



Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on:

Monday 2nd October 2023

At 7pm in the Small Hall at St Paul's Church and Community Centre, Covingham

Present: Cllr Bates, Curtis (Chair), Hawkes, Kay, Ricketts, Roy, Sandle and Wichall

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

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr May (unavailable), Cllr Bacon (unavailable) and Cllr Wallker (unavailable)

2. 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.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2023 were approved and signed as a true record.

4. Matters arising from the previous minutes

Dorcan Brook bank – no further information provided by SBC.

Allotments – Cllrs Curtis and Hawkes attended the NEL Parish Council meeting on 12th September. The request for Covingham Parish Council to have the site next to the Nythe Allotments was refused.

Outstanding Historical issues – meeting with Cllr Jim Grant week beginning 2nd October to discuss.

WALC Training – Cllrs May and Ricketts attended the Councillor Training Day on 13th September.

Laptop – A different model was purchased due to availability issues, but the Clerk is very happy.

School Hedge – No action has been taken by the school which is disappointing as the path is becoming unpassable in places.

5. Public forum

The resident in attendance raised concerns, after the recent rainfall, over the potential flooding issue in Hawkswood as it is believed that the River Cole is not cleared annually. Cllr Curtis explained that the riverbed is the responsibility of the Environment Agency, the banks are the responsibility of SBC and suggested the resident contact the Environment Agency. The resident also raised concerns over the mounds of grass cutting that have been left by the brook, Cllr Curtis confirmed that the area in question is cut by Stratton St Margaret Parish Council.

Concerns were also raised regarding a property in Hawkswood that is accumulating caravans and scrap cars which is attracting vermin. A noise complaint was also raised regarding the vehicles at this property. Cllr Curtis to pass on the contact details of someone who may be able to help. .

Action- Cllr Curtis

6. Police Matters

No Police personnel were present at the meeting so no update provided.

The meeting discussed the recent speed sign data for Kingfisher Drive and Covingham Drive with the highest speed recorded at 95MPH.

7. Chairs Verbal Update

Wanborough Allotments Committee – All Wanborough residents on the waiting list were due to be offered plots within days after the meeting. As some plots would still be vacant 3 or 4 Covingham residents were to be approached. Due to the demise of the Contractor for the Southern Connector road, the offer of heras fencing was in jeopardy of not being fulfilled as the fencing connectors had been removed from the site. Meetings in 2024 would be held in January, April, July and October to be more in line with the growing season.

Swindon Local Councils Forum – A letter, which was circulated at the meeting, had been sent out to all Chairs and Clerks the day before the meeting from Cllr Jim Grant, the Cabinet Member responsible for Community and Joint Working. The tone of the letter was very positive, acknowledged the value of Parish Councils and the contribution that they had made since Transfer of Services in 2017. Cllr Grant attended the meeting and the message was the same. He is looking to build a more open and honest, effective relationship in the spirit of partnership and co-operation, with an improvement in communications, to facilitate an improvement in trust and involving the Parish Councils in future policies. A Parish Liaison Officer has been recruited and a hotline phone number for Parishes to contact SBC direct, rather than via the normal telephone number. The Formal Protocol is being addressed with the aim of working together. A meeting is due to be held on Wednesday 4th October with all Chairs and Clerks to move this forward. All in all the meeting was very positive and the future looks promising.

Skateboard Park – Comments have been made in the past about replacing/repairing the skateboard surfaces although no companies could be found that supplied and fitted what was required. A Company has recently been identified that supplies the skatelite surfaces, but no fitting service. Wicksteed use a third party provider who use a 4mm thick mild steel base with textured coatings for grip who will deal with customers direct to supply and fit. The steel ramps have a much longer life than skatelite. Photographs of the equipment and measurements were provided to obtain a rough estimate which has come in at £20,000 - £23,000.

Resolved: The meeting agreed to obtain firm quotes from both companies to be formally discussed at the next meeting. **Action – Cllr Curtis**

8. Clerks Verbal Update

The Clerk thanked the Parish Council for the purchase of the new laptop and confirmed it was an excellent choice and is working brilliantly.

The VAT Reclaim has been submitted for April 2023 to September 2023.

9. Parish Maintenance Engineers

- **Monthly Reports** – Sadly there has been an increase in the number of discarded N20 cartridges in September.

- **Grounds Maintenance Matters**

Vandalised tree in Smitanbrook Park and the swastika emblem carved into the grass using a cycle wheel. – Unnecessary, mindless and offensive antisocial behaviour. The attitude across Covingham of not wanting to get involved is indirectly condoning the actions of the few and

letting them get away with such unwarranted behaviour. A direct and clear message needs to be made to encourage residents to report all anti-social behaviour.

Grounds Maintenance Contract annual review – the annual walkaround took place last week. 71 items of additional works have been identified, which is tree uplifting and hedge reduction in the main. The quote to be produced at the next meeting for approval.

Dorcan Way – NEL Parish Council has been informed of a hedge and tree adjacent to the bridge over the stream on Dorcan Way that is a danger to pedestrians as the view of the road is restricted. The Contractor for NEL believes that only half of the hedge is NEL's responsibility. The Grounds Maintenance Contractor has inspected it and due to the seriousness has carried out a temporary job on the tree to increase visibility. The maps provided by SBC at Transfer of Services are poor quality, use thick black marker, which has skewed the picture and have not identified the boundary correctly, which is and has always been the stream, this is also confirmed by formal maps available online. SBC to be asked for a clear and definitive answer to confirm where the boundary is.

Action - Clerk

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

- **Data Protection & Governance**
Nothing to report.
- **Planning Working Party**
Nothing to report.

11. Planning Matters:

a) To consider any planning applications.

The meeting noted that no planning applications had been received.

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

The meeting noted that no comments had been submitted.

c) To note any decisions:

The meeting noted that no planning decisions had been received.

12. Proposed Traffic order- Dorcan Way

To discuss the proposed traffic order from SBC for Dorcan Way – see order attached

Resolved: The meeting agreed to support the proposed traffic order with the recommendation that the 30MPH is extended further to include the Morrison's roundabout – Dorcan Way to The Messenger roundabout as there is a pedestrian crossing in this stretch of road that services the Primary School.

Action- Clerk

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 Wichall seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

b) To receive the monthly accounts reconciliation

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

c) Q2 Budget Monitoring

Resolved: The meeting noted that the Q2 budget monitoring is in line with expectations.

14. Limited Assurance Review

a) To receive the external auditor report and certificate for the year ended 31 March 2023

Resolved: The meeting noted that the external audit report was in line with the Internal Audit report.

b) To confirm the Notice of conclusion of audit and inspection of audited accounts period

Resolved: The Conclusion of Audit notice was published on 29th September 2023 for a limited period of time as required. The AGAR will remain published for 5 years.

15. Street art project for underpass Dorcan Way Covingham/Nythe

To consider participating, with NEL Parish Council, in the street art project as suggested by the Neighbourhood Policing Team – see letter attached

Resolved: As this project is in partnership with NEL Parish Council due to the boundary line location. The meeting agreed to wait for the response from the NEL Parish meeting which is being held on 10th October before a decision can be made.

16. The Handy Mag

The meeting agreed that the following should be included in the article:

- Reporting to the Police
- Halloween and fireworks – respect for residents.

17. Correspondence

The meeting noted that no correspondence had been received.

18. Matters for consideration

Cllr Sandle explained that a resident kindly offered some Bluebell bulbs to the Parish Council which have been collected and will be planted.

Cllr Sandle also raised concerns that since the double yellow lines have been painted on the road at Martinfield the ice cream van is now parking on the grass by the school.

The meeting closed at 8:30pm

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