



Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on;

Monday 4th October 2021

At 7pm in the former Library room at St Paul's Church and Community Centre, Covingham

Present: Cllr Bates, Benfield, Curtis (Chair), Hawkes, Kay, Khan, Ricketts, Roy, Sandle, Waywell, Wichall.

Also in attendance: Laura Evans (Clerk), one member of the Neighbourhood Policing Team and one member of the public.

1. Consider Co-option of a Parish Councillor

Resolved: Co-option of Cllr Kay, proposed by Cllr Benfield, Cllr Khan seconded the proposal which was unanimously agreed. Declaration of Acceptance of Office was signed and received.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Bacon (unavailable)

3. Declaration of Interests

Cllr Curtis reminded Members that they should declare any known interests in any matter to be considered at the beginning of the meeting and during the meeting if it becomes apparent that they have an interest in the matters being discussed.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2021 were approved and signed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the previous minutes

Covingham Park extension of lease – no action from SBC

Firecrest play area – no action from SBC

Gateway on Kingfisher Drive – Does not appear to have been completed. Mixed reactions from residents. Some misconceptions over funding and ownership, mainly due to the article in the Advertiser. It is a Swindon Borough Council Highways asset, not the property of the Parish Council. The rebuilding works were financed by an insurance claim made by SBC against the driver of the vehicle that crashed into it. It was project managed by SBC, the Parish Council was not consulted over the design or materials used. Fenced off area with surplus building materials still left on site that need to be removed.
Action – Cllr Curtis

Speed Indicator Device – licence to install objects on a highway application being progressed by Swindon Borough Council.

Memorial Area – memorial plaque has been ordered. The Funeral Directors, G&L Evans, suggested a simple design, sloping downwards meaning that any rain etc. would run off, pearl blue with silver lettering. The Stonemasons will install the stone once the tree has been planted and they will carry out regular cleaning. The area will be officially opened, date to be advised, in a joint ceremony with Cllr Benfield in his capacity as Freeman of the Parish and the Funeral Director.

Cllr Waywell suggested that once the exact location is determined for the Oak Tree that any neighbours are notified.

Swindon Local Plan Submission Revised Draft Plan Consultation – actioned.

Dorcan Brook Bank, St Pauls Drive – The riverbed is the responsibility of the Environment Agency but the banks are Swindon Borough Council's. Historically the instability of the bank has been reported to Swindon Borough Council by the Parish Council and Covingham Flood Group on at least 7 occasions since 2017, including the most recent. The issue is classified as 'Highways' meaning that any report made, does not stay visible on 'My Account' making it impossible to see what action has been taken or any comments that have been made by the Officer carrying out the inspection. The Parish Council Maintenance Team inspect the length of Dorcan Brook banks on a regular basis, more frequently during extreme rain conditions, to ensure that there are no blockages that could cause issues upstream and visibly check the stability. It is concerning that there has been no action taken other than the safety barrier being moved to the middle of the footpath, and no formal response has been received. Site visit to be arranged with the Borough Councillor. **Action – Cllrs Benfield/Curtis**

6. Public forum

No questions or comments were received from members of the public.

7. Police Matters

The Neighbourhood Policing Team gave an update on recent activity, although it has been quiet. Cllr Curtis raised concerns that there is a lot of anti-social behaviour taking place in Firecrest Park and Cllr Ricketts raised the issue of the increasing amount of scooters being used on footpaths. Cllr Kay explained that the Police presence has been noticed and is welcomed by the residents.

8. Chairs Verbal Update

Thermofisher – Swindon Borough Council Highways Department has approved the use of Cole Close car park by the employees/contractors until the end of November 2021. The Parish Council was not consulted on this request. Cllr Curtis attended a meeting with the Police and General Manager of Thermofisher, to discuss the issues being caused by the excessive parking and agree actions. The Police to provide an ongoing presence, subject to operational requirements, to encourage the employees/contractors to use the overflow facility on Dorcan Trading Estate. As has been confirmed by the Police, the cars are not being parked illegally, but it can be considered to be irresponsible and inconsiderate.

Swindon Local Councils Forum meeting (SCLF) – Two way communication, or the lack of, between SBC and the Parishes was discussed at length. Two recent initiatives announced by SBC, i.e. Net Zero emissions action plan and the Youth Project, where Parish Councils would need to be on board to achieve a Borough wide success, no direct communication or consultation had taken place, which the Members find disappointing.

Net Zero initiatives suggested by SCLF for Parish Councils to consider – tree planting, re-wilding areas, the use of rechargeable power tools, rather than petrol driven and where finance allowed, electric vehicles. The Forum also believes that there is a need to engage communities to make suggestions for schemes to attract a wider audience and participation. A further suggestion was made of any Contractors having an ecological position should be encouraged, before using them.

The recent change to the procedure for dealing with complaints against Borough and Parish Councillors, where all cases are to be reviewed and vetted by the Borough Solicitor in the first

instance, has resulted in far fewer cases being referred to the Standards Assessment sub-committee. This was seen as a positive development. Swindon Borough Council are currently reviewing the Code of Conduct as this has not been changed since 2012.

9. Clerks Verbal Update

The VAT Reclaim has been submitted for 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021.

10. Parish Maintenance Engineers

- **Monthly Reports** – Another busy month for the Maintenance Engineers
- **Grounds Maintenance Matters**
A quotation for areas within the Parish for potential improvement will be provided by the contractor for discussion at the next meeting.
The final grass cut of the summer has been deferred until March 2022.

11. Reports from Parish Council Working Parties and Committee's

- **Environment Working Party**
Cllr Benfield and Cllr Sandle have been continuing with deadheading the flower boxes and removing the sunflowers. Spring bulbs will be purchased to plant either side of the gateway at both ends of St Paul's Drive.
- **Data Protection & Governance**
The library section of the website has now been removed.
- **Planning Working Party**
All planning matters are covered in item 12.

12. Planning Matters:

a) To consider any planning applications

Application: S/21/1417 (8th October)

Location: 19 Covingham Square, Covingham, SN3 5AA

Proposal: Erection of three storey apartment building to create 12no. flats and separate dental surgery building.

Resolved: The meeting agreed that the following comments be submitted;

As stated in the two previous responses to the earlier planning application for this site, in principle, Covingham Parish Council has no objections to this area of land being redeveloped. However, we believe that any development should be sympathetically designed and considerate of the neighbouring properties.

Access to the site appears to be narrow and restricted to one vehicle at a time. The access road outside of the site is well used and cars are regularly parked on the double yellow lines reducing the width of the access road. There is insufficient footpath provision within the site meaning pedestrian safety is of concern.

Parking – We agree with the comments from Highways about insufficient parking spaces. The comment in the planning statement referring to the public car park not being overused is totally inaccurate. The car park is regularly full to capacity which results in cars being left on the access road on double yellow lines, blocking dropped kerbs and free passage is inhibited. Additional cars then use the adjacent sideroads causing congestion for residents and other vehicles wanting access. A suggestion that the Parish Council would advocate is the owners acquiring the redundant toilet block and using that area of land for car parking. It is highly unlikely that it would ever be brought back into use, has fallen into disrepair and is ugly.

Based on the above comments Covingham Parish Council objects to this planning application

Should this application be approved the following should apply:

Drainage – should this application be approved we fully support the conditions made by the Lead Local Flood Authority and would expect full compliance.

Due to the incidences of flooding that have occurred in and around this area previously, we are extremely concerned that the Environment Agency has not commented on this application and would request that the comments submitted to the previous application be taken into account.

We fully support the requests from North Wiltshire Swifts and the Senior Ecologist that swift bricks are incorporated into this building.

Application: S/HOU/21/1490 (11th October)

Location: 4 Verney Close, Covingham, SN3 5EF

Proposal: Erection of a front porch

Resolved: The meeting agreed that there is no objection to this proposal.

Application: S/21/1479 (18th October)

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

Proposal: Installation of 2no. liquid CO2 tanks, ductwork, replacement escape staircase and provision of 3no. replacement car parking spaces.

Resolved: The meeting agreed that there is no objection to this proposal.

b) To note any comments from the Planning Working Party submitted between meetings.

Application: S/HOU/21/1413

Location: 6 Cole Close, Covingham, SN3 5BU

Proposal: Erection of a single storey front extension

Resolved: The following comment was submitted: Covingham Parish Council has no objections to the planning application

c) To note any decisions

The meeting noted that no decisions were received.

13. Financial Matters

- a) To approve Finance Statement and payments approval list

Resolved: Cllr Sandle proposed approval of the Finance Statement and payment approval list. Cllr Benfield seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

- b) To receive the monthly accounts reconciliation

Resolved: The meeting noted that the accounts were in good order.

- c) Q2 Budget Monitoring

Resolved: The meeting noted the budget is on track.

14. Limited Assurance Review

- a) To receive the external auditor report and certificate for the year ended 31 March 2021

Resolved: The Meeting acknowledged that the Auditors had noted that on the basis of their review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in their opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices

and no other matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. The meeting congratulated the Clerk on achieving this result.

- b) To confirm the Notice of conclusion of audit and inspection of audited accounts period.
Resolved: The Conclusion of Audit notice was published on 22nd September for a limited period of time as required. The AGAR will remain published for 5 years.

15. New guidance for declaring gifts and hospitality offered to Parish Councillors

Resolved: The meeting acknowledged the new guidance for declaring gifts and hospitality offered to Parish Councillors.

16. Flowerbox Request

Resolved: The meeting agreed to the installation of a flower box by the park end for Ravenscroft

17. Correspondence

The meeting noted that no correspondence had been received.

18. Matters for consideration.

Cllr Kay raised concern that the area where the Junior Play Park was upgraded is still awaiting the completion of the path. Cllr Curtis to inform the Maintenance Engineers. **Action- Cllr Curtis**

The meeting closed at 8:30pm

Signed.....Date.....