

# **Annual Parish Meeting – Sibford Ferris**

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013 – 7.30pm

*Held in the classroom above the Sports Hall, Sibford School, Sibford Ferris*

**Apologies** – There were no apologies.

**Attendees** – Joanne Connor (Chair), Maureen Hicks (Deputy Chair), Vanessa Briggs (Clerk), Adrian Lamb, Tim Huckvale, Peter Robinson, Michael Goodwin (Head, Sibford School), Cllr George Reynolds, Peter Hardman (Clerk Sibford Gower Parish Council) and 10 members of the public.

**Minutes of the last meeting** – these were approved by the Chair.

Matters arising from the last meeting were discussed as follows:-

1. Telephone Box in Sibford Ferris. A note was put in the Sibford Scene but there were no responses.
2. Roadside clearance of weeds. This is ongoing over the summer months and there is regular contact with Cherwell District Council resulting in clearance from time to time.
3. Overflowing drains during high rain periods. Kerbing has been put in place which should help with this problem.
4. Bishop Blaize. This is ongoing and is dealt with later on the Agenda.

The Chair addressed the meeting with:-

## **Chair's 2012 / 2013 Report**

“During the last year we have had 6 formal Parish Council meetings. In addition there have been a number of other meetings and presentations attended by Councillors on behalf of the Parish.

Whilst there were no major events this year, we have been working on the development of the remaining area of the multi-use games area, undertaking discussions with Cherwell District Council in relation to rural exception housing as well as keeping essential matters under review, such as speed of traffic through the village, maintenance of verges and hedgerows, and planning applications.

I would like to comment on some activities

- **Multi Use Game Area**

The Multi Use Game Area which was finished in 2011, has continued to be used extensively by the village. We have therefore been actively working in the last year to expand this facility. We have also consulted with Sibford School and young people. The decision has been made to develop the site with fitness equipment and hopefully a

climbing wall. This will be a project we hope to fulfil in the next year albeit the next step is to apply for funding.

- **Sibford Community Plan**

The Parish Council are pleased to report that this year saw the finalisation of the Sibford community plan. It had long been the view of the Parish Council that we should have a Parish Plan, providing us with:

- A way to influence decisions by local authorities and other service providers
- A basis for planned action by people in the parish
- A possible route for winning funds for local initiatives and activities
- A framework to help the Parish Council decide what the community needs us to focus on

The plan in particular identified the following as some of the areas for the Parish Council to focus upon

- Whether the two Parish Councils should merge
- The provision of dog litter bins
- Traffic calming measures
- Ensuring the maintenance and provision of rights of way.
- Provision for recycling.

We have been in contact with Gower Parish Council to discuss the outcome of the plan. We have appointed a Rights of Way co-ordinator.

We would like to thank all the members of the Sibford Community Plan Committee for their hard work in producing what will no doubt be a valuable resource for us all.

- **Main Street**

The Parish Council has again been in discussion with Oxfordshire Highways over pot holes, as well as the state of the kerbing in Main Street, blocked gullies and drains. This year we had repairs to the road surface on Hook Norton Road, together with new kerbing along the south side of Main Street to avoid further verge erosion.

We have also arranged for street lights to be repaired and continually push in the summer for the cutting back of the roadsides and verges.

- **Litter Blitz and recycling**

Talking of verges, the roadsides, paths and verges are a lot cleaner thanks again to the tremendous efforts of the Litter Blitz volunteers who came out on Saturday 30th March to do the annual tidy up. Thanks to all of the volunteers and to Adrian Lamb for organising them.

The Parish Council were invited to provide details of any areas where glass recycling bins could be provided. The council suggested at Sibford Elm, the crossroads before entering the village. This has been agreed and will be placed there shortly. We investigated placing a bin

on that site due to the high level of waste which is left there but we have been advised it is likely to cause more waste to be dumped.

- **Cotswold Close Play Area**

The junior play area in Cotswold Close has again been well used in the last year. The equipment has stood up well, and with the grass cut regularly by Gerry Melvin, the area has been kept tidy and attractive. A weekly inspection has been carried out by volunteers. Our thanks must go to John and Lynn Woodvine for assisting with these inspections. The annual external inspection gave it a clean bill of health.

- **Churchyard**

The issue of maintaining the graveyard at Sibford Church continues to be an area of discussion. Two years ago the following the APM we agreed to contribute towards this cost. This was fixed at £300 per year.

However, there is a possibility this costs may increase. Sibford Gower Parish Council has now received formal notification of the intent of the church authorities to relinquish control of the churchyard to the local civil authority under the provision of the act regulating disused churchyards. This does not affect the new burial ground which is owned and administered by the two Sibford Parish Councils.

The legal duty for the churchyard falls in the first instance on the local Parish Council of Sibford Gower, but the Ferris has indicated they may be prepared to help, provided the costs are reasonable.

The Gower Parish Council has to decide whether they wish to accept responsibility; if they refuse, responsibility is handed on to Cherwell and they cannot change our minds later. The disadvantages of accepting responsibility are the costs and legal hassle involved in continuing maintenance; the advantages are that the community retains control of a local open space.

We understand Gower Parish Council is in contact with Cherwell, who have not yet replied; they have made contact with Hook Norton Parish Council, who manages their churchyard. Maintenance involves a contract for grass mowing and shrub clipping: the chairman and a churchwarden liaise over monitoring this. The contract is for mowing six times a year. There is no problem about litter, confetti etc. The contractor needs third party insurance and proper registration.

Every three years the tombstones are inspected by an expert. If they are considered dangerous they can be laid flat, which may cause distress to families and can lead to a requirement to try and trace the families involved. A significant undertaking which will ultimately incur more costs to both Parish Councils.

Gower Parish Council need to decide whether to accept the duty or not. It would be perfectly reasonable to pass it on to Cherwell on the grounds that two Parish Councils are involved. The cost to the public purse would doubtless be greater and local control would be lost. We feel it is also incumbent upon Ferris of to discuss it with our parishioners and to provide feedback to Gower about the level of support we will provide to the costs. We have

been of the view we contribute towards the costs by a fixed amount and it is then for Gower to decide how it is spent.

- **Housing**

Some of you may be aware the Sibfords have been identified under the local plan as villages that would be expected to take further housing developments. With this in mind, and in particular the need which has been highlighted in local housing questionnaires for affordable housing for local people, the Parish Council has been discussing with the council the possible development of a site on Hook Norton Road for rural exception housing.

Rural exception housing provides low cost housing for people with local connections. In order to fund the site it may be accompanied by some private housing. We have stated Ferris Parish Council believe rural exception housing is required but if there is a development of such houses, this must be accompanied with improved provisions for the existing villagers. The Sibford Ferris Parish Council has therefore looked at the inclusion of further green space so that any development would provide for green space next to the existing housing on Hook Norton Road and then the additional housing. This remains an area of discussion at this stage.

- **Sibford Ferris Parish Council**

This year has seen a number of changes for Sibford Ferris Parish Council. Our former Chair Chris Franklin stood down last year following the Annual Parish Meeting. I would like to thank him for all his hard work for the Sibford Ferris Parish Council over the years.

This year also saw the loss of John Simms who died last summer. John worked tirelessly for Sibford Ferris Parish Council. His contribution to our village cannot be overestimated. John was still attending meetings shortly before his death and finding time to look at planning applications and communicate on these issues. He will be missed by us all.

I am though pleased to report that Sibford Ferris Parish Council has been joined by Tim Huckvale and Peter Robinson who are now well ensconced in their roles. I am currently chair and Maureen vice. Adrian is our responsible financial officer. Vanessa Briggs remains our clerk.

Finally, I should like to thank the following people:

- My fellow Parish Councillors for their work and support in the last 12 month.
- Vanessa Briggs, for all her work as our Parish Clerk.
- Our District Councillor, George Reynolds, who regularly attends our Parish Council meetings, helping us with enquiries and information we require from both Cherwell District Council and Oxford County Council.
- Richard Hartree and Sue Mattinson for their leadership of the Sibford Community Plan Project.
- All the volunteers who give their time for the collective good as mentioned previously.

- Sue Rowley for handling the annual internal audit of the Sibford Ferris Parish Council accounts
- Adrian Lamb and his team for producing the excellent Sibford Scene
- Sibford School for providing a meeting room for us and for their co-operation on the play area and other village matters,
- and last but not least yourselves, for your interest and for attending this meeting.”

As Councillor George Reynolds had to leave the meeting by 7.50pm the Chair then handed over to Councillor Reynolds for any comments he wished to make and to the public to put any questions to him. Councillor Reynolds said he hoped that the Parish Council were satisfied with the new kerbing that had recently been put in. It was agreed that the Parish Council were pleased that the work had been completed. Adrian Lamb said that he had received one complaint that the work had taken 3 weeks and not 5 days as stated in the notices put through local residents’ doors. Councillor Reynolds did indicate that there was a lot of paperwork now needed when these projects were carried out.

Michael Goodwin raised a concern about the condition of the gated road between Sibford Elm and Wigginton. Councillor George Reynolds said that he had reported it as had Swalcliffe Parish Council. As the worst affected part of the road falls within Sibford Ferris Parish Council’s boundary it was agreed the Parish Council should report it as well.

The Chair then handed over to the Responsible Financial Officer for his report:-

### **Financial Report to 31 March 2013**

“The total spend for year was £6,277.53. This was £777.53 more than the precept for the year but with one off grants relating to the Jubilee celebrations and the Community Plan our total income for the year was £7,070.92. This means that £793.39 have been added to reserves replacing our extra spending in the last financial year.

The Community Plan accounts have been separated as they are now completed and show all transactions over the three years.

Our budgeted spending was as expected except that, in addition to budget, a £300 donation was made to the Jubilee celebrations and a £400 grant from Cherwell District Council was passed to the Village Hall committee to help fund the celebrations over the weekend. £86 was spent on training courses for the Clerk and councillors during the year. This was offset by lower than budgeted costs for play area maintenance, insurance and burial ground maintenance.

The total bank balance at the end of the year was £9,469.16.

The draft accounts will be presented to the Parish Council for approval. They will be made available to the public 14 days before being sent to the external auditor early in July. Before being sent to the external auditor Mrs Sue Rowley has agreed to take on an internal audit, which will also take in some of the procedures safeguarding the public funds for which the

Parish Council is responsible. I would like to thank Sue on behalf of the Parish Council for undertaking this role.

This is the end of the financial report.”

The Clerk then read out the short annual Wheathills Report sent from the Clerk of the Town Estate Charity as follows:-

“The tenant (of Town Estates Trustees) at Wheathills has asked for clarification on the use of Wheathills as the community plan had referred to it as “common ground” and therefore some villages had thought it was for general use. The Trustees’ response to this is: Wheathills is managed by the Town Estates Charity’s trustees on condition that it is never sold for housing and that it should always remain an open view for villagers to enjoy but it is not “common ground” as it is rented out as grazing land”.

The Chairman then advised the meeting that **Muriel Chandler from the Village Hall Committee** was unable to attend to present her annual report so the report had been forwarded to the Clerk to be read as follows:-

#### ANNUAL VILLAGE HALL REPORT FOR SIBFORD FERRIS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 29.3.13:

“During the last year Sibford village hall continues to be supported by all our regular groups and now also have art classes on a Monday working with pastels and on Fridays with water colours. We still have karate classes on Mondays and Saturdays and now have yoga classes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

We do appreciate the annual donations from your Parish Council which does help with the ever increasing costs of running the hall and keeping facilities up to date. We recently had an energy audit which only cost the hall £160, obtaining funding from toe2 for the other £500 and are now awaiting the report from this and expect that we may have to do quite a lot of work to make the hall more energy efficient. Again we will do our best to obtain grants to help with this work. We have a quotation for around £1200 to update the efficiency of all the radiators in the large hall but our first grant application has been refused so we have to look elsewhere for funding.

Our Easter egg hunt on Good Friday was very successful with 103 children taking part over two trails again set by Joan Broady with our ‘live’ Easter bunny keeping the children entertained and thanks go to all who helped make this such a success especially the Lamb family from the Ferris.

We have our annual fayre with the dog show, many entertainments and BBQ on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June this year at the hall and look forward to the support of the local residents. Unfortunately the very popular band ‘Damn Right I Got The Blues’ are not able to come to Sibford this year due to the two leading members having many more commitments but have promised to do their best to return in 2014. This is one of our largest fund raising events so is disappointing. The village hall lottery game will soon be starting which again helps to bring in funds – anyone who would like to join in the fun can ring 780025. We will also have another quiz night later in the year and at the moment have monthly film nights.

We have suffered from this winter's weather conditions causing emergency work, coupled with the fact that this year both Christmas and Easter seemed to last for a longer period with less hirers using the hall.

Although our income for the period from 6<sup>th</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 was higher than for the same period in the previous year, this was cancelled out by the increased expenditure for the same period. Since the end of December because of the wintry weather continuing, expenditure will have risen even further. I do not have our annual accounts to 5<sup>th</sup> April 2013 to hand as yet so cannot give you a full picture. I am however confident that, with the new classes now starting we can look forward to an improved picture in 2013/14.

We have recently had two members retire from the village hall committee but we have been lucky in having three members recently come on to the committee. We are now looking forward to reducing some of the work for the members who have been on the committee for some years and getting other members to share the key roles."

**The Chair then thanked the Clerk and passed to Michael Goodwin, Head of Sibford School, to provide an update to the meeting.**

Michael informed the meeting that the school was on budget. Although it had been hit slightly by the recession it was now totalling 412 pupils and the main growth area had been the junior school. There had been an expansion of early years and so the use of the buildings had been slightly rearranged to cope with the expanding area.

Recently energy had been put in to improving the outside areas and there was now a small farm area which included calves, lambs and pigs.

There had also been the completion of the Hall project, it had been re-roofed, re-clad, extendable seating had been installed together with a new stage and sound and light system. It was used by the local community on Saturday mornings during the arts and dance classes that were currently running. 300 families also used the School swimming pool for lessons.

The Chair thanked Michael.

**There were no representatives from Thames Valley Police but they had sent a short statement to be read by the Clerk as follows:-**

"Thames Valley Police will be launching a Neighbourhood Action Group Survey on/around 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013. This is an opportunity for rural people to set out their top priorities for the Neighbourhood Action Group for the next 12 months. Information about how to do this will be available in the media nearer the time."

### **The Chair then read out an update on the Bishop Blaize:-**

“This last year has seen a raft of applications for planning permission in respect of the Bishop Blaize. Whilst not in our Parish the Sibford Ferris Parish Council are aware of the villagers’ concerns and we continue to make representations following each application.

Last August saw an Appeal against the change of use. Sibford Ferris Parish Council made oral representations at the hearing. A further Appeal against change of use is listed for 22<sup>nd</sup> May and again we have made representations.”

A member of the public asked if there was a limit on the number of times appeals can be made and was informed there was not. It was confirmed the upcoming hearing was in respect of an appeal against the decision by Cherwell District Council to refuse planning permission for change of use. The hearing was in respect of the public house only and not the land below.

Michael Goodwin raised the issue of the container that had been removed and said that a number of parents from the School had indicated their concerns at it being left there.

There were questions about the upcoming hearing on 22<sup>nd</sup> May and whether representations could still be made on line. Although this was not now possible, it would still be possible to make representations in person by attending the hearing at Bodicote House, Cherwell District Council, Bodicote, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, providing you signed in at the beginning of the hearing. A coach was leaving Sibford Gower Village Hall at 9am and if anyone required a seat they should contact Richard Butt on 01295 780352. The hearing is due to start at 10.00am.

### **The Chair raised the matter of the Closure of the Churchyard**

The Chair said that this issue had now been raised as the Parochial Church Council had applied for closure of the Churchyard as it is now full. As the Churchyard is in the Gower, it will be Gower’s decision to take as to whether or not they want to take on the responsibility of the Churchyard and all that it entails or whether they want to pass that responsibility onto Cherwell District Council.

The difficulty for Sibford Ferris Parish Council would be that it would involve spending money raised in their Parish in another Parish and so it would have to be by way of contribution as only. Sibford Gower Parish Council would have to enter into contracts with any companies or individuals in relation to any maintenance, insurance etc that was required. One of the problems in the past was coming to agreement on the way the Churchyard was maintained, the Gower preferring a more manicured Churchyard to the Ferris.

It was understood that Sibford Gower Parish Council were information gathering at the moment and had been in contact with Hook Norton Parish Council who were responsible for their Churchyard. Peter Hardman, Clerk to Sibford Gower Parish Council also said that they were waiting to hear back from Cherwell District Council to establish that if the



responsibility is handed to Cherwell District Council whether the running costs would come out of the general purse or whether an extra charge would be made. Peter Hardman said that the general maintenance costs paid by Sibford Gower Parish Council had been a lot lower than quotes received for the same work 5-6 years ago. It was also understood by a member of the public that the cost of Cherwell doing the work would be a lot higher, as on top of the contractors an extra 12.5% administration fee would be charged.

Until all the information required had been gathered no decision would be made and it was suggested that a public meeting should be held before making the final decision in due course.

### **The Chair raised the matter of concurrent Annual Parish Meetings for Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower Parish Councils**

This had been raised by way of letter by Sibford Gower Parish Council to be put forward for decision at the Annual Parish Meeting. The general view was that it would not be a good idea.

### **The Chair opened the meeting to discuss Any Other Business and the following issues were raised:-**

A member of the public raised the matter of Wheathills and was concerned that the land was being used for more than grazing, as machinery and cars were being parked and left in the fields. He wondered if the Trust was being properly compensated for this and asked if the Parish Council could raise this issue with the Town Estates Charity.

Richard Hartree asked why there was no specific mention of Community Plan on the Agenda. The Chair said that it was because the issues arising from the Community Plan were now being dealt with individually and were mainly covered in her Report. Examples of this were the fitness equipment being looked at for the Multi Use Games Area. Appointing a rights of way officer. Discussing concurrent Annual Parish Meetings, exchanging Minutes of Meetings and Agendas with Sibford Gower Parish Council. Dealing with glass recycling. Generally the Parish Council had been busy taking matters forward resulting from the Community Plan.

The matter of faster broadband was also raised. Tim Huckvale reported that he had recently seen correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council raising hopes of superfast broadband in the Sibfords. Although nothing would be confirmed until June when the outcome of negotiations and details of the service each area will receive will be given.

A member of the public asked what was going to happen to all the soil in the Sib Valley from the work carried out at Sibford Hall. Tim Huckvale confirmed that he had been to see the owner regarding this and they confirmed that the soil would be spread evenly over the paddock.

The Solar Planning application was raised. The application had been passed by Cherwell District Council with numerous conditions. The permission was for 25 years. The height of

the panels and the hedging were discussed. Also where the panels would be visible from once the screening was in place. It was asked whether the possible affect on health had been considered. A member of the public asked why the local community do not directly benefit from the solar panels.

One further concern was raised of badger setts being filled in the same area.

With there being no further business to discuss the Chairman again thanked all who had attended and the meeting was closed.