**Swerford Parish Council**

**Parish Council Committee Meeting**

**Thursday 11 February 2021 at 19:30 hrs**

**Virtual Meeting using ZOOM**

**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). (JC, JA, JD, Clerk, GS respectively hereafter.) While JD was marginally delayed, a forum existed throughout.

**Residents:** None.

**Draft Minutes**

1. **Declarations of Interest.** None made.
2. **Apologies for absence**. Leonard Tustian (Councillor) sent his regrets.
3. **Code of Conduct.** Noted.
4. **Minutes** of the meeting of **5th November 2020** were approved. (Proposed - GS, Seconded - JA).
5. **Matters arising**:
   1. The 2021/22 Precept of £3,200 was discussed and approved.
   2. The 2021/22 Budget was approved.
   3. The A361 milepost was briefly discussed. Possible further decoration was considered impractical.
   4. Purchase of the new sit-on mower was noted. Insurance for the existing mower has been replaced: it was considered unnecessary to have this re-instated, the value being minimal and sale proposed as soon as the weather changes.
   5. As previously agreed, parking at Chapel End will be discussed further when work on Lansdowne Cottage is complete.
   6. The County Council has done some work to alleviate the situation next to Griffin House. While much improved, not much more can be done without major new infrastructure which the Highways Agency advise is not planned. It is thought that what has occurred has been positive and welcome.
6. **Financial Governance**:
   1. A statement of Receipts and Payments, and a Summary of Balances was presented. While the very latest statement from HSBC is due (ie the figures not completely validated with the bank), the position of monies held in our accounts is: £6,664.82 (Savings) and £3,632.84 (Current). It was agreed that the maintenance costs of the old mower had become oppressive and the decision to buy a new version well justified.
   2. Year-end Accounts as at 31MAR21 will be prepared in April and presented to the next meeting for formal approval. Funds at the moment are satisfactory (for example with relation to reserves to cover Playing Field maintenance, a new mower in due course and unforeseen matters of a general nature), but the Council is keen to avoid any lack of provisioning for new equipment (such as a new mower). How best to set aside reasonable sums will be considered with the budget. (**Action**: GS/JC.)
   3. It was agreed that Lisa Wilkinson be appointed the new Internal Auditor at a fee of £100 pa. (Proposed - JC, Seconded - JA). She is well qualified with the necessary experience (details provided by GS to Councillors by email on 8FEB21). **(Action**: JC/GS.)
7. **Planning Applications** received since the last meeting.
   1. The Consultation document received from Oxfordshire County Council relating to proposed changes to a Bridleway and Footpath in Swerford Park, and the Council’s position, were noted. (Document ABS/253/EXT/CR/253/09.20)
8. **General Governance**:
   1. It was acknowledged that the websiteis working well, albeit in its infancy. This will be reviewed again next January.
   2. A review of the Register of Assets and Register of Title Deeds to be undertaken and results circulated. (**Action:** WH/JC)
   3. An annual risk assessment of Council Activities (re Standing Order 6.1), to include Financial Controls (Financial Regulation 1.3), is to be carried out. (**Action:** WH/JC). (This appears to supplement the Annual Financial Risk Assessment conducted in OCT annually - last done in OCT 2020.)
   4. The need for a Chairman’s Report to the 2020 Annual Parish Assembly has been superseded and any relevant references will be included in the next Report.
9. **Playground.** 
   1. Is open and in use. Work on the swings is being done.
10. **Village Hall**.
    1. Applications to WODC have resulted in valuable support grants being awarded due to its forced closure and resulting loss of income. These (grants) should ensure that the hall is adequately funded through 2021. In the current uncertain circumstances, no budget has been prepared for 2021/2 as it is entirely unclear when and in what manner the hall will be allowed to open. The Village Hall will consider the options open to it.
11. **WODC Planning.**

Dissatisfaction with WODC Planning was again discussed. Little more can be said - prior meetings refer. The following were noted:

* various possible infringements in the work at Lansdowne Cottage (eg to do with windows and actual building work). Taken up by the Chairman, WODC’s response, it appears, is to simply ask the builder to seek retrospective permissions, none of which are likely to be rejected.
* a house name (‘Drovers Barn’) has been given to Backside and a Post Box installed. The Chairman will take this up with WODC.

The issue of enforcement is, it seems, a major bugbear for Parish Councils generally (Swerford is no exception): this can take up more time than the actual consideration of Planning Permission in the first instance. Our Agendas will therefore be amended in the future to include specific reference to possible infringements.

**Any Other Business**

* 1. The date of the next PC Meeting (the **Annual Parish Council Meeting**) was noted:20MAY21.
  2. The next **Annual Parish Assembly** must be held between 1MAR21 and 1JUN21. Guidance is awaited from WODC.
  3. **20’s Plenty for Oxfordshire** was discussed at some length. The Council will pass for the moment.
  4. There are two known **Stone Stiles** (by the Griffin wall and in the garden wall of North Vale). It was agreed that if possible, these should be Listed for posterity and this will be investigated. (**Action**: JC.)
  5. JC reminded that **Parish Council Elections** are due on the 6th of May. Details as to process are awaited.
  6. A subscription to Professional Zoom was discussed. It was decided to wait and see how regulation evolves. Interestingly, there are various village activities that might progress virtually - for the time being that is being left to the organisers.

The following general matters will be taken forward in due course:

* 1. **Playing Fields:** a working party to clean the area.
  2. **Swerford Charity.** Swerford PC Standing Orders note that according to Charity Law, having nominated a Trustee, an obligation exists to receive an annual report of activity together with Accounts. An Annual Review is due in FEB.
  3. **CPR training** originally targeted for JUL20.
  4. Location of a new **Chapel End tree.**
  5. How best to install and thereafter maintain ‘dog friendly’ **stiles.**
  6. Re-institution of a village **‘Welcome Pack’** - volunteers needed!
  7. Road **Warning signs** on Chapel Hill.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:40 pm.

The next Parish Council Meeting (the Annual Parish Council) is scheduled for Thursday, 20th May 2021 at 7:30 pm. It is hoped that this will be in the Village Hall but realistically this is likely to be conducted by Zoom. Guidance is awaited from WODC as this is an important meeting and details will be announced in due course.

W Haddon 14FEB21