

SAMBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

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Chairman: Cllr Chris Clews

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Clerk: Teresa Murphy

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held via Zoom on Monday 28th September 2020

Present:

Cllr Chris Clews	Chairman
Cllr Phil Jones	Vice-Chairman
Cllr David Shaw	
Cllr Peter Taaffe	
Cllr Philip Bond	
Cllr Clive Rickhards	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Neil Eddon	SDC (Studley with Sambourne)
Cllr Peter Hencher-Serafin	SDC (Studley with Mappleborough Green)
Teresa Murphy	Clerk

There were 30 parishioners present

The Chairman asked Cllr Bond to lead a minute's silence in respect of Sgt Matiu, who was tragically murdered at Croydon Police Station on 25th September 2020.

Following the minute's silence, the Chairman opened the meeting and started by stating the following:

Limitations of Zoom dictate that we have to depart from our previous practice. The meeting will be in public, but it is not a public meeting and it is not feasible for people to speak during the meeting, as is usually the case. Parishioners will have the opportunity to speak during Public Participation (Agenda item 5). If you wish to speak at this point please use the 'raise hand' facility and your microphone will be unmuted. The time permitted per speaker will be three minutes and the Item itself will last for a maximum of 20 minutes. The entire meeting will be recorded to aid the taking of minutes. This recording will be deleted once the minutes have been formally agreed at the November meeting.

1. **Apologies:** None
2. **Disclosure of Interest:** None
3. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2020 were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

Green Lane bridge: Cllr Peter Hencher-Serafin has done a brilliant job in orchestrating the campaign to save this bridge. The bridge should remain as a piece of architecture and an amenity for the public.

Electricity box on the Green: The annual inspection has been carried out by G S Adams. We have received the licence and the invoice has been paid.

Speeding Action Group: Cllr Bond was asked to make contact with an officer at Alcester Police, who has a keen interest in the problem of speeding, and invite him to attend the next Zoom meeting of the Parish Council.

Action: Cllr Bond

Speed Awareness Update: It had been agreed that the Village Hall would be booked for parishioners to view the plans for the Gateway Scheme. This has obviously not been possible, due to the pandemic.

Flooding and blocked drains: To be taken under Agenda Item 7.

Update on VE75 celebrations: Any discussions were halted due to the pandemic.

Retaining surround for circular bench and replacing supports for Middletown Notice Board: This work has been completed and the invoices paid.

Asset Register: The Clerk confirmed that the Register of Fixed Assets has been updated and circulated to Councillors.

Sambourne Lane ditch clearance: Nick O'Connor undertook the task and the ditch has now been cleared.

Wonderful Villages Photo Competition: The Chairman contacted the Church authorities for permission to proceed. He also contacted the organisers of the playground project to suggest photographing the planting of bulbs etc but has not heard anything back.

5. Public Participation

- Cllr Bond asked permission for Neil Snape to give an update on the flooding issues outside the late Jim Snape's house. Neil said that Jim sadly passed away just over a week ago.
- Neil had been in contact with Mark Banning and Scott Tompkins of WCC Flood Management Team on several occasions. They in turn had contacted Highways and were informed that there was no budget for a French drain and were not keen on enforcing a ditch to be dug by Jim's house and the field that was causing the issue. Highways have carried out jetting and drain clearing but Neil Snape was disappointed that WCC was not enforcing a Notice to Improve Land Drainage.

- The Chairman confirmed that the Parish Council has been in regular contact with Mark Banning. WCC will need to contact the landowner regarding the French drain. All information in regards to drainage and the structure of the field was open for residents to view at the last Parish Council meeting in March. We are aware that additional actions are still required to be completed, including the installation of a French drain, which was in Phase 3 of the Plan. We are currently waiting for Highways to contact us again about the proposal for final agreement.
- Cllr Rickhards said that he had been in communication with Mark Banning who, he understood, had been in contact with the Kirk family concerning the French drain.
- Beccy Talbot, a member of the Kirk family, spoke in their defence. The family has had discussions with Mark Banning and Highways and are happy to have a French drain. They are trying to do their best and are being unfairly accused of unreasonable behaviour. She reiterated that Paul Kirk brought the drainage maps to the Parish Council meeting to show where the drains are.
- Cllr Rickhards said he was not aware of any criticism by the County Council of the Kirk family and apologised if this were the case.

Roland White asked for permission to speak

- He spoke with reference to the two letters sent by him to the Parish Council concerning inappropriate behaviour, being led by members of the Council. He said that this alleged behaviour is not acceptable in today's society. He was not looking for an answer today as the letters requested the resignation of Councillors but he was asking for the matter to be investigated. Specifically there is evidence in play that Cllr Clews, Cllr Taaffe and the Clerk have been disrespectful to members of the parish. It is alleged that they have used their position on the Council to make inappropriate comments, both privately and publicly, towards members of the parish. These matters have been raised with Stratford District Council and it is requested that a formal investigation be held, with an independent investigator. Mr White asked for a revert at the next meeting of the Parish Council.
- The Chairman responded by saying that it is not acceptable for private emails from himself to Cllr Bond to be shared with members of the public. These emails have been stored by Cllr Bond for two years. It is important to state that if, by seeing these emails, any offence has been caused he fully apologises. He further said that he has never used his role of Chairman of the Council to infer anything that is at all to do with people's personal beliefs. He said that an attempt is being made to blackmail him to tender his resignation, not only as Chairman but also as a Parish Councillor.
- Cllr Taaffe said he has no idea why he has received this letter and asked Mr White how he found his personal address and email.
- Mr White responded by saying that if you search for someone's email you can always find it and it is not a GDPR issue.

Action: Chairman

6. Allocation of funding for the next round of Tree Maintenance

Trees have been inspected as part of the regular ongoing review. The report from WCC Forestry received earlier this year identified 4 trees that needed maintenance work. Six pieces of work were recommended amongst these trees. The cost of this maintenance work, which will be carried out by WCC Forestry, will be £695.00. Due to budgetary constraints it would be helpful if this work could be spread out between two financial years and Cllr Jones was asked to contact WCC Forestry to ascertain if this would be possible. It was agreed that material from the maintenance work could be left in habitat piles in the rough area.

Action: Cllr Jones

7. Flooding on Middletown Lane

- The Chairman said that this had been discussed under Public Participation and it was now a matter of pulling together.
- Neil Snape asked for an Action Plan to be drawn up of when actions will be taken by WCC.
- Cllr Rickhards said that he is in frequent communication with Scott Tompkins and Mark Banning and he will continue to press for action.
- Cllr Bond requested that £1500 be ringfenced out of next year's budget to support flooding. The Chairman said he would look into the legalities of this.

Action: Chairman, Cllr Rickhards

8. Warwickshire County Council Gateway Scheme for Sambourne

- Cllr Taaffe stated that he wished to correct a point that had been raised by some people that the Gateway Scheme was deemed unlawful. This was reported to WALC and the Scheme was temporarily suspended. Subsequently, WALC has apologised to Sambourne Parish Council and agreed that the Scheme adheres to guidelines and is lawful.
- Cllr Taaffe then gave a background to the WCC Gateway Scheme.
- Funding had been allocated from the County Councillor's delegated budget, for which we were extremely grateful.
- The Scheme was proposed by WCC and agreed by Sambourne Parish Council. These decisions were recorded in the Minutes of the relevant PC meetings and the plans were displayed on the notice boards and on the village website. The plans on the notice boards were removed after four months, as they had become illegible due to sun and rain damage.
- Arrangements were made to display the plans in the village hall, but this could not take place because of CoVid restrictions. This was for information, not consultation, the Scheme is as proposed by the engineers at WCC and is not something drafted by Sambourne Parish Council.

Cllr Taaffe then read out a statement from a senior manager at WCC, which was sent to Cllr Bond and copied to Cllr Taaffe and others: ***With regard to the positioning of signs on the***

Public Highway, this is the responsibility of Warwickshire County Council. Some signs such as Gateway signs are discussed with stakeholders such as Parish Councils and there is a collaborative approach, but ultimately we do not require Parish Council approval. We shall therefore continue with the Scheme as we feel is appropriate.

The following is an overview of meetings etc

1. 13th January 2020, meeting with WCC.
2. 2nd March 2020, SPC received first set of plans, and discussed at that evening's Parish Council meeting
3. 17th March 2020, site meeting with WCC.
4. 29th June 2020, received final drawings
5. 29th June 2020, plans sent to County Highways by WCC for pricing.
6. 29th July 2020, WCC notified SPC that the plans had come in slightly over budget but the plan was to continue.
7. 30th July 2020, WCC confirmed the plans had been passed to a contractor.

On 2nd March 2020 we received the first set of drawings from the Principal Engineer at WCC, detailing the Gateway Scheme and the Unsuitable for HGV signs. It should be noted that the drawings did not provide for gateways at Area 7 [Middletown Lane] and Area 3 [Sambourne Lane] due to the narrow verges at these locations being prohibitive. Following further communication between Parish Councillors, and the disappointment we all felt that gateways were not possible in two areas, further research was carried out by SPC and the findings were that other areas in the UK, with similar narrow verges, had installed white bollards at varying heights with red reflective bands at the top. This was then suggested to other SPC members and accepted as a very good alternative to Gateways.

Following the Parish Council meeting on 2nd March 2020 there were a couple of suggestions:

1. Bollards at area 3 & 7
 2. Move area 5 further down [before the White House], so drivers can see the gateways before they reach the brow of the hill. These suggestions were communicated to SPC members and given their full support. WCC were then contacted and these suggestions made.
- On 29th June 2020 we received the updated drawings from WCC and a comment noting these plans will now be forwarded to County Highways for pricing. It was noted there was an error due to a misunderstanding in these drawings, in that bollards were added to all locations, which was not requested, and these were removed from all areas except 3 & 7.

As a Parish Council we need to reaffirm the Scheme:

Vote:

Reaffirm the Scheme with WCC

Majority vote. Four agreed and one abstention

Scheme 2

- It has always been SPC line of thinking that once the original Scheme had been delivered, we would look at additional measures. With that in mind SPC made contact with WCC and asked if it would be possible to position gateways at the top of Middletown Lane by the Jubilee Pub, on Sambourne Lane just before Capilano corner down from Astwood Bank cricket club. This would be subject to land ownership and funds available from our County Councillors delegated budget. WCC has now drawn up the plans and Cllr Taaffe showed these, using 'screen share'.
- What this means is that we will have gateways on all roads leading to Sambourne and Middletown to the benefit of all parishioners residing in these areas.
- As a Parish Council we need to vote on the Scheme:

Vote:

Confirm that we can go back to WCC to agree the Scheme

Unanimous

- Following the vote, Cllr Bond asked "Are we going to have the money"
- Cllr Rickhards responded, I will make a strong recommendation to the officers that funds are allocated out of the 20/21 budget.
- Cllr Taaffe then made a statement regarding comments from others on email and social media:

I have many times, be that on social media or email, been accused of requesting, on the 8th August, that S&MM admin team take down previous posts on the subject of the Gateway Scheme, I can categorically state here and now that is NOT true. I did, however, on 17th September ask a member of the admin team to take down the most recent post showing plans of Scheme 1. This was because the drawing had not been discussed at PC level, is inaccurate and is not the Scheme that WCC are proceeding with.

- Cllr Bond made a statement that his legal advisers have told him that since the 2nd March 2020 all decisions made by SPC were unlawful.
- Cllr Bond also directed a question to Cllr Taaffe regarding the changing of the name of the Scheme, and what is the significance of that. Cllr Taaffe responded by saying, no significance, it is exactly what it is and a senior manger from WCC has agreed with our description.
- At this point Cllr Bond responded by saying there are residents of Middletown at the Zoom meeting and perhaps we should ask them. The Chairman reminded Cllr Bond that public participation had finished.
- Cllr Taaffe said that the important thing is that there are now gateways at all entrances to the village.
- Cllr Rickhards asked Cllr Bond if the inclusion of the extra gateways in Scheme 2 would also constitute being unlawful.
- Cllr Bond said that the advice from NALC was that all decisions made since the 2nd March 2020 were unlawful and he had this in writing 4 times.
- The Chairman asked Cllr Bond if he had supplied the picture, as he saw it, to WALC and NALC. The email the Parish Council received from WALC on 23rd September 2020

stated: ***The agendas and minutes covering the period from September 2019 through to March 2020 indicate that the Parish Council was conducting its business correctly.***

- Cllr Bond reminded the Chairman of the Nolan principles, transparency and that residents were present and asked for him to give details of the phone conversation between himself and Cllr Rickhards, during which decisions were made in relation to the Gateway Scheme. He repeated that he had asked for details of what had been discussed, under the Freedom of Information Act, and that he had been told to read the minutes.
- The Chairman responded that Cllr Bond had gone ‘underground’ by dealing directly with WCC and had badgered them into the inclusion of the extra gateway. None of the other Parish Councillors were aware of this and it had not been discussed by the Parish Council. The Chairman asked ‘where was the transparency’ and Cllr Taaffe added that Cllr Bond had still not supplied the minutes from his meeting with WCC.
- Cllr Bond asked if the Chairman wanted to open a confidential session, this was declined.
- The Chairman asked where Cllr Bond was heading with this, why he was actively trying to block the Scheme, and if he had his own agenda. Cllr Bond repeated that all decisions made since the 2nd March 2020 were unlawful and that he would like it on record that he did not like it being said that he had been badgering.
- Cllr Taaffe reminded Cllr Bond that the senior manager at WCC had stated that ultimately they did not need SPC approval.

Action: Cllr Taaffe

9. Middletown Resident’s Group

Lucy Wharrad thanked the Chairman for giving her the opportunity to speak. She reported that a meeting of the Middletown Residents had been held to speak about issues that were affecting the hamlet and whether SPC were able to assist.

Signage for Middletown

- More speeding signs are needed
- A dead end sign for Middletown cul de sac is required
- Clear signage for Middletown cul de sac. The existing one is inadequate.
- Lucy has spoken to the Localities Manager at the County Council and will contact him again when she has received a response from SPC.
- The Chairman responded by saying it was good that these points have been raised and SPC will do their best to support them.

Speeding in Middletown

- Lucy asked about Community Speed Watch. Cllr Taaffe responded by saying that details of the Scheme were put in the Parish Council minutes and volunteers asked for. Two residents of Middletown responded and are now in the team of 10. If anyone else from Middletown would like to join they can be put on the reserve list. The problem is that the team needs to be trained and, because of CoVid, that is on hold.

Cllr Taaffe hopes to be able to update the Parish Council at the next meeting. Cllr Taaffe also confirmed that there was a location in Middletown for a speed check but, for obvious reasons, he could not say where.

- As residents of Middletown seemed to be under the impression that they were not kept informed of events in Sambourne, even though the Agenda and Minutes were displayed on the notice boards and website, the Chairman suggested that he email Lucy every time anything changed on the website. In this way she could relay the information to other residents. Lucy agreed to this.
- Cllr Rickhards said that he is quite prepared to put forward to WCC the suggestions for extra signage as part of the delegated budget. Cllr Taaffe said he would also support this, as an extension to the Gateway Scheme.

Action: Chairman, Cllr Taaffe, Cllr Rickhards

Other issues

- Middletown requires a litter bin and a dog waste bin and would like to know who to approach for this. The Chairman suggested an initial approach be made to Stratford DC, but bear in mind an emptying fee has to be paid.
- Residents would like to create a mini Middletown Green. They would like to relocate the notice board to the other side of the road on the grassed area and install a bench and planters. This would create a safe environment to read the notices on the board. They asked if SPC could ring fence monies to support this. The Chairman questioned the location of the benches and planters, from a safety point of view. Lucy responded that she would speak to the Localities Manager and gain advice. The Clerk asked Lucy if she would put this suggestion in writing to the Parish Council. Any decisions concerning money has to be agreed at a Parish Council meeting as an Agenda item. Lucy agreed to do this.

Action: Lucy, Clerk (for Agenda)

Budget

- Lucy stated that in 2017/18 Middletown had £250 spent on it, 2018/19 £175.68 was spent and in 2019/20 nothing was spent and she feels justified that Middletown are entitled to more. It should be noted that the flood maintenance grant was used for flood alleviation in Middletown in 2019/20.
- Lucy questioned the tendering process of the contract for grass cutting in Sambourne. She also said that the grass is not cut in Middletown as often as residents consider it should be. The Chairman confirmed that the mowing contract would, in future, be put out to tender and secondly that if residents of Middletown feel they are not happy with the mowing in Middletown Lucy will raise it with SPC and the contractor will be contacted.

Action: Chairman

Laura Loy raised a question concerning the procedure for dealing with planning applications. The Chairman responded by saying the process we adopt is for Stratford to inform properties

in the vicinity. The application is then discussed amongst the Councillors and the submission made to Stratford District Council. The applications are not discussed publicly.

Wayne Bates stated that he felt there was increasing demand about what people want out of the Parish Council. Residents in Sambourne pay the lowest precept in the district and maybe discussions should take place to consider raising the amount requested. The Chairman stated that we are advised that we cannot raise the precept by a large percentage but a reasonable increase could be discussed. The Clerk said that the Precept was discussed at the November meeting and if a list of suggested items were to be received in advance of this meeting this would inform our discussions. The Chairman thanked Wayne for his support.

Action: Chairman, Clerk

10. Allocation of Training Budget

It was agreed that an amount to be allocated to the training budget would be discussed at the November meeting. The Clerk was asked to circulate a list of WALC training courses to be held in the next financial year.

Action: Clerk

11. Review of Conservation Project in the Recreation Ground

A report has been received from Katie Hague giving progress on the Project. They made excellent progress over last Autumn and this Spring, planting over 500 bulbs and clearing large areas of undergrowth. Their progress was then hampered by CoVid restrictions so further plans had to go on hold. When the Parish Council last discussed the Project it was agreed that there should be a 12 month probation period set. No complaints have been received in the past 12 months and it was therefore proposed to extend the Project.

Vote taken to extend the probation period for a further year: Unanimous

12. Donation towards Upkeep of Coughton Cemetery

The Parish Council makes an annual donation of £200 towards the upkeep of Coughton Cemetery.

Vote to make the annual donation of £200 towards the upkeep of Coughton Cemetery:

Agreed. 4 agree with one abstention.

Action: Clerk

13. Adoption of Equality and Diversity Policy

Vote to adopt the Equality and Diversity Policy

The vote to adopt the Policy was unanimous.

14. Accounts – to include Local Government 20/21 Salary Award

The Clerk presented a list of bank payments agreed from 1st July 2020 – 27th September 2020. Attached.

20/21 National Salary Award. The National Joint Council for Local Government Services has agreed the new pay scales for 20/21, to be implemented from 1st April 2020. The Chairman stated that the Parish Council has always conformed to these agreements and accepted the fact that the award is backdated to April.

Vote to agree the National Salary Award, backdated to 1st April 2020, for the Clerk:

In favour. Unanimous

15. Planning

Since the meeting held in March 2020 we have dealt with 10 planning applications. The details are attached to these minutes and will appear on the website.

16. Correspondence

None

17. Chairman's business

None

18. Date of the next Meeting

Parish Council meetings are held bi-monthly and, although the date of 2nd November 2020 was agreed at the meeting, to conform with the two month rule it has been decided that the next meeting will be held on:

Monday 30th November 2020 at 7.45 pm

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm