**Swerford Parish Council**

**Parish Council Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday 16th November 2022 at 19:30 hrs**

**Swerford Village Hall**

**Minutes**

**Present: M**r G Strachan (Chairman and RFO), Mr J Drinkwater, Mr L Tustian, Mr N Davies, Mrs J Tinsley (all Councillors), Mr W Haddon (Clerk), Mr C Ford (GS, LT, ND, JT, WH, CF respectively hereafter).

1. **Declarations of Interest.** There were no such declarations.
2. **Apologies for absence.** N.A.
3. **Code of Conduct.** Acknowledged.
4. **Approval of Minutes of the Meeting of 17th August 2022.** 
   1. Proposed by GS, seconded by LT. Approved.
5. **Matters arising.**
   1. No further action.
   2. The draft minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly of 20MAY22 were presented. The delay was noted and the reasons accepted. Approval was proposed by JD and seconded by LT: Carried.
   3. Chapel End Pond. Further consideration is being given. (**Action**: CF/JD.)
   4. Planting in St Mary’s Lane. It was agreed that the matter is now closed.
   5. Blocked gullies in Chapel End. LT will have a go at one. There are others to be addressed. JD will take up the matter with Paul Wilson of N Oxon roads. (**Action**: JD.)
   6. Defibrillator. The matter was discussed in some depth. For some time this has been on the Agenda and it was felt that this needs resolution. The aim is to relocate the Village Hall defibrillator to St Mary’s and see if a second machine can be located in the Telephone Box on the corner at Chapel End. While expensive the Council agreed that funds exist and the time is right to complete this.
      1. (**Action**: JD to contact Rev Janet Faull re St Mary’s.)
      2. **(Action**: ND to speak to Clare Field to see what possibilities there are on some basic CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) training.)
      3. **(Action**: CF to see what might be done regarding the second machine and to liaise with Mel Poke who has knowledge on this matter. The aim is a machine and training.)
   7. The letter to our MP was briefly discussed. The matter has lapsed.
   8. The issue of cabling in the road between Lansdowne Cottage/Robins Cottage was briefly touched upon. While unclear what contact has been made with Mr Davy to advise him that this is not considered Parish Council business, in view of the time since this was first raised the matter may be considered as lapsed.
   9. It was reiterated that two new trees at Chapel End were approved (budgeted at £75 each) and that CF may do whatever is necessary to get this completed. (**Action**: CF - who will also continue to try and track down Ben Acreman, or someone else qualified to assist, in removing the dying cherry tree.)
   10. GS advised that for various reasons the full final costs regarding village hall work were yet to be finalised, but that it is aimed this is done by the end of the month. To-date the Council’s contribution has been £2,442 (the Hall’s £15,000). A reconciliation outlining costs met bey each will be provided in due course. **(Action**: GS.)
   11. No further action.
   12. GS advised that in-principle a fee of £125 has been agreed with our Internal Auditor who is happy to continue. This was agreed.
   13. No further action.
   14. Time has passed. The matter was discussed. No further action. Although JD would try to see if anyone in St Mary’s can respond to the Hook Norton Village Museum with any helpful advice on the maintenance of their clock. No further action.
6. **Financial Governance**:
   1. GS advised that an up-to-date statement of Receipts and Payments, actual versus forecast, together with a Summary of Balances held, had been circulated. He briefly outlined some highlights. Current account funds currently total £1,128 and £6,668 is held on deposit. No Loans or Investments exist.
   2. GS advised that a list of cheques issued from 16AUG22 had been circulated.
   3. It was agreed in the meeting of 17AUG22 that the requirement for a quarterly reconciliation of bank statements is considered fulfilled by the information provided in the statement of Receipts and Payments. And that such reconciliations would in future be made up to the date of last statements received from the bank. This is provided that in all, total overall yearly reconciliations are given as soon as possible after year-end.
   4. GS advised that the budget for next year totalled some £3,800 and was outlined in the presentation in (a) above. Some discussion occurred. The budget was approved. A summary related to the Village Hall is still due. (**Action**: GS.)
   5. The Precept for 2023/24 was broadly discussed and will be presented at the next meeting for ratification: it is required to be presented to WODC by 6JAN23. Now £3,360, it was agreed that some £2,500 will be added to cover the costs of the RFO/Clerk to be appointed, and £1,500 to cover costs for keeping the Playing Field mowed. (In this regard ND will contact the Radfords to see whether or not it might be possible to approach their gardener to help - obviously on a paid basis.)
      1. **(Action: GS** - to finalise Precept.)
      2. **(Action: ND** - to have an informal word with the Radfords.)
7. **General Governance:**
   1. The position with HSBC has yet to be updated. It was agreed that JD, ND and JT (once co-opted) be appointed signatories and that JD will finalise the paperwork with HSBC. (**Action** - JD.) Online banking will also be looked into with a view to usage. (**Action** - JD.)
   2. Details having been previously circulated, the following updates were approved:
      1. Standing Orders;
      2. Financial Regulations;
      3. Financial Timetable.
8. **Planning Applications: ]**

The following Applications were noted as having been reviewed since the last PC Meeting:

* 1. 22/02330/FUL. Netherby Farm.
  2. 22/02337/HHD. The Old Cottage.
  3. 22/02687/HHD. Orchard Close.

Planning was again discussed. Briefly, with regard to the amount of time spent on reviewing applications, and also, briefly, the vexed question of Planning Applications where the Parish Council has raised objections. It was reiterated that it is thought that the power of neighbour objection is probably more significant than the power of Council objection.

The process was again reviewed for the benefit of ND. Essentially each Councillor is circulated with WODC information to form their own view:

* some applications are straightforward with no need to voice any objection. As such, a No Objections is returned to WODC without added comment.
* some have comment from Councillors, but with no overriding objection. These are considered by the Chairman, liaising further with other Councillors as necessary. Assuming no change, a No Objections is returned to WODC without added comment.
* those that raise more detailed concerns, and discussion are correlated by the Chair who will summarise, provide a response to the Clerk who will submit an objection, with reasoning, to WODC.

It was reiterated that every effort is made to see that within the knowledge and experience of the Council, objections are based on Planning issues as understood by Councillors not, for example, simple likes and dislikes. The focus on planning facts has been recommended at various annual Parish Assemblies by WODC officials. Where known, views of villagers, expressed privately to Councillors, are taken into consideration.

The recent Application re Orchard Close was a case where some comment occurred but a No Objection was lodged. This was again discussed in some depth. In particular, JD, who has considerable knowledge and experience in such matters, described how he had come to his conclusion, having spent a considerable amount of time examining the documents involved. It was agreed that there could be no reasonable objection to the Application and that the Council’s response was appropriate.

**The Boat in the Road**

At the end of the last Council meeting, ND volunteered to have a word with the owner with a view to getting the boat removed from the lay-by in the village where it has been sitting for several months. He was asked to do so.

He advised that since then, he had been in touch on numerous occasions. But that despite this, there had been no action.

(While this subject has been informally commented upon at and around Council Meetings in the past, it was hoped that a brief word might resolve the issue saving any personal embarrassment to the owner by more formal action.)

ND advised that as he had not had any success, he had advised the owner that unless he removed the boat, he proposed that he would be given seven days notice to do so, failing which it would be reported as fly-tipping.

This course of action was briefly discussed. The boat has been an eyesore for some considerable period of time. It was thought that this proposal was not unreasonable there having been plenty of contact and much opportunity to remove the boat, with no progress being made. ND was authorised to contact the owner and advise him accordingly. (**Action** - ND to advise owner.) (**Action** - Council to proceed in the event this still elicits no action.)

1. **Playground.)**
   1. Monthly visual checks are a requirement of our insurance cover. It was agreed that ND, who uses the playground on a fairly regular basis, will take on this responsibility. (**Action** - ND.)
   2. It was agreed that mowing needs to be addressed on a commercial basis. An estimate of £1,500 pa (see above) will be a basis to start enquiries, although some doubt was expressed that this would be sufficient. As noted above ND will approach the Radfords. If this does not work then further advertising will be needed.
   3. The ROSPA Report was touched upon. GS outlined that by and large there was little of concern, with one or two matters to be looked at in more detail. In his capacity as a resident of Swerford, rather than being the Clerk, WH expressed a view that from afar, the time might be right to have a general upgrade of the equipment which looked a little tired. But it was not thought that this was necessary, the equipment when bought being of a high quality and still serviceable and safe: in particular CF noted that he/his family use(s) it regularly and was quite happy for the time being. (ND also being a frequent user.) It was acknowledged that it continues to need to be monitored for signs of damage/wear and tear. A volunteer/team is needed to take this on. A formal visit will be led by GS to consider this in greater detail and to see what needs to be done. (**Action** - GS and any volunteers who can be found.)
2. **Village Hall**.

An update was given by GS. The situation in terms of the state of the building is in some state of limbo as underwriters/insurers/loss adjusters consider.

It was agreed that the Village Hall would provide a copy of their recently renewed insurance policy (the last held on file is VillageGuard 14/9/21-13/922). (**Action** - GS.)

1. **Swerford Charity**.

CF gave a brief summary. This was considered sufficient.

1. **Any Other Business.**
   1. No further action.
   2. Road Warning Signs. ND has been investigating in depth and keeps the Council advised. This is ongoing as County Council support is needed on the imposition of a 20 mph speed limit: he is in liaison with Hook Norton within which the ‘Griffin Corner’ exists, the site of many accidents recently. (**Action** - ND.)
   3. Jill Tinsley was co-opted as a new Councillor. The requisite Declaration of Acceptance was completed. She is most welcome and thanks were expressed accordingly.
   4. Recruitment of replacement of the RFO and Clerk has made no progress despite enquiries being made locally to Great Tew and Hook Norton. A circular was put out to the village: no interest has been expressed. Some local newsletters will be contacted and adverts placed (**Action** - GS), and OALC will again be asked for advice (**Action** - WH).
   5. The trees along the lower road out of Swerford were discussed. Contact will be made with owners along the road with the request that they have a good look and make safe where appropriate. **(Action** - GS).
   6. Stiles. Four stiles belong to Ash Hill Farm. LT undertook to get repairs done as soon as possible and in line with communication from WODC. (**Action** - LT.) One belongs to the Old Rectory and one to Windy Hill Farm. (**Action** - GS to contact owners with the request that they address the need to make good.)
   7. Matter not thought related to our Council. Matter closed.
   8. Council Title Deeds are lodged with Hancocks Solicitors, Banbury. They need to be advised of changes in the make-up of the Council. It was agreed that the arrangement with them continue and that a letter be sent signed by the Clerk and Chairman updating the position. (**Action** - GS/WH. Done.)

There being no other business the meeting closed around 10:00.

**The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 15th February 2023**.

William Haddon, Clerk 21 November 2022