

SOUTH LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

17th January 2022 at 19:30 in the Village Hall together with a Zoom link

Present

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

Parishioners present in the Hall and by Zoom.

1. Apologies. Apologies from Cllr. Dan Levy and Cllr. Carl Rylett - Cllr. Andy Goodwin attended at 20:05.
2. Declarations of interest. No declarations of interest - Dick Pears indicated that he now had no interest to declare as the shares he had held in Bluefield Solar had been sold.
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. No issue raised save as indicated below and in connection with Item 12.
5. Opportunity for any County Councillor and / or District Councillor to update the Parish Council on any matter of relevance or concern. Nothing to report by the Councillors but the Parish Council will be liaising with them urgently in relation to the soon to be filed A40 planning application.
6. Report on the liaison between the Parish and the Parishes of Stanton Harcourt, Sutton and Standlake. Nothing to report.
7. Constitutional:
 - a) the next steps in the process to change of name of the Parish Council - the application to change the name of the Parish Council to the Parish Council of South Leigh and High Cogges will be made in next 7 days as no objections had been raised and so an email to WODC Democratic Services will be sent to seek the change.
 - b) the proposal that Ken Brooks becomes the acting Clerk until a permanent replacement was amended at Dick Pears's suggestion that he became the acting clerk until the meeting in June 2022 - that will indicate that it is a temporary situation for a limited period allowing a candidate in the village to put themselves forward. As Dick Pears pointed out, Ken had already assisted to deal with issues about the precept (see below) and the council vacancy and the only concern was his connection with Nicky Brooks. If there was disquiet, then it was up to the village to come up with a candidate or for the Parish to fund a professional. Nicky Brooks pointed out, and Dick Pears agreed, that the Parish Council were facing a large number of difficult issues and Nicky Brooks did not have time to train a clerk at the moment and she felt that Ken should stay in the role until June with attempts to find a candidate and an advert placed in June. The Parish Council agreed.

8. Payments to approve. The payment of insurance was agreed and the bank account will shortly be converted to have internet banking facility.

The issue of the precept which was not on the agenda - a letter from WODC giving notice for the due date to set a precept had gone missing in the change over from the Parish clerks. There was a statutory date to set a precept that needed to be met and which fell between Parish Council meetings. As it was a statutory obligation it had to be expedited and there was agreement in advance of this meeting by all the Parish Council members that in order to meet costs such as election expenses, grass cutting, the village newsletter costs which had been additionally incurred or subject to an increase, the precept was raised by 10%.

9. Website: Tim Lawson had identified organisations that could assist with the website. The Parish Council had analysed the alternatives together with their costs and signed up with NetWise. There would be a soft launch of the new website on 28th Jan 2022 and it was already formatted and populated and a logo was being designed with the new Parish name. The village hall booking would remain with the current website for the time being - probably until end of April so that the new website could bed in and there would be time to avoid any glitches that might occur.
10. A40 and Shores Green - the planning application had not been filed as far as the Parish Council knew. In connection with any road works, Heather Horner had suggested that the Parish Council look at getting Tree Protection orders issued in respect of tree or trees that might be under threat. Lysette Nicholls and Dick Pears will walk to see what trees might be effected by the A40 works and which need protection. Nicky Brooks explained the relevance of that particularly in connection with the Barnard Gate Road. There was discussion about contacting the Forestry Officer at WODC.

Further Dick Pears explained that in connection with the A40 a meeting was being organised with Robert Courts.

11. Thames Water - This was getting to be an increasingly complex issue and there was progress report and further discussion about the way forward. Lysette Nicholls outlined the meeting that there had been between Thames Water and South Leigh, Aston, Stanton Harcourt and Standlake about a range of issues such as communications, flooding, sewage, and planning applications. Last week she had had a meeting with Phil Shaw, Head of Planning at WODC, and there had been a preliminary discussion about strategy across Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire so that there could be concerted action by larger areas to deal with common problems.

Rita Sawrey-Woodwards dealt with a discussion she had had recently with one of the crew working on the plant at South Leigh in connection with the work that was happening and she was told that Thames Water had rejected the idea of replacing the damaged tank with a new and larger tank and the consequences were that repairs would take an indefinite time because the blasting of the inside of the tank to clean it was causing damage which then had to be repaired.

Caroline Gane pointed out that there had been no suggestion from Thames Water that the blasting was going to continue over the weekend as it had and she also pointed out the damage to the verges and kerbs. There was another complaint from a resident about the damage to the verges throughout the village.

Dick Pears outlined what had already been done and indicated that his recent emails to Jake Morely had not been responded to and he would give Thames Water until Monday of next week but would ask Martin Spurrier to start preparing the press release and Lysette Nicholls indicated that from 28th January, Twitter would be able to be used.

Nicky Brooks and Lysette Nicholls indicated that two different Thames Water operatives had been in the village prospecting the need for further investigations. Therefore, it was very much work in progress.

12. Proposed solar farm at Tar Farm - The Parish Council had drafted a document for submission to WODC and the first issue was a formal vote in relation to it. Dick Pears proposed that the document should stand as the Parish Council's representation to WODC in respect of the solar Farm. Lysette Nicholls seconded it and it was passed unanimously.

Nicky Brooks gave figures about what had been achieved in reduction of the site and believed it to be between 16% and 17%. The document that was to be submitted to WODC distributed to people attending the meeting in person along with two maps showing the differences between the starting position and the finally agreed one

Nicky Brooks read out the document so that others would hear it and the intention was that it should be distributed on Facebook and on the village website.

There was then discussion with questions being taken from the floor. There were questions about how the Parish Council had come to the conclusion that complete objection would not be successful and Dick Pears indicated there had been informal soundings from WODC councillors but the reasoning was also set out in the first part of the document to be circulated. Tim Lawson indicated that independent legal advice would be needed to ensure that obligations which were imposed on the applicants were kept through the term. Nicky Brooks indicated that money lodged would be held in escrow. Keith Hawton thought the suggestion of research was an excellent idea and he thought there was bound to be resources in the University of Oxford but funding would be an issue. Rita Sawrey-Woodwards confirmed that the request on the Parish Council submission to WODC did assert that any funding for research, if it was forthcoming from Bluefields, would need to be separate from the Community Fund offered.

It was suggested that there should be an obligation on the applicants to remove the panels should they no longer be efficient or utilised because, for instance, the technology had moved on and that should happen even if the term of the lease had not expired.

There was a question about the length of the lease and wasn't 40 years too long?

Martin Spurrier made a number of points starting from the view that the scheme was "horrendous" and that the Parish Council should object with conditions but complimenting the Parish Council on what had been achieved.

Graham Soame indicated that he would walk the site again and consider his position once more in the light of what had been achieved but indicated that he reserved his position about whether he would continue to object but conceded that he thought there was no chance in defeating the whole scheme.

Nicky Brooks outlined the terms of the community fund being a total sum of £300,000 it being £200,000 as a lump sum and then £10,000 a year for 10 years with the current intention of the Parish Council being that it would be used regenerate the playing field. Tim Lawson thanked the Parish Council for all the hardwork, time and effort they had put in to dealing with the application.

13. Mobile Signal - Oxford Hill mast. There was no news and Dick Pears indicated he was puzzled by BT/EE failure to respond given their attitude in the past. It had been raised again with Robert Courts and when the Parish Council had more time they would continue to press.
14. Liaison with Eynsham Estate footpaths and other matters including revision of the playing field lease and terms to be included. Nicky Brooks outlined what had occurred at the meeting with Eynsham Park Estate and which had been outlined at prior Parish Council meetings such as a plan for permissive paths and work on specific issues like the field near the pub. There would also be a revision to the lease of the playing field to allow greater utilisation of that resource once the Parish Council had devised plans.
15. The Lymbrook:
 - a) Nature.
 - b) Pollution - Lymbrook Close sewage plant. This was an aspect of 11 above. Rita Sawrey-Woodwards indicated that when she tested in December at her four testing points, the reading at the pub end of Chapel Road upstream of the water treatment plant was higher for pollution than it was down stream of the plant which suggested that there was issue of, say, domestic foul water being discharged into the stream. That was one of the things that Thames Water would have to investigate by infra-red scanning. Some of the older houses might well have connections or overflows that do not meet current standards. There was a discussion about asking householders on Chapel Road to allow testing again to see if we could ascertain where / what the source of the issue was rather than wait for Thames Water to carry out work.
16. Flooding - There was nothing to add.
17. Facilities - On this item Dick Pears thought that having items on the agenda at each meeting when there was no particular matter that needed discussing or agreeing was not helpful and it was agreed that on future agendas only matters that needed discussion would appear as agenda items.
 - e) Bus Shelter - Martin Spurrier indicated that last year he had set up a display for St. Valentine's Day and Easter and that he was asking for others in the village to initiate ideas for the bus shelter but would help organise something for the Jubilee in June.
18. Responses to any planning matters. Gill Mill - most of the Parish Council members had not seen the application and it was agreed that they would convey their views to Nicky Brooks before the end of the week.
A complaint had been made about possible planning infringements at Lindsey Farm and that would be investigated.
19. Speed Watch / '20 is Plenty' scheme - Lysette Nicholls indicated that there were too few volunteers and that four people who had volunteered had still not done their training.
20. Dates of next meetings 21st February (Agenda by 7th February) and 21st March (Agenda by 7th March) and change of date for the April meeting to 25th April (Agenda by 11th April).
21. AOB. There was a discussion about the Jubilee with Caroline Auger and Martin Spurrier agreeing to liaise and discuss ideas.