

SWALCLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD 26TH SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 8PM IN SWALCLIFFE VILLAGE HALL

Councillors Present

Neil Urquhart (NU), Chairperson
Martin Collett (MC)
Steve Gandy (SG)
Ken Hodgkinson (KH)
Ryan Smith (RS)
Victoria Taylor (VT) – arrived late
Christine Coles - Parish Clerk and five members of the public

22/50. Apologies

Cllr Riordan (personal)

22/51. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests to declare.

22/52. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2022

The minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed.

22/53. Public Participation Session

A member of the public from the Play Park Committee was at the meeting. The Play park was set up three years ago through grants and a lot of fund raising. The land is leased from Swalcliffe Park School. There is a safety net of £4.4K which is for upkeep and improvements and being looked after by the Parish Council. Some small expenditure has occurred recently. Money needs to be spent on new equipment, chairs and tables, a reseeded area and more woodchip. The committee are concerned that this money has been spent on the village hall. The Chair explained that the Parish Council had to make sharp decisions in August related to the spend on the village hall work. Their cash position is much stronger now. Work on the village hall was cut back to manage funds. New play equipment should come out of fundraising money and the £4K will be reduced over a number of years. The Chair apologized for a lack of communication. The question was asked if the Parish Council would be able to give any more money once this money has been spent? The Chair replied that money is normally set aside in the parish budget each year and they have in the past agreed to support maintenance costs. The Chair reassured the committee that the money is still in the accounts and they should carry on with expenditure on maintenance items.

22/54. To note any matters arising from the minutes not included on this agenda for report only

Banbury Charities – A donation towards the village hall work of £1K was received.

Noticeboard – The Parish Clerk had circulated photos of wooden and metal boards. The existing noticeboard has been refurbished by Cllr Smith and so there is no urgency to replace it until funds permit.

Spend on Village Hall - This was authorized and DC Services were appointed.

Speedwatch - Cllr Taylor had spoken to Frazer Argyros-Farrell and he is happy to continue changing the battery. A new battery is needed but the signs may need replacing as they are old and temperamental.

Undergrowth by village sign – This has been cut.

Swalcliffe Park School – Cllr Smith to follow up with them about the planned open event.

22/55. To receive an update on the village hall refurbishment project

Cllr Gandy gave the following update.

He is pleased with work to date and DC Services have been working six days a week to complete the project in time for the Harvest Supper. The inside is looking nice and use of available space now is practical. The kitchen area has been insulated and the old units put back in until the funds are in place to replace them with free standing units. A new cooker has been purchased. There is a lot of work to do outside such as the cladding on the south side of the hall. It is hoped this can be done via fund raising. Long term goals are to replace the roof and replace the windows. A working party will look at what needs to be done outside. Cllr Gandy is to draft a list. It is hoped that some of this work will be done before the weather changes.

The original budget was £65K. Money received included grants from the Lottery Fund, Banbury Charities, Cllr George Reynolds, money from the Parish Council savings account and Village Hall account. Costs to date are £54K and an additional £15K is needed to complete the current programme of works. This could be paid for via a Public Works Loan or a loan through ACRE; the ACRE loan is only if the Village hall is a charity. £9K is needed to finish what is being done now and an extra £5K to finish the work. Internal discussions were held between three Councillors about taking out a PWL. It was agreed not to pursue the idea of a loan. The spend will be cut back. There will be VAT to recover and the Parish Council/Village Hall Committee will continue to apply for grants.

A vote of thanks was given to Kate Foley and the Village Hall Committee for their help and also to Cllr Gandy for his continued leadership of the project.

The Village Hall Committee have a couple of fund raising ideas which they shared at the meeting. Fund raising could be tied in with the centenary of the village hall in 2024. Fund raising is critical to complete the work and rebuild the Parish Council reserves. Co-ordination is critical in linking with other village groups such as the PCC and Play Park Committee so as not to overlap ideas and events. An open day for two hours with tea and cake was suggested to show case what has been achieved.

Action: Councillors to consider fund raising ideas for discussion at the next meeting.

22/56. To receive a preliminary report on the options for governance of the Village Hall

Cllr Collett gave the following report.

He has been looking into the governance requirements for the village hall, its relationship with the Parish Council and its status as a charity. He has referred to historic PC minutes and village hall records to find the original set up and purpose. There is a Declaration of Trust dating back to 1927 and the PC was made sole Trustee in 1947 by a Deed of Appointment. Based on his research he feels that the hall is a community asset held in trust. Cllr Collett had looked to establish if the hall was a charity. There is historic communication with the Charity Commission but having checked with the Commission, they have confirmed that the hall is not registered. It was noted that not all charities are registered with the Commission, especially when they are small or have a low level of turnover. Cllr Collett's research had identified that the Recreational Charities Act 1958 recognised village halls as charities when they are held in trust and their purpose is for the benefit of the community, as the hall in Swalcliffe is.

It was agreed that, whilst there is no urgency, the PC in partnership with the Village Hall Management Committee should work to update and modernise governance arrangements, ensuring that these are transparent and understood by all involved. Cllr Collett and the PC acknowledged the hard work of all those involved with the VH and that their efforts over many years had served the community extremely well.

It was agreed that as part of the work to be progressed, increasing the number of volunteers supporting the hall would be a beneficial outcome so that the current demand on such a small number of individuals was lessened.

22/57. To receive an update on the serviceability of speed cameras and programme for training speed watch team

It is the wrong time of year to carry out Speedwatch as daylight hours are getting shorter. Cllr Riordan has offered to help Cllr Taylor.

Action: The locations to be registered with Thames Valley Police. Cllr Taylor to speak to Sue Leech at Broughton. Volunteers to carry out the training and be ready to start in the Spring.

22/58. Review of protocols to access village defibrillator

A sad incident occurred in Tadmarton over the summer when a defibrillator could be not accessed. Tadmarton Parish Council then carried out a review of how to access their own defibrillators. A protocol was agreed, typed and distributed to each household. Cllr Smith advised that the defibrillator is currently checked monthly and checks are logged.

Action: Cllr Smith to consider the protocol used by Tadmarton PC.

22/59. Financial Report

The following payments were approved under statutory powers:

£67.19 to A Chittock (weedkiller to spray Common)

£35.00 to Community First (membership)

£151.20 to Community Heartbeat Trust (annual support cost)

£600.00 To Andrew Bathe (grass cutting)

22/60. To receive an update on planning

The following applications had been received since the last meeting:

22/02316/TCA, Tree work at Sparrow Hall, The Square. No objections or comments by CDC.

21/03777/LB, Repair 2no windows at front, replace 2no windows at front; replace 1no window at gable end at 1 The Green. No comment by PC.

22/02383/F, Erection of new house to replace existing, including moving dwelling to west of the site; erection of new workshop; demolition of existing buildings; associated landscaping works bin store and cycle store at Common Farm. Supported by PC.

22/02373/CLUE, Certificate of Lawfulness of existing development for the erection of retaining wall and raising of ground level at Fairview Cottage, Main Road. No comment by PC.

22/61. To receive Councillors' Reports

A bench with memorial plaque opposite the pub is in a bad state of repair.

Action: The Chair to ask the PCC if it can be repaired and placed in the churchyard.

Cllr Smith noted there will be a new termly newsletter from Swalcliffe Park School and there is a meeting next week. They were contacted about the Christmas market but did not respond to the email.

The Chair noted that the Book of Condolence would be placed in the archives. He will write a letter of Condolence to the Private Secretary to HM The King.

The Chair noted he will be handing in his resignation before Christmas as he is moving out of the area.

22/62. To note next meeting date and time

Monday 31st October 2022 at 7.30pm

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.35pm.