

SWALCLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 9th APRIL 2018 AT 7.30PM
IN SWALCLIFFE VILLAGE HALL

Present

Cllr N Urquhart (Chairperson), Cllr B Benson, Cllr R Smith, Cllr V Taylor, Christine Coles - Parish Clerk, Cllr George Reynolds and nineteen parishioners.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He introduced the guest speakers from Hook Norton Vets.

2. Update from Parish Council

The Chair first introduced the Councillors present who have all been nominated for another four year term plus 2 new prospective Councillors – Ken Hodgkinson & Lee McCallum who will take office on Monday 7th May. He explained the purpose of the meeting which is to receive reports from the Parish Council and other village groups. The Parish Council would then take questions from the floor and receive ideas of issues which should be considered over next year.

Achievements over the last year:

Defibrillator. The defibrillator has been set up in the redundant telephone box. It is now in operation and a training session was organised in February 2018 attended by 11 villagers. The box has been clad in green to reduce its profile with clear signage to show it houses a defibrillator. Thanks were noted to June Couch and Nick Carter for their co-operation.

Garage Lease. A new lease for the garage plots on the area behind the Village Hall known as Swalcliffe Parish Pit is being negotiated with the 4 tenants. The principal changes are: setting a 7-year lease period; establishing a transparent procedure for rent increases; clarifying the relationship between the Parish Council as Landlord and the garage owners as Tenants. Thanks were noted to the Tenants for their co-operation.

Cllr Taylor is leading on developing speed control measures including partnering with other councils for speed monitoring equipment.

The Parish Council are considering selling a plot of land adjacent to Jesters to Sarah & Matt Stanton. Money from the sale would go to the development of village assets.

Developed compliance. All meeting agendas and minutes are published on the Parish Council website page but it also now has relevant governance documents. Please refer to it if you want information on the Parish Council's activities. Thanks were given to David McLindon for maintaining the website.

The Chair referred to the Parish Plan which was produced in 2015. Three years on it is good to see that all activities bar the walking group are still running:

Swalcliffe Society (including Tithe Barn)

Art Club. Meets once a month (first Thursday) in the Village Hall with Ronnie Loxton offering tuition to a morning, afternoon and evening session.

Book Club. Meets once a month in the Stag's Head.

Bridge Club.

Film Appreciation Group. Meets once a month in the Village Hall.

Common Land Clearance Group.

Digital Connectivity Group. Provided focus for establishment of Sugarnet infrastructure.

Budget and Precept

The budget for 2018/19 was considered at the January 2018 meeting and it was agreed to increase the Parish Precept by 3% in April 2018. Copies of the pre-audited management accounts for 2017/18 and the budget for 2018/19 were circulated at the meeting.

Conclusion

Following the other reports and any questions, the Chair asked to receive ideas from the floor on issues that concern them or matters that the Parish Council should be considering over the coming year. These might include:

- How to improve village communications
- How to welcome new residents
- Speed control measures
- Parish facilities including the Village Hall
- The Parish Plan from 2015
- Development priorities for the next 5 years

Thanks were given to Christine Coles, the Parish Clerk for guiding the Parish Council for the last year.

3. Update on the Swalcliffe Community Woodland Play Area (Mr M Foley)

On behalf of the Management Committee Mr Foley expressed his thanks and appreciation to both Swalcliffe Parish Council and Swalcliffe Park School for their help and support for the project. The newly adopted title for the project is: The Swalcliffe Community Woodland Play area. Since last year's AGM the Working Committee, which is answerable to both the Swalcliffe Parish Council and Swalcliffe Park School Management, has held a considerable number of meetings as the project has progressed through its development stages. The Working Committee comprises of: Mick Foley, Peter Beddowes David McLindon Virginia Beddowes and Anna McLindon. The principal purposes of the Working Group are to obtain funding, supervise the construction of the Woodland and Play area, address bio-diversity requirements, prepare policies including a Health and Safety policy, ensure that the project remains within the budget and set timing agreements. The Working Committee will also administer the project on a monthly basis post opening.

To keep within the requirements of various funders an enlarged Village Management Committee has had to be formed. This Management Committee is required to have a formal Agenda, minutes of meetings, Banking Accounts etc. The Committee comprises of: Peter Beddowes, David McLindon, Mick Foley, Virginia Merritt, Anna McLindon, Christine Coles and Neil Urquhart for SPC, Rob Piner Deputy Head of SPS, Mark Williams from SPS, Sophie Thompson and Tom Woolston.

The updated Lease Agreement for twenty five years' duration is going through the process of being formally signed by both Swalcliffe Park School and Swalcliffe Parish Council. The original lease was formally signed in June last year.

Planning permission was first submitted to Cherwell District Council in June and was finally approved by them in October. There are three separate applications which are required for the Woodland project.

The Committee is pleased to announce that confirmed funding has been given by TOE2 for £5,000.00, Banbury Charities for £2,300.00 and Swalcliffe Village Fund for £5,000.00, Swalcliffe Parish Council for £6,000.00 (with the possibility of topping up if required) and local donations of up to £2,000.00.

The new Waitrose Store has put full details of the project on display so the committee is hoping that about £800.00 to £1000.00 will be raised through the shoppers.

The Working Party Committee has applied for Funding to the National Lottery Awards For All Funds. The amount applied for is £9,000.00. There are a further six fund raising applications that have been applied for. Tesco Store in Banbury has also agreed to promote the project once the Committee has 80% of Funds in place. This offer could amount for up to £3,000.00.

The Working Party via the SPC has applied to County Councillor George Reynolds for a possible local council grant. The project budget stands at just over £36,000. So the Committee is expecting that the present applications for grants will cover the difference and a little bit more.

The Working Party is in the process of arranging their next meeting for a couple of weeks' time to take a view on funding if required.

Under the terms of the grant from TOE2 and planning approval from Cherwell District Council/Oxfordshire Highways a public footpath will have to be installed in front of the School's dry stone wall. The path will be crossed plastic based. It is to run the short distance from the tarmac pathway up to the entrance gates. The Working Party on behalf of the Parish Council is in the process of obtaining three competitive quotes.

Under relatively new EU laws it is a criminal act to disturb birds during the nesting season. Given that the Committee did not have the full funding in place prior to the start of the nesting season, that being 1st March, the Working Party formally agreed that no work would start on the Woodland site until the first week in August 2018.

It is hoped that the Swalcliffe Community Woodland Play project will be open by the middle of October.

Miss Merritt confirmed the area will be more than a play area. It will be a learning resource and cover biodiversity. It will be a mini Forest School and be supported by local schools such as Frank Wise.

The Chair thanked the Committee for all their work to date.

4. Guest Speakers, Hook Norton Vets

The meeting was attended by Simon Richards and Sam Cutts, who are both partners in the practice. They moved to the Whitehill site 17 years ago and the business has expanded over the years. The business has farm, equine and small animal practices. They are very tight for space and limited by the facilities to do the equine business. Horses are ridden and exercised but they are looking to a site to move the equine part to. They would leave the small animal part on the existing site but move the stabling and diagnostic elements.

The partners are considering building a new barn to the rear of Grange Farm which would fit in with the surroundings. It would be seen from the crossroads by the golf club. This part of the practice would be open during office hours with an estimate 5 lorries and 30 car movements per day. There would be 6 equine vets, 3 nurses and 3 receptionists. They would work shift work and recruit in the local area. The partners are hoping to find somewhere for the long term. It is a family business which will grow and support the local area.

Mr Richards and Miss Cutts confirmed there will be 7 stables within one barn. Timing was confirmed as a planning application being submitted in September 2018, and then one year to develop and build which would take completion to late 2019.

It was confirmed that a road survey has been carried out and the road is sufficient to carry 400 cars. Parking will be in front of the barn and be self sufficient. They would work very closely with Cllr Benson who runs the forge.

5. Update from Swalcliffe Park School

There was no report.

6. Update from Parochial Church Council (Gay Harris)

The regular congregation continues to be between 6 and 10 but there is huge support from the village on festival occasions and for fund raising events.

Over 100 attended the Carols and Nativity and the provision of permanent kitchen and toilet facilities enabled the Church to provide a three course hot meal to 95 guests at Harvest Supper.

In addition, the Church has been able to offer facilities for teas after two Christenings and has held coffee mornings and a teatime recital. Three concerts are booked for 2018 and full details are on the village website. The Church has received enquiries from other groups and is now booking into 2019.

To enable these to take place a lot of work has been done on Fire and Health and Safety Regulations and thanks were given to Colin Hill for all his help with this. Thanks were also given to Peter Donovan who has updated the map of the churchyard graves for public display in the Church. In May last year Sugarnet installed broadband on the church tower roof and hopefully this has given subscribers a much improved internet connection. The holly trees have been pruned and the churchyard is looking better than for many years. A huge thank you was given to Maurice, Gillian and Michael Salter for all their help with mowing and strimming. Development of the Betty Panks garden is well underway. Andrew Bathe will finish laying the York Stone Slabs ready for the garden seat to be installed. The temporary handrail will be replaced with a wrought iron one to match the arches and low growing shrubs will be planted. Thanks were given to Virginia and Judy Byrne for their design and advice.

The PCC is taking delivery of a stairclimber on Tuesday 17th April to enable those in wheelchairs to access the church and four volunteers will be trained in its use. This has been paid for by the PCC with very generous donations from the Parish Council, Colin and Cathy and Fiona Briglmen. A big thank you was given.

Restoration work never seems to end and the PCC is now looking at pointing and repairing the outside North Wall, preserving the wall paintings, repairing the glass windows and updating the heating and lighting. In 2018 the PCC will be looking into applying for grants to have this work carried out. Finally, the PCC thanked the Parish Council for their continued support and help.

7. Update from Village Hall Committee (Kate Foley)

Last year was very quiet and there was no active fundraising. The hall pays for itself. It was used 56 times in 2017 and mostly for local clubs. The recent addition of wi-fi makes the hall more useable. Thank you was given to the PCC and Sugarnet. The hall is cleaned weekly. A generous donation of £670.00 was received from the Christmas Market. The Village Hall Committee is going to submit a wish list to the Parish Council. One priority job is to update the heating. The VHC is currently getting quotes for Oil/LPG and Air Source heating systems. Oil may be the most cost-effective. The need for efficient heating has been demonstrated by the amount of dampness in the hall over the winter months; this probably was also the reason that the projector had to be replaced recently. There is a problem with the roof where snow collected under the structure. Damp is lifting the current flooring. The kitchen refurbishment is ongoing and it is hoped that access can be sorted from Mrs Rudge's room. It would be nice for all the areas to be decorated by professionals. In the past a lot of work has been done voluntarily. There is an argument that a hall is not needed but it serves as a meeting room. The hall does require some urgent attention. Mrs Foley thanked Barbara Taylor for helping with the accounts. A copy would be passed to the Parish Council.

Cllr Benson congratulated Mrs Foley on the amazing job she did with the electricity. The meter was changed to a smart one and no readings are needed now. The storage heaters are now not compatible with smart meters, another reason to change the heating system.

Mr Foley noted that there are external funds available for projects such as the church and village hall. The Chair asked for project costs to be split between maintenance work and longer term developmental aspirations, the latter being more likely to attract grants.

8. Open Forum

Gay Harris of the PCC spoke about the stone which needs removing from the back of the churchyard. The rubble is not worth selling. The cost to rebuild the wall is £7K. The removal will require people with wheelbarrows.

John Bevan spoke about the concrete sandbags on the main road to Sibford which have replaced a stone embankment wall. The Chair noted this but he thought they are outside the Parish boundary.

County Councillor George Reynolds spoke about the roads which are disintegrating. More money seems to be spent on capital schemes. 65% of the budget is spent on Adult/Children Social Care.

The problem will not get easier. The problem with Northants County Council being bankrupt may cause problems within Cherwell. OCC may go to a Unitary Authority. One villager asked why villages are not able to repair their own potholes. Cllr Reynolds replied that there is a thinking that if a parish has the ability/willingness it may be handed to them. It was noted that filling in and patching does not last. Cllr Reynolds confirmed there will be an extra income from the houses being built but Banbury Town Council will benefit.

The Chair and Parish Clerk agreed to break down the budget sheet for the May Parish Council meeting and provide more detail on the 'Other' column. This will be reported on at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

The activity groups were discussed briefly. They have been running for three years now and need re-energising. It was suggested to produce a marketing brochure in the Autumn to advertise the clubs.

Mr Beddowes asked who would be cutting the grass? The Parish Clerk replied that the contract went out to tender but the job is very small. The job was given to Andrew Bathe who covered for Gerry when he finished before Christmas.

Mr Beddowes suggested the idea of public charging points for electric cars. It would be an amenity for the village and make it more attractive. The Chair said that the Parish Council will consider this.

In conclusion the Chair confirmed the things to take forward:

- To look at short term work and long term aspirations for the village hall. It is a parish facility which could have more use.
- To continue to support the Woodland Play Area. It is a useful facility which will bring something special to the village. The funds in reserve would be used.
- To continue to support the PCC and Churchyard.
- To improve, develop and review the village activity groups.
- To look into the idea of electric charging points for cars.

Finally, the Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting closed 9.10pm.