**South Leigh and High Cogges**

**Parish Council Meeting**

**Minutes**

**21st September 2023**

**7:30pm in South Leigh Church**

**Councillors Present**

Nicky Brooks (Chair) NB

Lysette Nicholls (Deputy Chair) LN

Rita Sawrey-Woodwards RS-W

Peter Grant PG

David Auger DA

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| Agenda Item No. | Agenda Item | Discussion |
| 1 | Apologies | Dick Pears sent his apologies. |
| 2 | Declarations of Interest | None |
| 20 | Respectful Behaviour Guidance | This item was brough forward from Item 20 to Item 3 to ensure that all present were aware for this meeting of the expectation of behaviour, courtesy and conduct of the public in meetings relating to the community.  NB read a statement re acceptable public behaviour and conduct in public meetings in South Leigh and High Cogges, which would be applied to all meetings held for the benefit of the community. |
| 13 | Consultation re the Church | This item was brought forward from Item 13 to Item 4 to enable the vicar to use his evening efficiently.  Simon Kirby, Vicar of South Leigh and Cogges, addressed the meeting.  Points raised:-  a) There are no plans to close South Leigh Church but thought needs to be given as to how the community can keep it open; a church and community challenge. It could be that the church closes as a worshipping building but remains open as a parish building.  b) The Parochial Church Council (PCC) would like a consultation with the village as to what the community would like, and to broaden its use from being just a church into being a part of village life. Karen Wilson and Liz Ashwell are on the PCC for South Leigh, separate from High Cogges. A questionnaire will be circulated via the newsletter in November 2023. The questionnaire will include questions such as numbers attending functions and services or other events, what events villagers would be likely to attend, what is the role of the church in a worshipping community/community, is it a valuable asset to the community, can the village hall/church connection be strengthened, what events could be held in the church that are not currently available, how could the community support the church, how could the church keep in touch with the community? Village support is required in order to keep the church viable.  c) Many rural parishes are struggling. Churches are self-funding; there is no central funding. Churches have to raise their own funds. Cogges/South Leigh give £94-95K to central funding out of which comes the vicar’s stipend, housing and training, church maintenance, heating and repairs. As an estimate, around £14,000 per annum is required to keep local churches functioning. Cogges church currently funds South Leigh church.  d) The diocese does not want to lose churches. South Leigh church attracts visitors to see the superb wall paintings, the second best in the whole of Oxfordshire. |
| 3 | Minutes approval | 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 and seconded and approved unanimously that they were to be adopted. |
| 4 | Parishioner Issues | No issues raised. |
| 5 | Payments to approve | NB informed the meeting that there were no outstanding payments due. The Insurance renewal is imminent.  Martin Spurrier presented an invoice which needs to be paid. |
| 6 | Reviews of issues from last meeting | 1) Childrens’ Playground.  The PC thanked Karen and Martin Wilson for their past and continuing upkeep and maintenance of the current childrens’ playground in Lymbrook Close. RS-W reported that the request to villagers to create a regular working party to clean the equipment and to keep the area safe for play only yielded 2 volunteers, which was deemed insufficient. It was suggested that funding might be found to employ someone for a few hours a week to do this. Karen Wilson reported that a new grass mower had been purchased and that keeping the grass cut was not a problem and that the equipment would always need maintenance. It would be useful to pass on the skills to others for continuity. RS-W suggested asking a known resident in Lymbrook Close who has voluntarily cut the grass at the entrance to Lymbrook Close, if he would be interested in doing this to cover times when Martin W. is not available to cut the grass. RS-W wand Karen will discuss this at a later date. Martin Spurrier has replaced the seats on the Springy equipment. There is currently £1K in the kitty mainly from past Summer Fayre contributions and from grants from the Co-op. Karen felt there was a need to request money from the PC and acknowledged that some of the equipment needed replacing. There is a need to have a water supply in the playground to enable parents/carers to clean the equipment but costs to install this are prohibitive. It was suggested that notices could be put up to encourage parents/carers to bring a bottle of water and a cloth to clean equipment before their children play on it. A query was raised re the responsibility of WODC to contribute to maintaining the equipment via payment of the public council tax. NB explained that the South Leigh precept from WODC covers this.  2) Anaerobic Digester.  Fiona and Dawn were congratulated by the PC for the excellent document prepared by them in opposition to the AD.  The planning meeting is now likely to be held in November 2023 as they are awaiting completion of statutory consultation reports. A village email will be sent out to inform villagers of when this will take place.  3) Thames Water readings  The recent Guardian article which deemed South Leigh plant discharge the second worst in the country was highlighted. Villagers were concerned that this could pose a health risk to South Leigh re disease. RS-W explained that the treated discharge was generally not a danger to health, but that the levels of dissolved phosphates and nitrates were the indicators monitored. Households and agricultural processes contribute to this and villagers should be encouraged to use phosphate-free detergents if possible.  Karen Wilson informed the meeting that Thames Water were planning to survey the Limb Brook for water voles and kingfishers and commented that stretches of the Brook were severely overgrown with vegetation and asked if the landowners could be encouraged to clear the half that they were responsible for.  RS-W will be testing the phosphate and nitrate levels in the Brook over the coming week.  4) Protected verge mapping  LN met with Graham Soames to discuss verges that could be left naturally to grow each year until September. WODC cut verges prematurely this year before wild flower seeds had set and dropped. 4 areas were identified, 2 in Chapel Road, 1 along Station Road and 1 opposite the pub. A map showing these areas was presented. The PC will request of WODC that these verges are left unmown unless there is a safety issue for traffic. LN requested Dan Levy (District Councillor) to be involved with this.  5)Letter to Eynsham Estate  To be completed  6) Broadband speeds |
| 7 | Anaerobic Digester update | See 6 |
| 8 | a)Shores Green update  b)Dual Carriageway Shores Green to Wolvercote, c)Traffic calming consultation | The dual carriageway is now on hold due to insufficient funding. The Park & Ride and the bus lanes will be completed.  c)The village consultation yielded a range of views both positive and negative. |
| 9 | Conservation Area application update | This is still awaiting a date; likely to be mid October. |
| 10 | Neighbourhood Plan and WODC Local Plan | A new Local Plan is currently under consultation. The public have been invited to give their views on line, by email or written. Housing, where and how much, is a huge issue.  The PC support Options 1-4, but are unhappy about Options 5-8. This was proposed, seconded and voted in support unanimously. The PC will issue guidance to villagers of issues to raise and how to complete their comments. NB reiterated the importance of all villagers contributing their comments to this consultation.  The issue of the new £600 million train link was raised. This is being supported by Charlie Maynard, the Lib. Dem Councillor for Eynsham and prospective MP candidate. This project is under Central Government Control. Concerns were raised about the proximity of the proposed railway to High Cogges residents.  Dan Levy was asked to explore the County Council and District Council policy on the new rail link between Carterton and Oxford. There was some discussion about the validity of development in West Oxfordshire. Dan Levy confirmed that South Leigh needs to be protected from Witney development. |
| 11 | District Councillor update | The A40 plans have been revised. Phase 1 will link the new Park & Ride to Wolvercote, with bus lanes in each direction and improved bike lanes on the south of the A40.  Dualing from Barnard Gate will have to wait until finance is available.  The proposed Salt Cross Garden Village at Eynsham is under judicial review re eco-friendly housing. Net zero was agreed with the District Council but the inspectors have refused this.  West Eynsham Estate…the master plan amendments were rejected.  Nursery site on the A40…  Local plan consultation…currently in progress, ‘Your Voice, Your Plan’. |
| 12 | Planning |  |
| 13 |  | See earlier |
| 14 | Security | NB raised the issue of residents being very aware of securing their own properties and cars. Recent thefts in the village. Security cameras on properties …residents need to post a notice saying they are there recording otherwise footage cannot be used as police evidence. |
| 15 | Salt boxes for winter | The current salt boxes in South Leigh are not fit for purpose. Dan Levy to enquire where funding is available to replace these. |
| 16 | Village Records and Archives | Awaiting information from Dick Pears |
| 17 | Pigeon/bird cull | This needs to be licenced. Outside of the remit of the PC. |
| 18 | Notice board update and complaint | Matter resolved. |
| 19 | Dog walkers advice | Following local incidents of dogs worrying sheep, residents need to make sure their dogs are on leads when livestock is in the fields. |
| 20 | Respectful Behaviour guidance | See earlier |
| 21 | Date of next meeting | Tuesday 24th October – AGM/PC meeting , to give the yearly report and accounts, to vote in chair and vice chair, plus a presentation about the Local Plan.  Thursday 26th October – Annual Parish Meeting plus Charlie Maynard presentation on the proposed rail link |
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