

Covingham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 14th April 2014
Following the Annual Assembly in Covingham Park Primary School, The Harriers, Covingham

Present:

Cllr Osbourn, Cllr Benfield, Cllr Hayward, Cllr Short, Cllr Parry, Cllr Curtis, Cllr Foss, Cllr Haigh, Cllr Wichall, Cllr Stanbury, Cllr Davis, Cllr Godbold

In attendance:

Gemma Cheal (parish clerk), Ward Cllr Heenan, Grace Martin (Community Flood Resilience Officer for Swindon) and Members of the public

1. Apologies

Received from Cllr Sandle.

2. Declaration of Interests

None declared.

3. Approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2014

Minutes were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising from the previous minutes

None.

5. Public forum:

No comments or questions raised.

6. Clerk's Report

Members noted the following report from the Clerk:

Register of Members Interests

Please can councillors who have not yet returned your Register of Interests forms, do so by the April Parish Council meeting as reminded by the Chairman at the March Parish Council meeting.

Meeting with Chair of Finance Committee

A meeting with Cllr Benfield took place on 8th April to discuss the End of Year finances. A Q4 statement will be presented by Cllr Benfield at the April Parish Council meeting.

Appointment of Internal Auditor

An internal auditor has been appointed. Clerk to send documents to Internal Auditor and to send of form to reclaim VAT incurred for the last financial year.

Parish Council Vacancy

Currently one vacancy on the parish council.

Community Payback

Correspondence continues with the Community Payback team about completing the grass cutting along the path way at Smitan Brook. It looks as though works have stopped again due to cracks along the edge of the path. Clerk to ask Terry the Groundsman to investigate further.

Dog Bin Update

A new dog bin and post has been installed at Covingham Park to replace the missing bin and post.

Update on Actions from March meeting:

- Swindon Borough Council (Bernie Brennan) re. update on drainage and programme of works. Response received the SBC. Update to be given by Chairman/John Short at the April Parish Council meeting.
- A meeting room was booked for the planning committee in March to discuss the S/10/14/0253. A meeting took place and a response was forwarded to SBC Planning

Department.

- Clerk is in correspondence with SBC regarding bespoke planning training for Covingham Parish Councillors. Update to follow.

7. Chairman's Report

Cllr Osbourn named councillors who had not returned a completed 'Declaration of Interests' form to the Clerk and asked them to complete and return their form as a matter of urgency.

8. Police Matters

Members noted a report received from PC Stefan Watts, containing the following information: Metal flashing was stolen from the roof of Covingham Park School over 3 consecutive nights in March. This has been linked to a number of similar offences locally and a suspect has been arrested regarding these offences. The suspect is currently on bail while the investigation continues.

There has been an increase in the reports of antisocial behaviour, including a number of calls regarding teenage youths at the play area adjacent to Neptune Crescent. The Neighbourhood Policing Team is working hard to speak with the older teenagers and make them aware of the impact of their behaviour so that the park remains accessible to all.

9. Reports from Parish Council Committee Chairs:

- Environment Committee (Chair Cllr Sandle):

Members noted a committee report previously circulated from Cllr Sandle containing the following key points:

Bulb planting: A survey has been carried out and results presented to members regarding key areas in Covingham to be included in bulb planting as certain areas could do with 'freshening up'.

Grass cutting: Members noted the Swindon Borough Council has announced a possible reduction in the frequency of cuts in the Borough. The Environment Committee will monitor the impact.

Allotments: No further progress has been reported with the new Nythe allotments. The Wanborough Allotments Committee has recently met and will be forwarding information regarding the number of plots held by Covingham residents. There may be some vacant plots at Wanborough in the future.

Dog Faeces: Members noted Covingham have 14 dog bins in the parish, more per acre than any other parish in the borough. However, there is still an issue with some dog walkers who are not picking up and binning their dog faeces. Members noted the seriousness of a disease called 'toxocarasis' which can be caused by dogs that are not regularly wormed. If found in dog faeces, this can lead to severe visual impairment or total blindness. Covingham Parish Council welcome responsible dog walkers, even from outside of our parish, but ask for dog walkers to bag and bin faeces or since the change in the law, to take it home and place it in their refuse bins.

- Finance Committee (Chair Cllr Benfield):

Members received an annual report of the Parish Council Finance Committee, which included the following key points:

- A complete review of the financial regulations, Code of Conduct and Standing orders has taken place.
- The annual budget for 2014-15 had been developed and accepted in a clearer format.
- The financial Risk Assessment and Asset Register have been written up in conjunction with the Clerk.
- Covingham Parish Council has lobbied the Borough to ensure that we will receive the Council Tax Support Grant of £5,084 for this financial year.
- An internal auditor has been appointed and a flow chart developed.
- Regular monthly meetings have been taking place with the Parish Clerk to ensure the parish finances are up to date.

Members noted future capital pressures and the expansion of the parish boundaries in 2015.

- Highways and Recreation Committee(Chair Cllr Short):

Cllr Short and Cllr Davis will make arrangements to move the new skate park equipment, subject to good weather, at the end of the Easter holidays.

Cllr Short and Cllr Osbourn will be meeting with the Director of Services at the Borough on 22nd April to discuss drainage issues at Covingham Park. Following the previous meeting, the Borough have given an update on previous issues raised by Cllr Short, to include a temporary solution to the cracks on the pathways at Covingham Park which was raised as an urgent matter. Cllr Short will continue to press for a schedule of works for Covingham, to include gully cleaning.

- Parish Plan Committee (Chair Cllr Curtis):

Members noted that a meeting took place on 17th March to discuss a response to 'The Hub' planning application and a final response was agreed and submitted to Swindon Borough Council, which included comments on infrastructure, traffic, flood risk and prevention and employment opportunities.

Cllr Curtis attended the Western Vale Villages (A420 working party) meeting at the Reading Room, Great Coxwell on 21st March. The Western Vale Villages consortium (WVV) was set up in 2006, comprising of several parish councils along the A420 and then Wanborough joined at a later date. It became apparent that the 3 local authorities that were in 'control' of the A420 were not joined up. The three are Swindon Borough Council (SBC), Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC). The WVV had identified the weak point in the infrastructure and the resulting increase in traffic from the suggested developments (8,000 houses from Swindon to the main roundabout at Faringdon).

The WVV have forced the traffic/transport issue that has resulted in the Statement of Common ground (SOCG) which lists the issues and gives a basis to work to. It also lists the villages that are included in the consortium and therefore will be able to use this document in any future discussions with the relevant council.

A cross border meeting was held with the interested parties on 7th January 2014 to get agreement and the final document is due to be signed by end of March/beginning of April. The enquiry into Swindon's local plan is due to take place end of April/beginning of May.

Wanborough Parish Council has an attorney who will raise issues to the Inspector on behalf of Wanborough and the WVV. He will advocate that any developments along the A420 will have an adverse impact on the villages from the traffic/transport point of view.

Members noted the following key points:

The White Hart roundabout is identified as one of the key changes to be made at a cost of £23m. No funding has been identified. A bid has been prepared by Swindon Borough Council but there is no guarantee of any money.

The WVV view is if the infrastructure cannot be funded, the houses should not be built. The plan needs to be deliverable, and they hope that the Inspector of the local plan will concur.

Rat Running – Swindon Borough Council are to discuss, with the relevant parish councils, the issue of rat running to be able to plan around the subject with appropriate measures to mitigate the problem.

10. Planning Matters

No planning applications received this month.

11. Financial Matters

- The financial summary and cheque list were approved and signed.
- Members received and accepted the Q4 Financial Statement.

12. Correspondence

Members noted the following received correspondence

Received from	Subject
The Dorcan Church	Letter of thanks for the grant received for the holiday club.
Swindon Borough Council	Update on Labour Group's position on transfer of SBC's leisure services to a private provider.
Member of the public	2 x freedom of information requests (responded to by the Clerk).
Thamesdown Transport	Consultation about proposed changes to bus services from 27 th May.

13. Matters for consideration

Members noted that Cllr Godbold may not be able to attend as many future meetings.

Cllr Benfield attending the recent East Locality meeting and reported that a Speed watch team has been set up, to cover locations including Kingfisher and St. Paul's Drive.

Members noted changes to the plans for Covingham Square. The bins are staying in the same locations. Ward Cllr Heenan has assured Cllr Benfield that the wall surrounding the car park will be done up and the panels will be replaced. The recycling area is going to be fenced off.

Meeting closed at 20:47.

Signed (Chair):