

**Minutes of Sibford Gower Annual Parish Meeting
held in Sibford Village Hall
on Thursday, 12th May 2011**

Present

Parish Councillors Peter Abbott, Roger Alder, Oswyn Murray (Chairman), Alan Parkin and Gilian Soden. Peter Hardman (Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer). County & District Cllr George Reynolds (who joined the Meeting at a later stage having attended another meeting elsewhere), Police Constable Rebecca McLeod (Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood Specialist Officer), Louise Wilson (Oxfordshire County Council Highways & Transport). Twenty local residents including Jean White (The Town Estates Charity), Mollie Mulley (Neighbourhood Watch), Muriel Chandler (Sibford Village Hall Committee) and Sue Mattinson (The Sibfords Community Plan).

Minutes

Proposed by Mr Ian Warden and seconded by Mrs Eileen Haynes, the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 5th May 2010 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Thames Valley Police Matters

Police Constable Rebecca McLeod attended the Meeting and provided information regarding the team, of which she is a member, responsible for the welfare of the area of which the Parish forms part. The matter of speeding through roads in the Gower and Burdrop was raised and PC McLeod outlined the way forward in holding speed checks might be considered. It was thought that this subject would perhaps be suitable for the Traffic, Roads and Footpath/Bridleway Network Group – part of the Sibfords Community Plan. The Clerk will liaise with Mrs Sue Mattinson in this regard.

The Chairman thanked PC McLeod for attending the Meeting and the information that she had provided.

Highway & Footpath Matters

Mrs Louise Wilson, Senior Technician, Oxford County Council Highways and Transport set out the current make-up of the Highways Team of which she is part. She provided a chart showing how the team is made up and setting out their particular responsibilities. Not unexpectedly, she referred to the continuing financial constraints on the team but every endeavour is made to deal with complaints and matters raised by the public. She said that residents are always invited to direct complaints and matters to the Highways Team and contact details will be set out in the forthcoming issue of The Sibford Scene.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from the Meeting and Mr Fred Inns raised the matter of potholes in the roads which appear not to have attention. Mrs Wilson assured the Meeting that every complaint received in this regard has attention but very much, because of the financial constraints, on a priority basis. She went on to say that every road is inspected each year checking where remedial work is required.

The Chairman expressed the Meeting's thanks to Mrs Wilson for her contribution and also said the Parish Council was grateful for the 'Keep Clear' signs on the road adjacent to the Village Pond and also for the kerbing of the pond.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman thanked everyone present for attending the Meeting. He referred to the change of Parish Councillors since the last Meeting with Gilian Soden, Roger Alder and Alan Parkin taking the places of Muriel Chandler, Martin Layer and Robin Spicer and he very much appreciated the contributions that had been and are made in the work of the Parish Council. He was very much of the opinion that change from time to time is of benefit. He also thanked the Clerk for carrying out his duties.

The Chairman's Report in full is given at Appendix 'A'

Mr Fred Inns questioned the value of including in this year's precept the sum of £1,000 to assist with expenditure in respect of The Sibfords Community Plan. (Sibford Ferris Parish Council will provide a similar amount). The Chairman set out the purposes of the Plan, one which is that the District Council will react more favourably to those Parishes which can demonstrate that a Plan is in place involving all sections of the Community. Mrs Sue Mattinson pointed out that expenses have been and will be kept to an absolute minimum and the £1,000 will cover at least a two year period.

Clerk's and Financial Report

The Council's Financial Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2011 have been completed and are presently with the Internal Examiner (to whom thanks are extended for once again carrying out the role) and then will be submitted to the External Auditor. The financial year started off with £8,120 in the bank and ended with a balance of £5100. Of this sum, £3,283 relates to the residue of a bequest of £5,000 by the late Miriam Tebbs. She bequeathed this money to the Parish Council to be used for the benefit of the Parish and it is used as and when suitable situations arise. The money is also used to pay for the maintenance of the plot of land that she bequeathed to the Parish Council to be used for the enjoyment of residents. Within the bank balance at 31st March, £215 is there for expenditure in respect of the Churchyard. £1,348 is in place for the maintenance of the new Burial Ground. The balance of the monies in the bank is for general administrative purposes, grants and other appropriate outgoings. The Council will receive a precept of £9,000 from Cherwell District Council for this financial year giving sufficient to cover anticipated outgoings and give a prudent amount to deal with any contingencies. Included within the precept figure of £9,000 are two amounts. One is £3,000 being the estimated cost of maintaining Holy Trinity Churchyard. A Parish Council has the power, under a Government Act, to contribute towards the cost of maintaining a churchyard and the Parish Council, with the knowledge that the Church does not have financial resources to pay the cost of the maintenance work, chose to exercise its power to pay towards that cost. The second amount is to cover the cost of £1,000 in taking the Sibfords Community Plan forward and Sibford Ferris Parish Council is also to provide a similar amount. All financial details are freely available to residents from the Clerk upon request.

At this stage, the Clerk was to read a statement from Mr Norman Nash (who was unable to be at the Meeting because of a prior engagement) regarding the financial situation of Holy Trinity Church. However, he did not do so as the subject had formed part of the Chairman's Report.

Report by The Town Estates Charity

Mrs Jean White (Secretary to The Town Estate Charity) set out current information regarding the Charity. Please see Appendix B for her full report.

The Chairman thanked Mrs White for her report.

Report by The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator

Mrs Mollie Mulley presented the report on behalf of the Neighbourhood Watch and this is set out in full at Appendix 'C'

The Chairman thanked Mrs Mulley for her report.

Sibford Village Hall Report

This year's Report was presented by Muriel Chandler and is set out in full at Appendix 'D'

The Chairman thanked Muriel Chandler for her report.

The Sibfords Community Plan

Mrs Sue Mattinson (Secretary to The Steering Group) reported the current situation and residents are kept fully informed by periodic newsletters that are distributed and information on the Website. Her full report is given at Appendix 'E'.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Mattinson for her report.

Any Other Business

Mrs Jean White asked whether details of planning applications received for consideration by the Parish Council might be included in the Parish Council Meeting reports published in the Sibford Scene. The Chairman agreed to this and they will also be set out on the Parish Council's website.

Mrs Kathy Yorke enquired concerning the current situation of The Bishop Blaize. Mrs Eileen Haynes (Bishop Blaize Support Group) said that the Pub is still advertised for sale at a totally unrealistic price leading to the view that another approach will be made to convert from Licenced to Private use. The Support Group continues to keep a watchful eye on the situation.

Mr Fred Inns again raised the matter of potholes in the roads and he was assured that every situation reported to the Parish Council is passed to Oxfordshire Highways and continues to be monitored until remedial work is carried out. However, there is not a lot that the Parish Council can do to expedite such work as every case is considered by Oxfordshire Highways on a priority basis. The Chairman urged those raising matters to also personally contact Oxfordshire Highways to add a certain amount of pressure.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked all present for attending and declared the Meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Oswin Murray 25th May 2012

Chairman's Report for meeting 12 May 2011

There were six meetings last year attended by a handful of loyal members of public who are always asked for and freely give their opinions; and County and District Councillor George Reynolds, whose presence and helpful advice on wider matters make our meetings really productive. We want more people to come, but at least some do.

Issues raised during the year (divided between Gower issues and joint Gower-Ferris issues)

Planning matters were mostly uncontroversial, though we are a Conservation area with large number of listed buildings. So don't try to ask for double glazing, windmills, solar panels if you live in a listed building, just enjoy the draughts. There are advantages and disadvantages of this special protection, but on the whole the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, and our conservation officer is conscientious and helpful even when we may individually disagree with her.

One planning application went to appeal and was turned down by inspector; since the chairman was involved in his private capacity you should ask the clerk for details

The new rules for non-publicity of planning applications (no notification of neighbours by council letter; a single notice to be publicly posted at the discretion of the applicant) have not yet caused any serious problem, but they do require both the PC and neighbours to scrutinise the notices that go up and raise concerns directly with the Clerk or myself. The Clerk does personally inform the immediate neighbours of any application.

The Village pond continues to occupy too much of our time. The water level caused concern, but is in fact now ok: there is nothing we can do about it since it fluctuates according to the water table, as Fred Inns will be happy to explain to anyone interested.

Parking at the pond continues to be a problem: we have sought to mitigate this by asking the highways authority to extend the Keep Clear signs along the edge of the pond, in order to protect the new kerb and allow farm vehicles access to Rye Hill Farm. The lettering was a bit unsightly at first, but has soon mellowed in thanks to the universal Sibford mud. But we know that not everyone is or ever will be satisfied with our efforts to solve the unsolvable.

Ownership of the pond: we all know who owns and looks after the pond: it's us and has been ever since Domesday. However we have never registered our ownership in the new land registry, and that leaves open the possibility of someone else (National Car Parks?) claiming it. Investigations show that the edges of the pond are owned by Oxfordshire CC, as they have recently demonstrated. The outflow is the joint responsibility of OCC and

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the water board. But the hole in the middle in which the water collects has no registered owner. So we are in the process of claiming it finally and formally.

Allotments: the last survey established a small demand, but not enough to require us by law to establish allotments. However we are pursuing 2 sites in Burdrop, both previously used for allotments. Firstly Miriam Tebbs' land which was left to the care of the PC, and could be used again either for allotments or a communal orchard, and which already possesses a standpipe. The land adjoining it is not available at present, but was indeed used as vegetable garden previously, and we would be willing to lease or promote the buying of it if the owner were willing.

Secondly the land opposite adjoining the little footpath down past the church towards Burdrop. This is owned by Cherwell District Council, and was originally intended for housing; but it is unlikely that housing would now be permitted given the problems of highway access. We have asked George Reynolds to pursue whether Cherwell would release this land for allotments.

Joint Gower Ferris matters

Housing needs survey and Affordable housing: no news other than that our site at Cubbs Corner has been declared unsuitable for traffic reasons. There remains a possible site in the Ferris. But the difficulty is that as long as major development in the Sibfords is on the agenda, it would be foolish for any landowner to agree to sell land at a discounted price under this scheme.

Severe weather: I am happy to report that, after representations from the Primary School, the County Council has finally agreed to making Pound Lane and Ditchedge Lane part of their priority snow-clearing route: pupil power has triumphed after years of total failure by your Parish Council.

We discussed in the autumn whether to set up a roster of 4X4 drivers willing to offer assistance in severe weather; the suggestion did not have any significant support. However since then the Ferris PC has set up precisely such a scheme, and (given the hard winter we have just experienced) it may be that the meeting will want us to reconsider this suggestion.

We are on the **Sibfords website**

Liaison with Ferris: I attended the Ferris annual meeting on Monday, apparently for first time; and invited the Ferris chairman to be represented at our meeting. Hopefully this will result in a welcome increase in co-operation.

Conservation area survey (compare the example of Alkerton and Shenington) was originally due to start and finish last year, but has been delayed due to staffing cuts in

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Cherwell. We have had no news for over a year, but we will pursue it especially in relation to the possible interface with the village community plan.

Response to strategy plan No response or even any acknowledgment has ever been received from Cherwell to our detailed and well argued joint villages representations as a result of the meeting on 6th April last year. But the south-eastern planning authority has now been abolished, and hopefully our voice will at last be heard under the new Localism Bill. This is a very important matter which we need to be vigilant about, since we understand Cherwell is likely to try at least partially to reinstate the very large planning numbers previously imposed on the Sibfords. This is one reason why the Sibfords Community Plan receives our full support, since such a plan should be the most effective way of combating proposals to turn our communities into dormitory villages by major expansion.

Churchyard and burial matters: The new burial ground is now in use.

Village precept: Shortly after initially setting the village precept in January we were approached with two urgent requests, to which after discussion we agreed. The result was that having decreased our precept in the previous year from £6000 to £5000, we were compelled to increase it to £9000 for the current year. Obviously I need to justify this to you:

The first request was for funding of the Sibfords Community Plan: we agreed jointly with the Ferris to contribute £1000 each: unfortunately unlike the Ferris we have no reserves, so were compelled to add this sum to our precept to cover it.

Secondly the churchyard. Since 2007 the Gower has funded the small maintenance cost of the churchyard, under powers vested in it by law, and from accumulated reserves, which are now exhausted. In January a very late request was made to the council for an increased maintenance amount of £3000. We understand that the increase was due primarily to the withdrawal of private volunteer support from two Ferris residents. We enquired of the Ferris whether they would be willing to share this cost, but they declined for this year on the grounds that they needed to consider the matter at a full parish meeting. With some misgivings we therefore agreed to shoulder the full cost for this year only. Since (unlike the Ferris) we have no reserves, this added £3000 to our budget, and resulted in an increased precept for property owners in the Gower of roughly a third, as you will recall from the April Sibford Scene.

However I am happy to report that at their meeting on Monday the Ferris agreed in principle to discuss with us joint funding for the future of the churchyard maintenance, in concert with the church. That should bring our contribution down to around £1000 and the village precept should accordingly reduce. But I must insist that all requests for assistance from PC funds should in future be made before Christmas.

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At the Ferris meeting I was asked what the Gower's position was in relation to the supporting of other religious bodies. I replied that while the Church of England as the Established Church since the year 1531 had certain historic legal rights which we were not at liberty to reject (including the right in the last resort to require the parish to maintain its churchyard), the view of the present Gower Parish Council was that it was our duty to support as far as we could *all* organisations religious and secular which work for the benefit of the community. If that involved a higher parish precept, then we would consider the matter seriously before coming to a decision. I hope the present meeting will agree with this principle that we should work for the benefit of the community as a whole.

That ends my report to you for the current year. Thank you all very much.

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The Town Estates Charity

Report to the Parish Council for the year 2009 – 2010

Much time and effort has been spent this year in dealing with solicitors and insurance brokers.

The Trustees took the decision last July to sell 2 acres of Epwell Wood after some negotiation with a suitable buyer and finally in March of this year this sale was completed. Unfortunately, an insurance claim failed to pay out on expensive repair work on utilities at the farm.

A request to plant 30 trees in the Wheathills field had been refused as it was felt that the cost of protecting and maintaining these would be too great.

The school has again been the main beneficiary of funds and a large donation was made to refurbishment of the Friends Meeting House. Many individuals have continued to benefit from the chiropody service and the personal alarms which we organise and supply. Once again coaches used for outings for the Friendship Club have been half financed by the Trust. Two sums of money had been allocated to help with medical care of local residents; and one university student has been given funds to help with the purchase of equipment.

As a result of the large sum paid out in maintenance at Heath Farm the accounts showed a loss for the year of £1230

In accordance with the Charity rules income from this year has been distributed as follows:-

Relief in Need	£3,259
General Benefit	£2,530
School	£7,432

Jean White
Secretary to The Town Estates Charity

Appx C

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH – MAY 2011

We still have our team of 14 residents who work to keep their neighbours informed and aware of information concerning the Banbury Rural Area passed on to us by the Neighbourhood Watch Office. We are fortunate to live in a small community where we know and can trust our neighbours. It is very important that we look after each other and if we are concerned about the activities of strangers in the village we should contact the Police with as much detail as possible. If we do not inform them they cannot help us.

Deborah Hextall is very approachable and helpful and with Jayne Taylor has worked hard to keep us informed and aware.

The position of the Neighbourhood Watch at present is:-

Funding for Neighbourhood Watch is continuing and Deborah Hextall is keeping her job.

Jayne Taylor – Crime Reduction will be made redundant in September unless she finds another post, she will be a great loss to us.

When she leaves her job, it will be taken over by Nick Gilbert at Kidlington.

Any resident needing advice regarding security should ask Jayne Taylor to visit them as soon as possible.

The Neighbourhood Team is:-

Sergeant Bruce Riddell

PC Richard Miller and PC Becky McLeod

PCSO Angie Alford and PCSO Nikki Dale

Mollie Mulley

Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator

Annual Village Hall Report for Sibford Gower Annual Parish Meeting

During the past year, Sibford Village Hall, under the Chairmanship of Joan Brody, we are happy to say continues to be supported by our regular groups which include Beavers, Cubs and Scouts who also have other events in the hall, Tots and Babes, Fielding Day Centre, Friendship Club, WI, Horticultural Society and Sibfords Society plus the weekly classes of Karate, Pilates, Keep Fit and a Water Colour Work Shop, Holy Trinity Church, The Primary School. Sibford Friends School all use the facilities including The Steering Group for the Sibfords Community Plan and we are pleased to have the Gower Parish Council holding its Annual Parish Meeting here this evening. In addition, we have private hirers for Meetings, Parties etc. Most days there is someone in the Hall and Sunday is the day it is least used.

Fund raising continues and successful events included two Quiz Nights, The Annual Fayre, the very successful visit from Damn Right I Got The Blues Band (who sadly cannot visit us in 2011 but hope to come back next year), Film Nights, The Good Friday Easter Egg Hunt – when we were surprised to have 72 young people enjoying three different routes and our Chairman doing an enormous amount of work on her own before the day to make everything so pleasurable – and we have just started the Village Hall Lottery Game again with 102 players bringing a profit to the Hall of £612.00, with £612.00 going into the prize fund.

Again, we are very grateful for the support of an annual donation from both the Ferris and the Gower Parish Councils and also from one local resident. We are also very grateful to both Parish Councils for their joint donation of £900.00 towards the cost of changing the old kitchen into a more welcoming storage room and altering the small back room into a further locked storage area, costing a total of £1,380.00, which included some other much needed repairs in that area plus floor covering. We will also be able to use this room as a changing/rest room for visiting musicians or theatre groups.

We did have a flood in the loft over the kitchen and bar area last August but with the enormous help of one local family who were (unfortunately for them!) using the car park at the time, we avoided worse problems. This cost quite a lot of work and money to get right but we did not have to cancel any bookings.

We had the ten year electric check and although everything was in order, we have brought all the electrical work in the hall up to date and now can isolate the two halls which, if there is a problem in one hall, the other one can still be used. This cost £900.00 and we are very grateful to The Town Estate Charity for their donation of £900.00 which covered the cost, We are still going to do further work by putting in more lights at the back of the stage, including an emergency light. At the moment we are also discussing new lighting in the large hall to make this more economical.

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We also enlarged the under stage storage to take all the large tables and make it easier to access.

Our Village Hall Fayre is on Saturday, 18th June and we hope to see lots of you enjoying this. We should also be grateful for volunteers to help on the day for short intervals so that everyone can have some time to enjoy the event. We would also like more people to be on the Village Hall Committee with fresh ideas and more people means less work for everyone.

We very much appreciate all the help from volunteers and I feel everyone should be very proud of their Village Hall with all its unique facilities that many other halls do not enjoy.

**Muriel Chandler
Village Hall Committee
12.5.11**

Initial Development and Engagement with the Community

The Launch of the **Sibfords Community Plan** was held on 7 December 2010 attended by approximately 90 people from Sibford Gower, Burdrop and Sibford Ferris. There was overwhelming support for the development of a Community Plan from those attending with about 30 people offering their services as volunteers. The event provided an opportunity for villagers to 'post' their comments on various themes and identify key opportunities and issues and broad topics of interest.

A **Steering Group** was subsequently established comprising the initial volunteers of Richard Hartree and Sue Mattinson, who agreed to act as Chair and Secretary, together with a number of volunteers from the Launch Event. The Steering Group includes Oswyn Murray and John Simms as representatives of Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris Parish Councils respectively. The inaugural meeting was held on 17 January, 2011 with subsequent meetings held at approximately monthly intervals. To keep the community up to date with progress, Newsletters have been prepared and delivered by volunteers and also posted on the **village website**.

Open Day was held on Saturday 19 March 2011 to provide another opportunity for people to find out more about the Community Plan and also to reach a wider cross section of the community, including families and the younger generation. Over 110 people attended and more people volunteered to help on various aspects of the Plan preparation. As at the Launch, people were encouraged to post their opinions and ideas.

Review of Responses

The comments and suggestions received at the Launch and Open Day have been collated and reviewed by the Steering Group. The data has been posted on the Village Website to enable everyone to see the comments arising from the two consultations. The overall findings have been simplified into a series of **Main Topics** together with a range of more specific issues and opportunities that provide the basis for further examination. These topics comprise:

- Housing
- Traffic, Roads, and Footpath and Bridleway Network
- Leisure and Recreation
- Community Facilities
- Environment
- Business and Economy

Working Groups

A meeting of Volunteers was held on 12 April to discuss the plan process and encourage people to join the **Working Groups** under the six main Topic areas. These Groups are now being established and familiarising themselves with the principal issues and opportunities identified for each Topic. After that their role is to research the background, study issues 'on site' where necessary and guide the preparation of the questions which will be included in a Community Plan Questionnaire to all households. These replies will be the Community's major input to its Vision of the future and the Actions needed to achieve it. Together these will become the finished SIBFORDS COMMUNITY PLAN.

Future Stages

It is anticipated that the background research and design of the Questionnaire will be undertaken in the Summer of 2011, followed by the delivery of the forms, collection and analysis of replies in the Autumn, 2011. Work on the Vision and Action Plans will take place in the Winter of 2011/ 2012 with a completed SIBFORDS COMMUNITY PLAN by early Summer 2012.

Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council (ORCC) Support

From the Plan's inception the **ORCC** has provided full support for the process and to date has awarded two interim grants of £100.00 each towards the costs incurred for the Launch and Open Day. It is anticipated that a **total grant up to a maximum of £1000.00**, inclusive of monies already issued, is likely to be made subject to ORCC's approval of the Project Plan and Costs. For costs to be eligible, the application must be submitted prior to the event and expenditure.

It is anticipated that overall costs will be in the order of £2000.00 to include the preparation of a questionnaire and production of the final report. Future costs will be spread across two financial years with the Working Group research, and development and evaluation of the questionnaire undertaken in 2011/2012 and the final report production in 2012/2013.

Sue Mattinson

Secretary to the Steering Group