

MINUTES OF COATES PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY 30 JANUARY 2023
7.00PM Coates Village Hall
Chair for this meeting: Robbie Whitfield

Councillors and Officials:	
Whitfield, Robbie (RW)	Chair
Hobson, Andrew (AH)	Councillor
Harris, Stephen (SMH)	Councillor
Dobson, John (JD)	Councillor
Gilly Torry-Harris (GTH)	Councillor
Brown, Jacqueline	Councillor
Alan Moorcroft (AWM)	Clerk/RFO

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Clement-Davies had sent apologies due to personal reasons; RW to clarify the date at which her resignation takes effect. Simon Large (Tree Warden) sent apologies for his absence on holiday.

2. DECLARATION OF MEMBER INTERESTS ON AGENDA MATTERS including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests

All Councillors present declared that they had no such interests, and there had been no changes since the last meeting.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING – 15 NOVEMBER 2022

JB had emailed AWM with comments on the notes of the last meeting. Amendments were made by hand, and the notes were then signed by RW and AWM.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Two applications had been received for consideration (23/04445/FUL 2 Manor Farm and 23/04485/FUL Dormer Cottage). No objection had been raised on 04445 but the comments on the initial application had been repeated. No objection had been raised to date on 04485 but not all councillors have responded yet.

JB asked for approval to attend a GAPTC training course on planning costing £35.00. After considering the benefits of the proposed training this was proposed and accepted.

JB raised the need for a meeting to be held if an objection to an application was contemplated. This had been considered previously and AWM had sent an email with a proposed process for dealing with any potential objections; this is to be re-circulated. In summary planning applications were to be initially considered via email. If an objection was contemplated an extension to the deadline for a response from CDC would be requested and a meeting of the councillors convened. Any agreed objection could then be sent to CDC following due consideration and a vote by the council. It is thought that the small number of potential objections makes a meeting for every planning application unnecessary.

At this point AH arrived.

5. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR TONY BERRY AND STEPHEN HIRST

None.

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6. FINANCIALS

Following the last meeting the following payments have been made. Clerk's wages (net of PAYE) £435.80, WAH allowance £42.00 and PAYE to HMRC £109.00. Payments to GAPTC £45.00 for clerk training and £25.00 councillor training. Payroll costs £17.95.

Pre-approval was considered, proposed and seconded to pay GAPTC £25.00 (councillor training), clerk's net wages £589.60, WAH allowance £72.00 and travel expenses £31.50 and HMRC £147.20. The previous clerk is due a payment of £25.50 (gross) due to an increase in the hourly rate of pay, less the deduction of PAYE. An invoice for £3,095.46 has also been received for the repairs to the playground – see discussion below. It was proposed and accepted that £4,000 will be moved from the precept account to the treasurer's account when payments are due to be made.

The bank mandate change removing AH and adding RW has been completed successfully.

GAPTC have appointed the same internal auditor as last year (Mary Leonard). A request for information has been received by AWM and will be dealt with shortly.

7. PLAYGROUND

The initial repair work has been undertaken but there are some unresolved issues. It was accepted that the lateral movement on the see-saw and the replacement caps on the posts were acceptable. The scramble net on the smaller climbing frame has now been returned. There is uncertainty over whether all the work on the larger climbing frame has been completed; the contractor's job sheet shows it as completed but Keith Austin (KA) has said it remains to be completed. AWM to clarify the position with KA and if it remains uncompleted advise the contractor that payment is being withheld until all work has been completed. Pre-approval to pay the contractor (£3,095.46) on completion of any outstanding work to the satisfaction of Councillors was proposed and seconded.

Bromfords have now removed the barriers used when repairing the dry stone wall.

8. MAINTENANCE OF COUNCIL ASSETS

SH and GTH reported back on this issue.

All assets are shown on the Asset Register, and Councillors discussed garden maintenance at the entrance to May Tree Close and Victory Green.

Some discussions had been held with potential contractors but any decisions here will need to await the outcome of a tendering exercise. Potentially, to be included among this work is the trimming of the hedge between Victory Green and the property of Angus Edmonds (AE); an initial quote has been made for this work but again will need to await the outcome of any tendering exercise. CPC and AE are still in discussion as to how the cost of any work will be paid. AE has mentioned the possibility of planting wild flowers in the land at the entrance to May Tree Close. AH is to talk with AE to clarify his intentions regarding this land. The tender process can be considered further once AE's intentions are established.

9. GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT

AWM has spoken with PK. He accepts that the contract with CPC is ambiguous. PK's preference is for the contract to last 2 years, i.e. 2022 and 2023. Councillors maintain that the Contract covers the period 2022 to 2025 as state. AWM will communicate this to PK and will look to tighten up the understanding of the signed contract.

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PK would like clarification of what areas are to be cut as some villagers have been challenging why he does not cut the grass outside their property. AWM is sourcing a map to clarify the areas covered by the Contract. PK is unhappy with the amount of dog mess in the grass but this will hopefully be reduced following the action taken.

10. SPEEDING INITIATIVES

AH has successfully applied for bin stickers, due to be sent out on 31 January. A decision will need to be taken as to where these should be placed to achieve maximum affect.

Consideration was given as to whether to hold a full speedwatch event or a less formal survey. The former has to be conducted with signs which it was felt would make motorists slow down before entering the monitored zone. A less formal event might be more appropriate but clarification of the requirements will need to be established. AH will liaise with the police and then set up an appropriate event.

Speed cameras located in the village would cost in excess of £3,500 which is beyond the resources of CPC.

11. ACTION POINTS FROM LAST MEETING

All items on the agenda have been dealt with satisfactorily and can be regarded as closed.

12. 2023/24 BUDGET

GTH and AWM had undertaken work on this prior to the meeting and drawn up a draft Budget for approval, which had been circulated to Councillors. The precept request needed to be made by 31 January so a decision on the budget needed to be made at the meeting. The spreadsheet attached to the agenda was prepared on the basis that the precept equalled the proposed budget. It did not follow that this would be the case and the council could claim a higher or lower precept which would impact on the reserves.

GTH and AWM provided some detail on the figures included in the proposed budget. The playground costs in 2022/23 had exceeded the figure proposed in the previous budget, but were expected to settle down to a lower figure for 2023/24. There was some streamlining of the categories for Maintenance of Assets, allowing more flexibility according to what was needed at any particular time. Both the playground costs and maintenance of all CPC assets expenditure were consolidated under separate headings which should allow more flexibility over what is spent. Because some Councillors would be standing down before the election on 4 May, it was thought that a contested election would be unlikely, so specific provision for election costs was not included; if this proves to be incorrect then any costs will come from reserves and an increase made to the 2024/25 precept.

AH questioned the large increase in the audit costs. A credit had been available in 2022 because of issues around the 2021 audit which had reduced the amount paid in 2022. The figure for 2023/24 was the 2022 cost, excluding the credit, with an inflation increase. JB questioned the large increase in the anticipated 2022/23 spend over the spend to November 2022. This was almost entirely accounted for by the cost of the playground repairs. The councillors were satisfied with the proposed spend and approved the draft budget.

In previous years the precept had been increased by 5%. If the proposed budget was claimed as the precept this would result in a 9.5% increase for a Band D council tax payer. GTH had noted that District and County Councils would be restricted to a 3% and 5% increase respectively. The councillors wanted to show financial restraint, and a possible increase of 9.5% was thought

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unacceptable. It was proposed and accepted that a precept of £10,500 would be requested. This would result in a 3.64% increase for Band D council tax payers and the reserves at 84% would be within CPC's stated policy.

13. OTHER ITEMS

Councillors expressed their sadness to learn of the sudden death of Mr Kuldip (Kolin) Singh Dhillon on 19 January 2023 and send their sincere condolences to his family. Mr Dhillon was a popular resident of the village, and the Council is particularly grateful for his patronage of the Coates Grande Fiesta at Trewsbury Farm in 2017.

JB has recently undertaken training on "Being a Better Councillor." The training was recommended for any new councillors and had given JB more confidence in what was expected of her. JB thought that all new councillors should be provided with copies of the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders. JB gave details of the items she considered most important and has some notes that she would share with other councillors if they thought they could benefit from them.

There will be an election for all seats on CPC in May 2023. With 3 councillors stepping down consideration will need to be given to encouraging new people to stand for election. An agenda item will be included for the next meeting to consider both the election process and what publicity can be used to encourage new candidates to step forward.

14. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION AT NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at 7pm on Thursday 16 March 2023. The May meeting will be held at 7pm on Thursday 18 May 2023. Consideration will be given to setting a rhythm for subsequent meetings.

The meeting closed at 21.50

Chairman Signature: 
Parish Clerk Signature: 
Date: 16 March 2023

NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 16 March 2023 at Coates Village Hall.
Electronic copies of these and previous Minutes are available from the Parish Clerk:
clerk@coatesparish.org.uk