

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 14th November 2023 at 7:00 pm.

Present

Cllr Adam Quinney	Chairman
Cllr Peter Taaffe	Vice-Chairman
Cllr Rob Clarke	
Cllr Neil Edden	SDC (Studley with Sambourne)
Cllr Peter Hencher-Serafin	SDC (Studley with Mappleborough Green)
Teresa Murphy	Clerk

There were 5 parishioners present.

1. **Apologies:** Received and accepted from Cllr Nick Moon, Cllr Rammy Arafa, Cllr Justin Kerridge (WCC)
2. **Disclosures of Interest:** There were no changes reported
3. **To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 12th September 2023**

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. **Matters arising from the minutes:**

Parishes working together: The clerk has made contact with Ullenhall Parish Council and has arranged a meeting with their clerk. She is also providing email support and hopes to arrange a meeting with other local clerks in the near future.

Ongoing

Footpaths: Agenda item 5.

Purchase of grit bin: The chairman has purchased a grit bin and four shovels. The grit bin will now be installed in Brickyard Lane.

Dark Skies Policy: Cllr Rob Clarke has contacted the local astronomical societies to see if anything similar was being done in adjacent villages.

Ongoing

Restoration of war Memorial: Taken under Item 13.

Defibrillator Training: Studley First Responders delivered two Defibrillator Awareness sessions on 21st October 2023. The sessions were well attended and extremely informative. In appreciation it was agreed to make a donation of £75 to the Responders.

Signs for the recreation ground: The signs have been purchased and are now installed in the recreation ground.

Review of Standing Orders: To be reviewed prior to May 2024

Warwickshire and West Midlands ALC's AGM: The chairman, Cllr Clarke and the clerk are attending the AGM on 15th November.

Notification of planning applications: An email has been sent to Cllr Edden requesting a definitive list of consultees for the different types of applications.

Overgrown footpaths in Green Lane: Cllr Hencher-Serafin confirmed that the overgrown hedges and overhanging branch have been dealt with. Cllr Hencher-Serafin also reported that residents would like to see the speed limit reduced from 50 to 40 mph along the Slough. The chairman said that the parish council would be happy to write a letter of support to WCC Highways to support this action.

Action: Chairman

Siting of trauma pack at Rough Hill Farm shop: Cllr Edden reported that there were 3 spare trauma packs and the idea was to position them strategically to the extremes of the village.

Contact WCC and Land Agents: Taken under Item 8 on the Agenda.

5. Improved Access to Footpaths Project

- Cllr Moon will give a detailed update at the next meeting.
- The chairman reported that members of the Ramblers Association have cleared the path down to Sambourne Hall Farm, which is much appreciated. They have kindly agreed to return at regular intervals to assist with the clearing of more footpaths.

Action: Cllr Moon

6. Local Flooding/Support

- 1) The chairman referred to the flooding that had occurred recently and said that a parishioner in Middletown had been misinformed that the parish council would reimburse him for the purchase of sand bags. He explained that the parish council only spends money on expenses identified in the budget and does not have the power to make discretionary payments that have not been agreed at a pc meeting.
- 2) The chairman spoke to the parishioner concerned and explained the confusion that had occurred. It was proposed that the parish council purchases the sandbags, for the amount of £50, from the parishioner. The sandbags will then be stored for use by parishioners in the event of future flooding.
- 3) There was unanimous agreement for this proposal.

Action: Chairman

7. Tree Survey Report

A survey has been carried out by Warwickshire County Council of the trees on the Green and the trees and vegetation in the recreation ground. The trees on the Green are in fair condition but there are a few dead elms in the recreation ground along the line of the stream, which could potentially damage fences. The chairman proposes to obtain quotes from local contractors to work 3m along the stream edge and remove the dead elm and vegetation. The tree survey report will be put on the website for residents to access.

Action: Chairman, Cllr Taaffe

8. Grass verges in Middletown

The parish council received correspondence in late August from a resident in Middletown Cul-de-sac concerning the grass verges. The Chairman and Cllr Taaffe visited the resident to gain first-hand knowledge of the issue.

Following that meeting, Cllr Taaffe spoke with both Neil and Justin and was guided to WCC Highways Area Surveyor, who he contacted. The following response was received:

'Stratford District Council are responsible for grass cutting in the inner town/village areas and as such I have asked SDC to add this to their grass cutting programme. They have got back to me and said they will add this to their grass cutting programme. This won't be until next year as their 2023 programme has finished now.

I have added the section here to our hedge flailing spreadsheet as hedge flailing is due to commence now that bird nesting season is over. With the hedges cut back this will allow SDC to mow the verges along here during their grass cutting programme.'

A great result and our thanks to Neil and Justin for their input.

9. Grass cutting contract – 2024-2025

It was agreed that our current contractors, JR Gibbs, provide a good service and are reliable. They held their prices in 2023-2024 and their quote for 2024-2025 has come in at only 10% higher.

There was unanimous agreement to accept their quote of £4055.70 for 2024-25.

Action: Clerk

10. Review of the Social Media Policy

It was agreed that the first paragraph should be updated to read: *This policy deals with all forms of social media, networks and platforms.* There were no other alterations and the Policy was signed by the Chairman and the website will be updated.

Action: Clerk.

11. Accounts

Draft Budget for 2024-25

- i. A meeting with councillors has been held and the Draft Budget for 2024-25 has been discussed and agreed. The budget shows a small deficit but this will be rectified by the carry forward envisaged for 2024-25.
- ii. There was unanimous agreement to accept the Budget as presented and it will now be updated on the website.
- iii. The chairman proposed that the Precept for 2024-2025 should remain at £17,500. There was unanimous agreement.

Action: Clerk

Budget Update: A copy of the budget update dated 13th November 2023 had been circulated to councillors. All were in agreement that the budget is on track for month eight of the financial year. The chairman said that one of the reasons why the budget is on track is because of the efforts of the parish councillors carrying out tasks around the village, rather than paying contractors. He thanked the members of the parish council for their time and dedication.

Bank reconciliations for September/October 2023: The bank reconciliations were approved and signed by the chairman.

Bank balances as at 1st November 2023:

Current account: 26,959.08
Deposit account: 18,736.66

List of financial transactions from 12/09/23 - 14/11/23

PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
British Gas	Electricity to the Green	21.34
SDC	Emptying of litter/dog waste bins	295.20
Unity Bank	Service charge	18.00
Clerk – September	Salary/Expenses/HMRC	555.20
Zoom	September payment	15.59
M Power & Sons	War Memorial restoration	5383.20
Hugo Fox	Website – September payment	23.99
British Gas	Electricity to the Green	23.13
Hugo Fox	Website – October payment	23.99
Clerk – October	Salary/Expenses/HMRC	596.67
Zoom	October payment	15.59
Cllr Quinney	Grit bin/shovels	151.67
Cllr Kerridge	Purchase of Christmas Tree	250.00
Stephen Noke	Poppy wreath	25.00
Peco Signs	Signs for Recreation Ground	234.00

12. Planning

Four planning applications have been considered since the last meeting:

Ref No	Property	Details	SPC Comments	Decision
23/01485/FUL	Glorfindel, Sambourne Park	Loft conversion	No objection	Permission with conditions 02/11/2023
23/01930/FUL	Early Birds, Perrymill Lane	Remodelling of existing bungalow	Objection	Withdrawn 24/10/2023
23/02786/FUL	Dinwoodie, Middletown Lane	Conversion and extension of garage		
23/02903/FUL	Eastern Hill Farm, Astwood Bank	Replacement dwelling		

13. Correspondence

Various questions have been asked about the restoration of the War Memorial and the chairman asked Cllr Taaffe to address these, which he did, as follows:

- Firstly, the parish council is pleased to announce that the refurbishment of the War Memorial has been completed.
- The Grade 11 war memorial is listed on Historic England. It is owned by Sambourne Parish Council and it is, therefore, our responsibility to maintain it. The memorial underwent a maintenance programme in 2013-14; no further maintenance has been carried out since that date.
- Three quotes were obtained, and a qualified contractor selected. The cost was agreed at £4,486.00. We applied to the War Memorial Trust for a grant but this was declined on the basis that the work required was identical to that carried out in 2014. The WMT do not support grants based on the previous one awarded. They went on to say that is important that a regular maintenance programme should be sought, in order to avoid a repetitive decline in the memorial.
- The Parish Council agreed to use the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) payment received from Stratford District Council to fund the maintenance. The cost was, therefore, not taken from the Parish Council's Precept and was not paid for by the parishioners.
- Cllr Taaffe suggested that an annual cleaning programme is agreed by Sambourne PC. He would also like to propose that, as several of the veteran's listed on the Memorial are from Coughton Parish, a contribution towards the cost is requested from Coughton Parish Council.

It was agreed that this proposal would be put on the Agenda for the January 2024 meeting.

Action: Clerk

The chairman reported that we have received a number of Freedom of Information requests. He would like to remind people at this point that the parish council can only provide information that we hold, whatever the format. We cannot provide information if it breaches the rules around General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Therefore:

- Asking for people's opinions would not be a valid request, if those were not already recorded.
- Asking the chairman to interrogate/question people in the parish is not a valid FOI, nor will he be instructed in this way.

The parish council has also been asked:

- ***If we have information on any Facebook profiles a councillor may have looked at and how often.*** We do not hold, as a council, this information. Open access information has no restriction for the public, be it LinkedIn or Facebook. We therefore see no need to ask councillors to keep a record of their browsing history on social media.
- ***If the parish council keeps information on a resident's personal internet browsing history.*** We do not, and could not, obtain such information as we do not have the resources of GCHQ. We suggest that if you do not want people to read your social media profile or posts, then your settings should be changed to restrict viewing.

The chairman's comments concerning complaints received:

- ***A complaint about a posting on Facebook by a councillor.*** I have received the complaint, but I have not been sent a copy by the complainant, or the full thread, to see what the post was in response to. It is understood that the post was deleted by the author shortly after posting.
- ***A complaint has also been raised with the police and the monitoring officer at SDC concerning this post.*** The guidance from WALC is that the police should finish their enquiries first, then the monitoring officer and finally, if required, the parish council will start an investigation. It is understood that the police have finished their enquiries and a letter of apology has been written. The monitoring officer will now, presumably, have to decide if the parish councillor was in capacity as a councillor at the time of posting the Facebook message. To be 'in capacity' the councillor would have to be at a parish meeting or discussing parish matters. If the discussion is away from an official meeting and covering topics that have no connection with the parish council remit of responsibility, then the councillor is usually judged not to be in capacity but in a private, personal position. When the monitoring officer has finished her enquiries, the complaint will be looked at.

The chairman also proposed that we look at our Freedom of Information Policy and how we handle FOI's at the present. Many other organisations publish their FOI's and the response

given. Dealing with an FOI request takes up a lot of time; time that could be used on more urgent matters. To have this information in the public domain was considered to be a good idea.

Correspondence – 12 th September – 14 th November 2023				
Complaint or Procedural query and follow up	FOI or GDPR Request	WCC/SDC/WALC/SNT information or Request for Information	General correspondence, accounts and administration	Planning
12	4	91	42	14
Total: 163				

14. Public Participation

No requests for public participation had been received.

The chairman reported that he had produced a notice concerning Roadside Hedge and Tree Management. This gives an overview of owners' and occupiers' responsibility for the maintenance of hedges and trees. The poster is on the notice boards and a request was made for it to be put on the website.

Action: Clerk

15. Chairman's Business

- 1) The chairman reported that he and Cllr Taaffe had met with a parishioner for an informal, discussion about planning and traffic problems in the village. It is useful to have informal meetings with members of the parish, not everything has to be done at a parish council meeting. Decisions are taken at a meeting, but gathering of views of parishioners can be taken at any time around the village – despite what some people may think.
- 2) There have been several break-ins in the village over the past few weeks. Parishioners should be aware and were urged to report any incidents to the police. There was a discussion about the introduction of 'Smart Water' to the village. This was thought to be a good idea and Cllr Rob Clarke agreed to look into it.
- 3) It was also reported that Cllr Taaffe had reviewed and updated the Risk Assessment for the bus shelter.

Action: Cllr Rob Clarke (item 2)

16. Dates of Next Meetings

Tuesday 9th January 2024 at 7:00 pm

Tuesday 19th March 2024 at 7:00 pm

The meeting closed at 7:45 pm

Review of Actions from the meeting:

Minute	Name(s)	Action
4	Chairman, Clerk	Parishes working together – ongoing
4	Cllr Clarke	Dark Skies Policy - ongoing
4	Chairman	Letter of support - Speed limit on Slough
5	Cllr Moon	Update on Access to Footpaths Project
6	Chairman, Clerk	Purchase of sandbags
7	Chairman, Cllr Taaffe	Obtain quotes. Upload Report to website
9	Clerk	Grass cutting contract 2024-5
10	Clerk	Amend review of Social Media Policy
11	Clerk	Draft budget for website, Precept
13	Cllr Taaffe, Clerk	Proposal for Agenda – January 2024
14	Clerk	Roadside Hedges poster for website
15	Cllr Clarke	Research into Smart Water

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