

# Covingham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015  
In Covingham Park Primary School, The Harriers, Covingham

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**Present:** Cllr Hayward, Cllr Foss, Cllr Osbourn, Cllr Wichall, Cllr Haigh and Cllr Curtis

**In attendance:**

Gemma Cheal (parish clerk), 7 members of the public

**1. Apologies**

Received from Cllr Sandle and Cllr Benfield

**2. Declaration of Interests**

None declared.

The Chairman received a letter of resignation from Cllr Wichall and read the letter to members. With regret, members accepted the resignation of Cllr Wichall. Cllr Osbourn expressed his thanks to Scott Wichall for his service to the Parish Council for approximately the last 13 years and wished him all the very best for the future.

**3. Approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

**4. Matters arising from the previous minutes**

Item 9 of the previous minutes (seating around Covingham Park): Cllr Foss noted that members had discussed the possibility of installing more seating around Covingham Park at the September Parish Council meeting and expressed his disappointment that members resolved not to install more seating around the park. Cllr Osbourn informed Cllr Foss that the decision was taken not to install further seating as members were concerned about a possible noise issue.

Cllr Foss pointed out that almost two thirds of the park is currently not covered by any seating. The park is for the people and residents should be able to enjoy the park and use it effectively. Cllr Foss will be raising this on a regular basis in the future and reminded members that councillors are here to represent the needs of the local residents.

Cllr Haigh informed members that he has been unable to make a note of the epicormic growth in Covingham to date as previously agreed, but he would try and have a look this month.

**5. Public forum**

Cllr Osbourn welcomed members of the public present at the meeting and invited them to address members of the Parish Council. Local resident Mr Kimber raised concerns about the location of one of the groups of the recently installed adult exercise equipment near Falconscroft. Mr Kimber also expressed concerns of anti-social behaviour as young people are hanging around the equipment. Mr Kimber is aware that the equipment was previously moved due to complaints by some of the neighbouring properties and asked for the equipment to be re-sited.

A number of possible sites were discussed, to include an area between two humps near the skateboard park. The Chairman informed all present that he had discussed the relocation of the equipment with Mrs Kimber. The Chairman also pointed out that he had visited the site with Cllr Haigh to look at other alternative sites. The Chairman pointed out the manufacturers had given

advice regarding the location of the equipment. Careful consideration needed to be taken because of the previous flooding problems on Covingham Park.

Residents of Martinfield raised concerns about anti-social behaviour in Covingham, particularly with gangs on Covingham Park during the evenings.

Cllr Osbourn pointed out that members are aware of anti-social behaviour and have reported concerns to the Police. The Chairman has also asked the Police to increase patrol in the Covingham Park area. Members recognised that Police Officers are currently stretched, but will continue to report concerns and request further patrols for Covingham. Better enforcement is required to overcome the problem of anti-social behaviour.

## 6. Clerk's Report

### **Play park repairs – carpet strip**

As reported at the last meeting, a strip of carpet underneath the swings requires repair. A quote has been received for £1,071.42). Due to safety concerns, the Chairman and Chair of the Finance Committee have authorised a purchase order so that the area can be repaired as soon as possible.

### **Audit Update**

The external auditors have passed the audit for Covingham Parish Council for the financial year 2014-15.

### **Wasps nest update**

John arranged for a company to deal with the wasp nest problem. This has now been sorted.

### **Handyman Report**

A full report from John is attached to this report.

### **Police Patrol**

I have contacted the Police via email to ask them to patrol Covingham Park, particularly around the new adult exercise equipment.

### **Special Expenses Form from Swindon Borough Council**

As in previous years, the Borough has sent through a form to be completed, of Statutory Provisions where the Parish Council is likely to incur expenditure in 2016/17. I will complete and return the form to the Borough by the deadline of 29<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Finance**

The Chair of Finance and I met on 7<sup>th</sup> October to discuss the quarter 2 finance statement. This will be reviewed at the October Parish Council meeting.

### **Code of Conduct – 'Interests'**

As actioned at the September meeting, I circulated a copy of the Parish Council Code of Conduct which includes information regarding 'interests'. I hope that this has been a refresher for councillors.

Members noted that there is some minor damage to a piece of the skate park equipment, presumably due to vandalism. The Clerk agreed to contact the company that installed the equipment to request repairs under guarantee.

## 7. Verbal Update from the Chairman

The Chairman informed members that Swindon Borough Council have contacted the Clerk via telephone regarding the new proposal from the government, regarding the potential transfer of services from Borough Councils to Parish Councils. Cllr Foss pointed out that as far as he is aware; the government have not amended the Act which states the areas that the Borough Council is responsible for and the areas that Parish Councils are responsible for. It is the responsibility of the Borough Council to carry out the work that they are responsible for and not the Parish Council.

Members agreed that the Clerk would not meet with Borough Officers without the representation of the Parish Council. Members agreed that this would be discussed as an agenda item in November. The Chairman agreed to meet with the Solicitor General.

8. **Police Matters** (Update from local neighbourhood policing team)  
No report received from the Police this month.
9. **Discuss the requirement for more litter bins around Covingham Park**  
The Clerk informed members that the Parish Handyman has not noted any significant increase in litter since the installation of the new adult exercise equipment and does not see a requirement for more bins. Members noted that 2 bins had recently been set on fire. Councillors will keep this item under review, along with the possible requirement for more seating on Covingham Park.
10. **Discuss bringing forward future Parish Council meetings to the first Monday of the month**  
Members resolved to defer this item until the November Parish Council meeting.
11. **Discuss provision of further flower boxes for the Parish and gift vouchers for local residents**  
Members noted that Cllr Sandle had suggested at the previous Parish Council meeting, to offer residents that maintain street boxes a yearly garden voucher at Christmas time as a 'thank you' from Covingham Parish Council to help maintain the boxes. Members agreed that they do not want residents to be out of pocket for maintaining the flower boxes and resolved to give a £10 voucher towards the maintenance of the street boxes.
12. **Reports from Parish Council Committee Chairs:**
- Environment Committee (Chair Cllr Sandle):
- Allotments**  
Nothing to report

#### **Street Boxes**

Spring bulbs have been purchased. As the flowers slowly start to diminish in our boxes, the bulbs are being planted. Instead of leaving the boxes empty during the winter months & until the spring bulbs begin to bloom, fresh plants have been purchased to continue to give a colourful display & brighten up Covingham through the winter period.

At our last meeting I suggested & proposed that:

As a thank you to the residents that have maintained street boxes, I feel we should offer them a yearly garden voucher, I suggest the sum of £10 or £20 given at Christmas time, to help towards the plants etc. not only as recognition, but also as an incentive for them to continue their excellent work.

Unfortunately I am unable to attend October's meeting to substantiate my proposal; I would however, ask you, before you vote, to consider the difference that these floral boxes have made to the parish & having agreed at September's meeting that we will now be supplying boxes to any resident who are interested in having & maintaining one in their street, in the hope that more streets will adopt a box. I trust you will vote favourably to the above proposal (*see Item 11 for decision*).

#### **Street Signs**

Spring bulbs have been purchased, planting under some of the street signs in Covingham & Kingfisher Drive will commence in due course.

#### **Bus Shelters**

John our Handyman has done an excellent job on completing the mammoth task of painting all our bus shelters, which has enhanced & brightened up the parish too.

- Finance Committee (Chair Cllr Benfield):

I have reviewed the Quarter 2 out-turn statement and am pleased to say that we are still in a favourable financial position regarding our Revenue Budget but the Capital Budget has been subject to some large items of expenditure, with possibly more to come.

I am led to believe that we may, yet again, have to move one of the three Exercise Sites, which will incur another item of costs, but that will depend on the outcome of tonight's discussions. Ref. Cllr. Haigh's letter to Mrs Kimber. On a personal note I still believe that the site in question has not had a fair trial, in other words not had the "test of time" and should be reviewed at a later date.

The final precept payment arrived on October 1<sup>st</sup>. but has not been included in the sheet.

As I wrote to you previously we have had another clear audit.

In November we will need to prepare next year's budget and a small increase in the precept may be necessary as well as adjusting and adding some new Cost Centres.

I am sorry that I cannot be with you tonight as I have a meeting in London with the planners of Camden Council London, regarding some alterations to my son's property.

- Recreation (Chair Cllr Haigh & Cllr Osbourn):

Cllr Haigh discussed the possibility of having a 'kicking wall' on the tarmacked area near the basketball hoop and presented a rough plan to members. Some of the area requires a professional to infill some of the cracks and some of the area would need to be re-tarmacked. Part of the plan showed a possible area to relocate a group of the adult exercise equipment; however we need to be mindful that we are not conflicting any regulation with siting the equipment in close proximity to the playpark, when considering the relocation.

Action: The Clerk agreed to get a quote for the possible relocation of one group of adult exercise equipment and to have a look for a 'Parish Plan' showing a detailed map of the area.

- Parish Plan/Highways Committee (Chair Cllr Curtis):

No report this month.

- Covingham Flood Group report (Cllr Curtis):

The date of the next Flood Group meeting has been rescheduled to 26<sup>th</sup> October.

### **13. Planning Matters**

Cllr Curtis informed members that she has received a copy of the Planning Protocol from the Clerk. Members noted that a planning application for Cornmarsh Way had been received after the printing of the agenda. Cllr Curtis agreed to have a look at the planning application.

### **14. Financial Matters**

- Approve financial summary and cheque list:  
Members approved the financial summary and cheque list.
- Approve 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Finance Statement:  
Members approved the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Finance Statement.
- Consider and grant requests received (current grant money available £850)  
No grant requests received this month.

### **15. Correspondence**

The Clerk informed members that Lloyds Bank had written to advise that a cheque payment to Caloo Limited had been returned to the payee's bank as it had not been signed in accordance with the account mandate.

The Clerk pointed out that the cheque may not have been signed by three signatories and advised that as the payment had already been approved, an online payment had been paid in order to pay the invoice in a timely manner. Members were in agreement with this course of action.

**16. Matters for consideration**

Cllr Curtis informed members of a meeting taking place on 26<sup>th</sup> October at Wanborough Parish (the same day as the flood group meeting), regarding information from the Canal Trust. Cllr Curtis will circulate meeting information to interested members, subject to a meeting confirmation.

Cllr Osbourn agreed to ask Scott Wichall if he might be willing to do some work to update the Covingham Parish website in the future. Members agreed that it would benefit from some updating.

Meeting closed at 20:49.

*Signed (Chairman):*