

SWALCLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 22ND JULY 2014 AT 7.30PM
IN SWALCLIFFE VILLAGE HALL

Present

Cllr J Morgan (Chairperson), Cllr M Foley (Vice Chairman), Cllr J Bell, Cllr B Benson, Cllr L Melvin, Cllr C Watkins, Christine Coles - Parish Clerk, Cllr George Reynolds and forty five parishioners.

1. Update from Parish Council (Cllr J Morgan and Cllr M Foley)

Cllr Foley (Vice Chairman) thanked everyone for coming. In the past people have said they do not know who the Parish Council are and what is going on. This is an opportunity to share information within all the groups of the village and the Parish Council. The Parish Council want to be transparent and in the past meetings have not been well attended unless there is an issue to discuss. A Facebook page has been set up now and there is more information on the village website. He thanked Julie Carpenter, Mike Taylor and Patrick Bradshaw who stood down from the Council in May. He thanked Dan Parish and David and Cassie Kinnaird for charging the vehicle activated sign batteries. After Doug Seymour left the village people took on additional tasks and they were thanked. Thanks was given to Gerry Melvin who mows the village areas and churchyard. He also introduced Cllr George Reynolds.

Cllr Morgan (Chairperson) first outlined what the Parish Council had achieved last year. New gates at each end of the village, the clearing of the shrubs on the Green outside the school and the village hall car park was resurfaced.

Looking forward each councillor now has an area of responsibility.

Cllr Foley - Planning. All planning applications are listed on the CDC website and on the Facebook page and village website. Cllr Foley also has the paper copy of live applications for anyone to see.

Cllr Watkins - Environment. This will include nature conservation, footpaths, litter, communications and liaison with the PCC.

Cllr Bell - Village Appraisal.

Cllr Benson - Highways, to include roads, signs, pavements, liaison with OCC Highways, garages and garage land. It is hoped that a meeting can be organised with OCC to discuss the state of the roads amongst other issues.

Cllr Taylor - Transport, parking, speeding and contact with the police.

Cllr Melvin - Conservation area and land.

Christine Coles - Valuable help and guidance to the team.

Looking forward, the new team to consider and propose the key things to address this year and how to go about it. The Parish Council have started to hold surgeries once a month. The next one is on Saturday 26th July 10-11am and the one after will be held during an evening in September. Date to be advised.

2. **Update from Thames Valley Police (PS Fishwick)**

PS Fishwick has been with Thames Valley Police for ten and a half years. She was based at Milton Keynes for seven years and has been in Banbury for three and a half years. She has been on the rural team since January having just returned from maternity leave. PC Miller covered for her and has gone back to being the Officer in the team. She covers 76 villages from Banbury to Bicester and there are two separate teams. Two new part time officers, PC Roach and PC Cook started in January and they job share. Crime is down in Thames Valley and rural crime is reducing. The team are working very hard.

The Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) meet every two months at Banbury Police Station and they set priorities and ask volunteers to come forward. At the end of 2013 a survey was sent out. The priorities set in April were speeding, parking and anti social behavior. Speeding is an issue and Community Speedwatch was set up, of which Doug Seymour was a key individual, and ran it with a PCSO. Cassie Kinnaird has recently called about restarting it and this will be set up again. There are speed vans in other villages but a request would have to be made for the van to come to Swalcliffe.

PS Fishwick reported that no burglaries had taken place in the last 15 months.

Question: How does this low level of crime compare to other villages? It compares well. Being close to Bloxham, crime is much higher there but you would expect this in a larger village.

PS Fishwick advised she would forward a new staff poster for the notice-board.

3. **Update from ORCC about Parish Plans (Alan Foulkes)**

Mr Foulkes noted that ORCC are an independent charity and they support rural communities with shops, halls, transport and rural affordable housing. A Community Plan will help to shape the future of the community. The first phase is to survey the community and get their views. This will look at a vision of 5-10 years and help to devise an action plan. There may be issues like transport, speeding, affordable housing. The process can take 18 months and it is not a legal document. It will research and influence planners and is a joined up voice. It would be the opportunity to improve local facilities, learn new skills and bring people together. The way to do it is to see if there is interest and set up a steering group who would be completely independent but work with the Parish Council. They would launch an event. The cost to produce a plan is about £1K and there is funding from ORCC. It should involve everyone, the Parish Council and other neighbouring parishes. The group should work with CDC.

Neighbourhood Planning is newer and has been developed in the last two years. It is about planning, bricks and mortar and to have a say about house building, a pro growth plan. It would be a legal statutory document but would take two years to develop. There is funding available and CDC have a duty to support the group.

The Chair asked if the Parish Council could start off with a community plan and lead to a Neighbourhood Plan. Mr Foulkes replied yes.

Relevant website addresses have been passed to Cllr Bell.

Mr Foulkes advised that 100 communities have done community led plans. They are very useful and have brought communities together. They have developed youth clubs, housing and villages have gained. A small group of 5-7 people would be needed to start with. ORCC would help with a launch event.

4. **Update from Horticultural Society (Malcolm Moodie)**

Mr Moodie thanked the Parish Council for giving him the opportunity to talk. The society was founded 31 years ago. Membership was then split 50/50 between Tadmarton and Swalcliffe and there were 50 members. The committee consisted of 6 people, 3 in Tadmarton and 3 in Swalcliffe. There are currently 88 members. Half are Tadmarton residents but only 15 come from Swalcliffe. The rest of the membership has widened between 8-9 parishes as people have moved out of the area. The Society are keen to welcome anyone. The current committee consists of 7 members of which one is from Swalcliffe. In the past there have been 5 lectures from visiting speakers to talk about subjects such as bee keeping, fragrant plants, bonsai and creating an olympic park. There are 2 shows each year and two organised trips. A long trip has been organised since 2000 and the last one went to South West Ireland for 6 days. The plant sale in the hall is a key fundraiser. There are lots of opportunities to share information with other clubs and make new friends. Recently Greatworth came to Tadmarton and next year Tadmarton are going there. The society publicise what they do via the Link. It costs £5 to join and is good value. There will be a summer show on 16th August and a trip to Wisley on 4th September. You have to be a member to go on trips and the cost is £17.00.

Question: When does the group meet? MM replied the second Thursday of each month.

5. **Update from Swalcliffe Charities (Maurice Cooling)**

This is a Christopher Cooke charity, registered and answerable to the Charity Commission to whom it makes a return each year. The function of the charity is to distribute income to individuals within the community. It does not generate its own income. The income comes from an annual donation from the John Loggins Trust which uses an income from field rentals in the area. The Christopher Cooke Charity also has a tri annual wayleave payment paid by the owners of Bacon Farm. This allows them vehicular access to their property via Swalcliffe Common. This came about because of the enclosure of the area known locally as Swalcliffe Common. This is in fact incorrect as the land is a fuel allotment enclosed under an Enclosure Act of 1772 for the benefit of the poor of the parish. We should refer to the land as the Swalcliffe Fuel Allotment in the future. In the past the trustees have pointed out that the value of the income they have to distribute over many years has diminished and what can be achieved is very limited. When the number of trustees fell to two they did consider closing the charity. However a note was circulated and a number of people came forward to become trustees. Therefore the charity has continued. There are now five trustees (Lou Bates, Jenny Bell, June Carter, Stuart Ralph and Maurice Cooling) any of whom may be approached if a villager knows where a small donation might be of use to an individual within the community. An Annual meeting is normally held in early November though if there was a special case they would call an additional meeting. A copy of the accounts to be attached to these minutes.

6. **Update from Fund Raising committee (Peter Beddowes)**

This group are an unofficial body. They started to raise funds for the church towers five to six years ago and because of the success of it, they have kept going. They have fun whilst raising money for local and national charities. There are a team of organizers who are very creative and they run 5-6 events per year. Half of the raised money goes to the church which is a village asset. They are going to support the building of a new toilet and kitchen in the church. The group would like to support a toddler play area but cannot find any suitable land. It is not an exclusive group and new people would be welcomed including the younger generation.

7. **Update from Swalcliffe Park School(Robert Piner and Cathy Stoertz)**

Cathy Stoertz is Chair of Governors and Robert Piner has been Vice-Principal for 15 months.

The school is a registered charity and has a Board of Governors and trustees. It is a specialist school for boys with autism. There are currently 52 boys on role and they are there for 52 weeks per year, staying termly or fortnightly. They are high functioning boys working to the National Curriculum. There are 100 members of staff including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists. The ethos of the school is Communication, Independence, Self Management and Achievement. The children at this school are those who have struggled in main stream education and require extra support.

Question: How are the boys referred? They can be referred through parents or alternative placements through the Local Authority. The family would look in the County, at a pupil referral units, mainstream school, special school or use this school as an alternative.

Question: How is Lodge Cottage being used? It used to be the head teachers house but Kiran Hingorani chose not to use it. Planning was given to make three boys bedrooms and these are for the more vulnerable boys who need nurturing. Cathy Stoertz advised that all the residential accommodation has been refurbished and they are all single ensuite bedrooms.

Question: What ages are the children? The children are aged between 11 and 19 years. However a lot of the older children have left so this will leave the younger ones and it will be much quieter.

Question: The village do not see much of the boys and should there be more integration? RP agreed. He advised that the boys use the bus to go into town. There are open days which are good ways to link with the community. Open Days will be publicised more and information put into the Link.

Cllr Foley thanked the school for allowing the use of the grounds on Boxing Day for a football match. They have been held for the last eight years and the last one raised £3K.

Mr Beddowes said that Mr Piner is part of the management team and is very ambitious. He is helping to create a centre of excellence and the village should take great pride and help the school to continue to achieve.

8. Update from Parochial Church Council (Reverend Hawkes)

Reverend Hawkes noted that he looks after the church in Swalcliffe and he works with the PCC and Church Wardens. The door is always open 24/7. He thanked everyone for their work and financial contributions. He was pleased to say that the tower and roof are still standing. A tropical evening was held recently and it raised £2K profit. This goes towards the running of the church as running costs are £15K per year. The PCC are trying to do some alterations to the church. The building of a new toilet and kitchen are a current priority. He noted the churchyard looks lovely and thanked Gerry Melvin for his work. There will be work done to improve the Betty Panks Memorial Garden soon. He welcomed the idea of a Parish Councillor being a liaison person with the PCC. He finally thanked everyone for their support and said the church could not survive without them.

9. Update from Swalcliffe Society (Jeff Demmar)

The Society has origins and aims but it is currently in a state of dormancy. The Society has lost membership and a degree of activity. It was established in 1987 and runs the Barn which opens for 25 occasions each year. This is a mandatory requirement. He thanked the volunteers who help to man the Barn for three hours on a Sunday afternoon. The aim of the Society is 'To increase our appreciation of Swalcliffe's past and record and conserve the evidence remaining to us for the future'. Thanks was given to Ronnie Loxton for holding a two day festival. Over 1000 people visited the Barn in two days. There are currently four people who are struggling to maintain the aim. They have produced a number of important documents. The first was a comparison of those people who lived in 1938, 1988 and 2000. It is hoped it can be repeated for 2014. All documents have been accepted as archival material. There used to be occasional meetings but it became unviable and they stopped. There is still a lot of work to do. In the Autumn there will be campaign to get more people involved. The village is surrounded by 2500 years of history. The past is to be investigated and that information recorded and extended.

Mr Demmar asked the Parish Council if they could put a fireproof cabinet in the back room of the hall to store the original documents? To be carried over to the next council meeting.

10. Update from Village Hall Committee (Mike Stanley)

The village hall was built in 1926 and renovated about six to seven years ago. The Village Hall Committee see their remit as keeping the hall maintained and fit for use by members of the village. PAT testing was completed, periodic wiring checks were completed, the emergency lighting was checked and fire extinguishers checked. The kitchen passed CDC Environmental Checks.

Events and hirers using the hall included film shows, art exhibitions, table top sale, childrens parties, retirement parties, World of Dance, yoga, band rehearsals, kick boxing training, Parish Council, Whine Society, Horticultural Society and Swalcliffe Park School.

The village hall details and activities continue to be put on the village website.

Finance

A balance of £1029.72 was carried over from 2012. Income totaled £2390.00 for the year, expenditure was £1521.39 which left a balance at 30.12.13 of £1898.33.

The Parish Council pay for the insurance of the hall but the committee was badly hit when Doug Seymour who was Chair, left the village. He did a lot of work and his wife Eileen was Secretary. This means there are only three members left on the committee. An advert has been put in the Link and more people have come forward who want to join. Details will be put on the website.

11. Update from Cllr George Reynolds

Cllr Reynolds lives in Shutford and was re-elected as County Councillor this year. He will serve 4 years until 2017. He was also re-elected as District Councillor. As the warding arrangements are changing there will be another election in 2016. Cllr Reynolds covers the area of Swalcliffe to Wardington which is 23 villages. The County Council are responsible for Schools, Highways, Social Services, Fire Service. Cherwell District Council are responsible for Planning, Recreation, Wheelie Bins, ASBO, Licensing, litter and clearing weeds. OCC have stopped spraying weeds on the road.

There are a couple of consultations in circulation at present. The Transport Plan and Flooding. Flooding does not just affect Oxford. There are other problems and it is ensuring that recognition is given to other villages who have suffered in the past. CDC are offering a 50% for the cleaning of War Memorials. The Local Plan should not affect Swalcliffe. CDC need to find room for another 6000 houses. The Plan will be back out for consultation in the middle of August. Banbury and Bicester will have to take extra houses and some villages will take some which is important for organic growth.

From the floor, Mr Stanley said that he had heard on the local radio that Oxford want to become a Unitary Authority. Cllr Reynolds confirmed this is correct. Places can become unitary authorities on their own and they run schools and highways. Cllr Reynolds thinks that there will be a shake up of councils after the next election. CDC are already working with South Northants Council and Stratford Upon Avon District Council. By sharing officers, saves money.

12. Open Forum

There were no matters to discuss.

Meeting closed 9.30pm.