

MINUTES OF COATES PARISH COUNCIL (CPC)
MEETING
THURSDAY 18 MAY 2023
7.00PM Coates Village Hall
Chair for this meeting: Robbie Whitfield

Councillors and Officials:	
Whitfield, Robbie (RW)	Chairman
Harris, Stephen (SMH)	Councillor
Gilly Torry-Harris (GTH)	Councillor
Brown, Jacqueline (JB)	Councillor
Alan Moorcroft (AWM)	Clerk/RFO

Members of the Public:
Large, Simon (SL) Tree Warden
Hirst, Stephen (SH) County Councillor
McKeown, Mike (MMc) CDC councillor

The items below were considered by the councillors in the order in which they are set out below. The numbers against them are the numbers as per the agenda.

1. APOLOGIES

None received, but MMc was due later because of another commitment.

2. ELECTION OF NEW CHAIRMAN

RW was prepared to continue in the role of chairman. There were no other nominations and RW was proposed and seconded as the chairman. JB was proposed and seconded in the role of vice chairman.

The chairman and councillors all completed Declarations of Acceptance of Office. RW, GTH and SH provided completed Register of Members' Interests documents; JB will provide her completed document shortly.

3. 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.

4. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING – 16 MARCH 2023

All proposed amendments had been incorporated within the draft notes. There being no further proposed amendments the notes were agreed and duly signed.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

No comments had been made to the clerk in relation to the erection of an agricultural barn at Trewsbury Farm (23/01322/AGFO).

6. RECEIVE REPORTS RELEVANT TO COATES PARISH FROM:

SH had provided a report in advance of the meeting (Appendix 1) and answered questions on this and also the recent improvements to the Trewsbury Road junction.

9. TREES

AWM had informed GAPTC of CPC's view that they were only responsible for trees on land belonging to CPC; no response had been received. Both AWM and GTH had contacted the insurance brokers about the level of cover in relation to any incidents involving trees. AWM had been informed that as long as CPC acted responsibly, undertook risk assessments and

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followed the advice of qualified arborists then they were covered. Having spoken to BHIB Councils Insurance, GTH's view was that, despite having Public Liability cover for up to £10 million, there was no guarantee that the insurer would cover every possible claim, but this was unavoidable.

SL provided details on the trees near to the Village Hall. Ownership is uncertain, but CPC has no responsibility. It was thought some work was required and the Village Hall committee are considering what action is required. The cherry trees in Victory Green are generally doing well, but unfortunately 1 of them has died.

A survey of the trees on CPC land is to be undertaken. AWM will arrange for quotes to be provided and will ensure the firms contacted are qualified, PI insurance is held and will provide details of the trees to be surveyed.

12. SPEEDING INITIATIVES

Bin stickers encouraging motorists to restrict their speed to 20mph have now been received. These will be distributed through the village with a sticker explaining how they should be displayed; AWM will look at getting these printed and at what cost.

At this point SL and SH left the meeting.

7. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

7.1. The councillors had considered the Internal Auditor's (IA) report (Appendix 2) and AWM's note on revised procedures in advance of the meeting. In summary the IA was satisfied with the general running of the council's systems but had made a number of recommendations on administrative matters and asked that items are minuted in more detail. It was proposed and seconded that a system of Internal Control would be adopted, the bank reconciliations would include copy invoices and bank statements, a table of transactions would be provide and signed by the chairman and regular reviews made of spending against the budget. A proportion of the Reserves (£2,000) are to be earmarked as playground reserves as expenditure on this item can sometimes be larger than anticipated in the budget.

7.2 The Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 was considered and approved and signed by the chairman and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

7.3 The Accounting Statement 2022/23, accounts, bank reconciliation and Variations Statement were considered and approved. The chairman and RFO signed the Accounting Statement 2022/23.

7.4 It was agreed that CPC qualified as an exempt body as both income and expenditure were below £25,000. The Certificate of Exemption 2022/23 was signed by the chairman and RFO.

7.5 It was agreed that the Notice of Public Rights would be published on 5 June 2023.

6. RECEIVE REPORTS RELEVANT TO COATES PARISH FROM:

At this point MMc arrived. Congratulations were given to MMc on his recent election.

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CDC are currently forming a cabinet following the election; MMc does not know if he will be appointed.

MMc is involved in promoting community energy projects and is to speak at an event in Coates Village Hall (29 June). This started in Somerford Keynes with a number of volunteers looking at energy savings, e.g. an agreed discounted price for solar panel installation. MMc gave details of community solar farms in which he is involved and hopes that these can be rolled out further across local parishes.

MMC recently attended the public hearing on the Tunnel House development. The outcome of the hearing was a planned site visit. MMc agreed to attend the site with RW ahead of the planned site visit. The objections are against the environmental impact of the proposed accommodation pods.

At this point MMc left the meeting.

8. FINANCIALS

There are no outstanding invoices from 2022/23.

Payments were made from pre-approvals for the clerk's wages, WAH allowance and arrears due to the former clerk at National Pay scale 11 rates. Payment was also made to HMRC for PAYE on wages. The payment due for printer cartridges awaits approval.

The invoices on the Schedule of Payments (Appendix 3) were considered by the councillors; two late invoices were added – PATA payroll (£14.00) and postage for VAT repayment claim (£6.85). They were all proposed and seconded and the Schedule was signed by the chairman and RFO.

The IA had recommended that contractual and statutory payments only needed to be approved by councillors annually. Once done payments could be made without further approval from the councillors, on condition that they did not exceed the approved amounts. Payments of the clerk's wages and WAH allowance at National Pay scale 11 rates, together with associated PAYE were proposed and seconded. The contractual payments due for grass cutting, at £255 per cut plus VAT were proposed and seconded.

Pre-approval to pay the clerk's wages and WAH allowance at National Pay scale 11, plus associated PAYE were proposed and seconded.

To cover the payments due it was proposed and seconded to transfer £1,500 from the Precept account to the Treasurer's account.

The bank reconciliation at 8 May 2023, financial analysis and bank statements were considered. The bank balances at 8 May of £14,526.36 (Precept account) and £868.83 (Treasurer's account) were proposed and seconded as a correct reconciliation.

No review of the Bank Mandate was required as no changes had occurred. In future this will only be considered if changes are made, or annually at the May meeting.

It was agreed that no changes were required for direct debits on the Treasurer's account. The only direct debit is for the annual payment to the Information Commissioners Office.

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Due to issues accessing HMRC's website a manual VAT claim in the sum of £1,463.74 was made on 15 May. The issue preventing access to the HMRC website has now been resolved.

10. PLAYGROUND

The RoSPA survey has been undertaken and their report has been received. All of the scores given are very low and no issues were raised by RoSPA. The report has also been seen by Keith Austin. He agrees that there are no issues arising through the report, but did raise the issue of algae on the decks of some of the equipment. This can become slippery in wet conditions. It was agreed that AWM would consult with Greenfields and Sovereign Play to try and determine what action could be done and at what cost.

11. MAINTENANCE OF COUNCIL ASSETS

The only application to undertake the garden maintenance work came from Paul Atkinson (PA) at a price of £22 per hour. PA has undertaken work for CPC before and the councillors are satisfied with the quality. It was proposed and seconded that PA be appointed. AWM is to contact PA to confirm his appointment, and will follow up in writing. Among other matters, AWM is to discuss with PA both the extent of the work required on the hedge in Victory Green and establish the cost.

12. SPEEDING INITIATIVES (CONTINUED)

The email of 8 May from Andrew Hobson (AH) concerning the missing road signs was considered. It was agreed that as AH already had this issue in hand then the matter should be left with him.

RW updated the meeting on the cost of Gateway signs. The cost of having these installed on the various roads into the village would run into several thousand pounds. It was resolved that this issue would not be pursued further.

13. ACTION POINTS FROM LAST MEETING

None, other than those already dealt with under other headings.

14. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARISH POLICY DOCUMENTS

The councillors will review the existing policies and propose any revisions deemed necessary in advance of the July meeting. RW will consider the Code of Conduct policy, Standing Orders, Data Retention and Privacy policy and Publication Scheme. GTH will consider the Risk Management and Grants policies. JB will consider the Health & Safety policy and the Disciplinary & Grievance Arrangements. SH will consider the Financial Regulations and Reserves policy. AWM will revise the Asset Register in line with the movement in the CPI.

15. OTHER ITEMS

1. AWM reminded the councillors that while he held personal contact information for each of the councillors he was not at liberty to share it with other councillors without consent.

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2. AWM had not received a renewal invitation from the insurance brokers and has emailed them for details of the cost. In 2022 a 3 year deal had been entered into and no increase in the cost of the policy was anticipated. AWM will advise the councillors further when more details are received.

3. JB has taken over the oversight of the defibrillator and will try and source some instructions on how it should be used.

4. Details had been received about a bench to celebrate the King's coronation. It was thought that the cost was too much for CPC to justify the expenditure.

5. The website providers (Athena) have indicated that they will contact AWM to discuss the service provided. It was thought that an easy way of establishing the amount of visits would be useful and that Google Analytics would be beneficial (subject to cost).

6. It was agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting would be held immediately before the 20 July CPC meeting. Consideration will be given as to how to improve attendance at the meeting and whether to invite a guest speaker.

16. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION AT NEXT MEETING

None.

The meeting closed at 10:00pm.

Chairman Signature: *Robbie Whitfield*
Parish Clerk Signature: *A. W. Moorhead*
Date: *1st August 2023*

NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 20 July 2023 at Coates Village Hall.
Electronic copies of these and previous Minutes are available from the Parish Clerk:
clerk@coatesparish.org.uk

Appendix 1 – report (17 May 2023) from Stephen Hirst, Gloucestershire County councillor
Appendix 2 – Internal auditor's report for the year to 31 March 2023
Appendix 3 – Schedule of Payments considered