

Annual Parish Meeting – Sibford Ferris

Monday, 27 April 2015 – 7.30pm

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

Apologies – County and District Councillor Reynolds had advised he would be late.

Attendees – Joanne Connor (Chair), Maureen Hicks (Deputy Chair), Adrian Lamb, Tim Huckvale, Peter Robinson, Anita Spencer (Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer), Cllr George Reynolds (from 8.05pm), Michael Goodwin (Head, Sibford School), Muriel Chandler (Sibford Village Hall), Gil Soden (Sibford Gower Parish Council/Sibford Community First Responders) and 10 members of the public.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and advised that the meeting could be digitally recorded.

Minutes of the last meeting on 9 July 2014 – these were approved by the meeting and signed by the Chair.

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

Chair's 2014/2015 Report

During the last year we have had 7 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 will be my last Annual Parish Meeting as Chair and a Councillor. I joined the Parish Council in 2008. I was approached by Anita (she has a lot to answer for) to see if I would be interested in being co-opted onto the Council.

I have to admit I had no idea what Parish Councils, and their Councillors did. I probably spend the first few meetings in a complete daze as I listened to discussions on planning issues, tried to work out where various footpaths and bridleways were in the village and the names of all the houses.

What I came to understand very quickly is that those of us who live in this village are very lucky to have our Parish Councillors who work tirelessly, and without most of the village knowing, to make the environment around us better and to ensure any problems are resolved.

This year has not seen any major project undertaken by the Parish Council; last year we added to the MUGA. I suppose it could appear to people who do not know the work of the Council we were quieter than we have been but that would not be correct.

In the last year alone SFPC has been involved in the following:

- Regularly inspecting the play areas at Cotswold Close and the MUGA
- Replacing broken equipment at Cotswold play area and checking signs.
- Ensuring a pad on one of the pieces of gym equipment was replaced.
- Organising the annual litter pick – including obtaining the bags and arranging collection
- Monitoring when/if the village will get faster broadband.
- Attending inter parish meetings
- Discussing and progressing a First Responders Scheme
- Considering the purchase of a defibrillator
- Involved in the potential development of affordable housing on the Hook Norton Road – including arranging village discussions and feedback.
- Responding on School Transport consultations
- Responding to consultations on bus services and the mobile library
- Dealing with issues arising from the burial ground and monitoring work carried out by the contractors
- Dealing with issues raised with us by our Parishioners over Badger Setts, Planning issues and car issues in Cotswold Close.
- Monitoring and responding to planning applications in our village and the surrounding areas.
- Visiting planning sites

- Checking applications for tree removals including observing the trees and commenting on the applications
- Receiving numerous emails every week from Oxfordshire CC, Cherwell and many other organisations
- Ensuring contributions to the village hall and other Charities
- Monitoring our bank accounts, insurance, risk assessments, preparation of annual accounts and auditing.
- Checking which street lights are working and reporting issues
- Fixing the noticeboard for parish news
- Uploading information onto the village website
- Organising the replacement of street names, broken styles and pot holes
- Asking for hedgerows to be cut back where necessary, dealing with blocked drains, report of knotweed

And so the list goes on.

If it was not for our Parish Council issues such as street lights, cutting back of weeds etc would take longer to resolve. They have worked very hard and dedicated an awful lot of time to this village and I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks for their hard work to my fellow Parish Councillors.

There are though others in the village who are not on the PC who should also be recognised and who I would like to thank.

- Once again our gratitude must be expressed to John and Lynn Woodvine for assisting with these inspections. We are very grateful for their support.
- 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.
- 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,
- Anita Spencer for all her work as our Parish Clerk.

I will now handover to the Responsible Financial Officer for her report:

Financial Report to 31 March 2015

“As Responsible Financial Officer to your parish council, my role is to keep the accounts in order, manage payments and receipts and reconcile these with the monthly bank statements. This work is overseen by the parish councillors, is guided by a set of Financial Regulations and a financial risk assessment, and is checked annually by both an internal and an external auditor, for whom an annual return is prepared. Over the next two years, there will be changes in the financial controls for smaller councils, such as this one, and the annual external audit will be replaced by 2017 by what is known as a “Transparency Code”. This Code, which actually came into effect from 1 April this year, means publishing annually on a freely available website, all items of expenditure over £100, councillors’ responsibilities, council-owned land and buildings, plus all the elements and documents currently required for the annual return. An internal auditor will still be required.

The internal auditor for this year is once again Sue Rowley of Burdrop and I would like to reiterate Joanne’s thanks to Sue for taking on this important role.

Referring to the Notes to the Accounts attached to your agenda, it should be emphasised that these are un-audited, draft accounts. Also, please be aware that all values expressed are inclusive of VAT apart from the Assets under Item 1, which are exclusive of VAT. VAT is recoverable in full. The VAT figure under Item 2 is considerably larger than for last year because of the capital expenditure on the fitness equipment next to the MUGA plus the laptop.

Under Item 3, the Section 137 payments were reduced by £350 as the payment to the Holy Trinity Church was redirected into the burial ground maintenance sum of £1446.00. Other payments, under Item 4, were increased by the payment of £120.00 to the external auditor for the year to March 2014. Also, there were £724.73 of costs from CDC for the parish council election. Capital expenditure was also incurred as mentioned previously, being £533.98 for the laptop and £9143.74 for the fitness equipment.

Although the precept amount rose slightly on the previous year, total receipts for the year were down a little. This was due to a reduction in grants, but offset by the recovery of the VAT on the fitness equipment

At the end of the period the current account balance was £2392.67 and the deposit account £6103.20.

The Annual Return for the year will be presented and agreed at the Annual Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday, 5 May. The accounts will be available for public inspection from 26 May to 22 June, before the external audit takes place on 23 June. As mentioned earlier in the report, the salient documents will be available on the Sibford Ferris Parish Council page of the Sibfords website at www.thesibfords.org.uk.

This is the end of the financial report for the 2014/2015 period.”

Wheathills Report

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

“There has been much discussion about the roadside hedge which has grown quite tall in places, whilst it has hardly grown in other places. A local hedgelayer was consulted and he suggested several options from which the Trustees have decided that they should wait another year to see what growth there is before deciding on whether to go to the great expense of having the hedge laid. The tenant of the Wheathills farm has been asked on several occasions to remove non-agricultural detritus and has done this from time to time. However, he is temporarily without premises for his building business and has used the Wheathills buildings again recently which we are dealing with. A dead tree has been felled in the boundary hedge with the neighbouring garden. It may be of interest to know that the Wheathills farm has been offered for sale to the Trust and a price and arrangement have been agreed. The Trust would wish that the farm continued as livery stabling.” Cllr Hicks added that since the report had been written, the Town Estates Charity had completed the purchase of the land and now owned 11 more acres at Wheathills. Cllr Hicks wished to express thanks to Mrs Tracy Morbey for offering the land to the Charity so that it could be retained for the benefit of the community.

Village Hall Report

Muriel Chandler then read out the Village Hall Report for 2014/15 on behalf of the Village Hall Committee, as follows:

“The Village Hall committee very much appreciates the donations from Sibford Gower and Ferris councils and also the help from the Town Estates Charity.

Unfortunately we do not have the final accounts for the year ending 31ST March 2015 at the moment but we still have the regular classes as last year in karate/pilates/yoga/art and also now have a weekly men’s fitness class and a weekly boxercise & metafit class plus another art class which brings this up to three art classes a week. We also have the regular village organisations using the hall and have had an increase in private hirings including the first wedding for some time. We have also shown two other couples around the Village Hall who are considering having their receptions here.

Fundraising has increased this year and at our Easter Egg Hunt we had 80 children competing and we are happy to report that the popular band “Damn Right I’ve got the Blues” are back on Saturday 27TH June when we hope to see as many of you as is possible. I have to add a personal thank you for all who have joined our Village Hall lottery game when £1,824 was donated giving £912 to Village Hall funds with £912 going into the lottery game prize fund. We have our annual dog show on Saturday, June 6TH and the committee is very grateful to one of our new residents who is organising another music night on 29TH August. We are having our annual Village Hall show on Saturday 26TH September this year.

We have started our refurbishment programme by having the front double doors replaced at a cost of £2,384.00 and this was achieved by the generosity of Oxford County Council via our District & County Councillor, Mr George Reynolds through the Councillor Community Budget Scheme of £1000 plus and our thanks go to Mr Reynolds for his help, another £1000 grant from the Doris Field Charitable Trust and the balance of £384 from the Village Hall lottery game.

The Village Hall was built in 1957 and was constructed with a cedar shingle roof with a life span of 30 years. The roof was renewed in the late 1980s and the Village Hall management committee have suggested we should have a contingency plan for the renewal of the roof within the next few years and possibly as early as 2017 at an estimated cost of up to £20,000 and it was agreed that all profits from Village Hall functions should in future be reserved towards this, plus some other refurbishments, and not be used as a general subsidy to hire rates. The hall currently costs £10.45 an hour to run and this gives us an operating loss of £4.45 an hour which is covered by fund raising events and some donations. Therefore we have had to increase our hiring rates but have made it less complicated by giving a local parishioners' price and a price for people living outside the parish. This will enable us to use at least some of the fund-raising profits for the refurbishments although we will still be applying for any grants that may be available."

Sibford School Report

The Head of Sibford School, Michael Goodwin, was then invited to give an update on the School's activities during the past year.

Michael Goodwin reported that there had been many positives in the year: an Independent Schools Inspectorate inspection just after Easter had yet to be published but preliminary impressions were that it was highly complimentary; the school roll had increased to 427, including over 100 at the junior school, which meant more pupil resources were available for refurbishments and redecoration; also, for the first time since 1930, the school was free from debt. Plans for the future included further developing the outdoor programmes, with the grounds already being well used. The animal husbandry programme had also been working very well. Michael Goodwin left copies of the School magazine, "The Sibfordian", for people to take away.

The Chair thanked Michael Goodwin for his report.

Report from Thames Valley Police

The Chair then read out a report from PS Rebecca Fishwick of Banbury Rural Neighbourhood Policing Team.

"Firstly I would like to apologise for not being able to be there with you in person this evening to deliver this report and answer any questions you may have.

Over the last 12 months we have seen a few changes to the Banbury Rural Neighbourhood Team. In October 2014 we welcomed a new team member, PCSO Louise Beaumont. Louise has worked for Thames Valley Police for over 14 years and prior to becoming a PCSO worked in the Police Enquiry Centre at Kidlington. Hopefully some of you will have seen her out and about on her patrols and at some of the village events she has attended.

Sadly last month PCSO Angela Alford left the Banbury Rural Neighbourhood Team to go and work on another Neighbourhood Team in the area. Some of you may have known Angela and we were sad to lose her from the team but wish her well in her new ventures.

In the last year there has been very little crime in Sibford Ferris. The village has had two burglaries to dwellings which occurred in July 2014 and December 2014. Unfortunately we were unable to identify the suspects in the first burglary however the second burglary was a burglary to the dormitory area of Sibford School and two males were arrested in relation to this offence. This case was taken to CPS who reviewed the evidence and unfortunately there was insufficient to prove they had committed the burglary. However one of the males was charged with handling stolen goods from the burglary. These males were local to the Banbury area.

There has been one offence of Criminal Damage in April 2014 and three offences of Burglary, non dwelling, which occurred, two in June 2014 and one in October 2014.

We have received no reports of any Anti-Social Behaviour within the village.

If there are any points you would like to raise or questions you have for myself or the team, please let the Parish Council know and they can pass them directly to me at: Rebecca.Fishwick@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk or you can contact me via our team e-mail address which is: BanburyRuralNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Thank you."

Affordable Housing

Cllr Hicks reported that matters on affordable housing were quiet because Cherwell District Council was currently working with the developer, Greensquare, on negotiations with the land agent to purchase the land. There would also need to be a Section 106 agreement to cover the provision of the amenity land and allotments. Cllr Hicks reminded those present that the scheme consisted of six affordable homes and two open-market dwellings.

Community First Responder Scheme

Gil Soden had kindly taken on the role of coordinating the scheme for the Sibfords and reported that there were now four volunteers willing to be trained as first responders and it was hoped that more would come forward from Sibford Ferris. Cllr Huckvale explained to the meeting the principles of the scheme, which was already working well in Epwell: the volunteers are trained by the ambulance service to give immediate first aid, and to use a defibrillator and oxygen supply; the volunteers are despatched by the emergency service when someone dials 999 for an ambulance and, as well as first aid, can offer support to the patient and guide the ambulance to their location. The more volunteers per scheme, the better the coverage that could be offered, as volunteers only give the time they are able. Gil Soden was thanked for heading up the scheme.

County and District Councillor George Reynolds

Cllr Reynolds was asked if he wanted to raise any points and reported that the issue that came up most often with the villages in his ward was the reduction in the verge cutting for this year – down from five times to twice, with a third cut just for the sightlines. It was agreed that the situation would be monitored.

Dog Bins

The Chair sought views on whether the installation of dog bins in the village would encourage residents to tidy up after their dogs. A complaint had been received during the year about the state of the verges along Woodway Road and this was reiterated by the resident at the meeting. Cllr Reynolds advised that generally villages found that bins were used. Michael Goodwin reported that the bin installed on Sibford School property was used but there were still instances of mess being left and also commented that the bins were unsightly. It was proposed that a notice was put in the Sibford Scene appealing for consideration to other walkers, whether or not mess occurred outside of the village curtilage.

The Chair then asked for other questions or comments from residents.

- A resident enquired about the site on Woodway Road identified by Cherwell District Council as a potential development site for 20 plus dwellings. Cllr Reynolds advised that more might be known once the new Local Plan was published. He had expressed his concerns to officers at Cherwell District Council about the poor access to the site due to the narrowness of Woodway Road. A resident commented that sewerage could also be a problem. Cllr Reynolds reminded the meeting that there would be pressure to build in the Sibfords because they were viewed as sustainable due to the presence of a doctor's surgery, post office, primary school, bus service etc.
- Another resident commented that the affordable housing scheme could open up the whole of the field on the Hook Norton Road to future development and asked why the parish council had not pushed for the scheme to go on the field behind Little London and the orchard behind Folly Court. Cllr Connor explained that this field had been considered by the district council and had been discounted; it also had not been on offer as an exception site. The resident commented that additional housing on the Hook Norton Road would increase traffic through the village, causing problems at pinch points such as by the Manor. She said that the traffic survey carried out for the scheme had only been for one day and was during Sibford School half term so was not representative. She also complained that a survey of flora and fauna in the field had not been carried out. She said that Sibford Gower had refused affordable housing and asked why Sibford Ferris had not also done so.

Cllr Connor advised that she could not comment on Sibford Gower's actions, but that the Parish Council was aware there was a need for housing and, although planning decisions are not made at the parish level, it was important to be part of the discussions and to try to obtain something for the village. Cllr Connor reminded the meeting that everyone had the right to make representations to the district council as individuals.

The resident stated that she would be against the site on Woodway Road, but was reminded by Cllr Connor that this was a different issue, was not a forgone conclusion and that if and when a planning application was made, the opportunity would arise for everyone to make their views known.

Michael Goodwin spoke in support of the parish council's handling of planning applications, saying that in his view, they had shown sensitivity under planning pressures, which were occurring in most villages.

- Cllr Huckvale responded to a resident's question about faster broadband. In Sibford Gower, although the cabinet had been installed for some time, faster broadband was now predicted to be available in September, six months later than originally planned. As far as Sibford Ferris was concerned, thanks to additional funding from Cherwell District Council, the service would be extended to include both Sibfords and Burdrop although the Ferris and Burdrop would have to wait until December 2016. It was noted that other providers were offering a broadband service but these were more expensive than BT. Cllr Huckvale advised that, as far as he could tell from the BT website, there were no properties within the village curtilages that would not be able to access the faster service. He could not confirm the status of outlying homes, however.
- A resident complained about the mowing off of flowers from graves in the closed churchyard at Holy Trinity Church. She asked what had been the saving when Thos Fox were contracted over Cedric Brown and complained that the work had been put out to tender rather than staying with Mr Brown. Cllr Connor said she could not provide the figures at the meeting but would forward them to the resident. She explained that at the closure of the churchyard, which then became the responsibility of the Sibford Gower Parish Council, with a 50 per cent contribution from Sibford Ferris Parish, it was felt that a proper mowing and maintenance schedule for both the churchyard and new burial ground should be drawn up and the work put out to tender. The expenditure represented a large percentage of the total precept and it was the duty of the parish council to approach the outlay responsibly. Cllr Connor advised the resident that the Ferris parish council could not directly take up mowing issues with Thos Fox as the contract for the mowing was with Gower Parish Council. She asked the resident to approach the Clerk there to resolve the problem.
- Muriel Chandler asked if reports on Sibford Ferris parish council meetings could be included in the Banbury Guardian village news. Cllr Connor thanked her for the offer and said this would be discussed at a future meeting.
- A resident expressed concerns about the way the parish council had handled the solar farm planning application in 2012. She explained that her family circumstances had prevented her from stating her views at the time. She said that in her opinion the village had been treated in a high-handed way, with no open meeting, and, with the application being considered over the Christmas period, there had not been sufficient time for residents to react and respond. The resident complained that the parish council had not commented to the district council about the badger setts on the land designated for the solar farm.

Cllr Connor responded that the parish council had asked the developer for an open meeting but this had not been provided. She pointed out that the parish council would not be able to represent the views of every resident but there was a right for individuals to make representations direct to the district council on all aspects of the application. Cllr Lamb responded about the badger setts that a requirement for badger gates in the perimeter fence had been part of the permission. He believed that the badgers had continued to inhabit the area to a degree during the development and were now fully in residence, digging their way under the fence rather than using the gates. Cllr Connor apologised to the resident for not responding to her letter on the subject of the badgers, which had been an oversight. The resident said she was not happy with the parish council. Cllr Connor reminded her that the councillors were volunteers and worked hard for their community.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 9.00 pm.