

Covingham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 10th November 2014
In Covingham Park Primary School, The Harriers, Covingham

Present: Cllr Osbourn, Cllr Benfield, Cllr Sandle, Cllr Hayward, Cllr Haigh, Cllr Parry, Cllr Foss, Cllr Curtis, Cllr Short and Cllr Davis

In attendance:

Gemma Cheal (Parish Clerk), Members of the public

1. Apologies

Received from Cllr Wichall.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Presentation to the winners of Covingham Parish Council's Best Front Gardens competition by the Mayor of Swindon Councillor Teresa Page

The Chairman handed over this item to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Cllr Sandle. Cllr Sandle welcomed the Mayor of Swindon Councillor Teresa Page and the three winners of the Best Front Gardens Competition. This is the first Best Gardens Competition held by Covingham Parish Council and all three winners were thanked for taking part in the competition. Cllr Sandle explained that three independent judges had the very difficult decision of selecting the winners. The standard was very high as there are many beautiful gardens in Covingham.

The Mayor of Swindon Councillor Teresa Page presented the awards as follows:

- First prize certificate and voucher was presented to Mr and Mrs Frost of Merlin Way.
- Second prize certificate and voucher was presented to Mr and Mrs Burnett of Popplechurch.
- Third prize certificate and voucher was presented to Mr and Mrs Baillie of The Harriers.

Photographs of the winners were taken. Members and competition winners agreed that photographs could be published in the Handymag.

4. Approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2014

Minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2014 were approved and signed, subject to one amendment to the attendance record.

5. Matters arising from the previous minutes

Cllr Haigh expressed his thanks to Cllr Foss for contacting the school regarding the overhanging branches along the footpath from Covingham Park to Dorcan Way. The issue has now been resolved.

6. Public forum

One member of the public present. No questions or comments raised.

7. Clerk's Report

Members received and noted the following report from the Clerk:

Resignation of Groundsman

Sadly, Terry has confirmed his verbal resignation in writing and will be leaving on 31st December 2014. To be discussed at the November Parish Council meeting.

Parish Van

The van failed its MOT on 4th November. Terry arranged for replacement of new front tyres. MOT certificate has now been issued. Cllr Haigh enquired about whether or not quotes had been obtained

for the replacement tyres and suggested for this to be done in the future.

VAT Refund

Currently waiting for our requested refund of £3,215.92.

Dog Bin Update

The new dog bin has now been installed as agreed.

Play park equipment update

Terry will replace the equipment when he has all of the correct parts. I am currently waiting for Terry to confirm the parts that are required so an order can be placed. To date, we have not had our annual play area inspection.

Letters sent this month

I have sent letters on behalf of the Parish Council to:

- Emma Godbold, thanking her for her work and dedication as Parish Councillor for Covingham
- Swindon Borough Council re. response to the amended Draft Local Plan
- Street Services at the Borough to order replacement trees for Covingham
- Swindon Borough Council re. lease of land at Covingham Park and Smitan Brook.

Special Expenses Form

As in previous years, I have completed and returned a list of statutory provisions required for council tax purposes (Special Expenses form) to Swindon Borough Council.

Meeting with Chair of Finance

I met with the Chair of the Finance Committee this month to discuss the budget for the next financial year. Cllr Benfield to update members at the November Parish Council meeting.

8. Verbal Update from the Chairman

The Chairman reported that he had received a letter of resignation from Terry Young, the parish Groundsman. Terry will be leaving at the end of December due to retirement. The Chairman reported that Terry wrote that he has enjoyed his time working for the parish and will miss the residents.

Councillors agreed for the vacancy to be advertised as a matter of urgency (ACTION CLERK). Cllr Benfield, Cllr Short and Cllr Foss agreed to be on the interview panel. The Clerk agreed to take notes.

Cllr Benfield informed members that the job description for the Parish Groundsman has been updated as previously agreed by councillors and is now up to date.

Cllr Foss asked Councillors if a confidential matter could be discussed at the end of the meeting, without members of the public present due to the confidential nature of the matter. The Chairman agreed.

The Chairman reported that he had attended a remembrance service held at Steam on behalf of the Parish Council.

9. Police Matters

No report from the Police this month.

10. Reports from Parish Council Committee Chairs:

- Environment Committee (Chair Cllr Sandle):

Members received and noted the Environment Committee report from Cllr Sandle. The following key points were noted:

Allotments:

Cllr Benfield attended the recent Wanborough Allotments Committee meeting AGM. Members noted that the allotments are being run in a professional manner. Covingham Parish Council and Wanborough Parish Council have established a good working relationship with the allotments. Self-policing of the allotments is proving to be successful.

Members noted that significant progress has been made at the new Nythe allotment site.

Trees

An order has been placed with Swindon Borough Council for two trees, to replace the two dead ones on Covingham Park.

- Finance Committee (Chair Cllr Benfield):

Cllr Benfield reported that he had met with the Clerk to discuss the end of year budget projection. Members received draft budget figures for the next financial year. Members agreed that this would be discussed in more detail at the December Parish Council meeting.

- Highways and Recreation (Chair Cllr Short):

Drainage works at Covingham Park are now complete. There have been no reported problems, even with the recent heavy rain. The drainage solution looks as though it is successful.

Cllr Short reported that he has spoken with Swindon Borough Council regarding payment of the completed drainage works.

- Parish Plan Committee (Chair Cllr Curtis):

Members received and noted the Parish Plan Committee report from Cllr Curtis. Members noted that a Planning Committee meeting was held on 20th October to discuss Swindon Borough Council's proposed minor amendments to the Swindon Local Plan 2026. A formal response was compiled and submitted to Swindon Borough Council within the time frame stipulated.

- Covingham Flood Group Report (Cllr Curtis):

Members received a report from Cllr Curtis on behalf of the Covingham Flood Group. The following key points were noted:

- A second multi-agency meeting took place on 6th November.
- Dorcan stream maintenance: The Environment Agency are still on target to undertake maintenance as planned between now and early 2015.
- Swindon Borough Council have removed silt from the culverts under the Sandpiper Bridge and Kestrel Drive Bridge. Swindon Borough Council confirmed that the Wanborough Road culvert has been inspected and both the culvert and trash screen were clear.
- Kestrel Drive Pumping Station: Thames Water has investigated the failures that occurred in December 2013 and January 2014 and confirmed both were due to electricity power outages which caused the pumps to trip out. All pumping stations are alarmed which goes through to the Control Centre. Thames Water have stressed that all incidences relating to sewerage should be reported to them.
- The Environment Agency has made amendments to the trigger points for warnings to be given re. possible flooding incidents to Covingham residents registered for the flood alert service. The water levels at Kestrel Drive can be viewed on the Environment Agency website.
- The Environment Agency has carried out modelling with 5 different scenarios for the Wanborough Road Culvert and Flood Storage Area.

Cllr Curtis noted a problem with trolleys believed to be from Morrisons in the stream and agreed to investigate.

11. Planning Matters

Application Number: S/14/1839

Proposal: Change of use of part of car park to site for hot food vending van

Location: Car Park, Covingham Drive, Covingham, Swindon

DECISION: Objection

Members resolved to object to the planning application and agreed for a letter of objection to be sent to Swindon Borough Council. Members also agreed for letters to be circulated to local residents of Larksfield and Covingham Square to ask them to support the Parish Council with the objection.

12. Financial Matters

- **Approve financial summary and cheque list**

The financial summary and cheque list was approved and signed.

- **Consider any grant requests received (current grant money available £575)**

Members noted that further information had been received from Hometruths who had previously applied for a grant from the Parish Council. After some debate, members resolved not to award Hometruths a grant on this occasion.

13. Correspondence

Members noted the following received correspondence:

- Letter of resignation from Terry Young (Groundsman).
- Freedom of Information request regarding an 'air conditioning assessment certification'. Response sent by the Clerk.
- Letter from Swindon Borough Council regarding 'Statutory Provisions'. Response sent by the Clerk.

14. Matters for consideration

Cllr Haigh raised the issue about the safety of some of the walls in the Parish that are in need of maintenance, as previously raised by Cllr Wichall. Cllr Haigh asked if a notice could go in the Handymag to point out that it is the responsibility of the landowners to ensure that the walls are safe.

Cllr Haigh pointed out that notices at the bus stops are currently on signs adjacent to the bus shelters and asked if an actual sign could be put in the bus shelter. Cllr Haigh pointed out the problem of epicormic growth in the Parish.

Cllr Haigh raised concerns about the state of the minimart car park and noted that a member of the Highways Agency commented that the condition of the car park is currently being looked at and will be patched up. This is best that they can do at the moment.

Meeting closed at 20:45.