

Covingham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 14th September 2015
In Covingham Park Primary School, The Harriers, Covingham

Present: Cllr Short, Cllr Hayward, Cllr Benfield, Cllr Osbourn, Cllr Sandle, Cllr Curtis, Cllr Haigh

In attendance:

Gemma Cheal (parish clerk), members of the public

1. Apologies

Received from Cllr Wichall, Cllr Foss, Cllr Davis and Cllr Fitchett

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2015

Minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2015 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising from the previous minutes

The Clerk informed members that a discussion took place in July regarding the purchase of a work mobile telephone for the Clerk and Handyman. A telephone has been purchased for the Handyman, however, the Clerk will purchase a telephone after distribution of letters to residents of the Redrow estate.

5. Public forum

No comments or questions.

6. Clerk's Report

Parish Council Van Insurance

The Parish Van insurance is due for renewal on 22nd September. I have renewed the insurance with A-Plan as in previous years. A cheque is included in the schedule for this month.

Update on Adult Exercise Equipment installation

The new adult exercise equipment has now been installed. One 'group' of equipment has been relocated at the request of some of the local residents. I have received positive feedback about the use of the equipment, particularly with young people. A cheque has been included in the payment schedule for the equipment. The schedule will be emailed this month.

Play park repairs and inspection

John Ricketts and I met with a representative from Kompan to discuss a quote for repairs to the flooring under the swings. I have also requested a quote for various parts that are missing or require repair. We are due to have our annual inspection of the play parks in September/October.

Payment of expenses for the Parish Handyman and Clerk

With the agreement of the Chairman and Chair of the Finance Committee, payment for expenses will be made via bank transfer for the Clerk and Groundsman. This is in line with the Parish Council Finance Regulations which states '*any payments made online, such as payments shown on the schedule of payments shall be verified by a nominated councillor as to the accuracy of the payment.*' - 6.1 Finance Regs (shortened). All expenses payments shall be listed on the payment schedule with supporting invoices for approval at full Parish Council meetings.

Training Course for Handyman

With the agreement of the Chairman and the Chair of the Finance Committee, I have enrolled John onto a 'ROSPA routine play park inspection training course' on 17th November. I thought this would be good for John as he regularly carries out routine safety inspections and minor repairs on our parks in Covingham. An invoice will be sent after the training course for the amount of £250 plus VAT.

Wasps nest

Our Handyman informed me of a wasps nest on a tree stump near the skateboard park. I have reported this as urgent to Swindon Borough Council.

Cllr Curtis updated members about a second disturbance since reporting the issue to the Borough on 2nd September. Cllr Curtis reminded members that the Parish Council have a legal and moral responsibility to deal with the problem as the nest is on land is leased by the Parish Council.

Members resolved unanimously to give delegated responsibility to the Handyman to deal with urgent, hazardous matters such as the wasps nest.

Handyman Report

Members received a report from the Handyman.

The Clerk informed members that the Handyman had recently been stopped by a Police Officer who informed him that the Parish Van should not be driven across the parks. The Clerk has clarified the matter with the Police. They have confirmed that the Handyman may drive the Parish Van on the parks in order to carry out his duties.

7. Verbal update from the Chair

Cllr Osbourn informed members that he attended a meeting at the Borough with Cllr Curtis, Cllr Benfield and Cllr Sandle concerning the Eastern Villages. The Chairman expressed his disappointment in the lack of attendance, despite an invitation being sent to all members. The next scheduled meeting with Swindon Borough Council is on Monday 7th November from 4 to 5pm at Wat Tyler House.

Cllr Osbourn informed members that 2 residents had formally complained about the adult exercise equipment on Covingham Park. One group of the equipment has been re-sited as a result of a complaint. Overall, the feedback has been extremely positive. Cllr Benfield informed members that one resident told him that the exercise equipment is 'the best thing the Parish Council has done in the last 30 years'.

Cllr Osbourn recommended for the adult exercise to remain in the current installed location as there is no detrimental reason to move it. Councillors may discuss possible re-siting of the equipment in the future if it causes a hazard and is substantiated. Cllr Haigh seconded the proposal. All councillors voted in favour. The recommendation was therefore carried.

8. Police Matters (Update from local neighbourhood policing team)

No report from the Police this month.

9. Seating around Covingham Park

The Clerk informed members that Cllr Foss requested for this item to be included on the agenda. Do we have enough seating around Covingham Park at the present time? The Clerk pointed out a comment received about the distance between benches, particularly for the elderly or disabled. This has been highlighted since the installation of the new exercise equipment.

Cllr Sandle commented on a possible noise issue with benches being positioned outside of the homes of local residents. Members agreed after some discussion, to leave the number of benches at the present number and to look at this again in the future. Members agreed to review the number of litter bins on Covingham Park at the October Parish Council meeting. ACTION: Agenda item for October meeting.

10. Reports from Parish Council Committee Chairs:

- Environment Committee (Chair Cllr Sandle):

Allotments

Nothing to report.

Street Boxes

The feedback regarding our floral boxes, not only from our residents, but also from some of the travelling public has been excellent. It is lovely to see that Robinsgreen, Ravenscroft & even the church has installed boxes, making the total within Covingham 21.

Enquiries are still coming in regarding what residents need to do to get boxes on their street. As an incentive, to establish our floral boxes further into the parish & to help the residents obtain a box for their street –I would like to propose that we the parish, make the boxes, (if the Handyman is willing). It would then be the responsibility of the residents of that street to purchase the peat, plants & maintain the boxes. The Clerk received a request from a resident of Pipitdene for flower boxes. The residents agreed to maintain the boxes if the Parish Council could make and install the boxes. Members agreed for the Handyman to make boxes for Pipitdene with the left over wood available. ACTION: October agenda item to discuss the possibility of further flower boxes for the parish.

As a thank you for the residents that have maintained boxes, I would like to propose that we give them a garden voucher, once a year for £10 to help towards their plants etc., and as an incentive for them to continue their excellent work. If both are accepted, a cost analysis will be carried out before we commit, to ascertain if this would be a viable project. ACTION: October agenda item.

Street Signs

Spring bulbs will be purchased & planted under some of the street signs in Covingham and Kingfisher Drive in the coming weeks. Residents who are interested in obtaining bulbs to plant within Covingham, should contact the Parish Clerk.

Bus Shelters

The Handyman has made an excellent job of painting the bus shelters which has enhanced the environment & our estate.

- Finance Committee (Chair Cllr Benfield):
No report required this month.

- Recreation (Chair Cllr Haigh and Cllr Osbourn):
An update on the adult exercise equipment was covered under item 7 'Verbal update from the Chair'.

- Parish Plan/Highways Committee (Chair Cllr Curtis):
Covingham Parish Council was invited to attend a meeting with the Planning Department of Swindon Borough Council to discuss the New Eastern Villages Development and be brought up to date with current applications. Four of the Parish Councillors, Cllrs Benfield, Sandle, Osbourn and Curtis, attended with 3 SBC planning officers.

The Local Plan has been adopted which includes an allocation of circa 8,000 dwellings of which 2,500 would be to the North and the remainder to the South, a 40 hectare site south of the A420 for logistics and distribution and 'The Hub' which would include the current Sainsbury's store plus other retail outlets, doctors surgery and possible sport facilities.

To date the only planning application where permission has been granted is for The Hub; however Reserved Matters are expected with this application. Applications for 2,542 dwellings in South Marston and 2,800 at Lotmead Farm are pending. Pre-application consultation with Redlands has taken place and SBC are expecting a planning application towards the end of the year.

Transport – A park and ride facility is being proposed as part of the overall development. There will also be an express bus route with the intention of making it an attractive viable option to using a car. The White Hart roundabout is to be upgraded and Greenbridge roundabout will be improved. Access roads onto the A420 will also be provided. The Southern connector road into Commonhead roundabout is planned to be delivered further down the line.

SBC have submitted a £50m business case to the Department of Transport which has been agreed to in principle. Wanborough Road access, in strict capacity terms, is not an issue. However, SBC do acknowledge that it is not ideal and have asked the applicants to undertake more surveys re. Merlin Way/Wanborough Road.

Housing – the current planning regulations mean that a minimum of 30% of any development needs to be ‘affordable’ housing, which includes provision for the elderly, equity release properties and rental properties. It is expected this will be managed/provided by a Housing Association(s).

Schools – there will be 5 primary centres each comprising of a school and day to day needs in terms of retail outlets so with limited opportunities for employment. Four new schools are planned with South Marston School being extended. A secondary school is planned for opening in 2019. SBC are adamant that using Covingham School is not a preferred option as it is not an attractive or safe route for children to access the school by foot.

GPs surgeries and Medical facilities – SBC believe that there is a generated need for 11 GPs. They are also working with GWH on long term expansion plans. They foresee ‘white rooms’ being made available at the primary centres for visiting medical practitioners to make use of.

Flooding and Drainage – SBC have worked with the Environment Agency and Thames Water on an emerging drainage and SUDS strategy which will govern the needs of the development as a whole, not each individual piece. They have identified that 40% of the total area needs to be underdeveloped to provide flood corridors within the boundary and around the edge. Thames Water is building a new pipeline from Blunsdon reservoir to Commonhead to cater for the NEV. A new pumping station will be installed for Dorcan located at The Marsh, Wanborough. SBC has a responsibility to safeguard and protect the canal route, but not to provide it. They acknowledge that there could be some sensible options to reroute it in certain places however, they are working closely with The Canal Trust on this.

Currently, there are approximately 5 land developers involved but this number will increase as the house builders come on board. A quarterly developers’ forum is held where items are discussed and to ensure that the development is viewed in its totality and that each developer is made aware that they cannot just look at their one part in isolation. Covingham Parish Council will be sent an email to keep us informed of the context of these meetings.

The key message to come out of the meeting was that SBC know that there will be challenges moving forwards, but they are committed to being proactive in obtaining the best outcome. They are committed to front loading the infrastructure needed but with a caveat that there are occasions where it has to be commercially viable, so some components may be delivered later than might be ideal.

- Covingham Flood Group report (Cllr Curtis):

The next Flood Group meeting is scheduled for 19th October. An update will be given after the meeting. The Chairman thanked Cllr Curtis for her hard work as committee Chair for Planning and for feedback given on behalf of the Covingham Flood Group.

11. Planning Matters

Application Number: S/15/1420

Proposal: Alterations to existing car park

Location: Patheon Building, Kingfisher Drive, Covingham, Swindon, SN3 5BZ

DECISION: No objections.

12. Financial Matters

- Approve financial summary and cheque list: The financial summary and cheque list was approved and signed.
- Consider and grant requests received (current grant money available £850): No grant requests received this month.

13. Correspondence

Members noted the following received correspondence

Received from	Subject
Harris Lamb	Development at Redlands invitation to the Parish Council
Resident of Pipitdene	Request for flower boxes
SBC	Statement of Licensing Policy
SBC	Consultation on Local Welfare Assistance
SBC	Swindon Borough/Parish & Town Council Charter 2015
SBC	Swindon Residential Design Guide Draft Supplementary Planning Document
SBC	Information on 'Parish and Town Allowances 2015' ACTION: Clerk to find out information from Stephen Taylor, SBC regarding payment of allowances to non-elected members.
Diabetes UK	Letter of thanks for grant received

14. Matters for consideration

Cllr Haigh pointed out that epicormic growth has become a real problem this year and there are one or two places where it has grown and is blocking views and signs. ACTION: Cllr Haigh to make a note of trees and refer them to the Ward Councillors.

Cllr Benfield informed members that the final plans for improvement works to Covingham Shops have been approved. The Borough are currently waiting for contractors to come back with a start date. There is now a brick wall around the recycle bin area.

Cllr Curtis queried grass around the matting underneath the adult play equipment.

Meeting closed at 20:53.

Signed (Chairman):