

# Covingham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on  
Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018 at 7pm  
at Covingham Park Primary School, The Harriers, Covingham

**Present:** Cllr Curtis (Chair), Cllr Benfield, Cllr Hawkes, Cllr Sandle, Cllr Waywell, Cllr Wichall, Cllr Ricketts

**Also in attendance:** Emma Kingsley (Parish Clerk), Angus Macpherson - Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire and Swindon, Cllr Heenan, Cllr Parry and nine members of the public.

## 1. Guest Speaker - Angus Macpherson: Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire and Swindon

Angus Macpherson thanked the Parish Council and residents for having him. He is trying to visit all Parish Councils to get feedback on policing in the area, explain the issues the Police are currently facing and find out if people are benefitting from the support networks that have been put in place. He asked if the Community Safety Forum worked for Covingham Parish Council, which the Councillors agreed was beneficial and they had seen problems voiced at the meetings, be addressed and rectified promptly by the PCSO's in the area. The Police and Crime Commissioner office was created to ensure that the police is working for all, with no political agenda and no committee ratifying decisions made by the Chief Constable, as was done previously.

Wiltshire Police receive £20 per head of population less than the national average, which in turn meant fewer Police numbers; the reason being that it is seen as a relatively prosperous county and safe, based on crime statistics from the last century. However, crime is different now with internet crime, child sex exploitation and modern-day slavery, e.g. nail bars and brothels, which is happening all over Wiltshire. Currently Wiltshire Police is 35 members over the establishment although that will level out due to staff about to retire. Whilst it was a positive that he was given the power to increase the Police part of the Council Tax by £12 per Band D equivalent last year, that had been wiped out by the salary increases that had been approved at a National Level. He believed that funding would be tight again this year as there was a pensions bill to pay. He believes that the 'days of reduction of police numbers are over'.

He went on to explain that Wiltshire Police is a modern force where every member of staff is provided with a laptop and mobile phone. Desks are no longer provided meaning that the staff are out in the Community more; with identified touch down points where they can access their emails and be seen. Some police jobs are now done by civilians as a warrant card gives you power, not experience, although these are not front-line roles. The rank structure in Wiltshire is different to the rest of the Country as certain levels had been removed.

A question was asked about the 101 number. Mr McPherson confirmed that it was now performing well and the average response time was 35 seconds. There is also a mental health nurse in the call centre to assist with mental health issues. The Community Messaging service was also well received.

Angus McPherson left the meeting at 7.33 pm

## 2. Apologies

Cllr Bacon

## 3. Declaration of Interests

None

#### 4. Minutes of previous meeting

**Resolved:** The minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018 were agreed and signed as a true record.

#### 5. Matters arising from the previous minutes

SHELAA – The objections have been submitted. A Public Consultation will take place in the Spring 2019 when we hope that the three sites within Covingham will have been removed from the list

Business cards - remain on the to do list

#### 6. Public Forum

A question was asked by a member of the public as to why the strips of land had not previously been included in the lease. Cllr Curtis informed the residents those pieces of land were not included in the lease that was signed in 2000 and so remained under Swindon Borough Council ownership and responsibility, until the Transfer of Services in 2017, when the Parish Council became responsible for the maintenance of the additional areas. The request was made during the negotiations for the additional pieces of land to be transferred to the Parish Council, but was refused in 2017. A new request has been submitted for the land to be included, which has been supported by the Borough Councillors.

Cllr Heenan informed residents that Swindon Borough Council legally have to submit a 5 year plan. Cllr Heenan advised residents that the pieces of land in question are currently in stage one with no plans in place to build on this land.

A resident commented that he believed that assurances were given at the time of the original purchase of the properties that the parks would never be built on. Some residents that were in attendance agreed that they would look for their original paperwork.

One of the residents raised their concerns over the roadmarkings at Coate Water Roundabout. Cllr Curtis informed the resident that this unfortunately wasn't covered under Covingham Parish Council but would include her concerns in an email to the Borough Councillors. **Action - Cllr Curtis**

#### 7. Chairs Verbal Update

**SHELAA and Covingham Park** – Cllr Heenan suggested on the Facebook page that the Parish Council should ask for the additional pieces of land that were included in the SHELAA, be leased to the Parish Council as the larger areas are and have been since 2000. To be clear, this question was asked during the negotiations for the Transfer of Services in 2017 and was refused. An email request was sent to SBC on 9<sup>th</sup> November and has been given support by the three Borough Councillors. Cllr Parry suggested a new 99-year lease for all areas of Covingham Park, however, that has been questioned as the current lease does not have a clause that allows SBC to cancel it, whereas the new leases currently being issued do.

**Community Hedge planting** – The event was successful and those that attended agreed that it would be good to identify some more sites where wildlife friendly habitat could be planted within Covingham.

**Grass cutting contract** – An end of year review meeting was held with the Contractor on 12<sup>th</sup> November. It was agreed that 'we got there in the end'. An in-depth discussion was held about the practicality of hedge cutting, with emphasis around the second cut due to it being at the end of the dormant period and close to the bird nesting season. This was seen more as a tidy up and not a full

cut. It was agreed that a harder cut would take place in November and 75% of the annual cost could be billed with the remaining 25% after the spring tidy.

**Street Sweeping** – the sub-contractor would be asked to action this. A proposed date of 13th December has since been suggested. A post will be added to the Facebook page for as many cars as possible to be parked off the roads.

**Path clearance** – The Contractor now has a small sweeping machine that could deal with paths at a cost of £25 per hour. Cllr Curtis asked the Councillors to email a list of paths they felt could benefit from this.

**Action – All**

As 2019/20 is the final year of the three-year Contract for Landscape Maintenance, the Parish Council will need to go out to tender next year to comply with Financial Regulations and Standing Orders. It was agreed that Cllr Ricketts would work on preparing the tender document.

**Transfer of Services Deed** – The issue over the perceived change of responsibilities due to the interpretation of the contents of the Deed is on the agenda again at the Swindon Area Committee Meeting on December 6th.

**Facebook** – As agreed, the profile picture has been changed to show the second winner's submission to the Autumn competition.

#### **8. Clerks Verbal Update**

The business phone for use by the Clerk had been delivered, the number distributed and is now the main point of telephone contact.

#### **9. Parish Maintenance Engineers**

- **Monthly Reports** –

It was agreed, another excellent report. There also appeared to have been a seamless transition with the change of staff to the Maintenance Team.

#### **10. Reports from Parish Council Working Parties and Committee's**

- **Environment Working Party** - Cllr Benfield and Cllr Sandle had attended the Wanborough allotment meeting. Of the 53 plots available, 24 had been allocated to Covingham residents. The six floral boxes that are maintained by the Parish Council have been replanted ready for the spring.

- **Website Working Party (Including GDPR)**

Cllr Hawkes informed Councillors that the website was carrying on nicely. Data protection remained an ongoing project. As Parish Councils do not have to appoint a Data Protection Officer, he questioned the need to name a specific point of contact for Data Protection matters, which could not be the Clerk due to a conflict of interest. It was suggested that the name of the Working Party be changed to Data Protection and Governance, which would encompass all eventualities and negate the need for a named individual, to which all Councillors agreed.

- **Planning Working Party-**

Cllr Hawkes tabled a written update report from the SBC/ NEV liason meeting

Covingham Parish Council had been asked by SBC to submit a statement in support of the Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) bid that they were currently preparing. The following was agreed and submitted:



Covingham Parish Council supports the Swindon Borough Council application for Housing Infrastructure Funding for the Southern Connector Road, from the New Eastern Villages (NEV) in East Swindon to the Commonhead Roundabout on the A419.

This road needs to be constructed before the southern part of the NEV development actually starts so that all development traffic can use the Southern Connector Road. The alternative is that construction traffic will have to travel through Covingham with all the problems associated with such traffic. There are already Traffic Regulation Orders in place restricting the movement of heavy traffic through the parish and without the Southern Connector Road the orders are likely to be removed to permit development traffic.

The road is an essential link between the New Eastern Villages and the M4 motorway and is needed to prevent additional traffic from using the roads in Covingham.

The Parish Council and others have reservations about the actual design and construction of the Southern Connector Road. Covingham and adjacent localities suffer from flooding. The Southern Connector Road will be built across a flood plain and the flood zones in the area. If there is only limited funding, or a too hurried approach to the design and construction, then the road could act as a dam, with restrictions to the normal movement of water during a flood event. Instead of flowing to the North East, waters would be forced North and South along the boundary of the route of the Southern Connector Road causing increased flooding to Covingham to the North, and Wanborough to the South.

**Lotmead Exhibition** - Cllrs Hawkes, Curtis and Waywell had attended the Public exhibition for the revised plans for the Lotmead Development. There appeared to be very little change to the original application that had been refused previously and upheld by the Planning Inspector. None of the Parish Council's objections had been addressed and a discussion paper was shared that laid out areas of concern. The Parish Council will formally respond to the revised Planning Application once received.

#### **11. Planning Matters**

The meeting noted that no planning applications had been received

#### **12. Flower Boxes**

To discuss and approve appropriate course of action

**Resolved:** The meeting agreed that the floral box procedure should be used for flower boxes that were not being maintained.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **13. Community Library Trust – Covingham Library**

To receive the report and decide how to proceed with the Library Working Party's recommendation.

**Deferred** - to the next meeting due to the information requested not being received in a timely manner.

#### **14. Financial Matters**

- a) To approve Finance Statement and payments approval list

**Resolved:** Cllr Sandle proposed that the Financial summary and cheque list was approved. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Hawkes and unanimously agreed.

- b) To receive monthly bank accounts reconciliation – The Meeting agreed that the accounts are in order and the budget on track.

- c) To review variations of the Draft Budget for 2019/20. - **Deferred** – to the next meeting due to the Community Library Trust – Covingham Library not being decided

**15. Correspondence**

The meeting noted that no correspondence had been received.

**16. Matters for consideration**

Cllr Wichall raised the Virgin Box still in a state of disrepair. The Clerk advised that this had been reported on a number of occasions with no success but would continue to report the issue.

**Action - Clerk**

One of the residents reported a leaning tree in Covingham Park. This is a known issue as the tree has been planted in a drainage channel. Cllr Curtis to investigate and report back **Action: Cllr Curtis**

The meeting concluded at 8.32 pm

Signed.....

Date.....