Minutes of the 2nd meeting of 2013 of Representatives of the OPC Highways Committee and Advisory Group held in the Hope Room, Otford Village Memorial Hall on Thursday 14th March 2013

Present:
Cllrs Mrs. J. Howe, H. Leicester and M. Whitehead
Steering Group representatives
S. Yates – School parents
D. Barley – High St Residents
J. Pyman – Otford Sporting Association (OSA)
M. Carter – Otford Village Memorial Halls (OVMH) and OSA
R. Dullage – OVMH
V. Stanley – Otford Methodist Church (OMC)
J. Belfield – Otford Nursery
G. Skinner and J. Cave – Otford Village Traders
R. Clay and D. Palmer Brody – Otford Allotments Association (OAA)
N. Christmann-Cooper – Other parties

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS
1.1 D. Callway (Gatehouse Nursery) and N Caisley (Otford Primary School) absent.
1.2 Mr R. Clay and Mr D.Palmer Brody of OAA introduced to all present.

2. MINUTES
2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2013 were read out by Cllr Mrs Howe.

3. RESPONSE FROM OAA
3.1 Cllr Mrs Howe asked the representatives of the OAA to feedback their position regarding proposals to (i) expand car park into the Allotments and (ii) implement Pay and Display (P&D) in the village car park.

OAA response: RC firstly wished to have it noted that parking restrictions implemented in outer parts of the village (including Tudor Drive and Bubblestone Rd) have resulted in a movement of additional traffic into the centre of the village (car park) creating additional traffic congestion and parking problems. Any profit raised by OPC implementing Pay and Display would be useful for projects to generate other parking facilities/spaces in the village.

(i) RC advised that the Allotments are on Statutory Land; any change of use would require a ‘change of use plea’ to the Secretary of State. OAA would oppose any such plea on the basis that the Allotments are on ‘Statutory Land’, in a conservation area close to an area of outstanding natural beauty. OAA would resist any change of use on this basis.
Cllr Mrs Howe asked their position on basis that alternative land was provided. RC advised that split areas become difficult to manage, there would be land quality issues (esp. with any land closer to the river) and stated that this point would only become relevant should a ‘change of use plea’ be successful, which as noted previously OAA would resist.
(ii) RC advised that the implementation of P&D in the car park posed one small area of concern, which would be the time at which the restrictions would be lifted – they would like them ending earlier in the Summer.

3.2 Cllr Mrs Howe asked if OAA would consider making their own car park area available for the use of High Street residents. RC advised this would again entail a change of use as it would be changing to public use where no public right of way exists.

4. RESPONSE FROM OMC

4.1 VS from OMC confirmed that many school parents already use the church car park during drop off and pick up times. VS advised morning drop off not a big problem, however the afternoon pick up period posed problems for the church as there were many more meetings, groups and activities taking place in the church halls during the afternoon. VS advised that an informal arrangement posed difficulties in terms of restricting parkers during times when the church hall users needed to park. VS confirmed that the OMC have had to place notices on cars regarding parking for church and hall users only. VS confirmed that OMC has not had any direct communication with the school regarding the issue as they don’t have any major objection to parents using the car park, providing their parking is not detrimental to those using the church and halls. VS advised that OMC will be building a new church in the next few years during which time the church parking area will be completely unavailable.

5. RESPONSE FROM OTFORD NURSERY STAFF

Cllr Howe asked how the implementation of P&D in the car park would impact the nursery staff. JB advised that the charges would not be economically viable for nursery staff to pay. It was believed that their employer would not pay/contribute to charges should they be implemented. Cllr Howe requested that the employer be asked to confirm their position. JB said many staff may be forced to leave employment if a solution to their parking situation could not be found. JB commented that the nursery had been awarded ‘Outstanding’ status twice by Ofsted Inspectors and that staff and ultimately the facility would be detrimentally affected by P&D charges.

The possibility of half day nursery workers utilising alternative parking in Bubblestone Rd was raised and JB confirmed half day workers could use this alternative parking, but that many staff worked the whole day and short lunch breaks created a problem for moving vehicles. JB also advised that some staff had previously parked in Warham Rd, but had on occasion received unpleasant and nasty notes on their vehicles from residents there, even though there are no parking restrictions in place.
6. REPORT FROM HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

6.1 Including the Traders Report provided to Cllr Mrs Howe by GS highlighting the detrimental effects the parking issue is having on local businesses. The Traders confirmed that most employees of local businesses have some allocated parking around/behind the business premises (with the exception of Hospices of Hope staff), but that parking (or lack of available parking) for customers wishing to utilise local businesses is detrimental to their livelihoods. The majority of Traders agree the need to remove/relocate all day parkers from the village car park and support the implementation of a charging mechanism. Traders against such implementation include businesses with staff parking in the village car park and those along Sevenoaks Road who are concerned this will push more long term parkers into their allotted parking area outside the shops there.

6.2 There is considerable concern indicated on responses to OPC about stakeholder representation not including other groups outside of the main ones currently included. One particular example included a resident of Pilgrim’s Way East who is unable to walk into the village and cannot shop in local businesses because of the difficulty parking. NCC confirmed that she in part represents other groups in that she travels into Otford from Kemsing. NCC confirmed that parking difficulties mean she can rarely uses the local businesses.

6.3 Another common concern indicated to OPC is the length of discussion time around action to be taken about the parking issue. The general feeling is that the car park issue needs to be addressed urgently and action taken to impact the situation, especially in light of the school expansion and possible changes to the railway access into central London. As such, the focus should be agreeing tariffs to implement P&D.

6.4 JP commented that the proposed High Speed Rail Link to St Pancras through Otford was unlikely to happen for a number of reasons (including track quality and line arrangement to Swanley) according to senior sources within South Eastern Railways.

7. PROPOSALS/IDEAS

7.1 GREEN CAR PARK AND DESIGNATED DROP OFF ZONE.
OPC has responded to KCC and Kent Education on the matter of the school expansion. Their response includes information about risk and liability issues with the car park facility and proposed drop off zone/walking bus in/from the village car park. OPC’s response included proposals for a possible green car park site behind the school (off of Sevenoaks Road) or a designated school drop off/pick up zone along the green verge on the western side of Sevenoaks road (approximately 20 car spaces) aimed at creating a safe drop off/pick up point and minimising traffic congestion in the centre of the village and car park. JP commented he had suggested the western verge for a drop zone approx. 8 months ago and had been advised it would require an extension of the 30mph zone towards Sainsbury’s. Cllr M. Whitehead indicated that this was the case and that feedback OPC has received indicated this might be possible in conjunction with a reduction in speed limit to 50mph along Sevenoaks Rd dual carriageway stretch to the Sainsbury’s roundabout. Cllr Whitehead indicated diagonal parking in the proposed drop zone had been considered too dangerous for re-entry onto the main road (as it would require reversing out).
7.2 RENT A DRIVE SCHEME.
Cllr Howe invited comments on the ‘rent a drive’ scheme. OPC would be happy to advertise the scheme in the Parish office however OPC would not run the scheme. Any arrangements would be privately undertaken between concerned parties. There is a company which runs a scheme which OPC can put people in touch with if they are interested. OPC will advertise the scheme in the Parish newsletter. RD advised there may be house insurance implications for those participating. Cllr Howe said that OPC would investigate with one of the companies that runs such a scheme.

7.3 TRIAL RELOCATION OF ALL DAY PARKERS

7.3.1 School Staff. JP confirmed he had spoken with Mrs N Caisley (Head teacher at Otford Primary School) with the proposal, to which Mrs Caisley seemed amenable. JP advised that SY has further discussed the matter with Mrs Caisley, who had confirmed to SY that the proposal had been fed back to the school staff but that many felt moving the car during their (sometimes restricted lunch break) was not particularly viable. However, she was aware that some staff now park along the Sevenoaks Rd between the Pond and Warham Rd. JB of Otford Nursery commented that moving vehicles for the Nursery staff (like school staff) during their lunch break had been found to be not viable due to variety of factors including restricted lunch periods and late parent pick-ups reducing the available lunch break for staff. JB did confirm that Nursery staff working morning or afternoon only shifts could make use of the restricted parking along Bubblestone Rd and this would be fed back to Nursery staff as a suggestion.

The School have included notices in their newsletter encouraging parents to car share where possible and to walk where viable and safe to do. The newsletter also included a request for feedback from Parents regarding interest in a walking bus from the west end of the village and volunteers to help run such a scheme. Additionally, the school were open to the idea of a ‘walk to school week’ to co-inside with health and fitness awareness projects.

7.3.2 Traders/Businesses employees. GS confirmed that she had spoken with the Hospice of Hope who had confirmed that they have approximately 8 all day parkers in the village car park and then another 15 part time staff who park in the car park for some of the day. They had felt that due to the high number of individuals concerned they felt it difficult to reach out to all the staff regarding the suggestion to make use of other available parking areas, such as Bubblestone Rd. SY commented that the 15 part time staff would be ideal candidates to make use of the restricted parking time frames on Bubblestone Road as their entire shift would fall into one or other of the allowed time frames for parking. SY commented that although these 15 did not take up 15 spaces all day, they probably took up 5 spaces between them throughout the day. GS agreed to revert to Hospice of Hope and stress the need to relocate some of these parkers and the appropriateness of the alternative parking locations.

RD asked about the parking space behind the High Street shops on the northern side of the High Street. GS confirmed that this space is mainly owned by Mr and Mrs Lowry (who own many of the shop premises). They allow 2 parking spaces for any trader leasing one of their premises. JC owns her premises and so has 2 parking spaces available to her. GS advised
she also pays Mr and Mrs Lowry for an additional 7 spaces here for her shop staff to utilise. GS advised most High Street traders and their staff do have parking available to them behind the shops. The exception is the staff in the Hospice of Hope shop/café and offices. Cllr Leicester stressed the point that all relocation of all day parkers is for the benefit of all groups around the table and that we are looking for the community to come together to try and make the necessary parking provisions.

7.4 REMOVAL OF SINGLE YELLOW LINES/RESTRICTIONS IN BUBBLESTONE ROAD.
The group asked about the possibility of the removal of the restrictions, noting that this had pushed traffic into the centre of the village. Cllr Whitehead commented that the residents had requested the restrictions directly with SDC and that OPC had not been involved. They are aware that many areas where the restriction has been imposed are not even outside residential dwellings. OPC have made enquiries about removal, which technically is possible, but costs almost twice as much to remove as it was to put in place, so the process will be a lengthy one. OPC have agreed to try to progress, but reiterate this is not part of the immediate solution.

RD asked the Cllrs if the relocation of 30 all day parkers from the Car Park would mean no P&D. Cllr Leicester advised that many options had been looked at with a view to finding the best mechanism to enable to best use of the car park. P&D had been deemed to represent the best mechanism to achieve this. As there would be no way to guarantee the permanent relocation of a number of all-day parkers without some kind of charging mechanism in place, the relocation of all day parkers would not mean P&D would not be implemented. There was consensus amongst the group that something needs to be done to relocate all day parkers from the car park.

8. IMPACT/PROBLEMS
RD stated that the OVMH biggest booker was looking for an alternative venue due to the proposed P&D in the car park, with at least 2 other bookers similarly affected, representing 10% of the hall’s total revenues. MC and RD also commented on the possible loss of Wedding Business on Saturdays, noting that 5 weddings could equate to 50% of their annual profits. Cllr Leicester asked if the group considered there to be any alternative tariff mechanism to remove all day parkers from the car park. RD advised that the group was experiencing problems on reaching any agreement due to the diverse vested interests represented. Cllr Leicester advised the aim of the group is to find alternative solutions. MC advised that the group recognised the need to remove all days parkers and that without a control (such as a charging mechanism) we could end up with a growing number of all-day parkers. He advised that the group felt that the tariffs felt to be viable amongst the various groups represented were unlikely to be agreeable to a third party profit driven external provider.

Another of the group’s concerns is the money going to an external third party rather than funds coming back into the village. The idea of operating a Charitable Trust to run the car park resurfaced, using an alternative mechanism like Flash Park to remove all day parkers and bringing all profit directly back into the village. JP advised that Indemnity Insurance could be obtained by such a Trust which would remove the liability issue raised by the Parish Council. Cllr Whitehead advised that the Parish Council had investigated use of the Flash park system and it was found that the car parks using it had a very different set of
circumstances and type of usage than the village car park and it was deemed inappropriate by the Council members. Cllr Whitehead advised that the Council runs on behalf of the Village, that a Charitable Trust would not have the same responsibility to the Village as the Council does and that the proposed approach under Flash Park would not generate sufficient funds to create any additional parking facility in the village. The Cllrs advised that some of the funds generated by P&D would come back to OPC with a view to being fed back into the village and particularly other parking solutions. Cllr Whitehead advised the need to return to the Aims and Objectives as set out in the Terms of Reference, noting any change in objectives would require starting the whole process again. Cllr Howe reconfirmed that the consultation process started on the basis of the implementation of P&D in the car park.

9. TARIFFS
9.1 Following discussions, the following tariffs were felt to be acceptable to the majority of groups represented:

**Weekday charges**

1st hr FREE  
2nd and 3rd hrs charged at 50p per hr  
Additional hrs charged at £1 per hr

**Sundays and Bank Holidays**

FREE

**Saturdays**

1st hr FREE  
2nd and 3rd hrs charged at 50p per hr  
All day charge £2

Charging period Mon – Sat from 7am to 6pm.

Annual Residents permits to be available to purchase.

9.2 SY proposed the possibility of providing ‘x’ number of Saturday permits for OSA members and visiting teams. Cllr Howe felt this could be achieved and asked OSA to determine how many permits would be required. MC and JP agreed that 20 permits would be sufficient, which could be interchanged between the various sporting clubs to best suit needs.

9.3 It was noted that parking in OBM car park was free after midday on Saturdays, which some of the Sporting Associations and or parents of children partaking in Sports clubs might be able to make use of.

9.4 It was noted that implementation of P&D would encourage car sharing, reducing general traffic volumes in the village and car park, which was viewed as being a positive result.
9.5 VIABILITY/TARIFF REVIEW
Questions were raised regarding the obligations to a third party provider, shortfalls in profit issues and review of effectiveness of the P&D implementation. Cllr Howe confirmed that there would be a 12 months tie-in to third party provider. She also advised that OPC would review the position after 6 months and again after 12 months to ascertain if the system was alleviating parking problems and/or improving car park usage as well as to ascertain if there would be any shortfall to third party provider’s profit requirements. If this were found to be the case, then either OPC would need to reduce the amount they get back from the third party provider and/or review and amend the tariffs as necessary. SY asked if there would be any input from the group or other parties to any tariff review. Cllr Howe confirmed that only OPC members would have input regarding tariff reviews.

9.6 RESIDENTS PERMITS
DB asked for confirmation of the amount to be charged in light of residents permits in Tonbridge costing only £35 and Chelsea and Kensington £180. Residents feel that £150 is too much, given there is no guaranteed parking space. DB also wanted confirmation of how many permits would be available for purchase given there are in the region of 40 residents cars parking in the car park at present, some of which do stay all day.
Cllr Howe confirmed that 1 permit per household would be available for purchase at £150 per annum, which equates to £3 per week. She confirmed that the permits did not guarantee a parking space (this could not be done legally), but merely a right to park without a ticket if a space is available for use. Cllr Howe queried whether permit charges referred to in Tonbridge related to on road bays or parking in car parks. DB was unsure. DB asked where residents were meant to park, concluding they may be forced to park in alternative locations such as Warham Rd and along the High St. It was noted by various members of the group that parking along the High Street may act as a traffic calming measure and viewed as a good thing. The Cllrs noted the residents’ dissent to the proposed charge for permits and agreed to investigate if the charges could be amended at all.

10. OTHER POINTS
Cllrs confirmed that re-surfacing of the car park is scheduled to take place in August. RD requested they discuss dates directly to see if they could coincide the work with work being undertaken in the halls during which time the halls will be closed.
Cllrs confirmed that there would be some system/bay arrangement changes made as part of the re-surfacing.
Cllrs confirmed that the best way to further the ideas of the green car park and/or drop off zone is via the Parish Councils official response to KCC regarding the school expansion and data presented in connection with that, which they have done. Cllrs agreed that writing to Nick Chard (KCC) regarding the parking issues and needs would be a good idea, including localised publicity of the issues through the Chronicle.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
It was agreed that one further meeting was required to finalise the position. The date of the next meeting was agreed as 18th April 2013 at 8pm
The meeting was closed at 10.30 pm