

**Minutes of the Sibford Gower Annual Parish Meeting  
held in Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School  
on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

**Present**

Parish Cllrs Peter Abbott, Muriel Chandler, Martin Layer, Oswyn Murray and Robin Spicer (Chairman).  
Seventeen local residents and the Clerk.  
Mr Ralph Grant (Area Engineer, Oxfordshire Highways), Police Community Support Officer Nikki Dale.  
County & District Cllr George Reynolds joined during the latter part of the Meeting having earlier attended another Annual Parish Meeting.

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mrs Eileen Haynes, Mrs Ann Spicer, Mrs Jean White and Mr David Soden.

**Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 were approved and signed by the Chairman

**Highway & Footpath Matters**

Mr Ralph Grant (Area Engineer, Oxfordshire Highways) gave a brief presentation which included the fact that the County Council is making a significant change in new contract arrangements and subsequent new contracts should be in place by June 2010.

Various matters were raised by residents at the Meeting. They were:-  
Request for dropped kerbs in High Meadow to facilitate easier wheelchair access.  
Repairs to village pond kerbing.  
Recently completed footpath work considered not to be finished up to standard.  
A blocked pipe in Colony Road causing flooding from time to time.  
Mud on the road in Pound Lane.

Mr Grant promised to ascertain what action might be taken and he will keep the Parish Council informed.

He referred to the disappearance of the village name plate in Pound Lane. He said that this was one of a number that had been lost quite recently and replacements are being arranged for this year.

**Thames Valley Police**

A presentation was made by Police Community Support Officer Nikki Dale. She said that she is one of five officers who have responsibility for thirty three villages. She commended the local Neighbourhood Watch Team and its leader, Mrs Mollie Mulley. New members are sought so that dissemination of urgent telephoned information may be more easily and quickly facilitated. Information on crime reduction was circulated to the Meeting and made available for distribution to the Village.

**Chairman's Report**

The Chairman welcomed all present including those who were making presentations during in the Meeting.

The Parish Council had met five times since last year's Annual Parish Meeting. During that period fourteen planning applications had been considered.

Regular contact had been maintained with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council especially with regard to Highway and Footpath matters. With regard to footpaths, residents will have observed that certain areas have been resurfaced and considerable work had been carried out at Burdrop Corner. As a bonus the footpath leading down the slope to the road (near to the Bishops Blaize) had a proper surface and edging stones installed.

The resurfacing of footpaths in High Meadow had been postponed because of financial constraints but the lowering of kerbs to facilitate wheelchair access is still being considered.

The Annual Litterblitz took place on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> April and thanks were extended to all those who took part.

The Parish Council, under the powers available to it, financed the maintenance of part of the Churchyard with the Ferris Parish Council taking on the maintenance of the remainder on a volunteer basis.

The Parish Council, again under the powers available to it, purchased, jointly with the Ferris Parish Council, the land adjacent to the Churchyard to create a burial ground. The churchyard currently has one burial plot left and so it would seem that in the relatively near future recourse will have to be made to the new burial ground.

Grateful thanks were due to Mrs Eileen Haines and the Bishop Blaize Support Group for the vigilant watch they keep regarding any activity or non-activity which takes place.

Turning to the Parish Council Meetings, the Chairman thanked County and District Councillor George Reynolds for the advice he gives when attending as many of the Meetings that he can bearing in mind his very busy schedule. As usual, a warm invitation was given to all residents to attend the Parish Council Meetings, which are always advertised, to take advantage of the Public Participation part of the Meeting to express views and opinions.

Matters discussed at Parish Council Meetings are always set out in the reports published in the Sibford Scene.

Finally, the Chairman thanked his fellow Parish Councillors for their involvement and input, acknowledging that they have busy business and personal lives. He also thanked the Clerk for the work he carries out at the Parish Council's instruction.

#### **Clerk's and Responsible Financial Officer's Report**

The new bus contract was awarded to Stagecoach and New Bus Service 50A starts on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009. An abridged time table will be published in the next issue of the Sibford Scene and a full one may be obtained from the shop in Sibford Ferris. One interesting feature is that the route now extends from Banbury to Stratford upon Avon. At the time of preparing this report, the fare structure is still awaited. As far as the Parish is concerned, there are two official stopping points – one in Main Street and the other at Burdrop Corner. With regard to the latter, the sign 'collapsed' some years ago and was not replaced. Oxfordshire County Council has been contacted in this regard. Certain residents are concerned that their boarding point has traditionally been in Pound Lane but this is not an official stop and as such technical difficulties exist in that drivers are not really allowed to stop unless the stop is official. The Clerk has spoken with Stagecoach and is now in dialogue with Oxfordshire County Council in an attempt to make the stop official.

The accounts for 2008 had been audited by the External Auditor without qualification and copies are always available on demand from the Clerk. Thanks were extended to Mr David Soden for once again carrying out the duties of Internal Auditor.

The clerk reported that during the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, Income totalled £7,624 comprising mainly a Precept figure of £6,000 and grants of £1,141. The grants related mainly to monies received from Sibford Ferris PC in respect of the creation of the new Burial Ground. Expenditure totalled £7,255 comprising mainly £1,910 in respect of the Burial Ground, £1,600 in respect of the Churchyard

maintenance and £2,462 in respect of administration (including the Clerk's salary, insurance and audit costs, stationery and postage). The small residual balance comprised sundry payments. The accounts are now the subject of Internal Audit (thanks again to Mr David Soden) prior to submission to the External Auditor. As always, copies of the accounts are available from the Clerk.

The Clerk thanked the Parish Councillors for the conscientious attitude taken in the execution of their duties and for making the life of the Clerk very tolerable and enjoyable.

#### **The Town Estates Charity**

In the unavoidable absence of Mrs Jean White (Secretary to the Charity), the report, shown at Appx 1, was presented by Cllr Oswyn Murray (a Charity Trustee).

#### **Neighbourhood Watch**

Mrs Mollie Mulley, as leader of the Neighbourhood Watch Team set out the current situation endorsing what PCSO Nikki Date had said earlier in the Meeting. She had gained another member for the Team and shortly will hold another Team Meeting to discuss how warning messages received can be more quickly passed on to the community.

#### **Village Hall**

Cllr Muriel Chandler in her capacity as Hon Secretary to Sibford Village Hall Committee presented the Report. Please see Appx 2.

#### **The Bishop Blaize**

Because Mrs Eileen Haynes was indisposed, the Report was unable to be delivered but it was understood that there are developments which will be reported upon in due course.

#### **New Burial Ground**

The Clerk reported regarding the above. The land for the new Burial Ground, adjacent to Holy Trinity Churchyard, was acquired by the Parish Council in 2006. The reason for this was that the Diocese, which owned the land, would not sell to a church but only to a Parish Council. From the date of the purchase of the land, the outgoing costs have totalled £7,993 comprising in the main, the purchase cost, repairs to stone walls, land levelling, fencing and maintenance. A generous donation by a local resident to pay for the metal fencing was acknowledged and very much appreciated. The Sibford Ferris Parish Council has contributed on a pro-rata basis (number of registered electors in each Parish). What remains, is to pay for the wooden fencing which will divide the land into two parts. One for immediate use and the other as a reserve for the future. The first part will have to be maintained to a standard appropriate for burial purposes. The other will be sheep controlled from time to time. The maintenance costs will be an ongoing feature. Thanks go to Mr Cedric Brown for the maintenance work and his involvement in the erection of the proposed new fencing. Mrs Evelyn Phillips is very kindly providing two seats, in memory of her late husband, to be placed in the Burial Ground.

#### **Holy Trinity Churchyard**

The Clerk reported regarding the above. In 2006, the Parish Council took the decision to financially aid the Church by funding the maintenance of part of the Churchyard. It has the power, under a Local Government Act, so to do. Previously, volunteer labour had been used but this ceased to be the case. So, at present, the Churchyard is separated into two sections. One is the responsibility of Sibford Ferris Parish Council which still relies upon voluntary help. The other is maintained at a cost to Sibford Gower Parish Council. Mr Cedric Brown carries out the work and thanks are extended to him. Since taking over the responsibility the total cost to the Parish Council was £2,475.

**The Village Pond**

The Report was presented by Cllr Martin Layer. Please see Appx 3.

**Any Other Business.**

Mr Fred Inns raised the matter of cleaning out the Village Pond, a practice that happened until the Pond Action Team was formed. He was advised by Cllr Martin Layer that such clearance may no longer be possible because of the presence of great crested newts and that advice from the Pond Action Team suggested that it was not necessary at the present time. Mr Inns also raised safety issues and the vulnerability of the concrete base of the pond by the added weight of the pond sediment. He was assured that the Pond Action Team would monitor the situation and advise the Parish Council should it have any concerns.

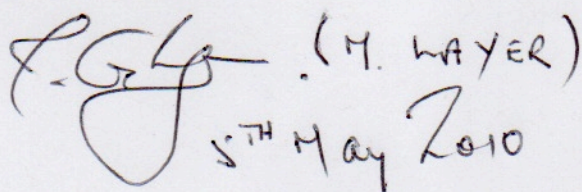
Mrs Kathleen Winter referred to recent very low flying aircraft and asked whether something might be done to prevent this.

Mr Alf Mullis expressed his thanks to the Town Estate Charity for financing the free bus to Chipping Norton. As mentioned above, this service has now been cancelled because of lack of use.

Mr Bill Wealsby complained about the ducks from the Village Pond which are 'visiting' his land and causing a nuisance. This matter is before the Parish Council at the present time and will be discussed at the next Parish Council Meeting.

Mrs Mollie Mulley was concerned about the possibility of villages being forced to take additional housing in line with Cherwell District Council's Options for Growth Consultation last November. Cllr Martin Layer advised the Meeting that the Parish Council had submitted extensive representations to Cherwell District Council on the Options for Growth taking into consideration a range of views expressed at the time. Cllr Reynolds advised that a response to this consultation had been delayed and was now scheduled for the summer.

**There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked all present for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.50pm.**

 (M. LAYER)  
5<sup>TH</sup> May 2010

APPX No 1

**THE TOWN ESTATES CHARITY  
SIBFORD GOWER AND BURDROP**

CHARITY NO 253440

**REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The work for the Trustees seems to have increased this year.

As a result of the recent valuations of property several changes have been made to tenancies with two changes of tenant. There have been large expenditures on maintenance of Sibford Heath Farm and the School House totalling £3,026. A further large financial commitment will be the cost of registering all the Trust land which is currently being undertaken.

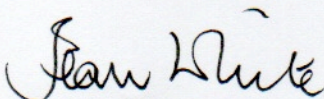
The school has again been the main beneficiary of funds with a sum of £7,432 having been paid for soft furnishings.

Donations have been made to the Sibford Pre School, the Sibford Society, Sibford Cricket Club, the Village Hall, the Friendship Club and the Friends Meeting House.

The free bus to Chipping Norton was cancelled during the year due to lack of support but the Trust continues to part-finance the Friendship Club outings bus. The Chiropodist and personal alarms are also still provided by Trust funds. In addition this year a one-off payment for help with heating costs was offered to anyone in need (within Sibford Gower and Burdrop) and two single parents and two pensioners applied and received the grant. Part of the cost of a bathroom conversion was made to a disabled resident.

The accounts for the year show income from rents, interest on investment and wayleaves totalled £25,617. From this sum payments were made for the maintenance, insurance and other expenses and the total distributions under the mandatory categories was:

Relief in Need	£4,772	General Benefit	£5,782
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Jean White  
Secretary  
May 2009

ANNUAL VILLAGE REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 14<sup>th</sup>  
MAY 2009:

During the past year Sibford Village Hall, under the Chairmanship of Joan Broady, has been supported by our regular hirers although it was a great loss to see the Playgroup finishing last July, after approximately 30 years, being our main weekday hirer. Tots & Babes did start up again two mornings a week. We did have to increase hire charges from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008 to help meet the Hall's present day running costs but for regular users this was just £1 per hour. New rates for private hirers are displayed on the Hall's notice board.

Fund raising continues but we are always struggling to get helpers at these events. The 2008 Annual Fayre again showed a good profit of around £1,000 but the Christmas Quiz had to be cancelled due to lack of support – we did, however, hold another Quiz in April and thanks go to our quiz masters Timothy and James Wimbush. A new Social Sub Committee has been formed to concentrate on fund raising and this year's Fayre, with a slightly different format but keeping the popular Dog Show, is on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June. On the 27<sup>th</sup> June we have been fortunate enough to have the very popular Ken Follett's 'Damn Right I Got the Blues' Band back again for the third time kindly arranged by local resident Antony Harwood, with a BBQ, run by local resident Steve Wilkinson, and licensed bar, with tickets at £10 soon to be on sale at the village shop. We have had two profitable concerts under the Live and Local organisation and we had a new experience – a film evening showing Mamma Mia, provided free by Cherwell District Council, where we sold soft drinks, sweets and ice cream, this proved popular and made a small profit to the Hall to cover running costs. Another film – The Duchess – is on next Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May and tickets are available at the village shop. We do get great support from Judith and Terry Byrne, the owners of the Ferris village shop, in helping to sell tickets, providing raffle tickets, etc. An Easter Egg Hunt took place on Good Friday and, despite the wet weather, the children seemed to enjoy this. We are also trying to restart the Village Hall Lottery Game, with 200 members at £12 per annum; this would yield a profit to the Hall of £1200 with £1200 being returned in prize money in a monthly draw at the Village Shop of three prizes of £50, £30 & £20. A murder mystery evening is being arranged for September – details will be in the Sibford Scene.

We are also fortunate to be supported with three donations per year – from the Gower Parish Council, the Ferris Parish Council, and a local resident. During the year we replaced the 12 old heavy wooden tables with 10 new large and 10 new smaller tables at a cost of £1,632, which have been well received and are easier to use. With the much-appreciated financial help from the Town Estates Charity, we are in the process of fitting lined curtains in the small hall. Still on going is the replacement of double-glazing in the large hall, and we are looking to put up black out linings at the windows in the large hall for when it is used for the showing of films during daytime.

We are, as always, looking for more people to give some voluntary time to assist in the running of the Hall. During the year David Soden has given a great deal of his time mowing the front and side lawns free of charge, together with Cedric Brown, who kindly mowed the play area lawn. With the purchase of a second-hand mower to keep the field tidy, we have again had help from other local residents giving their time in a voluntary capacity.

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We are delighted with the help of Sibford Horticultural Society in keeping the borders looking great. If you cannot give your time voluntary on the Committee, we always appreciate any help at fund raising events, or with small jobs or gardening work. Contact telephone numbers are on the Notice Board in the Hall car park.

Our Chairman recently attended a meeting of Cherwell District Council's Recreation and Health Improvement Committee, who have items for free hire to Village Halls and Clubs covering many activities. This Committee has been asked to do a feasibility study on the Hall's field, to see what could be done with it for recreational purposes.

M D Chandler, Honorary Secretary to Sibford Village Hall Committee.  
12.5.09.

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009

**The Village Pond.**

The Village Pond Project started back in July 2005 when an ecological survey of the village pond was carried out by Pond Conservation as part of the Ponds for People Project. The Parish Council were subsequently provided with a survey report and management recommendations for creating a wildlife pond.

A proposal was then made to the Parish Council that a Pond Action Team should be set up, independent of the Parish Council, to take forward the ideas. The Pond Action Team held their inaugural meeting in September 2006 at which they agreed to adopt the management plan and to create a wildlife pond. It was accepted by the 15 or so original members of the Pond Action Team that the success of the venture was uncertain but it was agreed that it was worth having a go. If it didn't work out then nothing was lost. It was on this basis the Parish Council agreed to provide support and financial resources to the Pond Action Team.

I have subsequently reported to these meetings on the progress of the project and the implementation of the management plan recommendations; on the planting of water loving plants within the pond, on shrub and wild flower planting on the grass bank, on general improvements to the setting of the pond and on the aspirations for increased wildlife. We have also addressed health and safety concerns; carried out a full risk assessment, published guidance in the Scene and circulated advice to user groups within the village.

At the end of last year it was reported that ducks had been introduced to the pond and that the majority of the planting had been eaten or disturbed. It was acknowledged by the Pond Action Team that the ducks conflicted with the original management recommendations and that it was either the wildlife pond or the ducks-only one would prevail! It was reported to the Parish Council in November 2008 that the ducks were welcomed by the Pond Action Team.

On this basis the principles of the wildlife management plan could not be sustained and there was no longer a mandate for the Parish Council to provide financial resources to the project through the Pond Action Team. The Parish Council resolved to withdraw formal support and funding from the project.

This decision as many will know sparked a media interest that culminated in BBC South Today and Radio Oxford giving the story air time in mid December. If anything the television pictures showed the beauty of this part of the village and probably added value to property prices.

From its inception the project has been ably directed with dedication and enthusiasm by Glennis Hardman and the Parish Council have expressed thanks to her and the Pond Action Team members for having at least given the idea a go. Management of the grass banks and the pond itself will continue to be carried out by the Pond Action Team and the Parish Council will be regularly updated.

Martin Layer

End