

Sibford Gower

Annual Parish Meeting

Notes of the meeting held on Monday 18th May @ 7pm in the small hall in Sibford Village Hall

1. Welcome, apologies and introduction – No apologies.
2. Report from Parish Council Chairman – Cllr Berks gave the following report.

1. Administrative & Personnel Changes

The PC underwent significant leadership and staffing transitions during this period:

- **Clerk & RFO:** Kirsty Buttle was appointed as the new Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).
- **Council Leadership:** Cllr Alan Berks was elected Chairman in September 2025, with Cllr Jackie Noquet serving as Vice-Chairman.
- **Membership Fluctuations:**
 - Cllrs Geoffrey Noquet and Alistair Paul resigned during the year.
 - The council was briefly rendered **inquorate** following Cllr Paul's resignation in September 2025.
 - Zoe Wesson and Roger Mallows were co-opted in November 2025 to restore the council's ability to function.

2. Finance & Governance

Significant efforts were made to modernize financial systems and improve transparency:

- **Banking:** The PC moved its accounts from Lloyds Bank to **Unity Trust Bank** to benefit from a higher interest rate (2.1%) compared to the previous 0.6%.
- **Digital Presence:** The council agreed to adopt a **.gov.uk** website (sibfordgower-pc.gov.uk) and professional email addresses via Parish Online to comply with new governance requirements, scheduled for launch in May 2026.
- **Audit & Compliance:** The 2024/25 internal audit identified issues with record-keeping and payroll access during a personnel transition, which the new Clerk has since rectified.
- **Precept:** A budget of **£16,433.45** was set for 2026-27, resulting in a precept of **£10,062**. This includes a 10-13% increase to cover rising costs and election reserves.

3. Assets & Services

- **Churchyard & Burial Ground:** After seeking legal clarity, the PC confirmed it is responsible for the maintenance of the Churchyard. A new grass-cutting contract with Thomas Fox Landscaping was agreed upon at **£2,604.72 per year**.
- **Burial Layout:** The layout of the Burial Ground was revised to increase capacity from 8 to 12 graves per row.
- **Highways:** The PC has been pushing Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) for road resurfacing. OCC indicated that Main Street and Hawkes Lane are planned for improvements in the **2026/27 financial year**.

4. Section 106 Funds

- **S106 Funds:** Efforts continue to reallocate remaining S106 funds from the Sibford Ferris Hook Norton Road development toward Sibford Gower Primary School.

5. Community Initiatives

- **Public Safety:** The PC consulted on the diversion of Footpath No. 12 at Top Barn Farmhouse, supporting the move as it removes stiles and improves pedestrian safety.
- **Communication:** To improve engagement, updates will now be published occasionally in the *Sibford Scene*.
- **Environmental:** New policies for **Biodiversity** and **General and Sexual Harassment** were adopted in late 2025.

3. Public forum – parishioners are welcome to raise any issues they wish to discuss subject to remaining time available –

- Speeding down the colony is still an issue despite the 20mph limit. Discussions were held regarding different potential speed reduction options and previous requests for a speed van which was declined in 2023 and the previous attempt at setting up a speedwatch group in the area. **To be included on the main PC minutes to agree what action should be taken.**

Meeting closed @7:25pm.