

SWALCLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING OF 3RD DECEMBER 2013 AT 7.30PM IN SWALCLIFFE VILLAGE HALL

Councillors Present

Julie Carpenter (JC), Chairperson

Patrick Bradshaw (PB), Vice-Chair

Mike Taylor (MT)

Mick Foley (MF)

Jane Gallick (JG)

Christine Coles, Parish Clerk (CC) and one villager

1. Speaker - Sue Moon of the Oxon School Bus Action Group (OSBAG) will speak about the OCC Home to School Transport Consultation

SM said that OCC currently provide free home to school transport for children to their catchment or nearest school at a total cost of £15M per year. The statutory minimum is free home to school transport for children to their nearest school if it is over the statutory walking distance (3 miles for those aged 8 to 16 and 2 miles for those of school age who are below the age of 8). Under the current consultation OCC are proposing:

- A) that free transport is provided to the nearest school only, or
- B) that free transport is provided to the nearest school except in cases where a long village would be split between two schools.

There are two options for when the changes will take place:

1. in 2015 for pupils starting at primary school or transferring to secondary school and for all other pupils in 2017, or.
2. from 2015 as new pupils start primary school or transfer to secondary school, but all children currently in receipt of free transport will continue to receive it until the end of Year 6 for primary and year 11 for secondary, thus children already in receipt of free transport will be unaffected.

SM set up OSBAG in June 2013. 1,000 people have joined OSBAG through Facebook since then. There were problems with the original consultation which started in June 2013. At the time OCC spoke to OSBAG and schools and a decision was postponed. OCC have now come back with virtually the same proposals. The consultation is better this time but the OCC consultation website is being updated with new information all the time. This could disadvantage people who had looked at the site early in the consultation. Public meetings have started. There will be a meeting on 12th December at The Warriner School.

As Sibford Endowed Primary School and the Warriner School are the catchment schools as well as the nearest schools to Swalcliffe, free transport for children up to the age of 16 in Swalcliffe will not be directly affected. However these proposals could affect surrounding villages. If there is no room at a nearest school, OCC will have to pay to send children to the next nearest school.

Catchment areas are important in terms of primary partnerships. OCC promote catchment and primary partnerships as the children and schools benefit from it. Communities and families will be split. OCC claimed savings of £365k per year in June but the calculations provided then did not stand up to scrutiny. OCC now claim a maximum saving of £1-2M but no supporting evidence has been provided. SM has written to ask OCC for evidence but has had no response.

Cllr Foley asked if this was a nationwide problem. SM replied that other counties have tried consulting. In Somerset, they have frozen catchment areas and called them catchment transport areas. If the proposals go ahead Burford will lose seven out of nine of their catchment schools. The numbers will go down and they will not be able to sustain a sixth form. In Buckinghamshire one school has been threatened with closure as a result of similar changes. At the public meeting in Carterton, Mr Roy Leech of OCC, said that no school in Oxfordshire would close but SM considered this could not guaranteed at this stage.

SM spoke about children going to sixth form and how changes are being made about who qualifies for the cheaper rate post 16. In Swalcliffe there is no sixth form within three miles so parents will be expected to pay the higher rate of concession. Post 16 education will be compulsory for children to the age of 18 in 2015.

Cllr Foley asked if there was a dedicated committee working on this consultation within OCC. SM replied that many public meetings have been held across the county and Ian Hudspeth, Leader of the Council has been at each meeting with two other senior officers from OCC. Cllr Foley also asked where does OSBAG stand if the vote goes against them. SM replied that they will be sorting out the mess in 2015. There will be issues around safe walking routes and she thinks they might get involved in safe walking route appeals. Cllr Foley asked if this would be contractual for 2015. Children need bus passes to use transport and this will be enforced with the issue of a bus pass.

Cllr Gallick referred to the public meetings which are important for OCC officers to hear the detail from members of the public. She asked SM if the information was being put together in a summary document. SM replied it was a good idea. All meetings are minuted but there is no-one on OSBAG who has the time to do this amount of work. SM noted that the media have been very supportive. There is another meeting soon to discuss media strategy and options.

In conclusion SM urged the Parish Council and villagers to make their views known via the consultation link on the OCC website. The consultation closes on 20 December 2013. The cabinet will be voting on the proposals on 28th January 2014.

The Chair thanked Sue Moon for coming to the meeting. SM left the room.

2. **Apologies**

Cllr Watkins

3. **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

4. **Minutes of last meeting held on 22nd October 2013**

The minutes were approved and signed.

5. **Matters Arising from the previous meeting**

Registration of Swalcliffe Fuel Allotment - The Chair noted that this land would be registered on behalf of Swalcliffe Charities. From the floor Maurice Cooling advised that he had spoken to the Charity Commission to ask about the basis of the charity but nobody knew. The Chair felt they may have to research the original documents which could be held in the office at Cowley as information changes over time. Cllr Taylor suggested to the Chair that she speak to Sibford as they have the same charity land but on a bigger scale.

White gates to mark entrances to the village - The Clerk to chase progress. It is hoped the new gates and new speed roundels can be installed at the same time.

Plant for wellhead - There was nothing suitable to buy at a recent plant sale at Ells Farm. JC to purchase 3 x 1m high shrubs from a garden centre.

Parish Pit - PB and CC to draft a letter.

Bench outside the church - The bench is still to be taken away and re-varnished.

Trimming of trees on the Green and in front of the school - Approval has been given to trim the trees in front of the school. The application is pending for work to the trees on the Green.

Vacancy on council - There is still a vacancy.

Registration of Area in front of school - JC to submit paperwork to the Land Registry although there is no supporting paperwork.

Trimming of overgrown vegetation - Gerry Melvin to trim the vegetation when he is able to.

Cutting of the village and churchyard - The Parish Clerk to write to Gay Harris of the PCC to advise of the new cutting arrangement which has been agreed with Gerry Melvin.

Highway Fund - The Clerk advised the meeting that OCC have accepted the grant application for £404.00 submitted by the Parish Council to cover the purchase of the new speed roundels on yellow backing boards.

Dogs off leads - MF to try and find official guidance to put in the Link.

Overgrown hedges - The hedges along the Main Road have been cut. Cllr Taylor advised the hedge at the bottom of the cutting has been cut back too.

Acknowledging Doug Seymour's departure - Once the Parish Council know of a leaving date for Doug, something can be arranged.

Christmas tree - The lights are going to be put on the trees on the Green this year on Thursday 4th December instead of buying a tree.

Sign for Tithe Barn - The matter has been reported to OCC as it is not a Parish Council matter.

8. Planning applications

To discuss how the Parish Council communicates and engages with the community about planning applications. Cllr Gallick noted that she felt the Parish Council should be visible in a more positive way. In her opinion planning was one issue that could be improved. Currently the plans are viewed online by councillors and the Parish Clerk keeps the hard copy in case of any requests by councillors or members of the public ask to see them. A note is put on the website advising of pending planning applications. The hard copy of the plans did used to be held by a councillor but this has not happened for some time now. Cllr Foley agreed to keep the hard copy of any new planning applications for the next three months.

Three applications have been received since the last meeting:-

- 13/00333/TCA, Fell 1 Pine tree at Sunrise, Main Road. No objections. Approved.
- 13/00327/TCA, Tree work in front of Swalcliffe Park School. No objections. Approved.
- 13/01661/TPO, Tree work to 2 limes trees on Land at the Green. No objections. Pending.

The Parish Clerk gave an update on older applications:-

- 13/01479/F, Construction of two storey dwelling with slate roof at the site of Manor Cottage following demolition after fire damage. Approved.
- 13/01295/F, Continued use of land at Grange Farm for equestrian training and competition purposes and construction of two all-weather sand arenas, together with associated access improvements, vehicle parking and site landscaping at Swalcliffe Park Equestrian, Grange Lane. Withdrawn by applicant.
- 13/01532/F, Two storey extension to link existing houses to existing garage block at The Mount, Green Lane. Withdrawn by applicant.
- 13/01545/F, Change of use of land to garden. Construction of garden railway at Barnwell Cottage, Main Road. Withdrawn by applicant.

7. To discuss Parish Plans

The Parish Clerk to forward the Sibford Parish Plan to the Chair and Cllr Foley.

8. To discuss highway issues

Potholes in Grange Lane have been reported again.

Cllr Foley has taken photos to show the drainage problems in Park Lane. Cllr Foley agreed to clear the ditch again.

9. Financial Report

The following payments were approved:

- £331.64 to Parish Clerk (hours)
- £20.30 to Parish Clerk (expenses)
- £54.09 to Parish Clerk (mileage to meetings 2012/13)
- £110.00 to Swalcliffe Village Hall (hire of hall)
- £120.00 to Kate Foley (Christmas party)

The Parish Clerk to email bank balances to councillors.

10. Correspondence

- CDC, Future events in Banbury and Bicester
- Professor Graham Upton, High Sheriffs Awards
- CDC, Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan Consultation
- OCC, Poster to advertise meetings regarding Home to School Transport Consultation. On notice-board.
- OCC, Swalcliffe Bridleway No 7 (part) Public Path Diversion and Definitive Map and Statement Modification Order 2013. On notice-board.

11. Councillors Reports

Cllr Foley is to carry out more research into broadband. In Buckingham a unit was put on a church tower and it worked in a similar way to a satellite system.

The Chair has met with Doug Seymour, Mike Stanley and Lou Bates of the Village Hall Committee to find out which jobs have to be done to keep the village hall legal and safe. A list of jobs currently covered by Doug was recently put in the Link and some have now been covered.

12. Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday 14th January 2014 at 7.30pm.

Meeting Closed 9.30pm

