

Covingham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 13th February 2012
in Covingham Park Junior School, The Harriers, Covingham

Present:

Cllr D Benfield, Cllr P Bennell, Cllr J Day, Cllr D Fitchett, Cllr A Foss, Cllr E Godbold, Cllr L Kellaway, Cllr B Osbourn, Cllr W Reddaway, Cllr L Sandle, Cllr L Thompson, Cllr S Wichall

In attendance: Jo Wheeler (parish clerk)

92. Apologies

Apologies from Cllr D Haigh and Cllr P Davis

93. Declaration of Interests

None

94. Minutes of the meeting on 16th January 2012

The council approved the minutes of 16th January and they were signed as a true and accurate record.

95. Matters arising

The council discussed Swindon Borough Council's boundary review. The review process will take a year to complete. Cllr Osbourn & Cllr Reddaway offered to join the Boundary Review working group once it had been established.

The parish council's request for litter picking has been registered with the Probation Service.

96. Police matters

PC Jack Newman reported on recent burglaries in the area. He reminded everyone to keep their back doors and sheds locked. He also reported an increase in anti-social behaviour. The police are meeting with Swindon Borough Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Officer to deal with the offenders. Persistent offenders will receive an anti-social behaviour order.

Cllr Godbold asked about drug problems at the Dorcan School. The police have carried out searches and used sniffer dogs, but they can only do so much as they need parent support.

Community Speed Watch will be launched in Blunsdon on 29th February. Community Speed Watch involves local volunteers monitoring traffic speeds at identified road locations in the community. The information is recorded and passed to the police, which result in a warning letter being sent to the registered keeper. For this scheme to work in Covingham a number of volunteers are required.

Ward Councillor Heenan has requested that Covingham have some rubber strips across the road to measure how many cars are actually exceeding the speed limit.

Cllr Osbourn will chair the next Neighbourhood Task Group meeting on 22nd February.

97. Public questions

None

98. Library opening hours

Ward Cllr Heenan explained the problem with library opening times. At the moment the library cannot open in the evening as the church does not wish to allow the building to be open without someone being present. He explained that the cost of Swindon Borough Council providing a member of staff works out at about £9.95 per hour, so to open the library for an extra 2 hours every week would cost about £2000 per year.

The council agreed that it couldn't contribute financially, as it decided not to increase its precept, but is in full support and will help to look into possibilities.

99. Planning Committee consultation

Ward Cllr Heenan explained that Swindon Borough Council will soon be releasing a planning consultation document. The paper will refer to the right of town and parish councils to have a planning application referred to the Planning committee where it raises significant planning issues and/or is locally controversial. Currently only borough council officers are involved in the process, but through participation of the chairman of the planning committee there should be greater accountability, improved communication and greater awareness of localism. These recommendations follow a number of objections by a Parish Council to some minor, non-controversial applications.

Cllr Benfield suggested that this is a good idea as so much time and cost is wasted on debating minor planning applications that aren't controversial enough to call in. He commented that the process should involve a member from each party (rather than just the chairman of the planning committee) as well as a planning officer.

100. Welcome to Covingham signage

The council discussed the idea of Welcome to Covingham signs on either a roundabout or at the gates. Because it costs approximately £1500 to sponsor a roundabout the council agreed that it cannot fund this. Cllr Benfield suggested that there isn't any benefit to adding to street furniture, which can have a negative effect by distracting drivers.

101. Website hosting

Cllr Wichall reported that Microsoft will soon be charging for website hosting. He recommended a new hosting company for £7.49 per month. All in favour of using the website provider.

Cllr Day will check the website reports to find out how many hits the website has received.

102. Recreation and Amenities Group report

Cllr Foss will check progress of the drainage decision with the School Committee.

103. Planning matters

New planning application:

KS/12/0175KICO 79 Merlin Way: erection of conservatory to rear. No objection.

104. Financial matters

The monthly financial summary and cheque list were approved.

105. Matters for Consideration

The council discussed the damage to grass verges caused by careless parking. Offenders will be reported to Swindon Borough Council.

Cllr Day to provide parish clerk with the Street Smart report number about potholes on St Pauls Drive, so that she can chase them up for a response.

Cllr Wichall reported the issue of dog fouling around Smitan Brook park. Offenders need to be reported to Swindon Borough Council's dog warden.

Cllr Foss mentioned the 'vulnerable people' list that was produced 4 years ago. Agreed that producing a similar list now would be extremely difficult as it would require regular maintenance, to ensure everyone is included. Cllr Benfield to include piece in news report about caring for vulnerable neighbours.

Cllr Osbourn confirmed that guest speakers at the annual assembly in April would include the new director from Street Smart and Claire Litchfield, Governance Officer at Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

This will provide parishioners with the opportunity to hear about and discuss issues such as recycling, highways and the NHS.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed:

Date: