

# **Annual Parish Meeting – Sibford Ferris**

Wednesday, 9 July 2014 – 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), Adrian Lamb, Tim Huckvale, Peter Robinson, Anita Spencer (Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer), Cllr George Reynolds, Michael Goodwin (Head, Sibford School), Muriel Chandler (Sibford Village Hall), Richard Hartree (Community Plan) and 7 members of the public.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

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

Matters arising from the last meeting would be dealt with during the meeting.

## **Chair's 2013/14 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.

This year has seen the continuing development of the remaining area of the multi-use games area with the addition of fitness equipment. The Parish Council has also had discussions with Cherwell District Council in relation to rural exception housing which resulted in an open event in June 2014 to provide information to parishioners. We have also kept essential matters under review, such as speed of traffic through the village, maintenance of verges and hedgerows, and planning applications. Agreement has also been reached with Sibford Gower over the maintenance of the old churchyard.

I would like to comment on some activities

- **Multi Use Game Area**

The Original Multi Use Game Area development was finished in 2011, has continued to be used extensively by the village so much so that it is worth reminding those parents amongst us that it is only to be used by villagers outside of Sibford School hours.

In addition to the games area, we have added fitness equipment. We obtained help with funding through our District Councillor, George Reynolds for whom we thank. Unfortunately we did not obtain any additional funding although applications were made. We are still hopeful additional funding maybe successful so that we can develop the remaining area.

I would like to thank Sibford School for their assistance with the development of the area and continued use of the schools land. I would also like to thank Adrian Lamb and Peter Robinson for their time and effort. Adrian kindly arranged collection and fitted the equipment saving the PC a significant sum of money.

- **Sibfords Community Plan**

Last year saw the finalisation of the Sibford community plan. The PC has continued to refer to the plan when considering how to improve Sibford Ferris.

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.

Recycling bins have been introduced at Sibford Elm. The PC keep an eye on them and report if they are full. After initial teething issues about timing of emptying this now appears to work well but if anyone has an issue it can be brought to our attention.

We have been in contact with Gower Parish Council to discuss the merging of Councils but this has not progressed any further. However, there is good communication and sharing of information between the Councils to benefit our parishes.

- **Main Street**

The Parish Council has again been in discussion with Oxfordshire Highways over pot holes, as well as blocked gullies and drains.

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 in April to do the annual tidy up. Thanks to all of the volunteers and to Adrian Lamb for organising them.

- **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 has, I am pleased to report now been agreed.

By way of background, Sibford Gower Parish Council 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 indicated it would be prepared to help, provided the costs are reasonable.

The Gower Parish Council has agreed to accept responsibility at this time. They have not yet, as I understand received notification of closure but it is imminent.

The cost of maintaining the churchyard went out to tender. The two Councils agreed the lowest quote – all participants having been given the same schedule of work. SFPC is now making a donation to SGPC to cover a share of those costs. It is an equal share based on the tender accepted. However, it is for SGPC to decide how much to spend on maintaining the churchyard and they can spend more if they chose to do so without incurring extra costs to SFPC.

SFPC are pleased a framework for the churchyard has been agreed and the Councils have worked hard to reach the agreement in the best interests of its Parishioners.

- **Housing**

The Sibfords were 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 discussed 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.

There has been a recent open event to enable villagers to look at the plans. It remains an area for discussion and comment.

With any development SFPC want to ensure there is a green open space. I am aware there have been comments it is not needed. WE are blessed with countryside around us but it is not always accessible for certain activities e.g. children learning to ride their bikes, playing cricket, flying a kit. Not all our houses have large gardens.

- **Sibford Ferris Parish Council**

This year has seen an election for the SFPC. The first in a very long time. It is a credit to this village that we have more parishioners wishing to be involved with the Council than we have members. So many parishes suffer with a lack of interest. I would like to thank all of those who put themselves forward for election and all those who voted.

The results of the votes were the election of myself, Maureen Hicks, Adrian Lamb, Tim Huckvale and Peter Robinson.

There has been a change in the clerk to the Council. I would like to thank Vanessa Briggs for her time as clerk. She moved us into the digital age with emails, was efficient and helpful. We are though just as fortunate to have Anita Spencer returning in the Clerks position. Anita has previously been the Clerk and has returned for another stint for which we are very grateful to have her with us.

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 and to Anita Spencer for returning to the role.
  - 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 continued efforts for 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.
- I will now handover to the Responsible Financial Officer for her report:"

### **Financial Report to 31 March 2014**

"The Responsible Financial Officer for the year covered by this report was Councillor Adrian Lamb. He handed over the role to myself at the Annual Parish Council Meeting on 2 June and should receive our thanks for temporarily looking after the accounting side of the Parish Council's duties.

Thanks also go to Sue Rowley of Burdrop for once again carrying out the internal audit of the accounts and accounting systems during the year.

In the year to 31 March 2014, the budget was set at £6779 and the total amount payments for the year were £4825. The difference between the sums is mainly due to the following:

1. The anticipated costs associated with the closure of the churchyard did not occur in the year.
2. Switching insurance companies achieved a reduced premium.
3. The Clerk's wages were reduced against budget because she gave up the role of RFO.

One item was significantly higher than budget, which was maintenance of the burial ground, shared with Sibford Gower Parish Council, budgeted at £250.00 with an actual payment of £492.50. The additional amount arose as a result of work carried out during the year to 31 March 2013 for which a contribution was not sought until the year to 31 March 2014.

Receipts for the year were £10,436.24. The precept of £6779.01 was boosted by grants under the New Homes Bonus Scheme, which for Sibford Ferris totalled £3370.00. The money was for improving community facilities and was put towards the purchase of the new fitness equipment adjacent to the MUGA, which occurred in the current financial year.

The bank balances at the 31 March 2014 (less uncashed cheques) totalled £14,965.77.

The accounting documents for the financial year were made available for public inspection between 9 June and 4 July and the annual return has been submitted to the external auditor. The completed return, with any issues arising, will be received in time for the next parish council meeting, on 8 September. No significant issues were raised by the internal auditor.

This is the end of the financial report for 31 March 2014."

### **Wheathills Report**

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

“At the Trustees’ meeting on 9 October 2013 the Trustees agreed that their tenant should be asked to clear away the broken down vehicles which were littering the field. This is the second time such a request has been made to the tenant.

At the Trustees’ meeting on 5 February 2014 it was reported that vehicles had been removed from the field.

There had been a request for the roadside hedge to be cut back but it is hoped that this may one day be laid in a traditional manner and it was decided not to act on this at the moment.

A tree in the boundary hedge with Mr Hobson’s property had some dead branches and Alan Berks [the tenant] has agreed to fell this when the ground dries sufficiently to allow heavy tractors on to the field”.

### **Village Hall Report**

Muriel Chandler then read out the Village Hall Report for 2013/14 on behalf of the Village Hall Committee, as follows:

“The Village Hall Committee very much appreciates the annual donation from the Ferris Parish Council.

During the last year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 our income against the previous year was slightly down from both our regular users and private hirers although our expenditure was less.

We lost the two adult karate classes during the year and now only have one class on a Saturday morning for youngsters. Pilates also now only have one class per week although yoga classes have recently increased to three classes a week and two art classes take place every week in term time. Tots & Babies use the hall in term time twice a week and Beavers, Cubs and Scouts use the hall most weeks excluding summer holidays and the same societies continue to use the hall including the parish councils, Holy Trinity Church and on occasions the local schools.

We are pleased to report that we have been able to recruit a number of people onto the Village Hall Committee who are bringing in new ideas for fund raising and we recently had a “Dog Walkers’ Breakfast” on a Sunday morning which was enjoyed by all who took part and over the last two months the private hirings have increased and we are getting further enquiries including one couple thinking of having their wedding in our hall – it has been a long time since we have had a wedding here. It was decided that the Annual Dog Show should be held on a separate date from the Annual Fayre and we had this in June when 41 dogs took part and we raised £483. We have a number of other fund raising events planned for the remainder of this year which includes our Annual Fayre on this coming Saturday and includes some ideas not tried previously. We will also have more film nights, a bridge drive on an afternoon in October, a Quiz Night in November and hopefully a band performing before the end of the year – all will be advertised in the Sibford Scene and with posters. It is interesting to note that from the regular users 12% of hall usage is by our more senior citizens and 42% by young people under the age of 16.

As we explained at last year’s Parish Meeting and as the Village Hall was built nearly 60 years ago and with the accelerating cost of heating oil and electricity, we took advantage of commissioning an energy audit with funding from TOE2. Since 1957, the Management Committee have spent time and effort maintaining the fabric of the building and generally ensuring the building is fit for the various users and in 2002, the Small Hall was built with a new kitchen etc with the help of Lottery funding.

From the energy audit, it was suggested there were three areas for improvement – the main hall lighting, the main hall insulation and lobby. In addition, the Committee have agreed that the main lavatories and the car park need urgent attention and initial research indicates that the cost of these improvements will be between £60,000 and £80,000. The plan is to greatly reduce the running costs of the hall and at the same time improve the ambience and fabric of the building. It is felt that the hirers will benefit from these improvements. They will also help keep the hiring cost to local organisations at a reasonable level. Currently, village organisations enjoy a substantial discount on the actual hourly cost of running the hall, the shortfall being made up with income from outside hirers and village hall organised events.

The Committee will be looking for grant funding and donations to meet the bulk of the costs but in the current climate, as these amounts are likely to be under £5,000, a substantial amount has to be raised as evidence of ‘good intent’ to obtain any grants at all. This is why the Committee has plans to run a series of events where all the proceeds will go into a refurbishment fund, although we still have to have some fund raising events which go towards the everyday upkeep of the hall. We are happy to say the first £50 donation has been received from Mr Jules Procter, the story-teller who came to the hall recently and will, we hope, return and the profit from both the Dog Walkers’ Breakfast and the Annual Dog Show will go to the refurbishment fund. One of our members has made a “Village Hall” donation box, which I have brought to this meeting, and this will be out at all our fund-raising events. We look forward to the whole community enthusiastically supporting our efforts in this major project.

We will have our Annual General Meeting on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm in the hall, followed by an open meeting when we will display the refurbishment programme and we look forward to seeing you there.”

The Head of Sibford School, Michael Goodwin, was then invited to give an update on the School’s activities during the past year. Mr Goodwin chose in this year’s report to concentrate on the contribution the School makes to various aspects of village life as well as to the wider community, as follows:

#### **“Sibford School: a village amenity**

As part of our community development plan we are keen to demonstrate a commitment to others by sharing resources.

In the past year this has been demonstrated through a number of activities including (in no particular order).

#### **Swimming Pool**

Our 25m swimming pool is used extensively by the local community.

In addition to providing public sessions the pool hosts:

Regular swimming lessons: ranging from Ducklings, (a first chance for pre-school children from the age of 2 ½ to 4 years to build water confidence) through to Sharks (our advanced session which enables to children to work on the finer technical points of four strokes ... breast, front crawl, back stroke and butterfly). We also run Rookie Life Guard sessions. Some 300 children take these lessons each term.

Lessons for local state primary schools: we already run teaching sessions for Sibford Gower, Brailes, Shenington and Bishop Loveday and from September 2014 will also be teaching pupils from Newbold and Tredington.

For two years running we have hosted the North Oxfordshire Schools Sports Partnership Aquathlon which involves between seven and 10 other schools.

The pool is now a regular training venue for Four Shires Swimming Club. Other users include Banbury Canoe Club, Team Cherwell. We also host single sex sessions for a local Asian group.

### **Sports Facilities**

We are part of the North Oxfordshire Schools Sports Partnership. As part of our involvement we provide our facilities free of charge for partnership events. In addition to general sport events (including the Aquathlon mentioned above) other events have included hosting Dance Festival and a Strictly Come Dancing competition.

Sibford has this year become one of only 19 MCC Foundation Cricket Hubs in the UK. A pilot scheme of six Hubs was launched in 2011 following concern that cricket was not played in over 78% of state schools. The scheme, which brings together an independent school, state school(s) and cricket club(s) proved a huge success and has now been expanded to 19 Hubs. As host of the North Oxford Hub Sibford is partnered with Bicester North Oxford Cricket Club, Great and Little Tew Cricket Club & Banbury Cricket Club. Pupils from Gosford Hill in Kidlington, Bicester Community College, Cooper School in Bicester, Heyford Free School and Chipping Norton School have all benefited from the Hub.

Sibford was also chosen to host the Oxfordshire regional tournament of the Northampton Saints 2014 Elite Insurance Sevens Series for Under 13 rugby players ... the final of which took place at Northampton Saints home ground. This event formed part of our annual Rugby Sevens competition.

We are host to the Sibford Super Sprint Triathlon and the Team Cherwell Junior Triathlon.

### **Muga**

Sibford helped finance, and provides the up keep for, the Community Multi Use Games Area which was opened in 2011. This year the area was extended to include outdoor gym equipment.

### **Lunches**

Sibford provides weekly lunches to the Fielding day centre.

### **Festival of Theatre**

Sibford's annual outdoor theatre production by the Rain or Shine Theatre Company has become a firm fixture in the village calendar. Comments received this year include: "Another excellent performance – thank you for sharing your garden and the production with the wider community" and "What a fun evening, yet again. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves."

### **Physics Workshops**

Practical work is vitally important when it comes to engaging pupils in science and enhancing understanding ... yet many local primary schools don't have the room or facilities necessary to undertake practical work. In June we ran Physics workshops for pupils at Hook Norton and Christopher Rawlins enabling them to benefit from using our facilities to undertake a number of experiments.

### **Author visits**

We have an on-going programme of author visits at Sibford and regularly invite other local schools to join us for these.

### **Theatre**

In December we invited a number of local primary schools to our performance of the musical Oliver! Some of the children who attended had never been to a theatre before and found the experience mesmerizing.

Since refurbishing our hall in 2012 we have seen an increase in the number of outside groups wishing to use these facilities. Bookings in recent times have included Banbury Rotary Club (Young Musician of the Year); I Stage Theatre Company; Susan Taylor Dance Academy; Dance Unlimited, Kaleidoscope Theatre Company

### **Holiday Play Scheme**

We operate our Fun in the Country Holiday Play Scheme in most of the major holidays and half terms. Many of the children attending are from local state primaries.

### **Employment**

The school is of course a significant employer – teachers, teaching assistants, catering, grounds, maintenance, office and administrative staff adding considerable value to the local economy

### **Community Classes**

At different times we have run a number of community classes that have included Life Drawing, Pottery, Stone Carving, Dance. We also make our facilities open to outside users running community classes eg I Stage Academy, community Trampolining, Waterbabies.

### **Sibford Post Office**

Both students and staff spend a considerable amount over the counter at the Post Office.

### **Mini Buses**

We regularly make our mini buses available to local uniformed organisations.

Sadly, these positive contributions have been dented this year in three ways.

We have suffered a number of thefts, especially from our horticulture area – at different times we have lost plants (shrubs uprooted, turf cut!, flowers cut), a hosepipe, a heater for the greenhouse...and more.

Damage has been done to the grounds by, we suppose, young people driving their vehicles in circles round and round the pitches, making deep tyre treads.

Young people using our football pitches – there have been complaints about their bad language and the litter they have left, but above all we have had to stress that the strict changes to safeguarding regulations mean that for us to guarantee the safety and well-being of our pupils we have to insist that young adults (16 or over) simply cannot be present on school grounds without a visitor's badge, or use school facilities without booking. This applies in the school holidays too, when we have a duty of care to the organisations that lease our facilities for their exclusive use."

The Chair thanked Mr Goodwin for his report.

### **Review of Community Plan**

Richard Hartree was then asked to give a brief summary of the review of the Community Plan carried out by himself and Sue Mattinson during the year. He reported that most of the items that had required action from the Parish Council had made progress. There had been less success with those items requiring voluntary input – many of the ideas highlighted during the plan's development had not happened. The only successful activity that had emerged was the walking group, although the 90 or so initial supporters of the idea had dwindled to 10 to 20 people actually participating. Mr Hartree wondered if it would be worth appealing again for volunteers in order to realise some more of the ideas identified by the Plan. Joanne Connor reported that having the Plan had been very useful for the Parish Council. She thanked Richard Hartree for his contribution and report.

Although invited, there were no representatives from either **Thames Valley Police** or **Oxfordshire Highways**.

**The Chair then opened the meeting to discuss other matters and updates were given as follows:-**

### **Affordable Housing**

Maureen Hicks reported that feedback from the Drop-In Meeting at the Village Hall had all been passed on to the various organisations involved in moving the scheme forward. She explained that the option holder was



due to submit an outline planning permission to Cherwell District Council and that the developer was proposing to put in six affordable homes and two open-market houses and that they were aware of the requirement to include an amenity space. There was still a discussion to be had on where to site the space. The hope was that a strip of allotments could also be included, to be managed and allocated jointly with Sibford Gower. The Clerk has a list of interested parties. Cllr Hicks reported that the main opportunity for detailed comment would be when the full planning application was submitted. Comments could be made by letter or on line.

Members of the public were invited to ask questions and the following issues were raised:

*Comment:* The “green” credentials of the site were lacking.

*Response:* Cllr Hicks suggested this could be requested at the planning application stage. She reported that she and Cllr Huckvale had visited a site at Steeple Aston and they had been impressed with the finish of the dwellings there.

*Comment:* This could be the “thin end of the wedge”.

*Response:* Cllr Hicks advised that this was the only land that was designated as a rural exception site.

Cllr Reynolds commented that access for Sibford Ferris could be a problem and it was important to look at the detail for allocations.

### **Defibrillator**

The Chair reported on the discussions so far between Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower on a proposal to obtain a defibrillator for use by both villages. Sibford Gower had proposed a joint purchase of a machine to be sited possibly at the village hall. Sibford Ferris Parish Council felt, however, that this would not be much use in an emergency because the machine would only be reachable within the critical time period for a minority of residents. The system preferred by the councillors was that used by Epwell of having a team of first responders, with a duty rota, and the on-duty responder having the machine with them for their shift. The first responders are trained free-of-charge by the NHS on an ongoing basis, although the machine must be purchased by the community.

A member of the public commented that CPR training would be welcome and Michael Goodwin suggested that the first-aid training used on a frequent basis by Sibford School could be extended to the community. This offer was warmly welcomed by the Chair.

### **Wheathills**

No issues were raised.

### **Closure of Churchyard**

No issues were raised.

### **Traffic at Temple Mill**

Those present were asked if there should be signage at the Temple Mill corner indicating right of way to avoid drivers meeting on the bend and not knowing who should reverse to let the other past.

There was one comment that signs would prepare drivers for the bottleneck.

There was one comment that there were already too many signs.

## **Next Phase of MUGA Development**

Cllr Hicks reported that there was a proposal to add some more items to the MUGA site in the future and that the village would be consulted on any plans.

No issues were raised.

## **Any Other Business**

**Bishop Blaize:** It was noted that the pub was up for sale, apart from the bottle store and car park.

**Sibford Gower Primary School:** Cllr Hicks reported that there was a new headteacher, Jane O'Sullivan, and that there would be two other staff changes, one for each key stage. Pupil numbers were buoyant with a full intake for September.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.45pm.