

**Minutes of the Swaffham Prior Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 14th December 2023
at 7.30pm in Swaffham Prior Village Hall.**

Present: Cllr John Covill, Cllr Alan Durrant (AD), Cllr David Greenfield (DG), Cllr Peter Hart (PH), Cllr Kent-Phillips (SKP), Cllr Ruth Lambert (RL) and Cllr Kate Muscroft (KM).

In attendance: Jude Griffiths (Clerk)

There were 3 members of the public in attendance.

146/23-24 To receive apologies for absence and to approve reasons for absence where appropriate.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sandra Gynn and Paul Latchford.

147/23-24 Members' declaration of interest for items on the agenda and requests for dispensations.

None

148/23-24 Public participation for items on the agenda
A member of the public noted a typo in the numbering of agenda items.

Item 149/23-24 was delayed to allow Cllr Charlotte Cane (ECDC) to arrive).

150/23-24 Approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 9th November 2023.
SKP proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting; seconded PH, passed with 1 abstention.

151/23-24 Matters arising from previous minutes (for information only).
136/23-24 DG noted input from Cllr Charlotte Cane that a need for affordable housing expressed in a survey made it very difficult to object to planning applications for exception sites.
Action: Clerk to write to Cambridgeshire ACRE noting that the PC will add the survey request to the January meeting agenda.

152/23-24 Correspondence for consideration/circulation.

- a) Emails regarding damaged fence between the church and the cemetery and fallen trees/hedging on Cooper's Green. Noted.
- b) Email update from the Bus, Walking and Cycling working group at ECDC, asking for feedback. Noted.
- c) Email from CCC invitation for PCs to attend a Teams meeting on 11th January at 6.15pm to engage regarding business and finance proposals for 2024-2029. Noted.

153/23-24 Consideration of planning applications received:

- a) 23/01330/LBC and 23/01329/FUL Changes to approved garage conversion. Changes include, internal layout, external window and door fenestration, addition of rear timber decking, changes to the existing glazed link roofs – retrospective. The Smock Tower Mill, Mill Hill, Swaffham Prior, Cambridge, CB25 0JZ.
KM proposed the PC object to the application, expressing disappointment that the application was retrospective and that the alterations to the external structures changed the appearance and outline of the building, should not have been made without planning consent and the mill should be returned to its previous condition; seconded SKP, passed unanimously.

Approved:

- b) 23/01156/TCON To comply with Condition 10 (Tree Topping, Lopping & Felling) of Decision Notice 10/00913/FUL. 32 Cage Hill, Swaffham Prior, Cambridge, CB25 0JS. Noted
- c) 23/00942/FUL Two levels of raised decking to the rear and alterations to existing boundary treatments- Part retrospective. 10 Green Head Road, Swaffham Prior, Cambridge, CB25 0JT. Noted

149/23-24 Reports

- a) Cambridgeshire County Council – report circulated by email. No representative attended.
- b) East Cambridgeshire District Council – report circulated by email. Cllr Charlotte Cane (CC) attended.
CC reported on a meeting she had attended with Sanctuary Housing. 212 houses are standing empty across the district. There are 1092 families on the housing waiting list, 97 of which are in urgent need.
Sanctuary have taken on a contractor to deal purely with bringing empty properties up to spec and estimate they will complete approximately 20 houses every 10 weeks. They are averaging 45 days to complete a repair in tenanted houses. CC is setting up regular meetings between Sanctuary and a District Councillor and also has obtained direct contact details for the local Sanctuary officer. Sanctuary is the biggest of several Housing Associations, offer low rent (approximately half commercial rent) and security of tenure.
The Chair invited questions.
SKP asked how many houses were standing empty in Swaffham Prior? CC said it was difficult to know but she would attempt to find out.

154/23-24 Accounts for payment including:

a) Clerk's salary and taxes	£588.00
b) Viv Elston – repair and restore of 2 benches and VH noticeboard	£498.00
c) Clerk's out-of-pocket expenses	£100.00
d) Chair's honorarium	£40.00
e) Village Hall 2023 rent of meeting room	£168.00
Total	£1394.00

Income:

Parochial Charities – grass cutting contribution -	£432.00
Allotments	£6.25
ECDC FIG (play equipment grant)	£10,000.00

SKP proposed that the accounts be paid in full; seconded AD, passed unanimously.

SKP proposed that £1000.00 be transferred from the savings to the current account; seconded PH, passed unanimously.

SKP noted that the budget-setting meeting will be in January where he anticipated that the precept would have to be raised.

SKP noted that the Optimum cashcard programme is closing the PC will have to have a different card. The 2 best options were a Barclays Debit card or a HyperJar cash card.

SKP proposed that JC look into getting a PC Barclays Debit Card attached to the current account; seconded KM, passed unanimously.

SKP noted that despite DG approaching 5 companies for quotes for grass-cutting contracts, only CGM had responded with the same deal as previously.

SKP proposed that the PC accept the CGM quote for a 3 year grass-cutting contract; seconded KM, passed unanimously.

155/23-24 To approve an update to the Press and Media Policy to cover ‘copy’ for publication.

SKP proposed that with the correction of 2 typos, the updated Press and Media Policy be approved; seconded PH, passed unanimously.

156/23-24 To agree the quote for metal edging on the cemetery pathway.

SKP proposed that the PC accept the quote; seconded AD, passed unanimously.

157/23-24 To adopt a nature recovery plan to fulfil the PC’s Biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021.

SKP proposed that the Nature Recovery Plan be adopted by the PC; seconded KM, passed unanimously.

The PC thanked Mike Barker for his work producing the Plan.

Action: Clerk to copy the Plan to the ECDC Ecology Officer, Emily Flintham.

158/23-24 To hear an update regarding to the proposals for the Greenways through Swaffham Prior and respond accordingly.

DG reported. Emails of the latest proposals for the greenways had been circulated prior to the meeting. The current preferred choice for the GCP was the original design offered involving a build-out near the 30 mph sign by the slip way end followed by a 20mph speed limit along the High Street, having rejected suggestions from the PC.

Objections of the PC to this design were that:

- It would involve removal/reduction of hedges and treelines at an environmental cost;
- It was unnecessarily expensive;
- It reduced the width of the road at the expense of agricultural and heavy goods vehicles and;
- On past experience of cycleways, the greenway will not be well-maintained once built.

DG suggested that the PC write a letter, thanking all involved for their time and effort but expressing disappointment that the response sent focused on the GCP and designers preferred option, belittled the other variations and did not consider an option of stopping the greenway at the edge of the village and joining it to the current cycleway, which would be the simplest and cheapest option, especially as the High Street has a good safety record and there is no speeding problem recorded in the village.

SKP proposed that DG and PL compose a letter as described above, including that the PC will be seeking legal advice on the matter, to be circulated for approval to the PC by email and then sent; seconded PH, passed unanimously.

159/23-24 **To resolve that, pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press leave the meeting during the consideration of Agenda Item 160/23-24 and 161/23-24 because of the confidential and sensitive nature of the information to be considered.**

It was so resolved.

160/23-24 To undertake provision of a clerk’s pension.

SKP proposed that the PC agree to undertake provision of a NEST pension for the Clerk; seconded PH, passed unanimously.

161/23-24 To amend the Clerks contract according to the outcome of agenda item 160/23-24.

SKP proposed that the Clerk's contract be amended in line with the outcome of agenda item 160/23-24; seconded PH, passed unanimously.

162/23-24 To approve a proposed gravestone design.

Approved.

163/23-24 Report on Heating Scheme.

DG reported.

The sound evaluations have been completed. Significant works are required, the proposals have been made and are to be approved soon. The parishioner is being kept informed.

The Heating Scheme has continued to perform during the recent cold spell.

164/23-24 Clerk's Report.

- a) The Clerk attended an SLCC meeting on 8th December at which it was suggested that .gov.uk websites and emails would become compulsory for PCs within the next few years, which needed to be considered in the PC's budget.
- b) The operational inspections for the playground have been scheduled for every 3 months, fitting with the yearly inspection in April.
- c) The remaining allotment plots were advertised in the Crier. PL is looking into ground cover for the new plots.
- d) The Clerk attended an ECDC Planning Conference for PCs at the end of November, which highlighted the need of the PC to comply with the Biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021. It also highlighted the Local Heritage list – a list of historical buildings important locally, which offers some protection against development and demolition, although less than full Listing.
Action: The Village Sign and the Landgirls Memorial were both suggested as additions to the Local Heritage List.

165/23-24 Parish Councillors' Reports

- a) DG. County Broadband have surveyed, got sign-ups and moved on. Gigaclear are in Commercial End, submitted permits and will know if they have been granted in the 2nd week of January. Gigaclear plan to have completed fibre installations in Swaffham Prior in April 2024.
SKP noted that BT aim to phase out landlines in the next 3 years.
- b) RL noted that a footpath across or around Dencora Field would join Rogers Road/Allix Grove/Fosters Lane to the network of footpaths through the rest of the village. It was commented that establishing a new public right of way was extremely difficult.
- c) JC. The Parochial Charities have had the playground trees checked and trimmed. The board of the Parochial Charities is in need of another Trustee – SKP volunteered.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Open Question Time.

None.

Business concluded at 9.20pm.