**Swerford Parish Council**

**Parish Council Committee Meeting**

**Thursday 14 May 2020 at 19:30 hrs**

**Virtual Meeting using ZOOM**

**Draft Minutes**

**Present:** Mr J Chaplin, (Chairman), Mrs J Abbott (Councillor and Deputy Chair), Mr J Drinkwater (Councillor), Mr W Haddon (Parish Clerk), Mr G Strachan (Councillor and RFO). Mr L Tustian (Councillor). (JC, JA, JD, Clerk, GS, LS respectively hereafter.)

**Residents:** Mr C Ford, Mrs Tina-Marie Poke. (CF, TMP respectively.)

**AGENDA**

1. **Declarations of Interest**. None were made.
2. **Apologies for absence.** None received.
3. **Code of Conduct.** Councillors were reminded accordingly.
4. **Approval of minutes.** Proposed by JD, seconded by JC, the Minutes of the meeting of 13th February 2020 were approved.
5. **Matters arising.** 
   1. The objection to Application 20/00181/S73 (the proposed storage building at Church End, Swerford referred to by the Council as ‘**Backside**’) was noted. The Chairman, after some further discussion with WODC, gave comments on why the Application had been approved.
6. **Financial Governance**:
   1. The up-to-date statement of Receipts and Payments together with a Summary of Balances held was discussed. No Loans or Investments exist. At 31MAR20 total cash was £12,187.51.
   2. The draft accounts were noted. Some Councillors sought time to review these further and it was agreed that, subject to any comment to be made, (such to be received by the RFO/Chair by close on Wednesday 20MAY20), these were in order and the Audit process should proceed. Approval and publication of the Financial Accounts are now due by 31AUG20 with the Public Rights Period to commence on or before 1SEP20. Final audited accounts and the external auditor report and certificate are to be published by 30NOV20. (Action: GS, JC.)
7. **Planning Applications**

As there were no Applications, a more general discussion occurred.

JC and JD attended a special WODC Open Meeting on 27FEB20, held to review how WODC Planning goes about Planning Breaches, and the strengths and weaknesses of services provided. Swerford Council has spent many hours on this subject and its concerns were expressed.

A general discussion occurred. In summary, while it is felt that District Councillors are very committed to representing Parish Councils and citizens, the system operates within what is thought to be a reactive, rather than pro-active, legal and bureaucratic framework that often has its own momentum. Opposition to applications and the raising of breaches of permissions can only be taken forward on a case by case basis within these boundaries.

The idea of approaching the Local Government Ombudsman as discussed in prior PC meetings was considered again but, in the absence of any thought that this might prove positive, will not proceed.

1. **General Governance**:
   1. The Parish Council is bound by, amongst other things, its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The following amendments were agreed (proposed by JD, seconded by JA) until the COVID-19 situation changes at which time we shall revert to current, standard practice:
      1. BANK SIGNATORIES: that the Parish Clerk is added to the list of Authorised Signatories.
      2. HANDLING COUNCIL BUSINESS: while the COVID-19 situation continues, council matters may be settled as required by any two Council Members (one of whom must be the Chair or Deputy Chair), or in the event that this is not possible, the Clerk, after due consultation with any one Council Member. Any such action by the Clerk is to be noted and ratified at the next Council Meeting.
   2. Other items noted in the Agenda were not discussed but taken as read, that: the Chairman’s Report to the Annual Parish Assembly has been postponed; current PC office holders will remain in place until either the next Annual Parish Council Meeting or otherwise as the Council may determine.
2. **Council Insurance** expires 31MAY20. As previously agreed, this will be finalised by Clerk/JC. Assets noted in the Register of Assets owned/ managed by the Council will be insured at a reasonable replacement value. A discussion occurred with regard to the Mower which needs to be insured. Liaison with the Council’s broker as well as Zurich Insurance is going on. (Action: JC/Clerk.)
3. **Village Hall Insurance**. A brief update by JC was given. Little has changed but discussions continue and further developments are awaited.
4. **Village Hall Accounts**: the summary previously circulated has been updated and this will be circulated to Councillors for information. (Action: GS/JC.)
5. **Village Website**. JC advised that this now exists but before it becomes operational Councillors will be asked for comment. (Action: JC.)
6. **Community First Oxfordshire**. Membership at a cost of £35 for 2020-2021 was approved. Clerk will give payment details to GS to progress. (Action: Clerk/GS.)
7. **Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils.** The subscription cost for 2020-21 of £140.42 was agreed.
8. **Grass cutting.** An update on the village situation was given and the position discussed. It was agreed that it will be done at Chapel End and in the Playing Field by a rota of volunteers (as previously agreed) as costs (petrol and maintenance of some £300 pa) should be significantly lower than that of a private contractor (thought to be some £3,000 pa).

Petrol costs are to be reimbursed as and when incurred, and an offer made to the Radford family who are kind enough to look after the area around the War Memorial, to reimburse their petrol costs.

(It has to be seen what cost insurance will be.)

1. **Any Other Business**:
   1. The ZOOM format was considered workable and a success and it was felt that sufficient ‘coverage’ of this format had been given to allow villagers a chance to participate. TMP expressed a view that this might even encourage greater village participation if done in the future. TMP also kindly offered to assist in setting up such meetings and this offer was gratefully accepted.
   2. The next meeting will be held at the same time on Thursday 30JUL20.

As noted in the Agenda various matters will be taken forward taken forward in due course:

1. **Playing Fields:** a working party to clean the area (JA/JC liaising).
2. **Swerford Charity** updates. (CF when appropriate).
3. **CPR training** targeted for JUL20.
4. **Salt Refills**. OCC had delivered a new bag as requested but had yet to distribute to bins as promised. The location of a new bin at Chapel End has yet to be decided. JC was considering further.
5. Location of a new **Chapel End tree.**
6. How best to remind owners of their obligation to install and thereafter maintain ‘dog friendly’ access to all **stiles.**
7. The damaged **mile post** by the A361.
8. **Bus Services**.
9. Re-institution of a village **‘Welcome Pack’** - volunteers needed!
10. **Road Warning signs** on Chapel Hill.

The Meeting closed at 8:45 pa.

………………………….. Clerk