**SOUTH LEIGH AND HIGH COGGES PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

**Minutes**

**(4 pages)**

27th July 2023

7.30 pm in the Village Hall

**Councillors Present**

Nicky Brooks (Chair) (NB)

Lysette Nicholls (Deputy)(LN)

Rita Sawrey-Woodwards (R. S-W)

David Auger (DA)

Peter Grant (PG)

Dick Pears (DP)

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| 1 | Apologies and Councillors and others present. Introduction to the conduct of meeting. |
| 2 | Declarations of Interest – no declarations of interest |
| 3 | To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as being a true record of the proceedings – a copy having been circulated in advance to the Councillors – it was proposed that the circulated minutes should be adopted – that was seconded and carried unanimously |
| 4 | Opportunity for any parishioner to raise a matter of concern- (1) The village hall committee advised the PC that they intended to erect a storage shed on the site of the current small thatched building – that was agreed.  (2) Ken Brooks had advised that there was an urgent need to relook at the Neighbourhood plan in the light of the potential new WODC local plan – the PC agreed and a working party was to be formed – the progress will be put on future agendas |
| 5 | Payments to approve – the list circulated in advance of the meeting to councillors was approved after being proposed and seconded. The list appears as Schedule 1 to these minutes together with reference to a sum received from the village hall. |
| 6 | Review of actions or discussions from last meeting (1) meeting with Vicar – a summary is attached to these minutes and after discussion there was a realisation by the PC that whilst the vicar was clear that there was no immediate threat to close the church, the attendance at the church and finances of it meant that its future was far from assured. It was felt that the village needed to know how perilous the fate was of it as a functioning church. Liz Ashwell indicated that she thought a robust and clear article in the next newsletter would be a good idea, the PC agreed and the PC committed itself to a joint review with the Church of the situation now and the future.  (2) Land at the level crossing. DP had emailed indirectly the current landowner who had responded speedily and in detail saying that trees that had been removed had had roots interfering with the drainage, they had planted new whips to re - establish the hedgerow and “As for what to do with the area now, that is a topic we are considering” DP had asked him that he should keep in touch  (3) abandoned cars – the one on Station Road had been removed on to a householder’s land and in respect of the other - in Lymbrook Close – there was an ongoing inquiry of the landlords of the garages - Cottsway (4) broadband speeds – the parishioner who had raised the initial concern had not responded to a chaser email but there were probably good reasons for that and DP agreed that with the help of Gary Nicholls and email would be sent out to the village to gather if there was a problem (5)  Terrorism (Protection of Premises) bill and its relevance to Village Hall – the Act was now in force and DP agreed to look at the details although John Ashwell thought that given the hall could not accommodate more than 100 people and that a marquee was outside the terms of the Act, the requirements would have little applicability to the village hall. He is also mentioned that CPRE are keeping them abreast of the law (6) OCC had provided traffic statistics for the months of May 2021 and May 2023 and supplied them to the PC, OCC’s interpretation was that they showed that the volume of traffic and its speed meant that the village needed traffic calming and that OCC had set out a budget in writing and with that they should fund a series of traffic calming measures that the PC would give greater details of later. |
| 7 | Freedom of Information Policy - a copy of the policy had been circulated to councillors in advance. It was proposed that this policy was adopted and that was seconded and carried unanimously. It will be placed on village website. |
| 8 | Dog walking on the playing field and whether it needs to be restricted or forbidden and access to, over and along the non-permissive former railway line. Since the last meeting two signs had been erected saying that dogs should be kept on leads and that owners should pick up after their dogs and that seems to have ameliorated the problems for the time being and it was agreed (1) two more signs would be purchased with one placed at the entry to the playing field from the non permissive footpath and (2) the parishioner who had emailed expressing concern that she, in particular, could not be expected to keep her dog on its lead would have a meeting with NB. There was one person who did not seem to be complying and LN said she would approach them should she see them not obeying the rules. DP pointed out (1) we had no lease of the playing field - the old one had expired and in any event the old lease had not made any provision for dogs to be walked. R. S-W pointed out that if the playing field was actually to be used for sports then in the interests of participants and children dogs would have to be restricted and suggested designated areas – around the pitch and a route to and from the non-permissive path. The PC agreed to keep the matter under review. |
| 9 | Update on Anaerobic Digester – it was thought that it would come to Lowlands Planning in September or October- Martin Spurrier indicated what the Stop Witney Digester group were doing–in particular a petition and a filing of an expert’s report. The group were intending to attend the committee meeting when it occurred. The PC indicated that a letter had been sent to the applicants and copied to the Chair and Deputy Chair of Lowlands Planning indicating that there needed to be two particular remedies in their application. They had not responded. |
| 10 | Update on Shores Green and the dual carriageway between Shores Green and Wolvercote – NB outlined where matters were currently (1) OCC had agreed to fund specific traffic calming in the village (2) The PC had made representations to OCC cabinet on 7 points connected to Shores Green and the dual carriageway – most of which seem to have been accepted (3) the cabinet had approved splitting the development of A40 into two because of funding issues – so Phase 1 was Shores Green junction and bus lanes into Oxford but no further development of dual carriageways which would be Phase 2 (4) There would have to be planning applications made in respect of those phases and the PC would make representations and attend monthly meetings starting in August |
| 11 | Update on conservation area application – WODC had rejected the application as follows:  “We have carefully considered your request in accordance with the criteria set out in Historic England's guidance for appraising places for designation as conservation areas.  However, unfortunately, while there is some historic, architectural and evidential interest, we do not consider there is enough special architectural and historic interest to designate South Leigh and High Cogges as a conservation area.”  The reasons were felt to be inadequate. A meeting with WODC has been requested, Freedom of Information requests are being considered and the instruction of Bindmans, the solicitors is also being considered but a meeting with WODC is the first step . |
| 12 | Planning   1. Previously considered with update a) Church Farm Church End No: 23/01278/FUL – The application was still under consideration. The PC had indicated that it has no objection to the grant on the basis of conditions that the structure is (1) sited where the plan indicates (2) does not provide any additional sleeping accommodation - it is noted that the floor plan included both a shower room and a kitchenette (3) is used as pool house and (4) will not result in any intensification in how the site is used. The PC suggests that a curfew of 10pm for the use of the pool and pool house but would welcome a discussion with the applicants.   (b) Field House No 23/00958/FUL – WODC had indicated their concerns about the application and as a consequence NB had had a meeting with the applicant who had presented a plan and new scheme which would form the basis of a new application and which showed greater planting to address some of the issues that been raised by WODC. The councillors had not had a chance to look at the plan or consider the implication and wanted more time but DP wanted it recorded that he found the idea of retrospective grants of planning permission unappealing – the idea that one could build without planning permission when planning permission might not be granted and then the building would remain was extremely unattractive. The PC felt that they needed to look and the plan and consider the matter before coming to a decision.  (2)  New applications, inc No 23/01755/HHD: Conversion of garage and erection of porch and single storey rear extension with roof lights at house by former railway crossing plus amendments to exterior fenestration – The plans had been considered by the PC. It was agreed that the fenestration was an improvement and most of the alterations would not be visible and or an improvement. It was agreed that there should be no objections. |
| 13 | Bank account and change of name of account to SLHCPC – the current bank account was in the name of South Leigh Parish Council and it needed to be changed to South Leigh and High Cogges Parish Council and it was agreed that David Auger would be added as a further authorised signatory |
| 14 | Date of next meeting - 24th August |
| 15 | Opportunity for any County Councillor and / or District Councillor to update the Parish Council on any matter of relevance or concern – No matters had been communicated |

SLHCPC

Schedule 1

**Schedule of Payments from PC accounts - period to 27th July**

22July

1. Ubico Grass Cutting – Playing field

£150.48

22nd July

1. John Ashwell – reimburse for payment of battery for

Debrillator

£240

12th July

1. David Abbott – grass cutting – village green £250
2. Add on Insurance to cover Generator £28

Village Hall has paid in £214.49 – as part of their profits

Meeting with the Vicar

Saturday 22nd July 2023

In Attendance ; David Auger, Dick Pears, Lysette Nicholls, Simon Kirby

Simon gave us an overview of the history of the church and the current situation. He confirmed that currently they had no plans to close the church but the reality was about the sustainability.

In summary the congregation is mainly external villagers with only 3 regular attendees from the village (equating to 1% of the village population which is in alignment with the national average). Current services are fortnightly with extra services at Easter and Christmas.

The church is not funded by the Church of England centrally and all funds to maintain the church are raised locally and the High Cogges congregation are subsidising St James, as contributions from St James congregation are minimal.

Whilst the church has reserves these are not enough to assist with the mounting ongoing financial pressures. They have no water or washroom facilities so the opportunity to raise more revenue by letting out for other purposes to support on going costs is minimal. (The village hall provides these facilities and even if the church had these facilities it would be competing with the village hall which would not be sustainable in a village the size of South Leigh).

Major current issues include the boiler failure, refurbishment of the organ and lack of Church Wardens.

Currently the church is being run by the PPC (which are managing to look after the church) and they have a lack of Church Wardens. They have found a solution in regards to a Treasurer and Safeguarding Officer but without further volunteers the position (whilst manageable short term) is not a long term solution. They are applying for grants with assistance from Martin Spurrier.

We discussed the options we could look at and one of the options was to close the church yard and burials taking place. Maintenance of the grounds would then fall upon the PC. If this happened villagers would be given the option to purchase a plot.

Other suggestions include the church being taken over by a church trust.

In essence it was suggested that the PC in conjunction with Church would look at doing a joint consultation later this year (provisionally November).

Simon is meeting with Bishop and the PC members will discuss at the PC meeting.