

Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum Annual General Meeting 2024

Minutes of the meeting on 20 November 2024 at 7.45pm, held at Cutteslowe Community Centre

In attendance: Steering Committee members John Bleach (Vice Chair), Paul Buckley (Chair), Tony Dale, Katherine Kaye, Richard Lawrence-Wilson (Treasurer), David Stone, Cllr Steve Goddard (from 9.30pm); and 36 other local residents.

1. Welcome and apologies

Paul Buckley welcomed everyone to the meeting, and expressed thanks to Wolvercote W.I. for providing refreshments. Apologies for absence had been received from Mary Brown, Louise Franklin, Christopher Hardman, and Phillippa Hardman.

2. Minutes of the last AGM on 7 November 2023

The Minutes were approved without any changes.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the Minutes, that were not already on the Agenda.

4. Chair's Annual Report 2024

Chair of the Forum, Paul Buckley, spoke to his Annual Report 2024 on activities of Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum since the 2023 AGM. There were four highlights.

1. The status of WNF as a recognized 'Neighbourhood Forum' had been re-confirmed by Oxford City Council through its formal 're-designation' (something required by law every five years).
2. Paul thanked Steering Committee members by name, for their work as volunteers for the Forum over the past year, and mentioned the few changes in personnel. Paul also summarized activities of the committee during the year, including holding a Public Meeting at Cutteslowe Community Centre on 10 July 2025, and carrying out its two main tasks, as follows.
3. Guided by the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan, the Steering Committee had considered on behalf of the Forum 74 public consultations affecting the Plan area, and had responded to ten of them. The responses concerned applications for planning permission, the Oxford Local Plan 2040, the proposal for a large football stadium in the 'Kidlington Gap', and the proposal for new housing behind Goose Green Close.
4. A major task had been managing applications from community groups for funds to which the Forum has access, from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) collected by the Council from developers. There had been two application rounds, in Spring and Autumn, resulting in a total of 30 applications, requesting £167k in total. All those meeting the criteria had been approved, and funded by the Council.

Paul pointed out that documents relating to 3. and 4. above are all publicly available on the website at www.wolvercotenf.org.uk. He ended by encouraging more volunteers to join the

Steering Committee, to help with the work it was doing on behalf of the Wolvercote community, or to offer assistance in other ways. A wide variety of skills were needed, for the Committee to be really effective in its role.

5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts 2024

The Forum's Treasurer, Richard Lawrence-Wilson, presented his Treasurer's Report and Audited Accounts for 2024. He emphasized that WNF currently had no source of funding itself, so reserves from previous years were diminishing rapidly because of a few continual running expenses, such as web-site fees, poster printing and room hire. However, discussions were under way with the City Council to explore accessing a small portion of the CIL money available, to cover the Forum's expenses in managing CIL applications. To help cover other costs, voluntary donations were very welcome.

Paul Buckley proposed acceptance of the Accounts for 2024. This was seconded by Graham Jones and agreed by the meeting nem con.

6. Elections

- Vice-Chair John Bleach and Treasurer Richard Lawrence-Wilson had reached the end of their terms under the constitution. Paul Buckley nominated them both to serve again in the same roles: JB was seconded by Tony Dale; RLW was seconded by Jo Maldon. There were no other candidates, and their elections were agreed by the meeting nem con.
- There were no candidates for Secretary, so that position remained vacant.
- Several Steering Committee members, Mary Brown, Tony Dale, Katherine Kaye and David Stone, had also completed their terms under the Constitution but agreed to stand again. In addition, Louise Franklin, who had been a co-opted member, stood for election. All were nominated by Paul Buckley, seconded by Christopher Gowers, and elected by the meeting nem con.
- Christopher Dawkins was then nominated by John Bleach, seconded by Christopher Gowers, and elected nem con.
- There remained a single vacancy on the committee, but there were no further candidates, so it remained vacant.

Paul Buckley invited other residents of the WNF area to consider contributing. The committee was able to co-opt other members at any time. Anyone interested was encouraged to get in touch via wolvercotenf@gmail.com.

Interval, with refreshments provided by Wolvercote W.I.

7. The latest from Oxford North

Victoria Collett and Olivia Jane-Nott provided an update on the Oxford North development. The Red Hall and two science laboratory buildings were currently under construction. The Red Hall would be the hub of the development with a café, co-working spaces, and a 'town hall' space open for hire. There would also be 2 acres of green space (Fallaise Park) with sustainable drainage, a market square, cycle and pedestrian paths, a timber cycle pavilion with showers and lockers, and managed parking. The site would open in 2025.

Future amenities planned for the site included a hotel, bistro, nursery, and gym. In addition there would eventually be 480 homes, of which 35% would be 'affordable'. Those on Canalside were already under construction. Victoria emphasized that ON wished to engage

with the local community, and to this end had set up a 'Social Value Steering Group' composed of, among others, representation from the City Council, OXLEP, DWP, Job Centre, Active Learning. ON had taken on apprentices from the local community, had hosted students visiting the site, and had allocated £5 million to deliver public art. ON was currently expecting to pay £4.94m of CIL to Oxford City Council.

8. CIL money for community infrastructure projects

John Bleach reminded those present of what the Community Infrastructure Levy is (a levy paid by developers in our area to Oxford City Council) and explained that Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum can access 25% of it for community infrastructure benefitting this area. Such entitlement resulted from the Forum having created an officially approved Neighbourhood Plan for our area. CIL funds had been paid out since 2021 to support about 50 projects so far, to the extent of about £260,000, with payments of a further £160,000 approved but not yet paid.

John reviewed the range of projects that had already been supported. He also showed a map revealing how the CIL grants to date were distributed across the WNF area, and he encouraged more applications to come from the central and eastern portions of the area.

Tony Dale explained the criteria applied by the Steering Committee when approving CIL grant applications, and explained that, although applications could be submitted at any time, there would be two rounds of decision-making in 2025, with the deadline for the first of these being 17 March, 2025. Details of the application process could be found on the Forum's website at www.wolvercotenf.org.uk, where Guidance Notes were provided together with a blank Application Form for applicants to complete and submit. He invited local community groups to consider how CIL could be of help to them.

Tony concluded by addressing a few questions about CIL. He encouraged local groups and individuals to ask themselves: where are the existing gaps in our community infrastructure, that CIL could help with? What impact will all the new housing in our area have on CIL funding? More housing means more CIL provided by developers, but also means a larger community with more needs to be met.

9. Local developments in the pipeline

Katherine Kaye reviewed further developments planned for in and around the WNF area. She expressed concern that some flood-prone patches of land are close to areas designated for development.

She highlighted building works already under way in the WNF area, additional to Oxford North: 134 dwellings at Priory Grove (east of the Banbury Rd, north of North Oxford Lawn Tennis Club). In the pipeline, with planning permission pending, was housing behind Goose Green Close, adjacent to Oxford North's Canalside. In addition, changes were being proposed to commercial buildings at Jordan Hill, including the creation of a private day treatment health centre. These were currently the subject of some planning applications, with more expected.

Next door to the WNF area there was the large (800 dwellings) Water Eaton housing development already with planning permission but held up by concern of the Environment Agency over surface water pollution risks. In addition, there was the 16,000 seater football stadium proposed by Oxford United Football Club for 'The Triangle' plot next to Kidlington roundabout: this was currently under consideration for planning permission by Cherwell District Council (CDC). Finally, there was land currently occupied by North Oxford Golf Course, which had been designated for housing by CDC, but there was not yet any application for

planning permission.

Katherine emphasized that all these together would cause significant change to our area in coming years. Of special concern to the WNF Steering Committee had been the stadium proposal, and she listed the many problems identified for our area. They were primarily adverse impacts on local roads and the functioning of Oxford Parkway, especially because OUFC planned to provide no car parking for spectators. Because of this, the Steering Committee had submitted several objections to planning permission being granted.

10. Q&A and general discussion

There followed a general discussion of the work of the Forum, in which several questions were raised.

Q: How much CIL money does WNF currently have access to? A: This is variable, growing with time as development takes place, but currently £1.25m: so far approximately £250k has been spent on community projects.

Q: Can WNF invest the CIL money until needed for spending? A: No, the money is not in WNF's possession; it remains with the City Council until paid out to community groups to fund their projects.

Q: Could WNF itself initiate projects and how would they administer them? A: Yes, in principle, but currently not doing so.

Q: Could bidding for CIL money be made more accessible across diversity in the community? A: Yes, the Steering Committee will encourage successful recipients of CIL to make themselves available to advise new applicants as a 'buddy'.

Q: Where will children from the ON residential areas go to school? A: Currently the nearest Primary School with vacancies is Cutteslowe Primary School. Wolvercote Primary School is nearer but is currently full. When Water Eaton is developed, that will include a further Primary School, providing another option.

Q: The public were told the ON development would not be visible from Port Meadow; why was that overturned? A: The plans were approved by the City Council.

Q: Is there scope for residents to suggest facilities to be provided on the ON site? A: Yes, since ON wants to include local residents; the ground floor of the Red Hall is already planned to provide a café, 'town hall' space, and flexible working units.

A GP from the Summertown Health Centre made a plea for help with achieving a new GP surgery, as their current premises in Summertown, Cutteslowe and Wolvercote are inadequate.

In addition, suggestions were made:

- It would be good to have hard copies of the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan available to the public. The Steering Committee would consider enabling this.
- WNF could consider holding online or hybrid (online/in-person) public meetings, to widen the number of residents able to attend.

11. Close

Graham Jones proposed a vote of thanks to the Steering Committee for their work on behalf of the Forum: this was passed by a show of hands. The meeting closed at 10.06pm.