

OXFORD GREEN BELT NETWORK

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Sandford-on-Thames village hall at 7.30pm on Monday 17th November 2008

Present: Ian Scargill (in the Chair) and a total of approximately 30 members of the Steering Committee and representatives of parish councils and amenity groups. At the beginning of the meeting the Chairman thanked Sandford-on-Thames Parish Council for providing the hall and hospitality on the evening.

Apologies for absence were received from Henry Towers, Linda Goffey (on behalf of Stanton St John PC), Janet Carr and Gwendolen Birks (Wheatley PC), Caroline Lister (Elsfield PM), Colin Colbeck (Oxford Park Homes), Cllr Michael Gibbard (Cherwell DC), John Howell MP.

Minutes of the 2007 AGM, having been circulated, were approved. There were no matter arising.

Hon Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year to 30.09.08: Michael Tyce presented the Accounts, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes, and on the proposal of Elizabeth Gillespie, seconded by Liz Shatford, these were approved. At the suggestion of the Hon.Treasurer, a subscription of £15 for 2009 was agreed. The Chairman reported that the Steering Committee would be considering appropriate ways of spending the accumulated balance, perhaps in the form of publicity. The Hon.Treasurer further presented details of which parishes had paid a subscription to OGBN in recent years.

Election of Steering Committee: The following were elected to the Committee: Joe Adams (Kidlington), Jane Baldwin (Eynsham and OPT), Clive Briffett (South Hinksey), Elizabeth Gillespie (Baldons and SODC), Duncan Graham (Sunningwell), Martin Harris (Horspath), Moyra Haynes (Cumnor), Gillian Salway (CPRE), Ian Scargill (OPT), Liz Shatford (Sandford-on-Thames), Henry Towers (Stanton St John), Michael Tyce (Waterstock and CPRE).

It was noted that Michael Tyce had kindly agreed to continue serving as Hon.Treasurer.

Chairman's Annual Report: The Chairman presented a report on the activities of the Oxford Green Belt Network over the past year. A copy of the report is attached to these Minutes.

The Government's proposed changes to the South East Plan:

The meeting was reminded that OGBN, like many other organizations, had responded to the consultation on the Government's proposed changes to the South East Plan, the final date for which had been 24th October. It was expected that the Secretary of State would publish the final version of the Plan in the New Year and that this would then become the definitive regional policy document.

In discussion, Elizabeth Gillespie confirmed that South Oxfordshire District Council, although opposed to the proposed urban extension south of Grenoble Road, had

nevertheless been obliged to make provision for this in the Council's new planning documents.

Martin Harris spoke about the consultation process that had been undertaken in connection with the Plan and explained the grounds on which it might be possible to challenge the legality of the Plan through means of a judicial review. This would need to be done within 6 weeks following publication of the definitive version of the Plan. Possible grounds for the challenge are considered to be: that a Regional Spatial Strategy should not be site specific, and that the Plan might have been based on flawed evidence. It is also doubtful whether the proposal to build the urban extension constitutes the required special circumstances for infringing the Green Belt.

Michael Tyce reported that both District and County Councils had been seeking legal opinion relating to a possible judicial review.

Bob Warne (Sunningwell) raised the question of funding and Elizabeth Gillespie confirmed SODC's commitment to fighting the urban extension if a legal loophole could be found. Bob Warne further urged OGBN to mobilise parish opinion and seek to persuade all Green Belt parishes that a threat to one of them was a threat to all.

Martin Harris observed that one of the strongest arguments against the Plan's emphasis on allowing the further growth of Oxford was the adverse impact that this would have on the city itself.

Hazel Hutton (Oxford Park Homes) described the existing situation at this small estate of "mobile" homes and the fears that existed amongst the residents who would be encircled by the urban extension if it were to take place.

Message from John Howell MP:

The Chairman read to the meeting a message of support in the fight against the urban extension from John Howell MP. In this he drew attention to the damage which the urban extension would do to the local landscape and the quality of life in Sandford and other nearby villages. The Green Belt here is a good example of why the Green Belt was created in the first place.

District Plans:

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that District Councils were well advanced in the preparation of their new Development Frameworks, and he urged parish councils to note the suggestions that had been put to the Districts from land owners and developers keen to promote development on particular sites.

Other Green Belt matters:

Jenny Standen (Radley Parish Council) explained the situation in Radley where Radley College, in return for permission to build houses on the site of the existing village hall, which was in poor repair, would grant the Parish Council a freehold on another site and build for the Council a new hall and two football pitches. This was clearly an attractive offer to the Council, but opinion in the village was not unanimously in favour. The Chairman stated that Joe Adams had attended a public meeting in Radley when the matter had been discussed, and the Committee of OGBN had subsequently considered the matter. No planning application had yet been

submitted but the Clerk of Radley Parish Council had been informed that OGBN was likely to oppose a deal of this kind affecting the Green Belt.

Bruce Tremayne (CPRE Oxfordshire) drew the attention of the meeting to the change of ownership at Oxford Airport and the likelihood of development taking place there. Cherwell District Council have hitherto been protective of the site of the airport but the new owners are claiming permitted development rights on the grounds of this being an aviation site and state that they do not need to ask for planning permission for what they are proposing to do. CPRE is looking into the situation.