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COVINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the ordinary Meeting of Covingham Parish Council held on:

Monday 14th September 2026

At 7.00pm in the Small Hall at St Paul's Church and Community Centre, Covingham

Present: Councillors V Curtis (Chair), Anupindi, Bacon, Bates, Parsons, Ricketts, Walker and Wichall

Also in attendance: **Laura Cutter (Clerk & RFO) and A Hughes (Maintenance Engineer)**

1. **Apologies**
Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Hawkes (unavailable) and May (unavailable).

2. **Declaration of Interests**
Cllr Curtis reminded all 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 the previous meeting held on Monday 10th August 2026**
Proposed: Cllr S Wichall; Seconded: Cllr L Walker
Vote: Agreed with one (1) abstention.
RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 10th August 2026 as a true record.

4. **Action Review Summary / Matters arising from the previous minutes**
   - **20mph Speed Signs**: Still no response from Swindon Borough Council. *Clerk to contact the SBC Highways Department.*
   - **Covingham Park Memorial Area:** Contractor has confirmed the hedges can be tidied.
   - **Laptop:** Device has been purchased but the Microsoft Office package has not been delivered yet.
   - **Covingham Park:** Entry/Exit points to be reviewed. *Clerk to contact the SBC Highways Department.*

All other items were on the agenda for discussion.

5. **Public Forum**
There were no Members of the Public present.

6. **Police Updates**
No personnel from the Police were present. Tree vandalism in the Smitanbrook is under investigation, with future educational and environmental initiatives being explored to highlight its consequences.

7. **Chair's Verbal Update**
Nothing to report.

8. **Clerk's Verbal Update**
Covingham Shops public toilets have been closed for several years. Recent vandalism has become more prevalent. While this falls under the remit of Swindon Borough Council, enquiries are being directed to the Clerk. Police are aware and monitoring the situation.

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9. **Parish Maintenance Engineers**
   - **Monthly Reports –** Members noted the reports. The Chair thanked the Maintenance Engineers for all their good work locally; the Council and Community is appreciative.

10. **Recommendations from the Data Protection & Governance Working Party**
   - Members noted the new accessible template for all policies following requirements set out in the changes to Assertion 10. This will enable the Parish Council to move through updating all the policies to a compliant standard.

   - **Documentation Retention Policy**
     Members reviewed and adopted the draft policy. The retention of supporting documents for meetings was discussed, with the Clerk advising that this would depend on the content, including financial, contractual or confidential information. Minutes will be retained indefinitely and include sufficient detail to support future enquiries.
     Proposed: Cllr J Ricketts; Seconded: Cllr R Bacon
     Vote: Agreed unanimously.
     RESOLVED: To adopt the Documentation Retention Policy.

11. **Planning Matters**
   a) **Members noted that no planning applications had been received.**
   b) **Members noted that there were no comments from the Planning Working Party submitted between meetings.**
   c) **Members noted that there were no local planning decisions made by Swindon Borough Council.**

12. **Financial Matters**
   a) **Members approved the Schedule of Payments for September 2026.**
      Proposed: Cllr J Parsons; Seconded: Cllr S Wichall
      Vote: Agreed unanimously.
      RESOLVED: To approve the Schedule of Payments as presented.

   b) **Members received the monthly accounts reconciliation as at 31st August 2026.**

13. **Speed Indicator Devices**
    Members received an update from Cllr J Ricketts. The new lithium iron phosphate batteries, purchased for the Speed Indicator Devices, arrived a month ago and have been tested. The lithium iron phosphate batteries are lasting longer than the acid batteries and appear to be holding their charge for longer. The new batteries are much lighter in weight which will be safer to move the signs and change the batteries. The recommendation is to proceed with purchasing four new lithium iron phosphate batteries, but there is no requirement for an additional charger, as the two purchased with the last order are sufficient. The data from the Speed Indicator Devices will continue to be collected and reported back to Council at a future meeting.
    Proposed: Cllr J Ricketts Seconded: Cllr S Wichall
    Vote: Agreed unanimously.
    RESOLVED: To approve the purchase of 4 x new lithium batteries up to the value of £300.00.

14. **Vehicle Insurance**
    Members received and agreed to renew the vehicle insurance at the quoted cost of £789.32.
    Proposed: Cllr S Wichall Seconded: Cllr R Bacon
    Vote: Agreed unanimously.
    RESOLVED: To proceed with the vehicle insurance renewal at a cost of £789.32.

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15. **Flower Box Maintenance**
The Chair advised that the volunteer maintaining five Parish Council sponsored flower boxes had relinquished the role. Members suggested obtaining annual maintenance costs from the Grounds Maintenance Contractor and bringing this to a future meeting for further discussion.

16. **Trees for Climate**
The Chair advised that there are no updates at present, awaiting delivery of the trees and progression of the project from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and Swindon Borough Council.

17. **Memorial Bench**
Members received a request for a Memorial Bench in Covingham Park and reviewed the request against the Memorial Bench policy. At this time, the request has been declined due to not meeting the criteria set out in the policy. The location is also not suitable as there is already a bench in proximity and is the recognised access route into the park for the maintenance team, utilities, grounds maintenance contractor and highways.
During the discussion, Members agreed to review the policy and criteria.
Proposed: Cllr J Ricketts **Seconded: Cllr S Wichall**
Vote: Agreed with two (2) abstentions.
RESOLVED: To decline the application for a Memorial Bench in Covingham Park due to not meeting the criteria and the location being unsuitable. To review the Memorial Bench Policy and bring back to a future meeting.

18. **Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day Invitation, 8th & 11th November**
To note that the Chair will attend both civic events and lay a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council. The wreath will be delivered on 1st October 2026 paid for via the Chair's Discretionary Allowance.

19. **Wanborough Allotments Draft Contract**
Submitted to Wanborough Parish Council, no response in time for the meeting but will bring to a future meeting.

20. **National Joint Council (NJC) Uplift 2026-27**
Members noted the Personnel Sub Committee's update that the NJC 2026–27 pay award is a 3.3% increase across all salary bands. The increase will be implemented in the September payroll and backdated to April 2026, as a contractual obligation.

21. **The Handy Mag**
    - End of season grounds maintenance updates
    - Community initiatives / events
    - Bulb planting

22. **Matters for Consideration**
Cllr S Wichall: Requested a Maintenance Engineer agenda item for future meetings to allow them to speak on matters arising.
Cllr P Bates: Queried SBC regarding the timing of weed spraying in areas of Covingham. The Clerk will continue to chase updates and seek further information from the Swindon Local Councils Forum on 24 September 2026.
Cllr V Curtis: Meet the team photos on the website? Most in general agreement to upload a group picture to the website.

The meeting ended at 20:12

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Signed…….. Date……

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