

# SOUTH LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

13th December 2021 at 19:30 in the Village Hall

## Present

- Nicky Brooks (Chair)
- Lysette Nicholls (Vice chair)
- Rita Sawrey-Woodwards
- David Auger
- Dick Pears

Members of Public present: Martin Spurrier, Liz and John Ashwell, Graham Soame, Caroline Auger, Claire Shestopal and husband, Anne and Russell Cherry, Tim Lawson (to deal with item 10).

## AGENDA

1. Apologies - no apologies and no attendance by District or County Councillors.
2. Declarations of interest - Dick Pears declared an interest re. Bluefield Development and will not participate in any decisions or votes relating to the Solar Farm
3. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as being a true record of the proceedings. Approved.
4. Opportunity for any parishioner to raise a matter of concern. Martin Spurrier, Russell Cherry, Graham Soame and Claire Shestopal raised issues about item 12 and their concerns will be summarised below.
5. Opportunity for any County Councillor and / or District Councillor to update the Parish Council on any matter of relevance or concern. There was no attendance and also nothing raised.
6. Report on the liaison between the Parish and the Parishes of Stanton Harcourt, Sutton and Standlake. Nicky Brooks said though South Leigh was grouped with Eynsham and Cassington in terms of the wards, South Leigh had more in common with the parishes of Stanton Harcourt, Sutton and Standlake. Lysette Nicholls, acting as liaison as she is District Council for those parishes, reported cases of COVID continue to increase, so be cautious. Car parks are having electrical charge points constructed including Back Lane, Eynsham, Woodford Way, Witney, Hensington Road, Woodstock, Black Bourton Road, Carterton and New Street, Chipping Norton.  
  
There was to be a meeting by Zoom 14th December with Thames Water who were putting up six people to deal with a range of issues and Dick Pears said in the Q and A that follows that he would raise the issues that were occurring with the water treatment plant in South Leigh and mentioned the two emails of complaint he had received about Thames Water's continuing work from two residents in Lymbrook Close.  
  
Rita Sawrey-Woodwards, as a resident of Lymbrook Close, indicated that there had been some minor improvement in that tankers were not coming quite so early or so late.
7. Constitutional - Nicky Brooks mentioned the issue of the Parish Council no longer having a Clerk. Jackie Johnson had offered to take minutes and Ken Brooks offered to be the Clerk, but not take minutes or be paid. Dick Pears offered to take minutes and that was agreed and there was some discussion about Ken Brooks as Clerk. Dick Pears suggested that another notice should be put round the village requesting

someone to come forward and if Ken Brook's offer was taken up it should initially be only for six months

Proposed change of Parish Council name to the 'Parish Council of South Leigh and High Cogges'. The requisite notice had been placed on the village website and noticeboard, circulated on the village email and village Facebook page. Time limit for objections were 31st December - as yet there were none.

Martin Spurrier volunteered to sort out a key to the Village Noticeboard and it was agreed that for a trial period that the notice board would not be locked

Parish Council representative for South Leigh Charity - Rita Sawrey-Woodwards is the new Parish Council representative on the charity and she indicated that whilst the terms of the charity focused on the "needy" - "needy" needed to be interpreted in line with the 21st century and it did not mean simply lacking money but should address need in terms of, say, loneliness and depression and she suggested, for instance, a coffee morning for people who are alone so they can meet up and meet others. Other ideas were invited. There was a discussion about drawing up a list by use of the electoral roll.

8. Payments to approve - there were none. Change of bank account - Nicky Brooks and others on the Parish Council were having difficulty getting Barclays to provide internet banking facilities for joint signatures on the current Barclays Parish Council account. It was agreed that a change should be investigated. There was one bank that provided banking facilities to other local authorities for £6 per month or Starling bank.
9. Newsletter - it was agreed that the next issue should be paper based - some people do not have access to internet and it was difficult to know with the internet distribution who is receiving copies whereas with the old system of hand delivery it was clear that all households were receiving a copy. The internet distribution had at the time saved money when the village was strapped for cash but now it had very slightly more money. Of course some may elect to have electronic version only which would save the Parish Council some money and that possibly could be ascertained when the paper copy was delivered. It was hoped that the team that had so diligently delivered before could be resurrected. There was discussion over the merits and whether we could ask for contributions.

It was thought that announcements could also be displayed on the village noticeboard, at the bus shelter and in the church or at the entrance to the village hall but in the case of the church and entrance hall, others would need to be consulted.

10. Website - Tim Lawson had after many years decided to cease provision of his website as a voluntary service to the local community. No one in village had responded to requests for assistance so alternatives were being investigated such as Netwise and Hugo Fox but there were many different issues to consider in making comparison about substitute providers - cost, address, continuity, GDPR, planning applications and the integration or otherwise of the village hall booking facility; there was going to be a whole raft of work that will be needed to be carried out. There was some discussion about how material would be uploaded, which of the various providers looked, or were, the more professional, comparative costs and whether the current website needed to be pared down. Tim Lawson would liaise with Lysette Nicholls to bring forward some recommendations. If possible the current village hall booking system to remain in place with the new provider.
11. A40 and Shores Green - Briefing from OCC. Nicky Brooks, Lysette Nicholls and Dick Pears had a Zoom meeting on 22nd November with three of the officers working on the A40 - Stephen Gardner (Communities HIF2 A40 Smart Corridor: Planning

Application) and two others. At that stage it was thought that the application for planning permission was being filed so we had the meeting then as it was thought it would be 6th December and now it is thought it would be in the New Year. Dick Pears mentioned the work that had been commissioned by OCC to deal with “access between South Leigh and the A40” and the problem was going to ensure that OCC took it into account and to that end Robert Courts had been approached for his assistance but had not replied and Lysette Nicholls undertook to chase.

12. Solar Farm - there were a number of powerful critiques of the application with Martin Spurrier reading a detailed, three-page reasoned brief and producing photographs and marked plans and arguing:
  - i) that the Parish Council must oppose the application.
  - ii) it was one of the largest sites in the country and was too large and too close to the village.
  - iii) there were a number of cases where a solar farm plan had been defeated by local opposition and the Parish Council should follow that example.
  - iv) if there was no opposition it would seriously undermine the authority of the neighbourhood plan.
  - v) no opposition would mean that developers would follow where Bluefield had gone before.
  - vi) The parishioners should be consulted on what the Parish Council were intending to submit and support the Parish Council by their individual submissions.
  - vii) he, like others, was particularly perturbed by the effect of the panel on particular views – from Bonds Lane and from the footpath near Just Cartridges.
  - viii) he thought that Bluefield and Site owner should be approached to remove certain fields which he identified as A, B and C on his plan (particularly C) which would mean views were less effected and the landowner could be asked to substitute other land.

Graham Soame developed the objection in his lodged objection on the WODC website. Initially he didn't realise impact of this application on one of the least densely populated areas locally and he had three major concerns

- i) the effect on views.
- ii) the precedent for developers.
- iii) the width of the paths which Bluefield had made woefully inadequate provision for.

Russell Cherry, with his responsibility for the village footpaths, was equally strong in his opposition to the application - “vehemently opposed” as he put it - and whilst he supported the reduction of emissions thought this plan was “a blot on the landscape”, rights of way which are well used and will be adversely effected and the open aspects and aesthetics of the village setting would be ruined with solar panels blocking views.

Claire Shestopal was reassured by what she had heard from the floor. She had wanted to live in a tranquil, green, small village and the current situation with developments such as the Solar Farm had influenced their decision to buy in South Leigh as they wanted to live in a place such as South Leigh. This development, in her and her husband's view, threatened that and there seemed to a policy of wrecking land to achieve reductions in emissions.

There was discussion that the width of paths was not substantial enough and reference to the OCC policy.

David Auger mentioned the noise that the inverters would make - not in reality the inverters themselves, but the fans to keep them cool.

Nicky Brooks indicated:

- i. a delay had been sought from WODC so that the Parish Council would have more time to develop its views
- ii. the application would be determined by the Lowlands Planning Committee rather than the officers
- iii. some of the issues that the Parish Council had with the current plans, assessment and proposals
- iv. the work that was being done and had been done by the Parish Council to analyse and critique the application.

The Parish Council had to listen to what had been said tonight and thanked the contributors however, ultimately, the Parish Council would have to take the decision that it judged was in the best interests of the village. She mentioned a Community Fund and the offer of £300,000 by Bluefield but firmly stated that in planning terms that was a wholly irrelevant consideration. The Parish Council would need to have further meetings to formulate a detailed position and if there were to be opposition to the scheme it would have to be formulated in planning terms with the assistance of the neighbourhood plan and WODC plan.

13. Liaison with Eynsham Park Estate re. footpaths and other matters. Nicky Brooks outlined the issues that had been discussed with Eynsham Park Estate at the meeting on 15th November 2021 and referred to the change of management by the handing over of the estate to Michael Mason. The discussed issues included flooding, particularly near Shuttles Cottage, the fields occupied by Buckingham's, the field by Margery Cross, their development plans, the football pitch, the wall on Station Road, permissive paths and their agreement to the planting of more trees by Martin Spurrier. The Parish Council would formulate our suggestions for a revised lease and put it to them without the initial involvement of Withers, their solicitors in order to save costs.
14. Precept - pre discussion how this might be affected by money due to be received by Twelve Acre Farm.
15. The Lymbrook.
  - a) Nature.
  - b) Pollution - Lymbrook Close sewage plant. There was a zoom meeting with Thames Water on 14th December which was organised by Lysette Nicholls and to be chaired by Lysette Nicholls and attended by Nicky Brooks and DP.

Rita Sawrey-Woodwards indicated that she had been in contact with Lucy Dickinson of Eynsham Nature Recovery and suggested the formation of a What's App group for the sharing of data. She said there had to be a decision about what to do with the whole year of figures that she had collected for the Lymbrook and it was thought that perhaps we needed to see what happened after Thames Water had completed its work in February.

Flooding and sewage - Lysette Nicholls - We have done as much as we can re. the pipes and flooding where the pipe is in High Cogges. The OCC have investigated and found the issue is on private land and offered to put in a manhole cover so that

residents could access and repair it but this was declined. As this is on private land we cannot assist further.

16. Facilities - There were no updates at the moment.
  - a) Village hall and defibrillator.
  - b) Village green.
  - c) Playground.
  - d) Football pitch.
  - e) Bus shelter.
17. Responses to any planning matters:
  - i) 68 Church End - there was no objection.
  - ii) A40 HIF Scheme - we await the submission of the planning application.
  - iii) Tar Farm Solar Farm - see above.
18. Speed Watch / '20 is Plenty' scheme. Lysette Nicholls explained that there could only be a reduction from a 30mph limit to 20mph where there were already 30mph street signs and she said there would have to be further information supplied to the village. She said lots of villages had made applications so it remains to be seen whether our application will be successful.
19. AOB - Neighbourhood Plan group AGM - this is a group of which Ken Brooks was a member. It is a useful lobby and information group for the village when revision of the Neighbourhood plan is in the offing. It had had its AGM recently but this year there was not much to report

Next meeting: 17th January 2022 - agenda by no later than 3rd January 2022.