

Minutes of General Meeting

Held on Sunday 14 July 2019, 18:00 at Lower Slaughter Village Hall

Councillors present: Cllrs Chapman, Randles, Roche, Sinclair and Thomas.

In attendance: 21 members of the public

190714/1 Chairman's Opening Remarks

Cllr Sinclair chaired the meeting and welcomed all present. In the absence of Liz Dowie (Consultant) Cllr Randles took the minutes. Cllr Randles sadly reported the recent death of our Associate Priest, Revd Sue Cox. Sue's smile, sense of fun and down to earth nature touched many people during her life and a full St Lawrence's Church at BOTW for her funeral was testament to this. We send our sincere condolences to her family and shall miss her deeply.

190714/2 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Chapman, Randles and Thomas declared an interest, as plot holders, and Cllr Roche also declared an interest, as her partner works for plot holders, in item 14 – Allotments and Orchard Report.

190714/3 Apologies

Apologies were received from Liz Dowie, due to holiday, and Mr Colin and Mrs Christine Edwin.

190714/4 Minutes of previous meeting

With one amendment to item 190520/12 To review and adopt policies and council documents - final line to read " ... policies **will be** available on the website, *the minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 20 May 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record by Cllr Sinclair.*

190714/5 Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising other than those covered elsewhere in the agenda.

190714/6 Complaint

Cllr Sinclair read out the following statement which is now recorded in full as follows:

"Lower Slaughter Parish Council has received correspondence in the form of an Open letter (dated 6th July 2019) and via e-mails (dated 5th and 6th July 2019) which contain serious allegations in respect of the Council's fulfilment of its responsibilities for Local Planning in general, and a specific complaint about the handling of the Gilders' Electric Vehicle Charging Station Planning Application, in which the performance of an individual Councillor has also been openly criticised. For the record, our initial consideration is that we believe these complaints are **unfounded and without merit.**

Unfortunately, as the correspondence contains a serious allegation in respect of the Council's performance as well as potentially defamatory comments in respect of an individual Councillor, we have referred these communications to the relevant authorities and are seeking advice in respect of our response.

Until such time as this advice is forthcoming, we are unable to comment further on this matter or enter into any further dialogue or communication with the Complainant directly or any third party.

Please be assured that we take all complaints seriously and all the issues raised by the Complainant will be considered thoroughly and a formal response provided in due course."

190714/7 To receive comments from the public

- i. Telephone Box** : Mr Barnes thanked Messrs Wheeler and Ayers for repainting this, a sentiment echoed by Cllr Sinclair who also thanked Mr Barnes for obtaining the paint, some still unused.
- ii. "Emma" film money** : Mr Cochrane asked if residents would get the opportunity to comment on the ideas put forward for spending this. Cllr Sinclair said that further suggestions would be welcomed but once the list was finalised a process would be put in place to enable the views of residents to be taken into consideration (see also item 10).
- iii. Electrical Vehicle Charging Station** (see also item 8.1) : Mr Cochrane asked about the deadline for this planning application and if the Parish Council would seek and pay for legal advice on it. Cllr Sinclair said that, whilst the quoted deadline had passed, recent District Council elections and the scale of the application meant its status was still "awaiting decision" by CDC. The Parish Council remained in touch with the Case Officer who, once all comments had been received, would make his decision which Mr Keeling (our Ward Councillor) would then either sanction or refer to CDC Planning Committee. It was noted that after thorough consideration and a public meeting, the Parish Council had objected to this application and both our Ward and County Councillors had taken notice of those objections. Legal advice was a matter for CDC as the Parish Council is just a Consultee in the process.

Mr Classen asked if seeking advice from a Planning Consultant and sharing costs with other local Councils would be worthwhile. Cllr Sinclair said that Lower Slaughter was already in close contact with neighbouring Councils, one of which had a planning specialist. He then invited Cllr Thomas, who also has extensive planning experience, to address the meeting. Cllr Thomas advised that for 27 years he ran the Birmingham Office of a major UK Structural Engineering Consultancy. During this time his experience ranged from acting as an expert witness on a Bullring planning enquiry, through to supporting clients on major, well-known planning applications. He reiterated that CDC must inform the Parish Council about all planning applications, since it is a Statutory Consultee. He also confirmed that the Parish Council review all planning applications including residential applications following notification.

Cllr Sinclair said that for major applications such as this, the Parish Council would review, make residents aware, listen to what the village says as a whole, and encourage everyone to consider whether they support or object, bearing in mind individual and Parish Council views carry similar weight.

Mr Battersby said that Bourton-on-the-Water had objected to this application. It was pointed out that BOTW Parish Council appeared to support the proposal (having stated they had no objection to the application) but had initial concerns about traffic flow. They later gave advice to assist in resolving their concerns and their comments on the portal also support a Park and Ride facility.

- iv.** Mr Battersby also raised his request for an agenda item, having given 5 days' notice. Cllr Sinclair advised that the 5 days' notice requirement applied to Parish Councillors, not members of the public.

190714/8 Planning Applications

8.1 To report on earlier applications

18/01681/FUL Scrap Haulage Yard, Gilder, Fosseway, Lower Slaughter GL54 2EY
Re-development of existing scrap yard and haulage depot to create electric car charging service station and associated works.

Parish Council objected 27/6/19. CDC planning decision awaited.

19/01501/FUL Old School House, Becky Hill, Lower Slaughter GL54 2HS
Replacement of garden shed with greenhouse.
CDC permitted.

8.2 To consider new planning applications

19/01988/FUL and 19/01989/LBC The Old Mill, Mill Lane, Lower Slaughter GL54 2HX
Conversion of café to dwelling, conversion of retail area to dwelling, reconfiguration of café/retail area, refurbishment of outbuildings, associated landscaping.

It was noted that regarding 19/01988/FUL and 19/01989/LBC, Mr and Mrs Edwin had written '*unless we have missed anything, there do not seem to be serious grounds for objection*'.

Invited by the Chairman to address the meeting, Mr Gerald Harris, freehold owner of The Old Mill and paddock, said he wished to convert the existing café into a 1-2 bed dwelling to rent or sell, reunite part of the existing shop with the upstairs flat to create a 3-4 bed house for his daughter Laura who works alongside him, and bring the café/retail business together in-house. Car parking would be provided for 2-4 vehicles accessed from the alley where a gate or removable post would be installed to prevent others parking down the side, stone display area to remain in situ, bridge section to be made safe, old pump house and sheep shed in paddock to be refurbished in-keeping with locality and used as storage.

Villagers expressed their concerns about

- potential business "creep" into and development of the paddock,
- access to storage buildings in the paddock, ie routes, frequency, vehicles to be used, and possible development of rough track or "road"
- increased number of cars and parking requirements resulting from change of use
- increased volume of people and traffic using Mill Lane, deliveries etc
- the placing of a gate or post in the alley/footpath
- preservation of historic pump equipment currently in old pump house.

Mr Harris said he would seek advice about the old pump equipment, had no intention of developing the paddock, and with deliveries still coming to the Old Mill, access to storage would only be by themselves via the bridge or the field gate using their own vehicles. The Chairman said anyone with a specific concern should write to CDC who could place a restrictive covenant on the application. He invited Councillors to ask questions then thanked Mr Harris and Laura for attending and, with apologies, Mr Harris left the meeting. *After consideration, Councillors were minded to support the application in principle, but with concerns about lines of boundary, parking, and preservation of the field to prevent future business "creep". It was therefore agreed to submit an entry to this effect onto the CDC planning portal.*

18/03618/FUL Hill Barn, Lower Swell

Retrospective change of use and extension of 2 x agricultural barns to conference hall and function suite (D2)

After consideration, Councillors were minded to object to this retrospective application due to the inadequacy of the road infrastructure to access/egress the site and potential for increased traffic attempting to access the site via Lower Slaughter. It was therefore agreed to submit an entry to this effect onto the CDC planning portal.

8.3 To discuss any other planning issues

No other matters were raised.

190714/9 Finance

9.1 Cllr Chapman reported on the financial position as at 26 June 2019. *The report was approved by the Council and signed by The Chairman (Appendix 1). As all monies had now been received from Box Hill Films for "Emma", Cllr Chapman suggested and the Council agreed that these funds totalling £40,000.00 should be transferred to the Reserves Account and earmarked for Village Projects - formally proposed by Cllr Randles and seconded by Cllr Roche.*

9.2 The following payments sanctioned since the last meeting were approved by the Council:

CDC Planning Meeting (Chairman's Expenses)	£19.95	Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Sch 1. Para 8
Insurance (Came & Co)	£464.97	LGA 1972 s111
GAPTC Annual Subscription	£56.53	LGA 1972 s111

9.3 The following payments were approved by the Council

Internal Audit Fee (Housego Accountancy)	£156.00	LGA 1972 s111
Printer Cartridges (Mr P Sinclair/Viking)	£25.07	LGA 1972 s111
Clerk Advert (Mr P Sinclair/Glos Jobs)	£39.60	LGA 1972 s112
Secretarial Services (E Dowie)	£470.00	LGA 1972 s111

9.4 Cllr Chapman advised that under the Audit process the public had the right to scrutinise Parish Council accounts. Details could be found on the website and Council noticeboard and anyone wishing to take up this opportunity should make an appointment directly with Cllr Chapman.

9.5 Cllr Thomas advised that invoices were now expected from CDC for approximately £220.00 for installation of the dog waste bin by the Green Lane entrance, and from the Window Cleaner for £40.00 for cleaning the bus shelter, both having been previously discussed and approved.

190714/10 Filming and Broadcasting

In addition to the ideas already published in the July LSVN, refurbishment of the Mill Dam footpath, adding a new tree adjacent to the Church entrance, printing additional copies of the village history booklet, purchase of additional parking cones and provision of new kit for the children's cricket team were all suggested at the meeting. Parish Council to decide and communicate timescale for receipt of suggestions and mechanism for gauging the level of residents' support for the various ideas proposed via the LSVN.

190714/11 Highways, Traffic and Parking Report

The bus shelter was now much improved following repairs to the road surface, new road markings and having been cleaned. A stonemason and CDC Conservation Officer have been contacted about repairs to the Listed clapper bridge.

190714/12 Village Grass Cutting and Maintenance Report

Grass cutting continued as per the contract and Cllr Chapman advised that a new Standing Order had now been set up for payment.

190714/13 Reports from Local Organisations and Charities

13.1 Village Hall and LSVN – nothing to report.

13.2 Village Fete – With the barbeque now sorted, Mr Randles confirmed that the Fete was going ahead with 90% of stalls secured. Residents were encouraged to support the event with raffle tickets and if anyone had items to donate could they please either contact the relevant stallholder direct or have them ready for collection at 6.30pm on Wednesday 14 August. Cllr Sinclair would update website.

190714/14 Allotments and Orchard Report

Work to the seating area and the western boundary in the allotments would get underway as soon as the contractor provided the necessary COSHH statements for the products to be used. It was also noted that the plantation area required strimming or cutting 2 or 3 times each year and this now needed to be addressed to maintain the area.

190714/15 Parish Website Report

There were no items to report.

190714/16 Reports from Wardens

16.1 River – Nothing to report.

16.2 Rights of Way – Thanks to Robin Cochrane for his continued work on the Scare Lane bridge vandalised about 12 months ago. It was hoped that all repairs and fixing the permanent rails would be completed by the Cotswold Wardens later this month. Mr Covington has questioned the necessity of the stile at the far end of the footpath opposite The Rectory. His contact with Frank Dorrington-Ward (PROW Officer) resulted in a visit to site and liaison with the landowner. The outcome is awaited.

16.3 Snow – Mr Barnes confirmed that he was happy to continue as Snow and Flood Warden and would report as necessary next time.

16.4 Trees – Cllr Thomas confirmed that there was nothing to report on the trees, but clarified that the request for an additional tree adjacent to the Church entrance had been requested by Bob Ayers.

190714/17 Recruitment of Parish Clerk

Despite advertising with GAPTC and across Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, there had been no applications to date. The Chairman was sad to report that Liz Dowie, our temporary and highly respected Consultant/Secretary had resigned.

190714/18 Correspondence

The Chairman read out the following statement:

“The Council has received an email from a parishioner purporting to identify inaccuracies in the Minutes of a recent meeting. This is the latest in a succession of continuous and direct criticism by two parishioners about Parish Council operational and procedural matters. The Council considers this level of scrutiny entirely unnecessary and could be seen by some to undermine and discredit the current Council. It is wasting the Council's time and interfering with the Council's ability to carry out its work. The Council therefore considers these actions to be unhelpful and will no longer respond unless there is a change in attitude, but will continue to monitor complaints and/or communications.

It is a fact that, having consulted officers in local government and expert organisations, the Parish Council operates within and exceeds prescribed guidelines. The Council has the protection of our village at its core in all deliberations. Cllrs Sinclair, Thomas and Randles have all received training from GAPTC and Cllr Roche is soon to attend the training. It is also a fact that the Council has received positive comments from many parishioners in support of the Council including “this is the best Council we have had and it is the most peaceful the village has been in a long time”.

As previously reported Liz, our temporary consultant secretary, has resigned as a result. Liz is a qualified Parish Clerk employed by another Council and in fact also audits council procedures and processes. She has 7 years' experience as a Clerk and, before taking semi-retirement last year, she worked for over 3 years for Charlton Kings, a full-time role for a much larger council. Liz made the following comment in her resignation letter ... *‘I have dealt with many types of complaint in 7 years of Council work but have never seen anything at this level and have found it particularly surprising in the light of the breadth of experience, level of commitment and training the Lower Slaughter Councillors have.’*”

Cllr Chapman reiterated that every member does their best for the Council and for the village. Cllr Roche added that should Lower Slaughter find itself without a Parish Council its affairs and income would in all likelihood be administered by BOTW which might affect the village greatly if this happened.

Mr Battersby, the author of the open letter referred to earlier, asked if he was included in this action. It was reiterated that the Council consider his letter to be a far more serious matter which would be handled separately.

Mr Randles said that the village had been through periods of nastiness and had come close to losing its Parish Council in the past, but he felt that the current group of people were very talented and committed and as villagers we should encourage and motivate them – not undermine and demotivate.

The Chairman summed up by saying that, if fellow Councillors agreed, he proposed that from now on the Council would continue to review all comments on our procedures but only respond to any issues which showed non-compliance with the law and or statutory guidelines or made suggestions which in our opinion served the parish. This being our final determination.

190714/19 Date of next meeting: Sunday 15 September 2019 – Lower Slaughter Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.



Signed
Chairman

Date .15 September 2019.....