

SWALCLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL

NOTES AND MINUTES **OF AN EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** **ON 29TH SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 7.00PM** **IN SWALCLIFFE VILLAGE HALL**

Councillors Present

Jane Morgan (JM), Chairperson

Jenny Bell (JB)

Ben Benson (BB)

Mick Foley (MF), Vice Chairman

Lizzie Melvin (LM)

3 garage owners were present

8 other villagers were present, following an invitation to the village

1. Apologies

Cllr Taylor and Matt Stanton

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Foley declared an interest as he rents a garage from the Parish Council.

3. To discuss the garage area and the possible redevelopment of the area

SPC is looking to make changes to the garage area to help the village as a whole. SPC is charged with doing its best for the village and sees this as an opportunity to consider a positive step change.

Cllr Melvin outlined the SPC idea and reasoning and showed a map of the garages area that she had purchased from UK Planning Maps. Currently the garage buildings are all different styles and states of repair and building materials. Plots of the land are let on one year leases to named individuals. Total rent received by the village is £1020 per year for the area. This is not enough to pay the village share or proper repair of the access. The general ground area had been filled over the years but has not been adequately maintained because of lack of funds.

SPC therefore is considering to end the leases.

SPC believes that it is time to review the use of the village land for the benefit of the whole village and proposes to build a neat block of garages in the area and let them out on leases to Swalcliffe residents.

The income should be at least £8000 per annum which would secure an ongoing income for the village. The garage plan would provide a cleaner space in keeping with the village and offer garaging and storage facilities with power. The access road and drainage for the area would also be improved.

The reasoning behind the proposal is that SPC is being faced with demands for money from village organisations and this project could help us to fund these. Previously additional funds have been secured by a one off sale of land but this can only be spent once. In addition, OCC has just announced that villages now need to fund more local services themselves.

There are a number of specifics to discuss further with garage owners. They have been aware of SPC considerations for some time. Three options had been considered by SPC and shared with garage owners and this is now focused on the one option above. Garage owners are looking for compensation or not to lose out.

When the annual lease is terminated, the terms of the lease state that the garage owner must remove the building and concrete plinth. It was noted that buildings deteriorate over time in both materials and value. Owners are aware of the risks that they took in purchasing the garages by sealed bids.

Garage owners must live in the village. The current leases were re-written 7 years ago and garage owners have signed them each year. The lease does not sell with the building; it is up to the Parish Council. The land is not the garage owners' to sell and the lease cannot be sold with a house or between individuals.

SPC suggests that compensation would be in the form of some or all of:

- SPC could remove the building and plinth
- Current garage owners have first option on a new garage
- They could benefit from a small discount on rent for the first 1-2 years

SPC asked garage owners present for their views as to what they would see as fair. They were encouraged to come and talk about this, although they also pointed out that any compensation is a matter for public record and we have to be open with the village about what money is received and what money is spent on.

Other villagers interested in the current garages see them as a big risk due to the short leases, asbestos in building materials, and expensive to buy.

The next steps are for SPC to ask the village if it supports the idea via a flyer with a few specific questions. There would also be a pre-planning application to Cherwell District Council. SPC must involve the village as it is a large potential project with associated costs, risks and benefits. Many are not aware of the area or the garages at all.

SPC would then need to get detailed building plans and costs following the response from the village and CDC.

SPC currently has circa £16,000 in a fund from sale of land that could be used for such a project.

If the building costs are high there may be 2 options:

1. Build some of the garages now and some later, plus a provision for a second floor in the plans and foundations etc. so that it can be added later for an office or flat.
2. Sell a small piece of the land at one end of the plot as a freehold piece of land to a villager. The land would have a restriction for only a garage or storage in the set style and size. It would be a public sale and anyone who lived in the village could offer for it.

Ideas and discussion at the meeting highlighted further options to consider:

3. Rather than sell a piece of land, all garages could be built and one presold as freehold so money is available to help building cost, while new owner is a freeholder of that one garage when it is built.
4. A second storey for a flat or an office would bring extra income and provide more

amenity to the village and would need to be included in any planning. It adds more worry and risk, but potential for more amenity and income. Some villagers present expressed reservations about this.

5. If there is to be one freehold plot then there could be restrictions on how the garage building would have to look to conform
6. The village could have leases of 5 years for each garage. If people pay up front at a discount this would help with building costs

Other ideas from the evening:

- If some new garages are still available or become available after all those in Swalcliffe have their leases, then they could be offered to other local residents on slightly less favourable terms.
- Convert the area to free village parking, although this would be costly to do and provide no income to construct it or maintain it. It would, however, be an asset to the village.

Timescale is likely to be at least 18 months,

The notes above include answers to the questions and ideas raised on the evening

The Chair thanked everyone for coming this evening.

Meeting Closed at 8.50pm

Next Swalcliffe Parish Council meeting date is October 20th 7pm