

Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on:

Monday 7th July 2025

At 7pm in the Small Hall at St Paul's Church and Community Centre, Covingham

Present: Cllr Bacon, Bates, Curtis, Hawkes (Chair), Kay, Parsons, Ricketts, Sandle, Walker and Wichall

Also in attendance: Laura Evans (Clerk)

1. Consider Co-option of a Parish Councillor

Resolved: Cllr Bacon proposed the co-option of Cllr Parsons. Cllr Kay seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr May (unavailable).

3. Declaration of Interests

Cllr Hawkes reminded Members that they should declare any known interests in any matter to be considered at the beginning of the meeting and during the meeting if it becomes apparent that they have an interest in the matters being discussed.

Cllr Kay declared an interest in agenda item 14 as she is an allotment holder.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June 2025 were approved and signed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the previous minutes

Dorcan Brook Bank- no update

Naming of a footpath- no update

Noticeboard – Covingham Square – A noticeboard has been ordered that can be fixed onto the existing posts, therefore removing the need to apply for permission from SBC to place an item on the highway and not incurring the associated charges. Delivery is expected within a month – 6 weeks.

Larksfield Hedge- Cllr Hawkes met with the resident, the border inside the property boundary had been planted with hedging that has grown through the fencing into parish maintained land. The resident is aware that the Parish Council wish for the hedge to be retained and will be trimmed by the Contractor. Anything growing from, or into their property can be cut.

Diseased and dying trees- Cllr Hawkes had investigated the concerns about the diseased and dying trees raised by the Grounds Maintenance Contractor. Full details had been passed to SBC for action. They have confirmed that the trees will be removed but will not be replaced due to the costs involved. Cllr Hawkes to include these when compiling the list for Trees for Climate planting later in the year.

6. Public forum

No questions or comments were received from members of the Public.

7. Police Matters

No Police personnel were present at the meeting so no update was provided.

8. Chairs Verbal Update

Thames Water Pumping Station- Cllr Hawkes attended an online project briefing for the Swindon New Eastern Villages (NEV) wastewater infrastructure by Thames Water. Road closures will need to take place to be able to complete the works which will be carried out in the school holidays to keep disruption to a minimum.

Swindon Local Councils Forum (SLCF)- Parishes were asked if they would support writing to Wiltshire Police asking them to consider issuing additional powers to PCSOs. The current powers and extra powers required were not presented. The meeting agreed in principle to the PCSO's having more powers, a letter of support cannot be written until further details are received.

The SBC Partnership agreement with Parishes is not making progress.

SLCF are creating a list of outstanding issues within Parishes to get these issues progressed. Cllr Hawkes to ensure that the naming of the footpath, Dorcan Brook and Covingham Park Lease are added to the list.

Action- Cllr Hawkes

9. Clerks Verbal Update

Clerks Operational Meeting- A direct reporting system for Parish Councils is currently being created, with a three tier escalation process. The question was asked if Parish Councils would prefer that just the Clerk has access to the reporting and updates rather than individual Councillors.

Resolved: The meeting agreed it would be happy for the Clerk to report issues.

10. Parish Maintenance Engineers

- **Monthly Reports** – No comments received.

- **Grounds Maintenance Matters**

Bench in Covingham Park- request to repaint and re-lay the paving slabs.

Resolved: Cllr Ricketts explained that this particular bench is not a Parish Council asset and therefore is not covered by our Memorial Bench Policy. The resident should make contact with the Contractor who installed the bench.

Yew hedges – watering in summer.

The Contractor had carried out three waterings to the Yew hedge due to the extreme temperatures. Watering is £44 + VAT.

Resolved: Cllr Wichall proposed a £400 provision for future watering at the discretion of the Contractor and for the three already completed.

Cllr Ricketts made an amendment to the proposal for a £600 provision for watering. Cllr Kay seconded the amended proposal and was unanimously agreed.

11. Planning Matters:

a) To consider any planning applications.

Application: S/HOU/25/0686 (1st July)

Location: 111 Merlin Way, Covingham, SN3 5AN

Proposal: Erection of single storey rear extension, conversion of garage into habitable space and front porch.

Resolved: The meeting agreed there were no objections to this proposal.

Application: S/HOU/25/0597 (9th July)

Location: 2 Tealsbrook, Covingham, SN3 5AU

Proposal: Erection of single storey side extension.

Resolved: The meeting agreed there were no objections to this proposal.

- b) **To note any comments from the Planning Working Party submitted between meetings.**
The meeting noted that no comments had been submitted.

c) **To note any decisions**

Application: S/HOU/25/0585

Location: 23 Swanbrook, Covingham, SN3 5AJ

Proposal: Erection of two storey side extension and single storey rear extension- Granted.

12. Financial Matters

- a) To approve Schedule of Payments Month 04- July 2025

Resolved: Cllr Wichall proposed approval of the Schedule of Payments Month 04- July 2025. Cllr Sandle seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

- b) To receive the monthly accounts reconciliation

Resolved: No comments were made regarding the monthly accounts reconciliation.

- c) To approve the Lloyds Bank Current Account and Lloyds Bank Reserve Account Bank reconciliation statement for the period of 01st June to the 30th June 2025

Resolved: As this item was introduced due to an advisory comment made by the Auditor in the Internal Audit report that was not accepted by the meeting, this item would not be included as a future agenda item.

Cllr Curtis entered the meeting at 7:50pm

- d) Q1 Budget Monitoring

Resolved: No comments were made regarding the budget monitoring.

13. Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Report for 2024/25, as prepared by Auditing Solutions, was received and had been reviewed. The meeting noted that the Auditor considered the Parish Council's financial processes to be robust. In light of this, the meeting questioned the reason and need for the recommendation that had been made and agreed that it would not be accepted and therefore not introduced.

14. Allotment Update

Cllr Curtis attended the Wanborough PC Village Maintenance and Footpath meeting which the allotment society report into. No further progress has been made on the formal relationship between the two parishes in connection with the allotments.

15. Grounds Maintenance Contract Tender Process

To approve the Grounds Maintenance Contract Tender process

Resolved: Cllr Curtis proposed approval of the Grounds Maintenance Contract Tender Process. Cllr Bacon seconded the proposal and was agreed with a majority vote and one abstention.

Clerk to action the process.

Action- Clerk

16. Basketball Courts

A young resident emailed the Clerk with suggestions for improving the basketball courts.

Resolved: Cllr Wichall proposed that the discussion be deferred until the next meeting as Cllr May had put so much time and effort into getting the previous quotes and should be able to contribute. Cllr Bacon seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

Clerk to add to the next agenda.

Action- Clerk

17. Creation of a natural flood alleviation area in Covingham Park

To discuss the two options that have been suggested.

The Councillors and the Contractor were provided with the draft options prior to the meeting. The Contractor's preference was option two but with two amendments; moving the meeting area further east as the area suggested gets rather wet, and for wildflowers to be planted within the grass. Cllr Kay raised concerns that the orchard area will be in a lot of water.

Cllr Hawkes to feedback the two amendments and concerns over the orchard to the Conservation Lead at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

Resolved: Cllr Kay proposed draft two with the matters raised taken into consideration. Cllr Walker seconded the proposal and was unanimously agreed.

Action- Cllr Hawkes

18. The Handy Mag

The meeting agreed that the following should be included in the article;

- Completion of first phase of weed spraying
- SBC removal of diseased trees

19. Matters for consideration

Cllr Bacon raised concerns that there is a gap forming around the paving slab in the Memorial area.

Maintenance Engineers to be asked to infill with soil.

Action- Cllr Hawkes

The meeting closed at 8:44pm

Signed.....Date.....