Treuherz, Cllr John Howson, Cllr Andrew Gant

The meeting being quorate, it was opened at 7.35 with an introduction and welcome from the Chair and explanation of how the meeting would be conducted, and topics on the agenda.

**CHAIR’S REPORT FOR 2023**

David Nimmo Smith gave a brief report of the preceding year [the slides can be found on the Forum website] highlighting the CIL fund grants disbursed, and the progress being made by the 4 working groups [Alexandra Park, Diamond Place, Transport and Planning].

**CIL funds** have been awarded during 2020 [2 rounds], 2021, 2022 and 2023. Not all funds have been finally paid where projects remain incomplete. Awards were made in 2023 for the following:

* Coronation bunting for Summertown
* Christmas lights for 2022 Christmas/New Year season
* ATTHEBUS art project at Cherwell School
* Scooters and bikes for us at Cutteslowe Primary School
* Sunnymead Minnows children’s group at Cutteslowe community association
* Replacement equipment for Library of Things [petrol -> battery powered]

We currently have sufficient reserves to start a further round of grants in January 2024.

**Alexandra Park Working Group** [led by Henk van Es] has continued to improve the area through tree planting by the team from Wytham Woods [funded by CIL], consultation on future works with neighbours, and awaiting the provision of a noticeboard to publicise the future plans for the Park. The aim is for significant work to be completed by the centenary in 2025.

**Diamond Place Working Group** is chaired by Bob Colenutt. A series of workshops between community, OUD [University] and the City Council took place during 2023, and the report is awaited and will be publicised when available. Lobbying for a Health Centre at Diamond Place continues.

**Transport Working Group** Neil MacLennan leads this group which provides community representation on City and County Council groups, and has supported the provision of further bike stands in Summertown [Partly through CIL funds].

**A Planning Working Group** is now established, led by Bob Colenutt. Submissions are made for selected planning applications where these conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan. The Group has started work on updating the 2019 Neighbourhood Plan, and is drafting a response to the 2040 Oxford Local Plan. Response to government guidance and consultations.

**AGM BUSINESS**

Members of the **Steering Committee** are David Nimmo Smith [Chair], Henk van Es [Treasurer], Natasha Robinson [Secretary], Deborah Bryceson, Geoffrey Randell, Bob Colenutt, Chris Pownall and Neil MacLennan. David Madden resigned from the Steering Group earlier in the year, and the Chair thanked him for his contribution to the Forum’s work.

Local Councillors are ex-officio members [Laurence Fouweather, Andrew Gant, John Howson, Tom Landell Mills, Katherine Miles]

**MINUTES OF AGM 2022**

These were published on the website. They were proposed and approved nem con.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

The report is available on the website. Henk van Es, Treasurer, spoke to the report describing the expenditure during 2023 and expected costs in 2024. He explained that our current position remains in status quo but continues to be insecure as we do not receive a regular source of income. We hope to apply for grants to support the revision of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Residents were invited to donate to help the work of the Forum to continue.

The financial report was approved nem con.

**ELECTIONS**

No members of the Forum Steering Committee were required to stand for re-election, and no applications had been received. The maximum number of members is 10, and there are currently 7 elected members and one coopted [Henk van Es].

Henk van Es stood for election [Proposed by David Nimmo Smith and seconded by Bob Colenutt] and was elected nem con.

It was noted the City & County Councillors for the Neighbourhood also attend Steering Committee meeting, ex officio.

**CONSTITUTION [amendments]**

Amendments have been made to the original Forum Constitution to include the additional responsibility of the Forum Steering Committee to monitor and distribute CIL funds. Natasha Robinson explained that this was not a function of the Forum when initially constituted, but first took place during 2020, according to an agreed process developed through public consultation during 2019, and has occurred every year since then. As the amendment has not been available on the website for sufficient time for consultation prior to the AGM, this will be publicised during December and finalised during January according to any responses received. [*post meeting note: no objections were raised, and the amendment was deemed to be* ***AGREED***].

**AOB**

There was none.

**QUESTIONS**

What process was available to remove ‘dead’ cycles to make more cycle racks available for use? Cllr Miles recommended contacting ODS who tag the bikes and then remove them. Cllr Upton also suggested using ‘Fix My Street’.

**INTERVAL**

There followed a 15 minute refreshment break to enable those present to meet the Committee prior to our speaker session.

**PRESENTATION FROM CITY COUNCILLOR LOUISE UPTON, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, AND CYCLING CHAMPION.**

Cllr Upton introduced herself and explained that she had held her cabinet portfolio since May 2023, and would be talking about the Oxford City Local Plan 2040 which is currently subject to Regulation 19 Consultation.

The Local Plan is the City’s tool for managing planning to shape the City and meet the priorities of responding to the climate emergency, addressing the housing shortage, and making Oxford a lovely place for all to live.

The Local Plan is refreshed every 5 years. The last Plan was approved in 2021. This one will last through to 2040.

The Local Plan cannot contradict the NPPF [eg the number and pricing of 1st homes on developments], although it is possible that this might be permitted to reflect Oxford’s very high housing costs.

Consultants are used to provide supporting information. The consultation process has proceeded through the ‘Preferred Options’ exercise, and Regulation 18 consultation. At Regulation 19 stage there is limited opportunity for change, and the Plan is being assessed for ‘soundness’. However all comments submitted will accompany the document when reviewed by the Inspector. It is hope that this Plan will be ready to adopt in 2025.

Key challenges to address in the Plan include managing the booming health sciences economy vs marked inequality within the City – there are 2000 people on the Council’s housing waiting list; traffic congestion is severe and worsening.

Running through the Plan is the need to address the climate emergency through reducing/eliminating embodied carbon in developments; ensuring climate resilience through urban greening factor and biodiversity net gain [>10%]; including flood protection through SuDs.

The intention is to build 9600 new homes and commercial sites can now be converted to housing sites, with a requirement for 50% affordable units, including 32% social housing. Viability assessments may require reduction in these figures using a cascade of priorities [sequential tests].

Employing local people and provision of affordable workspace is needed to support local businesses.

There is a need to protect green and blue spaces, although biodiversity net gain may also be challenged by viability concerns.

The “15 minute city” has become a ‘toxic’ concept, but local and district centres need to be supported to enable key facilities to be available within walking distance.

Health provision is not mandated within the Local Plan, but working with the ICB is essential to ensure their plans for health delivery can be integrated into developments under the Local Plan.

Key planning issues within the City for our neighbourhood include: Oxford North; OUP sports ground; Diamond Place [which is delayed by OUD works in Wellington Sq]. The LP will set out what is expected on each site. Loss of sports facilities will require reprovision.

**David Nimmo Smith thanked Councillor Upton, and invited questions.**

Car free developments: are these realistic if family members have jobs that require vehicles [eg tradesmen, care workers]. LU noted this concern and will respond.

Public transport: racial abuse on public transport is not uncommon and if residents are compelled to use it then public transport must be made safe for all. LU noted this concern and will discuss with the bus service provider [the Council does not manage the bus service]. She stated that 30% of Oxford residents have no car.

Will the structure for approval of the Local Plan effectively disempower the Neighbourhood Plan through the inspection process? LU agreed that the 2 cannot conflict but will seek advice from Head of Planning as to how this can be managed to enable the NP to reflect local priorities.

There is a widely held belief that the City Council does not recognise concerns from our neighbourhood as a priority due to the absence of Labour councillors. LU responded that planning is regulated and apolitical.

LP 2040: is it material when responding to current planning applications? LU stated that it is unlikely to change significantly during consultation and so does carry some weight at its present stage.

Sequential tests: there was significant concern expressed that this approach could result in loss of affordable/social homes being built if developers use viability assessments to limit the numbers. LU stated that the wording of the Plan will be sufficient to resist this.

Climate resilience: are we already too far behind due to approved developments already underway. LU agreed this was potentially a problem as it would not be possible retrospectively to apply LP2040.

Landowners: how can local communities be given more consideration when landowners are not obliged to do so – eg Oxford Colleges whose developments on green spaces around our neighbourhood will have such significant effects?

**The session closed at 9.30pm and David Nimmo Smith thanked Councillor Upton for her presentation.**

**The raffle was drawn, and a bottle of champagne presented to the winner!**