

Minutes of the Swaffham Prior Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 9th July 2020 at 730pm via Zoom.

Present: Mr John Covill (Chair) (JC), Mr Andrew Camps (AC), Mr Alan Durrant (AD), Mr David Greenfield (DG), Mrs Sandra Gynn (SG), Mr Peter Hart (PH), Mr Paul Latchford (PL) and Mr Steve Kent-Phillips (SKP).

In attendance:

Mrs Jude Griffiths (Clerk)

Cllr Charlotte Cane (ECDC) (CC)

There were 3 members of the public in attendance.

38/20-21 Apologies for absence:

None.

39/20-21 Members declaration of interest for items on the agenda and requests for dispensation:

SG declared a personal interest in agenda item 50/20-21.

The Chair proposed that Agenda Item 50/20-21 be moved to directly after Agenda Item 40/20-21 as the two items were connected. This was agreed.

40/20-21 Public participation for items on the agenda:

David Isted stated that he was speaking for the family of George Frost, who is buried in the Swaffham Prior Cemetery. Mr Isted alleged that Mr Frost's gravestone had been damaged during the PC's recent safety test, carried out by the Clerk and AD. Mr Isted wanted the safety tests to be carried out by someone with a relevant City and Guilds qualification, with a formal risk assessment and visual assessment completed prior to the test. He pointed out that more modern graves can be left untested and that a maximum of 25kg pressure should be applied to a memorial stone.

50/20-21 To discuss the carrying out of the safety check on graves in the cemetery:

SG stated that there had not been suitable public notification prior to the carrying out of the safety or 'wobble' test of the cemetery memorial stones and that she did not consider those who had carried out the task to be suitably qualified. SG asserted that the failure of the seal between the cement plinth and the marble stone on the grave for which she co-owned the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial was due to excessive pressure used which she believed would not have happened if the testers had had e.g. a relevant City and Guilds qualification. SG stated the stonemasons that erected the stone in question had listed four reasons why the seal may fail, of which SG believed force to be the right one and that an independent stonemason she had invited to look at the stone also blamed force.

AD quoted the Institute of Cemetery and Crematoria Management guidance for Management of Memorials (August 2019) that cement joints when properly fixed should withstand up to 25kg of pressure and if they fail, would be the responsibility of the memorial mason. AD also noted that modern graves 'can' be left untested, not 'must' in the Ministry of Justice guidance.

AD stated that less than 25kg of pressure was applied to each memorial stone.

PL noted that gravestones are a sensitive area and the process of testing therefore needs careful consideration.

The Chair noted that the existence of a pecuniary interest in the repair of gravestones meant that this discussion must be left until the next meeting and only the procedure of carrying out safety checks in the cemetery could be considered.

The meeting was suspended whilst two members of the public spoke. Mr Isted reiterated his belief that only older graves should be tested and that the tester should have a City and Guilds qualification. Mr Gynn noted that the ombudsman had found in favour of gravestone owners where stones had been laid down by unqualified testers and this had the potential to be expensive for a PC. The meeting resumed.

The PC discussed the lack of clear information as to what qualifications were needed for the tester to be suitably qualified. SG asked the Clerk for details of the cemetery training attended – the Clerk confirmed that it had taken place in a classroom, not a cemetery and that the Clerk had felt able to carry out the tests competently following the training. The Clerk noted that during the testing, no problem had been noted with the Frost gravestone.

It was agreed that the regulations needed changing to incorporate more sensitivity towards the memorials and their owners, for example by pre-publicising tests so that owners are aware and can attend if they so desire. However it was agreed that the changes to the cemetery regulations should be discussed at the next meeting (13th August 2020) when the councillors had had time to study all available advice in more detail.

41/20-21 To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 11th June 2020:

SG added to item 33/20-21 “SKP asked how much it would cost to repair unsafe stones? The Clerk did not have a figure, but said that having undertaken the ICCM cemetery management course, she could undertake the checks on the graves and report back the number needing work. AD offered to assist.” *The minutes were approved unanimously with this amendment.*

42/20-21 Reports:

- a) CCC representative
None received.
- b) ECDC representative – Cllr Charlotte Cane (CC) reporting.
A report was circulated by email prior to the meeting. The District Council was now meeting via Zoom. Operational Services Committee met on 8th June and approved the Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and also the Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020-2025.
Finance and Assets Committee met on 18th June. They noted the report from the external auditors on the accounts to the year ended 31st March 2019 and approved the external audit plan for the year ended 31st March 2020 and the internal audit plan, despite this last not covering anything arising from COVID19 or Brexit. £150,000.00 was approved from CiL funding for road improvements. A COVID-19 Member Working Party was established to “help drive an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable recovery for East Cambs” and with the aim to capture the environmental and community pluses that have been seen during lockdown.
At the next ECDC meeting of 16th July there will be a financial update from East Cambridgeshire Trading Company (ECTC) which has warned it may not be able to repay its £1million loan to ECDC when due, asked for a 2 year extension and reduced interest rate. At present it is 18 months behind on building plans due to COVID

The Chair invited questions.

JC noted that after reporting an incidence of fly-tipping, he’d received a reply saying it had been cleared away on a Friday when it was not gone until the following Tuesday afternoon.

CC said this was probably due to a mistake rather than deliberate but took the details to raise the question.

43/20-21 Matters arising from previous minutes (for information only):

None.

44/20-21 Correspondence for consideration/circulation:

- a) Email from S French responding to questions raised during the presentation re the Heating Scheme Noted.
- b) Email from P and S Northrop raising concerns about the proposed Heating Scheme layout. DG shared 4 alternative layouts being considered for the screening of machinery on site by moving it to the A14 side of the barn, including the turning circle for buses.
- c) Email from C Turner regarding overgrown footpaths and damage to electrical box. To be covered under Agenda Items 49/20-21 and 51/20-21.

45/20-21 Consideration of planning applications received:

1) 20/00556/FUL 8 Tothill Road, Swaffham Prior, Cambridge, CB25 0JX

Proposed extension and alteration to existing bungalow – refused.

PL asked if it was known why this application was rejected. SG reported a conversation with the owner saying that it was for minor points. CC was invited to comment and said that it was due to concerns that the proposed building would look too different to other buildings in the road and that the owner had been in conversation with the Planning Officer. SKP noted that alterations to the planning proposal had not been submitted so that the proposal had been rejected and the owner then invited to resubmit. SG stated that the owner had done so.

46/20-21 Accounts for payment including:

a) Clerk's salary and taxes	£310.00
b) Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management membership	£95.00
Total	£405.00

Receipts: ECDC CIL £1,687.89

A direct debit of £148.88 to Eon for street lighting was also noted. *SKP proposed that the accounts be accepted and paid; seconded PH, passed unanimously.*

SKP noted that the cost of replacing Mr Sumner's fence panel (see min. ref. 2425, February 2020 meeting) will be £105.00, to be paid at the next meeting after the invoice had arrived.

47/20-21 To review the use of BACs for payments by the PC.

The Clerk noted that the three month review of payment by BACs was now due. SKP proposed that payment by BACs continue and be reviewed next at the November meeting; *seconded PL, passed unanimously.*

48/20-21 To discuss the Speed Indicator Device (SID) repairs.

SKP reported that when the SID was on the High Street near the play area, the plastic over the camera lens was scratched; while it was deployed on the B1102 complaints were received that it was not working. *PH proposed that SKP take the SID to be checked over and if repairs cost less than £100.00*

to go ahead. PL added that anti-scratch plastic should be quoted for. Seconded DG, passed unanimously.

49/20-21 To discuss the claim of damage to an electrical box by CGM

DG shared pictures of the damaged electrical box and outlined the contents of the email received by the Clerk regarding alleged damage to the electrical box by CGM during grass-cutting. DG had inspected the box and reported back to the PC by email. DG noted that the damage was not recent, as shown by the ivy growing through the box and that it was unlikely that the vegetation on the bank had been cut for a very long time. DG also questioned if the box was within the curtilage of the house. DG thought it unlikely that CGM had caused the damage. PL asked if any proof had been provided that the damage was due to CGM? The PC agreed that a letter should be written to find out.

Action: the Clerk to write a polite letter to Mr Turner saying that while the PC sympathise, there is no evidence that the damage was caused by CGM and asking if he could provide proof that it was.

51/20-21 To decide the PC's response to vegetation overgrowing paths through the village

PH reported that after the complaint from Mr Turner regarding the footpath running from Mill Hill to Cage Hill, he had walked along the footpath and the top third was pretty clear, the middle needed some brambles removing and the bottom third was narrow but passable. The Clerk asked how wide a path was wanted and PH replied that ideally two people should be able to walk side by side, but that not many country paths enabled this. PH also noted that the footpath behind the school was very overgrown and that this was an annual problem and as such the PC should have a general policy to deal with it. AC noted overgrown hedges opposite the Beeches. DG suggested putting a friendly reminder in the Crier for people to trim back overgrown vegetation.

Action: Clerk to put message in the Crier.

Action: Parish Councillors to walk the footpaths to assess their condition.

52/20-21 Clerk's Report

- a) The safety tests in the cemetery had been carried out as requested.
- b) ETS had carried out the tree removal as agreed under min. ref. 2438 (March 2020), but during the work had accidentally chipped two cremation plaques that had become hidden under soil.
Action: Clerk to contact the plaque owners.
SG asked if ETS were to trim the remaining trees. The Clerk said no, the PC had agreed that the ECDC Tree Officer, Kevin Drane, was to be consulted over the yew trees before any work was ordered on them. *The Clerk amended this at 926pm – ETS had left a tree that they found to be full of nests, intending to finish removing it in the Autumn, when nesting season had finished.*
- c) The Clerk asked if the playground was to be reopened in light of the new government relaxing of restrictions. Documents pertaining to what was required to be in place for the safe reopening of playgrounds had been circulated by email prior to the meeting. DG had carried out a risk assessment on the playground and recommended not reopening. PL asked the legal position of the PC regarding the playground. DG said the PC was responsible for preventing transmission of COVID 19. The requirements for safe reopening (such as cleaning regimes, numbers using equipment limited, bans on food and drink, booking systems) were discussed and the decision was reached that the playground should remain closed at present.
Action: Clerk to replace signs on the playground gates to make it clear it is still closed.
- d) Wicken PC had supplied their email guaranteeing that they would maintain the gate at the edge of Upware and had been sent an email of support.
- e) The village hall had been booked for the Annual Village Assembly.
- f) Mr Stocks had been contacted to say that he could remove the ash tree overhanging his garden and the tree had now gone.

g) The fly-tipping had been reported as requested and had now been collected.

53/20-21 Parish Councillors' Reports:

- a) SKP made the PC aware that an email had been received from the Newmarket Clerk noting travellers were parked up in Newmarket.
- b) SG noted a white horsebox had been parked up overnight in the Village Hall carpark, although it had caused no damage or problems.
- c) AC noted that the proposed 3m wide cycle track between Swaffham Prior and Burwell would have to go on verges that are not wide enough. SKP commented that these were proposals for discussion only.

The meeting ended at 925pm.

54/20-21 Open Question Time

Michael Limb commented that the shower tray dumped in the drainage ditch beside the Burwell Tigers' field gate had been removed, but that the ditch was now very overgrown and may need clearing of vegetation. He also noted that hedge trimming may have to wait until the end of nesting season.

Business concluded at 927pm.

Unapproved