

Covingham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 14th November 2013
In Covingham Park Primary School, The Harriers, Covingham

Present:

Cllr Hayward, Cllr Foss, Cllr Davis, Cllr Short, Cllr Haigh, Cllr Curtis, Cllr Benfield, Cllr Osbourn, Cllr Godbold. NB: Cllr Davis and Cllr Short left the meeting at 20:30.

In attendance:

Gemma Cheal (parish clerk), Ward Cllr Price, members of the public.

1. Apologies

Received from Cllr Parry and Cllr Sandle.

2. Declaration of Interests

Cllr Short and Cllr Davis declared an interest in item 3.

3. Interview of candidate for parish councillor vacancy

Members of the public were asked to be excused during this item. Members decided that Cllrs Short, Davis and Benfield could remain in the meeting for this item (the candidate is known to them).

Cllr Osbourn introduced the candidate, Melanie Stanbury and invited her to address members. Melanie Stanbury was then asked to leave the meeting to enable members to discuss her presentation.

Following discussion and a vote, Melanie Stanbury was invited back to the meeting where it was announced that members had voted in favour of her co-option on to the parish council. Cllr Osbourn welcomed Melanie Stanbury on to the parish council.

4. Approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2013

Minutes were signed as a true and accurate record.

5. Matters arising from the previous minutes

Members noted that a Swindon Borough Council Local Plan 2026 Examination took place on 13th November. A Planning Inspectorate had been appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the soundness of the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026. The Inspector has raised a number of issues, including the ability of Swindon Borough Council to build the number properties planned against the money needed to be spent on infrastructure. Cllr Short asked why brownfield land is not being built on and commented that infrastructure was always done first in the past.

6. Public forum

Ward Cllr Price commented that he had attended the Swindon Borough Council Local Plan Examination. In response to the question from Cllr Short, 80% of the land allocation for the eastern villages is greenfield and 20% brownfield. There is 20% VAT on brownfield land and none on greenfield land.

Member of the public commented that he is active on anti-flooding in Covingham. Members noted that he is campaigning for the widening of the culvert under the Wanborough Road and the removal of the Dorcan Flood Storage Area.

7. Clerk's Report

Members received and approved the following Clerk's Report:

Parish Council Vacancy Update

Melanie Stanbury has been invited to attend the November meeting of the Parish Council for an interview. Press and public will be asked to leave the room during this time. A decision can then be made on an appointment.

There are currently 2 vacancies on the Parish Council.

Community Payback

Clerk has emailed Community Payback to request for the remainder of the work to take place at Smitan Brook as work has stopped on the paths around Covingham Park.

Tree Preservation Order

A letter has been sent from the Parish Council to Swindon Borough Council requesting a TPO on trees along Covingham Drive, as requested at the October Parish Council meeting.

Response from Swindon Borough Council on Eastern Villages SPD

Clerk has emailed Swindon Borough Council to request an official response that the representation from Covingham Parish Council made on 16th September 2013 has been received.

Swindon Borough Council Special Expenses Form

Clerk has completed and returned the above to the Swindon Borough Council Monitoring Officer. All Parish Councils are required to complete a form indicating where parish council expenditure is likely to occur for council tax purposes.

Meeting with Chair of Finance Committee

Clerk and Cllr Benfield have met to discuss financial matters, including information required to set budget and precept ready for the meeting of the finance committee in December as well as other work due to be completed such as updating the risk assessment and asset register.

Relocating new skate park equipment

The Clerk, Cllr Osbourn, Cllr Davis and Cllr Short met at the skate park following the October Parish Council meeting to decide on the best place to relocate the equipment as it was placed too close to the path. Lightmain have confirmed that the equipment will still be covered under guarantee if we move it, although Clerk has asked for this to be put in writing. Cllr Short to give further update under agenda item 9 (committees) at November meeting.

8. Chairman's Report

The Chairman informed members that the Police had given their apologies for the meeting. Further report can be found under item 11.

9. Reports from Parish Council Committee Chairs:

- Environment Committee (Chair Cllr Sandle):

Cllr Benfield reported on the National Flood Forum: Swindon is one of 6 local authorities that have a scheme. Cllr Benfield met with local organiser of the flood forum and circulated a meeting report to parish councillors prior to the meeting. Purpose of the forum is to provide useful pointers for local residents should a flood happen. Leaflets to be generated and distributed to residents of areas that are vulnerable to flooding. Members noted that the parish council would be supporting but not driving the scheme. Members resolved for Cllr Benfield to continue progress. Local flood forum representative to be guest speaker at the next Annual Assembly meeting.

Cllr Curtis provided an update on allotments: A meeting on the new Nythe allotments took place on 22nd October. The terms of reference agreed by the parish council were followed at the meeting. There will be an agreement similar to the agreement with Wanborough parish council for Covingham. Ward Cllr Heenan was in attendance and a working party was set up. There is no further news to date. Occupation is planned for March/April 2014.

There will be 300 plots. The plots will be free for the first 6 months. Ward Cllr Heenan talked about asking for contributions for set up costs from parish councils.

- Finance Committee (Chair Cllr Benfield):

Cllr Benfield reported that a change in government policy meant that the parish council set a negative budget for this financial year. £2500 should have come to Covingham parish council. The budget has been reviewed for the remainder of the financial year and the parish council may well be able to put some money back in to the capital reserves.

A discussion is needed with members of the finance working party before the December parish council meeting to look at the budget and precept for the financial year 2014-15.

Members noted from Ward Cllr Price that Swindon Borough Council Cabinet will be meeting to discuss paying back some of the money to parishes. Members noted thanks to Cllr Pajak for his work on this.

ACTION Cllr Osbourn: Cllr Osbourn to write to the Borough regarding the above in support of money coming back to the parish council.

Members noted that the asset register is out of date and will be looked at by Cllr Benfield and the Clerk.

- Highways and Recreation (Chair Cllr Short):

Cllr Short and Cllr Osbourn met with the Borough Director of Services to get answers on what works need to be done in Covingham. A programme of works has been requested, including making the footpaths safe at Covingham Park and bollard replacement at Covingham Square. It looks as though a site visit may have taken place to assess the area. A drainage survey needs to be carried out. There has been no feedback on this from the Borough to date.

Cllr Foss reported that the school has discovered a leak. The school believe the leakage is within the school grounds and are trying to locate the problem. As it stands the school doesn't know where water is going. Issue needs to be resolved before work is done in the park as it may have an impact. Cllr Foss will provide an update when more information is known.

The skate park equipment will be moved when the weather improves as dry weather is needed for the JCB. Lightmain have confirmed that the guarantee will not be affected if the equipment is moved, as long as there is no damage.

Cllr Benfield commented that Ward Cllr Heenan has confirmed that the signage on Merlin Way will be installed on 15th November at the cost of £7,000. Cllr Benfield to check on progress.

- Parish Plan Committee (Chair Cllr Curtis):

No planning applications received this month. Cllr Short asked for a proposal to go forward to ask for a referendum on whether the proposed planning for Redlands should go ahead.

ACTION Cllr Osbourn: Cllr Osbourn to contact Chair of Wanborough parish council for a discussion.

10. Planning Matters

None.

11. Police matters:

Cllr Osbourn provided an update from the Police: There have been some break-ins primarily in the east of Swindon to include sheds and garages. A number of people have been apprehended independently of each other. Members need to be aware that there is some problem in this area.

Members noted that the majority of outbuildings have not been locked or the locks have been broken. The Bobby Van will come out free of charge to put lock on garages. Members of the public to try and be vigilant.

12. Financial Matters

The finance summary and cheque list were approved.

13. Correspondence

Members noted the following received correspondence

Received from	Subject
Swindon Borough Council	Special Expenses Form – completed and returned by Clerk

14. Matters for consideration

Cllr Benfield reported that a local resident has complained about the hard standing area at the end of swallowdale. Business people parking are parking there overnight.

Complaints have been received about the ruts on the triangle of land by the skate park.

Cllr Stanbury asked if the parish has a composting area and mentioned it could be a useful, free environmental resource for the local community that could open up funding opportunities.

Meeting closed at 21:17.