

## **SIBFORD GOWER PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held in Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011**

**Present:** Parish Cllrs Peter Abbott, Oswyn Murray (Chairman), Alan Parkin and Mrs Gilian Soden. County & District Cllr George Reynolds. Five local Residents and the Clerk.

**Apologies:** Apologies were received from Cllr Roger Alder who was unwell.

#### **Minutes**

Proposed by Cllr Peter Abbott and seconded by Cllr Alan Parkin, it was resolved that the minutes of the Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011 be approved. They were then signed by the Chairman.

#### **Matters arising**

Various matters arising are detailed in the relative parts of the agenda below.

#### **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman referred to the recent sad loss of Mrs Eileen Haynes who had regularly attended Parish Council Meetings and was very much involved in community life. The Clerk is to prepare, for the Chairman's signature, a letter of condolence on behalf of the Parish Council to be sent to her husband expressing the Council's appreciation of all that Eileen had contributed.

The Chairman referred briefly to The Bishop Blaize and it is understood that the matter of the ownership of the adjoining piece of land claimed by the Barton Family as theirs is still to be resolved with a recent court hearing having been adjourned and to be heard at a later date. With regard to the horse box and metal barrier positioned on the roadside verge, the matter is still to be resolved by Oxfordshire Highways.

**Land at Burdrop adjoining Piggy Path:** The Parish Council some time ago approached Cherwell District Council which owns the land as to whether it may be used for allotments. The response was that the District Council would be reluctant to see the land transferred to the Parish Council for allotment use unless it was satisfied that there is no foreseeable prospect of development. The Chairman instructed the Clerk to approach the District Council to enquire as to the possibility of a relatively short term lease (say for twenty years). District Cllr George Reynolds said that he would also look into the matter.

The Chairman referred to the two villages having been combined for planning purposes and now being classed as a single Category A village, which could make them liable for a larger increase in house building. He is in discussion with the Chairman of Sibford Ferris PC about the fact that this was done without consultation and they intend to mount a protest at the arbitrary decision by Cherwell District Council; he will report to the Parish Council in due course.

The Chairman spoke of the forthcoming conservation area and listed buildings review by the conservation team at Cherwell District Council; Mrs Mattinson had already been approached by Dr Rose Todd in relation to the Parish Plan, but there had not been any contact with the PC or with any of the organisations that hold records relevant to the history of the villages. It was agreed to pursue this matter with Dr Todd.

The Chairman referred to the letter that had been drafted by himself to the Electoral Review concerning the reduction of representation for rural areas. Cllr George Reynolds approved its contents and it was agreed to send it as the views of the Parish Council. The letter is appended to the minutes.

#### **Sibfords Community Plan**

Mrs Sue Mattinson reported on the current position and briefly took the Meeting through the Sibfords Community Plan News - September 2011 a copy of which is being delivered to every household in the

Parish. She stressed the importance of the Household Questionnaire which will be delivered to all households in November. Answers will be a very important contribution to the Plan and enable a build up of an accurate assessment of the community's views and aspirations for the future. A high percentage of completed returns will give the Plan greater influence on Cherwell District and Oxfordshire County Councils' consideration of future decisions that will affect the Sibfords.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Mattinson for her report and involvement with the development of the plan. He asked her to convey the Parish Council's appreciation to all the others who are closely connected.

#### **Clerk's Report**

Village Pond: The matter of acquiring ownership is in the process of being continued by Cllrs Peter Abbott and Roger Alder.

Merging of Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower Parish Councils: This matter has been raised from time to time bearing in mind the shared community facilities (eg Church, Schools, Village Hall, Surgery, shop etc). After referring to Cherwell District Council, it was learned that if it is decided by both councils that merging is a good idea, both councils should pass a resolution to that effect at the respective Parish Council Meetings. The District Council should then be approached and consideration would be given taking into account the benefits of the merger but the Clerk was advised that so much is altering under current legislation changes that what lies ahead for Parish Councils is somewhat uncertain.

Salt bins: Details had been received from Oxfordshire County Council regarding the arrangements for the coming winter season. The County Council will fill **ALL** bins once at the beginning of the winter season. It will not refill the bins as required, the responsibility being left to the Parish Council which will have to find storage space for extra salt to be delivered and then be responsible for filling bins as and when necessary. The first 1 tonne bag of salt will be delivered free but further bags will cost £100 each. The Parish Council's immediate need is to find a suitable location for storing the bags of salt and in this regard the Clerk was instructed to approach possible local land owners. Then will come the problem of making suitable arrangements for refilling bins when needed.

#### **Financial**

BDO LLP completed the external audit for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 and there were no matters that came to their attention that required the issuing of a separate additional issues arising report. The Annual Return was presented to the Council and proposed by Cllr Peter Abbott and seconded by Cllr Gilian Soden was approved and accepted. The notice of the conclusion of the Audit was displayed on the Parish Council's notice board for the requisite period of fourteen days.

Proposed by Cllr Peter Abbott and seconded by Cllr Gilian Soden, it was resolved that the following payments be approved:-

Cheque No. 133 £149.00 dated 04.07.11 in favour of Messrs Herbert & Cholmeley re advice in respect of claiming ownership of the Village Pond. (Retrospectively)

Cheque No. 134 £18.75 dated 10.07.11 in favour of Sibford Village Hall being the cost of hire for the Annual Parish Meeting on 12.05.11 (Retrospectively)

Cheque No. 135 £100.00 dated 13.07.11 in favour of Sibford Ferris PC being the proportion due in respect of the burial on 04.05.11 (Retrospectively)

Cheque No. 136 £40.00 dated 13.07.11 in favour of Open Spaces Society being the annual subscription (Retrospectively)

Cheque No. 137 £144.00 dated 21.08.11 in favour of BDO LLP being the fee for the annual audit of the Parish Council's accounts for the year ended 31.3.11 (Retrospectively)

Cheque No. 138 £100.00 dated 07.09.11 in favour of Sibford Ferris PC being half the fee received from J & M Humphris in respect of the burial of the late Eileen Haynes (Retrospectively)

Cheque No. 139 £194.21 dated 21.09.11 in favour of P B Hardman being reimbursement of the Clerk's expenses

### **Planning Matters**

The following applications were received, considered and no objections raised:-

No. 11/01011/F The Vine House, Main Street, Sibford Gower N.Nash  
Extension to rear

No. 11/01043/F Larkspur, Main Street, Sibford Gower Mr & Mrs I Tyrrell  
Side and rear single storey extension and rear dormer window extension. Replacement roof with glazed lantern to existing extension

As amended in accordance with plan no's 001B, 003B, 004B & 005B.

No. 11/01209/F Joinery Workshop, Main Street, Sibford Gower A S Designs  
Demolish existing stone wall and build new extension to existing joinery workshop

The following decisions were received:-

No. 11/01011/F The Vine House, Main Street, Sibford Gower N Nash  
Extension to rear  
Permission for development subject to conditions

No. 11/01043/F Larkspur, Main Street, Sibford Gower Mr & Mrs I Tyrrell  
Side and rear single storey extension and rear dormer window extension. Replacement roof with glazed lantern to existing extension (As amended in accordance with plan no's 001B, 003B, 004B & 005B.)  
Permission for development subject to conditions

### **Highway Matters**

The Clerk reported that on 1<sup>st</sup> September he toured the Parish with Mr Tim Wilde (Oxfordshire Highways) with regard to outstanding matters still to receive attention from Oxfordshire Highways. They are 1) The installation of a mirror at the exit of Bondsend Lane 2) Kerbing the left verge to the entry to Bondsend Lane 3) The lowering of the kerb at the junction of Pound Lane and Main Street and 4) Resurfacing the road to the Sibford Surgery. Mr Wilde promised to check matters out and will be in touch in due course. Much matters on the County Council's financial constraints.

### **Footpath Matters**

No matters arose.

### **Burial Ground**

Very satisfactory maintenance continues to be carried out by Mr Cedric Brown and the costs are shared with Sibford Ferris Parish Council. Following the first two burials, a problem have arisen in that the

grave diggers have been depositing the surplus earth (mainly stones) nearby creating an unsatisfactory appearance of the Burial Ground and the possible impact on future maintenance. The Clerk was instructed to speak with the Funeral Directors to ascertain whether a satisfactory arrangement can be achieved.

#### **Churchyard**

Cllrs Peter Abbott and Alan Parkin have been in discussion with Sibford Ferris Parish Council regarding maintenance of the Churchyard as to sharing maintenance costs. These are to continue following Sibford Ferris Parish Council having taken advice from Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils when it was confirmed that the cost involved might properly included within future precept requests. The Clerk is to ask the Ferris Parish Council to restart the dialogue especially as it had raised the subject of obtaining quotations for work to be carried out. This is important because Mr Cedric Brown obviously needs to be aware of what his involvement may be.

#### **Community Emergency Plans**

Oxfordshire County Council is keen to encourage the development of a network of simple community emergency plans and asked Councils to complete a suitable form. Sibford Gower Parish Council has submitted the form advising that it does not have full emergency plans but would be prepared to provide details of a survivor reception centre and emergency contact details including the fact that Holy Trinity Church could be used as a survivor reception centre in case of need.

#### **Speeding**

The matter of arranging speed checks at various places in the Parish is being handled by the appropriate committee set up within the Sibfords Community Plan.

#### **Public Participation**

Muriel Chandler referred to strangers in the Parish going round from house to house offering goods for sale and strongly recommended that they are asked to produce a pedlars' licence. Suitable warnings submitted by our Neighbour Watch Co-ordinator (Mrs Mollie Mulley) are published in The Sibford Scene from time to time.

She referred to overhanging trees on the Burdrop Hill and a problem branch on the verge adjoining one of the High Meadow properties. The Clerk is to check the situations.

She said that The Village Hall Committee is seeking information concerning the creation of a play area and facilities in the field next to the Village Hall. She trusted that this would have the support of the Parish Council. The Parish Council awaits further detail in due course.

Finally, Muriel Chandler trusted that the Parish Council would support arrangements that may be put in place for 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. These may include appropriate road closures. The Parish Council awaits further details so that support may be given as appropriate.

#### **Any Other Business**

No other matters were raised.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

This will be on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2011 starting at 8pm in the Staff Room of Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School.

**There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked all for attending and closed the Meeting at 10.05pm**

## Appendix

### Electoral Review of Oxfordshire: Draft Recommendations

At first sight the aim of achieving electoral equality seems fair. But there are good reasons for the current inequality of electorates in Oxfordshire which are not simply historical.

The County is highly diverse, composed of large towns, medium-sized towns and small villages. The north of the county in particular has many small scattered settlements, each with their own economy and local facilities and needs.

The aim of electoral equality will inevitably reduce the representation of the smaller communities and create an authority even more dominated by the interests of the large town than at present.

On the one hand, the result will inevitably be the further starvation of local government facilities in rural areas – closure of schools, loss of bus services, travelling libraries, medical care, facilities for the young and the elderly etc etc. On the other hand, it will increase local government bias of urban life-style choices and against the countryside. It will increase the tendency to regard the countryside simply as a dormitory for the towns and an opportunity for further suburban sprawl.

In a county with such wide disparities between town and country, there is a strong argument in favour of allowing electoral representation to reflect the different interests necessary for a vibrant localism, and weighing this against electoral equality.

Osgyn Murray

22nd November 2011