



Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on:

Monday 6th November 2023

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

Present: Cllr Bacon, Bates, Curtis (Chair), Hawkes, Kay, May, Sandle and Walker.

Also in attendance: Laura Evans (Clerk)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Ricketts (unavailable) and Cllr Wichall (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 2nd October 2023 were approved and signed as a true record.

4. Matters arising from the previous minutes

Dorcan Brook bank – see Chairs Update

Outstanding Historical issues – see Chairs update

School Hedge – The hedge has been attended to.

5. Public forum

No questions or comments received from members of the Public, as none were present at the meeting.

6. Police Matters

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

Cllr Curtis contacted the Neighbourhood Policing Team to better understand what they are doing with the speed sign data that is provided. It was confirmed that a few speed checks had been carried out but a request for more personnel to do organised checks has been requested.

7. Chairs Verbal Update

Meeting with SBC for all Chairs and Clerks was held on Wednesday 4th October with Cllr Jim Grant, Brian Pinchbeck from SBC and the new Parish Liaison Officer in attendance. The message conveyed had a similar tone to the SLCF with regards to partnership working, being more open and honest, involving Parish Councils in future policies and to improve communications. Brian Pinchbeck was tasked with drawing up a strawman of additional services that could be transferred, due to the severe lack of funding, but these were not going to be forced onto the Parishes, as in the past. The draft strawman has been shared and whilst some activities were not relevant to Covingham Parish Council, some were already being undertaken but some would be beyond our capabilities.

Cllrs Curtis and Hawkes attended a meeting with Cllr Grant on Thursday 5th October. Assurances were given regarding the threat of houses being built on green open spaces, i.e. Covingham Park, as the Labour Group has committed to all parks being protected and no building would be agreed to. The outstanding issue of the extension of the lease would be looked into, but conditions may be applied to facilitate this, although that would not make this a non-starter. A proposal will be put together in due course for the Parish Council to consider. Several historical issues were discussed although no immediate resolution could be offered.

Wanborough Allotments – Cllrs Curtis and Hawkes met with the Chair of Wanborough Parish Council on Friday 6th October to discuss the possibility of formalising the historical verbal agreement and a clearer understanding with regards to the process/rationale used for plot allocation.

Swindon Local Councils Forum – an interim meeting was held on Thursday 19th October to discuss setting up two working parties – one for the Protocol agreement and one for the additional services that may be transferred to Parish Councils. Some of the attendees thought that individual Parishes should not be engaging in conversations with SBC until the Protocol had been finalised and approved, although that is too late for some as discussions have been opened.

Chairs & Clerks Engagement Meeting with SBC held on Monday 23rd October. Items discussed:

SBC/Parishes Protocol - Cllr Jim Grant, Cabinet Member responsible for Communities and Joint Working, confirmed that a meeting had been held and he is confident that it will be approved. Current draft version to be sent to SLCF for review at the next meeting on 23rd November. Cllr Grant believes that each Parish should formally adopt the Protocol.

Additional transfer of Services – SBC assumption is that the larger Parishes will take on the work with smaller Parishes tapping into the services where they do not have the capability to do it themselves. No work will be transferred without the approval of individual Parish Councils.

CTSG and the Tax Base – details will be sent to each Parish Council after 8th November

Draft Swindon Plan, (not to be confused with the Swindon Local Plan), that will flesh out how the 3 missions will proceed for the next 3 years and reflect on how SBC needs to work, to be agreed at the December Cabinet Meeting. A large scale Consultation will follow in January/February 2024 with the emphasis on Parishes as SBC want to hear what the Parishes think. The aim is for the plan to be approved at the March Cabinet Meeting.

Election Cycle – Matt Box, Head of Elections and Local Democracy, gave a presentation about the effect of the recent decision by SBC to hold all out elections every 4 years. Full Consultation has been started.

Jon Harris gave an update on the Strategy for Transport. SBC does not have a policy or methodology for Electric Vehicle Charging. A policy is to be produced. A survey has been commissioned for suggestions to possible sites. Bus stops and shelters are also to be surveyed to look at provision and the needs/demands.

Food waste collection rollout and changes to recycling – 85% of properties will be affected with all having a change to the collection day. HMOs or blocks of flats etc. are not currently included. 40% of the weight of residual waste currently is food waste. The method chosen for the recycling will create an income stream for SBC. There will be no change whatsoever to Garden Waste collections.

Cllrs Curtis and Hawkes spoke with Cllr Chris Watts on Tuesday 24th October to discuss historical flooding incidents, share data and local knowledge. Dorcan Brook Bank was also discussed and looked at. From photos taken on 17th October it was clear that the footpath had slipped further during that week which is assumed due to the excessive rain on Friday 20th October. Design Engineers were back on site on Wednesday 25th October carrying out a further survey from the one completed 8 months previously, as the area under consideration had now been widened to take in the whole of the bank back to Bullfinch Close. They confirmed that the path had slipped further since their previous visit. An email has been sent to Cllr Watts with a comprehensive history of the issue with photos and previous emails attached.

Cllrs Curtis and Hawkes attended a meeting on site in Peregrine Close with the 3 Ward Councillors, the MP for Swindon South and two representatives from Thames Water on Friday 27th October. All pipes had been surveyed by CCTV and cleaned, including one pipe that was not connected to a Thames Water Asset, therefore not part of the TW infrastructure, but ownership was not known to be confirmed. No defects in the pipework was found although some roots had been identified and removed in one. There was a blockage of fat, oil and grease affecting part of the street which TW were due to clean. The Sewer Pumping Station did operate as it should as this is automatic and did not need manual intervention. SBC had advised that the Roadside Gulleys had been cleaned recently although there was evidence of some still being blocked in the road. TW advised that the EA needed to be contacted in relation to controlling the River Cole levels to minimise bursting its banks and flooding the road. SBC will be undertaking a Section 19 investigation which will mean a public statement will be made about which agency is responsible for what.

8. Clerks Verbal Update

The Clerk confirmed that the VAT Reclaim amount had been received.

9. Parish Maintenance Engineers

- **Monthly Reports** – Another very busy month with a brilliant job being done.
- **Grounds Maintenance Matters**
To approve the costs for the additional works identified during the annual walk around.
Resolved: Cllr Kay proposed the additional works be completed for the cost of £4,799.64. Cllr Bacon seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

The final grass cut of the season has been completed. One cut has been held back to enable an early one in March 2024. The second round of hedge cutting will be delayed as the weather is not cold enough as yet to stop the growth.

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.

Application: S/22/1834 (6th November)

Location: 25 Finchdale, Covingham, SN3 5AL

Proposal: Change of use of utility room to dog grooming parlour

Resolved: The meeting agreed that there is no update to the previous comment of no objection which was submitted in May 2023.

Application: S/HOU/23/1288 (17th November)

Location: 8 Robinsgreen, Covingham Swindon SN3 5AY

Proposal: Erection of metal railing to flat roof and ladder for fire escape from the first floor.
(retrospective)

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.

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. 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 Hawkes seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

b) To receive the monthly accounts reconciliation

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

13. Parish Election Consultation

To consider whether to harmonise with Swindon Borough Council's election cycle due to the decision to hold all out Borough elections every 4 years – see document attached.

Resolved: Cllr Kay proposed to harmonise the Parish Elections with SBC's election cycle. Cllr Bacon seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

14. Skate Park Ramp Repairs

To discuss the quotation provided for the resurfacing of the skate park ramps – see document attached

Resolved: Cllr May proposed acceptance of the quotation for the sum of £24,600 + VAT for the resurfacing of the skate park ramps. Cllr Bacon seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed. Cllr Kay stated that the skate park is an extremely well-used asset but users of the skate park need to be more considerate of the users of the footpaths as there has already been one incident involving a child and another incident involving an elderly resident.

14. Covingham Square Underpass Mural

To discuss the estimate submitted by the artist to carry out the artwork.

Resolved: Cllr Walker proposed not to proceed with the artwork due to prioritisation of funds which are possibly needed elsewhere. Cllr Kay seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

15. The Handy Mag

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

- Skatepark- users to be respectful of walkers
- Weeds on footpaths and kerb lines and road sweeping
- Happy Christmas

16. Correspondence

The meeting noted that no correspondence had been received.

17. Matters for consideration

No matters for consideration or future agenda items were raised.

The meeting closed at 8:51pm

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