

SOUTH LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES, 27th September 2021, 19:30

Present were:

- Nicky Brooks (Chair)
- Lysette Nicholls (Vice Chair)
- Graham Soame (Parish Councillor)
- Rita Sawrey-Woodwards (Parish Councillor)
- David Auger (Parish Councillor)
- Dick Pears (Parish Councillor)

Members of the public present - Martin Spurrier, Caroline Auger and Claire Shestopal

The Parish Clerk was not able to attend for personal reasons.

Although the numbers below refer to the agenda items they were not taken in chronological order.

1. There were no apologies from the District and County Councillors and no attendance by them.
2. Declaration of interest - Dick Pears indicated he had shares in a connected company to the Bluefield Group and it was agreed he would not vote on any decision in relation to the solar farm.
3. The minutes of the meeting of 16th August 2021 were approved.
4. Four issues were raised by parishioners -
 - (i) Adam Mumford sought permission of the Parish Council to cut a laurel impinging on his land- it was not within the Parish Council authority but it was noted that within his curtilage he could do that and also to abate any nuisance such as to cut impinging roots but in relation to plants on land other than his he needed to seek the permission of the landowner - probably Eynsham Park Estates.
 - (ii) in relation to the tyres outside College Farm it was agreed unanimously that the position of the Highway authority would be sought - Lysette Nicholls to contact the authority.
 - (iii) There was discussion also about the verges out of the village and again the Highway Authority would be consulted about sight lines and safety heights before decisions were taken.
 - (iv) Claire Shestopal raised a number of issues about the Solar Farm being principally its operating position being too far to the north, the noise and position of the inverter, it being too large a site and having concern about the noise both of construction and thereafter (the idea of an acoustic fence was not even appropriate to suggest and she fed her views into the general discussion at point 14 which was taken out of order.
5. There were no updates from County Councillors or District Councillors as they did not attend.
6. The development of individual roles and designated responsibilities for particular councillors was work in progress starting with the results of the 21st July 2021 workshop and would be formalised in the New Year (if not earlier] when the pressure on the Parish Council caused by the A40 and Solar Farm commitments abated but there would be a use of targeted emails between councillors. There was a general discussion about the South Leigh Charity but there would have to be an agenda discussion and consultation about that. More importantly all the sub-committees needed to have a Parish Council representative and all needed to be rationalised. It was agreed that, subject to consultation with the village, the process should be started to change the name of the Parish Council to 'South Leigh and High Cogges Parish Council' under section 75 of the Local Government Act 1972 - it being felt that the new name would better represent the actual situation and provided for greater unity - Dick Pears to be in charge of the consultation process with the village, the ward councillors and WODC.

7. The payments brought forward by Nicky Brooks were approved. All were in line with the budget.
8. There was a lengthy discussion about the A40. Nicky Brooks indicated the successful receipt of information from OCC as a result of the Freedom of Information Request - the first tranche of statistics allowing the Parish Council to have a firm basis in objective figures to measure any subsequent increase in traffic after the A40 works had completed and allowing the Parish Council to seek controls on traffic (if negotiations prior to work commencing had not succeeded) and the second showing the sophisticated method that OCC had used in selecting particular junction options. There was a meeting on 28th September with the team at OCC. There were continuing discussions about Barnard Gate and the road and whether a dramatic closing of the road and turning it into a greenway was possible. There was further discussion about issues arising and it was agreed that the item 8(e) cycling and footpaths should be a more general item, not connected to A40 in particular but connected to the needs of the village and its connections with its local area. It is a complicated issue requiring planning by WODC and OCC over a number of years but there was reason why the debate should not be started.
9. Conservation Area - Parish Council update with the text of an email sent to the planners of WODC by the conservation group seeking a pre-application consultation with them.
10. Mobile phone signal - Dick Pears expressed his frustration with the progress or lack of it, and the unwillingness of the mobile providers to fulfil their obligation and promises. Dick Pears and Nicky Brooks will raise issue with Robert Courts on 12th November. The earlier meeting with him was postponed by Dick Pears and Nicky Brooks because there were so many issues in flux.
11. The Limb Brook - Rita Sawrey-Woodwards updated the Parish Council. South Leigh is now working cooperatively with the Nature Recovery Network in Eynsham via Lucy Dickinson with regard to sharing the use of the electronic equipment needed to analyse the chemical content of the water in the Limb Brook, i.e. a photometer and an oximeter. This equipment is far more accurate than that currently being used and so gives more credibility to the results should they be needed to support approaches to Thames Water. Equipment has also now been received from Lucy Kennery of the Lower Windrush Valley Project team to sample the Limb Brook for eight species of invertebrates in the Riverfly Project, a national investigation to monitor invertebrate species affected by pollution. September sampling was done for chemical analysis on 29th September, later than usual, due to the Brook being dry.
12. Thames Water were continuing to empty the sewage treatment plant in Lymbrook Close, started on 10th August and apparently continuing for 6 weeks. The Parish Council was never officially informed of how long the process was going to last, so the Parish Council could not inform residents, but the view was that it should have finished by now. We are waiting for comments on the letter from Thames Water from WASP. In the meantime, Nicky Brooks had shown the Thames Water letter to her son who worked as a chemist in the water industry and he has suggested a number of further questions to be posed to Thames Water - such things as capacity of tanks for sludge and the type of breach. Robert Courts is setting up a meeting with different parts of Thames Water - flooding, environment, water treatment - for a joint meeting with representatives of South Leigh Parish Council and the Parish Councils of Stanton Harcourt, Standlake, Northmoor and Aston and which have already had one meeting hosted by Lysette Nicholls and was the constructive start of the greater liaison between neighbouring Parish Councils.
13. Flooding - there were no issues caused by the recent spate of heavy downpours but a local landowner still needed to be approached about clearing ditches. Pipes have been cleaned out but there may be an issue about a tank and on whose land it is situated which Lysette Nicholls has chased for further information and an update.
14. Facilities
 - a) Village Hall - Caroline Auger informed the Parish Council that a new order of cushioned chairs had been commissioned and were for delivery within the month - the current chairs need to be

stored elsewhere than in the village hall (there is no space to store two lots of chairs in the hall) so that they were available for use by the village. The obvious place was in the hut on the playing field but there was a need for it to be rationalised and tidied with considerable amounts of stuff thrown out. In due course a group will be organised to achieve that. The village hall committee were also looking at further storage opportunities and were upgrading the drive to make the turn less extreme and steep.

- b) Playground - the new lease was ready to be signed - 25 year lease from 1/8/21 to 31 August 2046 - rental currently £125 pa. There was discussion about how it might be terminated if decision were made to move the playground and there was a clause allowing either side to terminate on 6 months notice. On that basis it was agreed it should be signed.

- 15. There was no objection to the planning application re Shuttles Cottage - it being seen as having no impact on the overall scheme and has not got any larger since our PD/COL application 19/03321/CLP dated 2nd December 2019.

Turning to the Solar Farm. David Auger had done a lot of research into the company and some of the personalities. There appeared to have been a good turn out by the village at the public consultation event - there was some concern that:

- i. there were no photographs or mock ups to show the imposed farm on the landscape.
- ii. little consideration of showing how it would look in winter and how obvious.
- iii. they were using terms like "enhancement" to mean no more than widening the footpaths.
- iv. Graham Soame was concerned that they would be very far on with discussions with WODC. Lysette Nicholls said their nearest established site was near Swindon and they had offered a site visit to Parish Council. It was confirmed that it was quite normal to set up a new company for each individual project and that should not necessarily raise suspicions and financial security would have to be provided by bonds.
- v. However the other issues even in the light of the current presentation were.
- vi. length of work and extent of working hours during construction - it appeared that it had been said during the day that the construction would last no more than 3 months - clearly that must be wildly optimistic as for hours for work, 9 to 5 and no work at weekends was the consensus and such terms could be imposed as a condition of the grant of planning.
- vii. there needed to be far greater detail about planting.
- viii. the site was too large and its northern boundary should be pushed further south.
- ix. traffic and passing places on the single track road needed to be considered - apparently there are 14 passing places - four would need upgrading and possibly an additional one and the access point for the site might have to be re-visited - apparently there had been a number of people from Stanton Harcourt who attended concerned about the traffic - so the issue of reinstating road after completion of work needed to be considered.
- x. it was simply ridiculous for Bluefield to say that the rights of way would be unaffected save in the limited meaning that one could still get from A to B along them.
- xi. there needed to be clear enforceable plans for the de-commissioned farm.

Nicky Brooks was clear that reports would be required when the planning application was submitted and that was when we needed to be on our guard but we need to focus on:

- i. the layout - the angle of the panels was it one direction or more than one.
- ii. the construction phase and would include matters like access, hours of working.
- iii. planting and biodiversity issues and Rita Sawrey-Woodwards made the point there needed to be provision for maintaining and monitoring what was done, e.g. re-planting trees that had died.
- iv. decommissioning.
- v. money - bonds to ensure maintenance and money for decommissioning.

Dick Pears had raised the issue of cycle paths and if money was to be forthcoming for that it would be indirect in the sense that the community might be provided with money and could decide to spend it

on and there was discussion over the ownership of the railway line which is not with the curtilage of the Solar Farm and Gascoigne land but probably Eynsham Park Estate.

16. Speed Watch - Lysette Nicholls said it would be reactivated shortly - she needed volunteers - it was an obligation only of about an hour once a week.
17. Representations had been made to the Boundary Commission (BC) but there needs to be further work in anticipation of the public inquiry - we need to get Robert Courts on board and it was going to be a difficult task getting the BC to split us off from Eynsham but it was important to reiterate issues such as health for South Leigh being focused on Witney - a point that Caroline Auger made - but also the linkage exists now between Stanton Harcourt, Sutton, Standlake and South Leigh Parish Councils, with the first three all staying in the Witney constituency. As a simple example, it was those that chairs, tables, marquees were borrowed from for the recent event, not Eynsham, and it is those Parish Councils co-operating about Thames Water. There had already been a meeting of the chairs of the those Parish Councils.
18. There was a spontaneous round of applause for Martin Spurrier's efforts in organising the village event. It was agreed that it had been a great success but we needed to capitalise on the attempts to combat loneliness in the village. A report needed to be filed with the National Lottery to explain the use of the money etc. and Martin Spurrier and Nicky Brooks would deal with that and a press story would be done.
19. The next two meetings will be 15th November and 13th December with the dates for the rest of the year determined on 15th November.

The meeting concluded at 21:50