

**Minutes of Sibford Gower Annual Parish Meeting
held in Sibford Village Hall
on Monday, 10th April 2017**

Present

Parish Cllrs Peter Abbott, Mrs Susan Bannister, Oswyn Murray (Chairman), Alan Parkin and Peter Hardman (Clerk).

Mrs Maureen Hicks (Sibford Ferris Parish Council)

Twenty seven Local Residents.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Gilian Soden

Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th April 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising which did not feature in the agenda items.

Chairman's Report

The chairman reported on activities during the year

Miriam Tebbs land: the land has been cleared and the hedge laid very expertly by Nigel Prickett has been trimmed this winter. Seven fruit trees were planted by Mr Wyatt. We are awaiting the felling of the holly tree under the electricity cable, after which we shall consider the siting of a new bench in the orchard. We are very grateful to TOE2 for their grant to cover the costs of this work.

The new bus service appears to be working well, thanks to a continuing subsidy from Warwickshire CC (no thanks to Oxfordshire).

The services now provided by OCC are now minimal. Since they are now only prepared to pay for one verge cutting a year, the PC has agreed with Nigel Prickett to pay for a further two cuts at appropriate times out of the village precept.

The Millennium Field: we are very grateful to the Town Estate Charity and Margaret Hobson for ensuring that the Millennium Field is preserved for the enjoyment of villagers. The PC has agreed to arrange for and undertake half the cost of its maintenance. Hedge trimming and dog bins have already been arranged. This is a wonderful asset for the future.

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Two successful events:

The Queens 90th birthday celebrations and the Elizabethan Feast in February: thanks to all who organised them.

Two items of considerable concern have come to our attention:

Horton Hospital: the determination of the NHS to run down and ultimately close the Horton is the subject of a campaign ably run by Save the Horton campaign, supported by our local doctor and Roseanne Edwards of the Banbury Guardian.

One Oxfordshire:

The proposal by Oxfordshire County Council to create a unitary council, and abolish District Councils, has been opposed by Cherwell DC and our local MP. This appears to be an attempt to take over the assets of North Oxfordshire and will result in less local participation.

There is a common pattern to both of these alleged public consultations. A professional firm is employed at the cost of tens of thousands. They produce a flashy brochure that contains no information at all and invite locals to reply within less than a month. They conduct biased surveys and claim intimidation if anyone challenges them. They then ignore the results. This is what localism means in the modern British democracy. We do our best.

Planning

There have been 20 planning applications this year, mostly for things like extensions or tree work. But two perhaps warrant specific mention:

Muddle Barn Farm: The plans for a large Georgian mansion with Victorian extensions were twice submitted to Cherwell: on both occasions the PC offered detailed objections. Two of your parish councillors attended the Planning meeting of Cherwell at which it was to be discussed, but half an hour before the meeting the proposal was withdrawn. However the Planning department had already recommended refusal on the grounds that the proposal conflicted with Policies H17 and H18 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996, policies ESD13 and ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 and paragraphs 17 and 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

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A third submission of revised plans did not address any of these issues but was inexplicably recommended for approval by the planning officers, who paid no attention to our comments. However at our request Cllr George Reynolds spoke eloquently against the clear breach of planning rules involved, and Cherwell councillors voted to refuse this new application. We fully expect the owners to lodge an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate, where we will repeat our objections. In the meantime the owners have applied for permitted development rights to expand the existing small house for the purposes of providing changing rooms for an intended swimming pool. The PC was not asked to give an opinion, but it is clear that the owners still intend major development.

Bishop Blaize: The saga continues.

The designation of the former public house as an Asset of Community Value was upheld by Cherwell despite being challenged by the owners. This means that the property must function as a public house rather than a private dwelling.

The owners therefore opened it as a public house on an occasional basis and offered it for sale as such, However all applications to view by prospective purchasers were evaded, and there is no real evidence that the pub continues to function. The owners have applied to erect b&b facilities on the carpark, but (again thanks to Cllr George Reynolds) have been refused: this is currently under appeal. There appears to be continuing infrastructure development in the car park, without planning permission.

Having ascertained from the Enforcement Officer that in her opinion the current usage was illegal, the PC wrote to Cherwell asking whether they were intending any enforcement action. Six months later they replied that they did not. We replied inviting Cherwell officers to come to the present meeting to explain their position. Despite having plenty of time Cherwell DC has not replied. At this point the meeting unanimously passed **a motion of dissatisfaction with the situation and asking for urgent consultation at the highest level between the PC and the officers of Cherwell DC to provide detailed responses to the questions raised by the PC.**

Clerk's & Financial Report

During the year ended 31st March 2017, the Parish Council has met four times.

There is nothing that I can usefully add to what the Chairman has covered in his report so my report will be relate to financial matters. The financial year started off with £11,538 in the bank and ended with a balance of £13,315. Of this sum, £2,655 relates to the residue of a bequest of £5,000 by the late Miriam Tebbs. As most residents know, she bequeathed this money to the Parish Council to be used for the benefit of the Parish as and when suitable situations arise. Following the closure of Holy Trinity churchyard the

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cost of maintenance falls upon the Parish Council shared equally with Sibford Ferris Parish Council. During the financial year ended 31st March 2017, £3,060 has been the cost of maintenance. Currently, £5,138 is held towards ongoing maintenance costs such as mowing the Churchyard and Parish Council Burial Ground, repairs to the stone walls and other situations which may arise. Following the acquisition of the Millennium Field by The Town Estate Charity the Parish Council has taken on the cost of maintenance and so far £840 has been spent on trimming, £30 was the cost of installing of a dog box which cost £299. The Council's Financial accounts for the year ended 31st March 2016 are in the course of preparation and it is hoped that Mr David Soden will kindly agree once again to carry out the Internal Examination as he has done so many times in previous years. They will then be submitted to the External Auditor after approval by the Parish Council. Reports of all Parish Council Meetings are published in the Sibford Scene, The Banbury Guardian and the Parish Council's website.

All financial information and details are freely available to residents from the Clerk upon request. My thanks go to the Parish Councillors for the support that they give me in my role as Clerk with special reference to my Chairman to whom I am most grateful, as always, for his guidance.

Highway & Footpath Matters

Cllr Susan Bannister spoke on this matter. She reported that she had walked most of the footpaths and bridleways in the last couple of months. A request had been received to repair a gate on the path which runs between Main Street and Backside Lane and the matter is currently receiving attention. The rerouted path to Haynes Barn is now easily accessible though the sign at the top where it joins the bridleway just below the barn was not in position when last passed.. She would welcome volunteers to cut back the growth along the paths in the next month or two. Finally, she appealed to dog walkers not to leave poo-bags hanging on bushes beside the paths but, please, take them home and bin them there.

Holy Trinity Church

The Rev Ronald Hawkes was unable to attend the Meeting and his apologies were presented. He had provided his written report and this was read out by the Clerk. It contained information about the Church Clock which is now keeping very good time. The Church was very pleased to be part of the village celebrations for HM90- the Queen's Official Birthday Weekend. Reference was made to proposals about making alteration to the interior of the Church and the starting up of a Youth Group, The Church has been pleased to use the excellent facilities of the Village Hall. Thanks were expressed to the Parish Council for maintaining the Churchyard/

Report by The Town Estate Charity

Jean White presented the Report which included information about discussion taking place to update the Trust Scheme and its records, the current situation with regard to

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Wheathills, relationship with Warriner School Partnership Academy and monies provided for the benefit of local residents, local organisations and the church. She reported that a very important addition to the Town Estates assets was the Millennium Field which it is hoped provides an amenity from which many may benefit in a beautiful location.

Report by The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator

The Report was presented by Mrs Mollie Mulley. It included information about the present Banbury Rural Police Team, the current Neighbourhood Watch Team, other news about Mrs Mulley's involvement as Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator. She thanked Tim Huckvale for his work including Neighbourhood Watch on the Sibford Website and Caroline Seeley and Tony Skowronski, editors of the Sibford Scene. She finished her report by saying that it is time for change. Peter Hine will now be the new Neighbourhood Watch Village Co-ordinator. The police say that 'we are the eyes and ears on the ground'. There are so few police covering the Banbury Rural Area, a large area, and it important that we do all we can to help them. She asked that we welcome and support Peter,

Sibford Village Hall Report

Mrs Joan Broady, the Chairman of Sibford Village Hall, was unable to attend the Meeting as she was not well but her written report was presented by Cllr Alan Parkin . It contained details of Hall usage and the top three hirers were Tots & Babes, Scouts, Cubs & Beavers, the Fielding Day Center and Yoga. The Sibford Village Hall is a well used venue and the refurbishment of the large hall has created a modern environment with an impressive lighting system making it suitable for many different uses. Together with the excellent kitchen and the small hall it is a venue to be proud of. Fundraising is now starting and grants investigated to re-construct the lavatories to bring them up to the standard of the rest of the hall. It has to be borne in mind that the shingle roof is nearing the end of its life and the car park will soon need re-surfacing. The car park is not used only by the Village Hall but also provides useful parking for the Church and Primary School. The financial support given by both Parish Councils, Town Estates Charity and residents in the Villages of Sibford is greatly appreciated and makes a huge difference.

The Reports in full are available from the Clerk upon request

As the Meeting drew to a close Mrs Mollie Mullie once again raised the issue of parking around the Village Pond and Mr Fred Inns raised his concern as to maintenance of the village pond and the immediate area.

The Chairman thanked all those who had presented the reports and there being no further business to discuss, declared the Meeting closed at 8.55pm.