

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM HELD AT SOUTH OXFORD COMMUNITY CENTRE

WEDNESDAY 7th MARCH AT 7.30 PM

1. Environment Agency Update on Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme – Richard Harding

RH gave an overview of the scheme with which most people are now familiar. He emphasised the fact that the scheme will not affect the quantity of flood water just how it moves and it is not about moving Oxford's problem on; the modelling has been checked and this will not happen. The presentation can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/oxford-flood-scheme-moves-a-step-closer>

The planning application will soon be made to County Council, there will be a consultation and RH invited people to write letters of support. The work will also be going out to tender shortly and the EA are in talks with the land owners affected by the scheme. Subject to successful planning application and there not being a public inquiry the work could start in 12 months time.

2. Brasenose College Student Accommodation Proposal Update – Philip Parker, Bursar

The college is aware that the sports field site on the Abingdon Road is a very sensitive site - green belt and flood plain. The college had carried out a consultation last year and there had been support for the proposal to open the space up by removing the fencing creating a new local amenity with a footpath to the river. Opposition to the proposed accommodation blocks came largely from those living opposite. The scheme was still in the pre-planning stage. Recently the Environment Agency had made changes to the flood map of the area and the college was looking to see how this would affect the scheme. PP was asked about the White House pub. He confirmed that the lease expired next year and it was too early to say what will happen although if it was not renewed the college might seek to convert the upper part of the building into student accommodation with perhaps a restaurant or similar below. Asked about the disused squash court building he said that it had been nominated as a heritage asset and a decision on this was awaited.

More information about the proposed student accommodation can be found here:

http://www.westwaddy-adp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/311_32_2017-07-20_Design-Review-Boards.pdf

3. Footbridge Marlborough Road to Hinksey Park – Steve Smith Senior Bridge and River Engineer OCC

The bridge is now beyond repair and needs replacing. If the replacement is similar then this will cost in the region of £70k but if it were to be wider the cost would double as it would require new foundations. OCC are consulting on this. The plans can be viewed at the community centre by arrangement and feedback sent to SS by email SSMith3@oxford.gov.uk

4. The Oxford Swift City Project – a talk by Emile Seccombe

Historically Oxford is a swift city and the tower of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History has a large colony which has been studied since 1948. Sadly the swift population nationally is in serious decline and has halved since 1995 largely because of the loss of urban nest sites in our old buildings and modern building design. The project aims to reverse this by increasing awareness. There is a community scheme to provide nest boxes. The public can help by making gardens bird friendly and taking part in the swift survey amongst other things. Information on how to help can be found on the RSPB website or contact Emily Seccombe by email: oxfordswiftcity@rspb.org.uk or by phone 07740515848. This partnership project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

5. Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour - Sergeant Graham Horton Thames Valley Police

The Stronghold Campaign is about creating a hostile environment for open space drug dealing and use. Since it started 24 arrests have been made and 3 offenders have already been imprisoned. Turning Point, a charity which provides support for addicts, has said that the operation is beginning to work; drugs are harder to source in the area.

County Drug Lines is a form of criminal enterprise where city drug gangs identify areas to flood with drugs and use children and vulnerable people as 'mules' and in some cases take over the homes of vulnerable people and use the property as a base for drugs activity. This has been happening in this area. Working in partnership with the city council, arrests have been made and drug dealers evicted from properties including one on the Abingdon Road. Extra resources had been given to the Stronghold Campaign which will continue for the time being.

The feeling of the meeting was that drug dealing and use in the area is blatant. And Sergeant Horton was asked whether crime such as burglary had increased as a consequence. It was the view of the police that the majority of drug users funded their habit by begging.

Sergeant Horton emphasised the importance of the public reporting any information to the police by calling 101 (non emergency) or email OxfordCentralNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

6. AOB

There is a proposal to reorganise GP practices; information can be found here:

<http://www.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk/documents/work%20programmes/oxford-city-locality-place-based-plan.pdf>

The next South Oxford Health Centre patient Participation Group meeting is on Monday 9th April at 7pm, see <http://www.sohc.org.uk/>

Concerns were raised about the proliferation of bicycles left on the streets by users of the new bike Apps. To report abandoned yellow OFO hire bikes or issues with the yellow OFO hire bikes please go to www.ofo.com/uk/en or phone 01865 304048.

To report abandoned Pony hire bikes or issues with the Pony hire bikes please go to www.getapony.com or 01865 950950.