

**Minutes of Sibford Gower Annual Parish Meeting  
Held in the hall of Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School  
On Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

**Present**

Parish Cllrs Peter Abbott, Roger Alder, Oswyn Murray (Chairman), Alan Parkin and Mrs Gilian Soden. Peter Hardman (Clerk).  
County & District Cllr George Reynolds.  
Twenty Local Residents (Cedric Brown, Muriel Chandler, Stephen Gomershall, Tony Haynes, Glennis Hardman, Fred Inns, Mollie Mulley, Hugh Pidgeon, John Ross, Frank Scouse, Ian Warden, Clive Warner, Bill Wealby, Jean White, Kathleen Winter and Kathy Yorke.

**Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2011 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

**Thames Valley Police Matters**

Present from Thames Valley Police were PCSO Angela Alford and PC Duncan Vale who answered matters raised which included on-road parking difficulties. PCSO Alford made the point that parking is allowed except where 'No Parking' signs are displayed. Drivers are asked to avoid parking where there are 'Keep Clear' road markings. Otherwise, consideration should be given to ensure that there is room for buses and emergency vehicles to pass. She went on to say that she is always available to come out to resolve any situations that may arise from time to time.

She stressed the relatively new '101' phone number to which matters of a non-emergency nature should now be directed

**Matters Arising**

Mr Fred Inns queried the value of the recently defined Conservation Area and the Chairman responded by saying that it is of great benefit for many reasons.

**Highway & Footpath Matters**

Unfortunately, no one from Oxfordshire Highways was able to attend the Meeting. Local resident Mr Fred Inns raised the matter of gullies in Colony Road blocked after work on the road was carried out some time ago by contractors engaged by Oxfordshire Highways when rubbish was dumped in the gullies. Subsequently, Oxfordshire Highways has denied clearance is its responsibility

There were general complaints about the condition of certain roads where potholes are a problem. This is especially true of Hawkes Lane and the road to the Surgery. In this regard, the Parish Council has been in frequent communication with Oxfordshire Highways but with no action forthcoming apart from promises that matters are having consideration. With particular reference to Hawkes Lane and the surgery road, the Parish Council had received a strong email from a local resident complaining about the road conditions and he is quite willing for that email to be passed on to Oxfordshire Highways and the Clerk will carry that forward.

The Chairman made the point that Oxfordshire Highways is having to work under great financial pressure and has to carefully consider matters in order of priority. However, the Parish Council will always bring matters to the attention of Oxfordshire Highways.

**Chairman's Report**

The Chairman presented his Report which included the sad loss of the Rev Timothy Wimbush, Issues raised during the year (divided between Gower issues and joint Gower-Ferris issues), the new rules for non-publicity of planning applications, the Village Pond, ownership of the Pond, Parking at the Pond, allotments and Bishop's End (former Bishop Blaize)

The Report in full is shown at Appx A.

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### **Clerk's & Financial Report**

Reports of all Parish Council Meetings are published in the Sibford Scene and The Banbury Guardian plus the Parish Council's webpage.

The Council's Financial Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 have been completed and thanks are expressed to Mr David Soden for completing the Internal Examination. They have now been submitted to the External Auditor. The financial year started off with £5,100 in the bank and ended with a balance of £7,802. Of this sum, £3,283 relates to the residue of a bequest of £5,000 by the last Miriam Tebbs. She bequeathed this money to the Parish Council to be used for the benefit of the Parish as and when suitable situations arise. There have been no reasons during the course of the year to call on these monies. Also contained within the bank balance is £1,000 held specifically in reserve for expenditure that may occur in connection with the developing Sibfords Community Plan.

The Precept for the previous financial year was £9,000 and this included £1,000 towards expenditure with regard to the Sibfords Community Plan and £2,000 in respect of the maintenance of Holy Trinity Churchyard. The Precept for the current financial year is at a lesser figure of £6,250. The Parish Council will not now pay all the maintenance costs of the Churchyard but will make a grant of £1,250 towards the Parochial Church Council to be used towards the cost of maintaining the Burial Ground. It had been hoped that Sibford Ferris Parish Council would match this figure but, in the event, it will make a grant of £300 for the same purpose.

The Parish Council made a grant of £500 to the Village Hall Committee towards the cost of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations and applied to Cherwell District Council for a grant of up to £500 for the same purpose. £400 was received and passed on to the Village Hall Committee.

All financial information and details are freely available to residents from the Clerk upon request.

### **Report by The Town Estate Charity**

Mrs Jean White reported that there have been two ordinary meetings and two extra meetings during the year. Heath Farm has again taken most of the time and attention of the Trustees. The Heath tenant's agreement was slightly amended to allow the Trust to apply for planning permission on a redundant barn which has now been approved. More recently, maintenance work on water tanks has been carried out at the farm at great expense. New windows have been installed in School House. The Charity continues to fund chiropody services, personal alarms and half the cost of coaches for outings arranged by the Friendship Club. The school has benefited from funds for building work and help with student trips.

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

Relief in Need	£2,420
General Benefit	£4,991
School	£4,240

The Chairman thanked Mrs White for her Report.

### **Report by The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator**

Mollie Mulley presented her report which is given in full at Appx B. In doing so, she asked that residents take advantage of the 'Have Your Say' meetings when the Police visit the village from time to time.

The Chairman thanked her for the Report.

### **Sibford Village Hall Report**

This was presented by Muriel Chandler and the Report is given in full at Appendix C.

The Chairman thanked her for the Report.

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**The Sibford's Community Plan**

Sue Mattinon and Richard Hartree were unable to be at the Meeting because of prior engagements but the Clerk had received a progress report and this is given at Appx D including the information about the Timetable and Final Plan Production. It is anticipated that The Community Plan will be published in July/August 2012.

The Chairman expressed appreciation of the high Village response to the Questionnaire and to Sue Mattinson and Richard Hartree for the work they had undertaken in connection with The Community Plan.

**Any Other Business**

Mr Fred Inns raised the matter of road markings where Bonds End Lane joins Main Street, Sibford Gower. In times gone by, by the right of way was marked as the turning from Main Street into Bonds End Lane indicating that those approaching from the Village Pond area should give way at the junction with Bonds End Lane. This would appear to be a sensible and safe arrangement and the Clerk was instructed to approach Oxfordshire Highways.

The Chairman announced the almost imminent departure from the village of Cllr Roger Alder when he moves to a new home. He will be very much missed by the Parish Council, the Parochial Church Council and all who know him.

**There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked all present for attending and declared the Meeting closed at 9.03pm**

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**Chairman's Report for the Meeting on 25 May 2012**

Our sadness at the death of Rev Timothy Wimbush is tempered only by the knowledge that Erica has found a house and will continue to live in the village. We wish her all good fortune in the future. You will have received the notice about the appointment of a new Rector, and we look forward to welcoming him.

There were six meetings last year mostly 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 on a regular basis. The meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January, at which the question of the Bishop Blaize was raised, was however attended by a record 18 residents.

**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 a large number of listed buildings. So I must remind you not 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 ongoing series of planning applications continues of course to be highly controversial, and is currently the subject of two enforcement orders, an appeal and a public inquiry about which more later.

**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 a great deal of our time. During this two year period of drought the water level has continued to cause concern, but there is nothing we can do about it since it fluctuates according to the water table. However the PC was so alarmed at the overcrowding of the fish in the shallow water that at the start of April we arranged a fish hunt. Some half dozen local residents waded into the pond and managed with great skill to catch about 25 fish and transfer them to the ponds of Mr Richard Butt, where they are now living happily in great comfort and deeper water. That still leaves over a dozen nimble fins who escaped our fishing nets, but at least they are less crowded. If anyone wants photos of this remarkable village sport, they can apply to me.

**Ownership of the pond.** Roger Alder is in charge of creating a dossier to enable us to claim ownership of the pond as a village green, and I must remind him to hand on his remit to Peter Abbott if and when he leaves the village.

This issue is actually becoming quite important, since it is now very noticeable that the pond wall towards Pond Cottage is seriously cracked and falling inwards, with a resulting permanent puddle in the lane leading to Rye Hill. We have discussed this with Oxfordshire Highways, and put to them the fact that they own the start of this track, and the wall is moving because of insufficient foundations to the roadway; we also suspect that the outlet pipe from the pond has been crushed. They are at present consulting as to whether this is their responsibility; but since they already claim that they own the land surrounding the pond and therefore the walls, we do not see that they have a leg to stand on. Their current position seems to be that since the pond is unowned they cannot be held liable for the maintenance of the wall which they admit they do own in order to protect an entity that they do not own, since there is no-one to sue them. We shall fight this, but it would certainly help us if the pond was registered as publicly owned waterspace.

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## Appx A

**Parking at the pond** has not been too bad this year, and the new Keep Clear signs seem to be working despite the fact that they have blended in with the local mud. But we are very well aware that the changing pattern of ownership in Bonds End Lane (where at least six houses have changed hands this year) could easily throw up a problem in future.

**Allotments:** the last survey established a small demand, though not enough to require us by law to establish allotments. However we have now obtained 2 sites in Burdrop, both previously used for allotments. Firstly Miriam Tebb's 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 Piggy Path down past the church towards Burdrop. Cherwell District Council has at last agreed to lease us this land for allotments at a peppercorn rent, and we are only waiting for the Community Plan to create an allotment association to run the allotments; in the meantime the Clerk has kindly volunteered to attend an Allotment Management Course (for which the PC will pay).

*Joint Gower Ferris matters*

**Housing needs survey and Affordable housing:** negotiations are still ongoing, but the attention has moved to a site in the Ferris. The difficulty remains 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. The new arrangements have not of course yet been tested.

**Conservation area survey:** Villagers will have taken part in the public consultation and will have seen the final report published last month. Rose Todd and her team must be congratulated in producing such a beautiful and well researched document in the time allotted. My personal opinion is that it would be a good idea to pay for copies and publish it for sale in the village shop, it is such a good introduction to the history and landscape of the two villages.

**Response to Cherwell strategy plans:** No response or even any acknowledgment was ever received from Cherwell to our detailed and well argued joint villages representations as a result of the meeting on 6th April 2010. But Cherwell is about to publish a new consultation document for a new plan whose name I forget: we shall dust off our previous submission and update it with the views on housing and expansion expressed in the Community Plan, and bang it in, in the hope that this time they will listen to us in the spirit of the new Localism Bill. Thanks to the Community Plan we are now at least fully prepared.

**Churchyard and burial matters:** The new burial ground is now in use. The Parish Council continues to be willing to pay half the cost of the maintenance of the churchyard, though strictly this remains the responsibility of the Parish Church Council. After interminable negotiations Sibford Ferris PC agreed last year to contribute £300. We can only hope that they will change their minds in future under an influx of new Councillors, and perhaps with the arrival of a new Rector.

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Appx A

**Broadband:** We have finally managed to sign up all the Parish Councils in the area to the Swalciffe Exchange Broadband Users Group and are trying to get our bid into the Oxfordshire initiative for High speed broadband, which is getting off the ground at very low speed. There are other possibilities. Paul Hobson and Tony More who are coordinating our bid with myself will keep you informed

**Bishop's End (former Bishop Blaize):**

Your officers have had a couple of meetings with the Planning Department of Cherwell DC to discuss procedure in relation to the ongoing saga of the Bishop Blaize site. As many will know two Enforcement Orders have been issued by Cherwell and appealed against by the owners. The deadline for public submissions to the Inspectorate has passed, and all submissions will shortly be put up on the website at [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk) under the relevant Appeal References.

Sibford Gower Parish Council has made a full submission to the Inquiry, and we have indicated our desire to address the Inquiry in due course. This will be held in Bodicote House probably on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August. It is extremely important that all villagers, whatever their views attend this public inquiry, which will determine the future of our three villages in perpetuity.

In the meantime, in accordance with our submission, we shall continue to oppose any application to change the designation of the former Bishop Blaize public house or to build on any portion of the conservation area of the Sib Valley We are very grateful to the timely publication of the Conservation Report which enabled us to make a powerful case against development in this area. We shall also fully support Cherwell DC in any enforcement orders that are brought in relation to this property.

**The Parish Precept** was determined at £6250 a significant reduction on the extraordinary sum we felt necessary last year.

**Diamond Jubilee:** The PC made a grant of £500 towards this, and you will all have received your invitations. I am sure all wish to express their thanks to Muriel and her team and we all look forward to enjoying the fun.

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

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**Appx B**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT – May 2012**  
**SIBFORD GOWER AND BURDROP**

We have had the same Neighbourhood Watch team working to help keep us informed and aware. I have supported them by contributing to the Sibford Scene with police advice, asking residents to remain aware, to report suspicious behaviour and supplied telephone numbers for the Police, Crimestoppers and Trading Standards.

The Police have introduced 101 for normal police telephone calls throughout the country with 999 for emergency calls.

We have held one meeting this year. I have tried to keep the team up to date with newsletters. I would like to thank them for their support and time.

We are in the Banbury Rural Area. There have been a number of staff changes during the year in the Banbury Rural Neighbourhood Policing Team. Deborah Hextall is still the manager of Neighbourhood Watch and is very helpful and supportive.

I attended a Neighbourhood Watch Conference. Representatives from The Force Intelligence Bureau, CID, Speed Watch and Police Enquiry Centre gave talks explaining their jobs also Crimestoppers and how they work with the Police. The Police need our help and want to work closely with us to help them to look after our community.

We now have regular updates from the Police and they have arranged a series of 'Have Your Say' meetings, including two at the Sibford Gower Village Hall.

Metal thefts and oil thefts have been of particular concern this year.

Village Co-ordinators have been invited to join the Banbury Rural Key Individual Network. It is a separate group set up by the Police. I have agreed to join. I have also put Cedric Brown forward because of his position at the entrance of the village.

Mollie Mulley  
Neighbourhood Watch Village Co-ordinator

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**ANNUAL VILLAGE HALL REPORT FOR SIBFORD GOWER ANNUAL  
PARISH MEETING ON 25.5.12;**

During the past year Sibford Village Hall, under the Chairmanship of Mrs Joan Broady, continues to be supported by all our regular groups which includes Beavers, Cubs & Scouts, Tots & Babes, Fielding Day Centre, WI, Friendship Club, Horticultural Society, Sibfords Society (who have an Archives Room at the Hall), plus continuing weekly classes of Karate, Pilates & a Water Colour Work Shop. Our facilities are also used by Holy Trinity Church, Sibford Primary School and the Sibfords Community Plan Meetings. In addition we have private hirers for birthday parties, anniversaries, christenings and funerals and February was a very busy month for these private hirers, so most days there is someone in the Hall, with Sunday being the day least used.

We do appreciate the annual donation from your Parish Council which does help with the ever increasing costs of running the Hall, and without this and other help we would have difficulty keeping our hiring rates down to a competitive rate. We did have to slightly increase our charges from 1<sup>st</sup> April but without both the Parish Councils help, this would be higher.

Fund-raising continues and successful events included the Annual Fayre in June 2011 which raised just over £1,000; with two film nights, a quiz night last November and our Village Hall Lottery Game raising just over £1,250. Our Easter Egg Hunt this year was very successful, with 84 children taking part over two trails that Joan Broady had set for them, and we even had our own "live" Easter Bunny presenting the prizes.

In June we are planning four days of Sibfords Diamond Jubilee Celebrations from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup>. On the Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June from 2.30 p.m. the Village Hall is hosting the Diamond Jubilee Fayre in and around the Hall, and, because of the donations from the Gower Parish Council, together with part of the donation from Cherwell District Council, we will be giving our local children free rides on the Bouncy Castle with slide and on the Cup & Saucer Roundabout, together with playing with sumo suits and enjoying candy floss free of charge, which we feel is appropriate in this difficult financial time. The event will also include our popular Annual Dog Show for 'Sibford Top Dog', together with lots of games, stalls, BBQ, teas, licensed bar, Grand Raffle etc. Followed in the evening with a Talent Show and Disco, again free of charge, plus licensed bar. On the Sunday there are Open Gardens in the three villages and Teas can be purchased at one of the gardens in the Gower. Monday is the Sibfords Sports Day from 2.30 p.m., with medals to be won, when Sibford School in the Ferris is kindly allowing their outdoor facilities to be used, and you can bring along your own picnic teas. This has been supported by the Ferris Parish Council. There will also be the distribution of Sibfords Jubilee Mugs to all the children in the area, mainly purchased by the very welcome support of a £300 donation from The Town Estates Charity, together with help from both Parish Councils. On the Tuesday there is a "Walk Round the Village" Quiz starting at 1.45 p.m. from the Wykham Arms with the support of The Sibfords Society, and Damian and Debbie from the Wykham Arms serving afternoon teas, followed in the evening with a Quiz there.

We are very grateful to both Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris Parish Councils for their own donations towards these celebrations and also to all the Councillors for agreeing to apply for grants from Cherwell District Council, which have both been successful. We are also grateful to Mr Keith Hicks, a Village Hall Committee member, for dealing with all the paperwork in this connection.

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June we are pleased to report the return of the very popular Band "Damn Right I Got the Blues" tickets priced at £12, with a BBQ and Licensed Bar. Later in the year we hope to have another Quiz Night, as sadly the one arranged earlier this year fell through from lack of entries. Other fund-raising events are also in the planning stage.

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The new storage room, again the two Parish Councils helped with this cost, makes it easier for all hirers to access all the chairs and small tables, with the under-stage store for large tables also much easier to use, and the small storage room now means Committee members do not have to accommodate stock in their homes. Repairs to, and maintenance of, the Hall and grounds for year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April 2012 will not be as high as the previous year, when we carried out the alterations, etc.

Again the Village Hall Committee appreciates the Parish Councils' help and interest, which makes our Village Hall the attractive venue that it is. The eleven members of the Hall Committee are all volunteers, some for many years, and work tirelessly so that people can enjoy using the venue.

Muriel Chandler (Hon Secretary to Sibford Village Hall Committee.

Osgo Murray 29th May 2013