

SWINDON PARISH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
held on
13th May 2014
at Swindon Village School

Present:

Peter Allen (Chairman of the Parish Council)
Shaun Cullimore (Clerk to the Parish Council)
9 members of the public

Introduction by Peter Allen

Peter Allen stated that the meeting was for the benefit of parishioners; it was not a parish council meeting.

Minutes of Previous Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th May 2013 contained instances where Tracie Crews' first name was spelt "Tracey". Subject to this correction the minutes were accepted.

Report by Peter Allen (Chairman of the Parish Council)

Cllr. Allen thanked the Parish Councillors. They are not paid but take up office to serve the community. The Parish Council is a statutory body that must be consulted on local planning applications. Cllr. Allen also thanked the Clerk for his work during the year.

Cllr. Allen commented on the state of the roads in the parish. Many of the problems were the result of inadequate repairs and reinstatements following road works. He believed that the County Council could do more to get contractors to do remedial work under guarantee. He also noted that our County Councillor (Bernard Fisher, not present) had a budget of £20,000 to spend on highways works.

Car transporters unloading on Manor Road continue to cause obstructions. The Parish Council is looking at various options to resolve this.

The Parish Council had established an Allotments Working Party to put structure into the running of the allotments. Rents have been collected up to date and a troublesome tree has been felled. The relationship between the allotment holders and the Parish Council is a positive one.

The Parish Council now have responsibility for the trees in the Manor Court Amenity Area. A tree report had been commissioned and some safety work conducted as a result.

Boy racers continue to be a problem in the parish. Sadly the joint working group with the police and the Borough Council had disbanded.

Cllr. Allen was concerned at the number of advertising signs along Kingsditch Lane.

At present the parish does not have any flood wardens. Any member of the public can be a flood warden. They are only expected to report problems; they do not need to get involved in direct action.

Regarding the proposed North West Cheltenham Urban Extension ("Elms Park"), Cllr. Allen noted that the Regional Spatial Strategy, now being superseded by the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), had opposed any reduction in the Green Belt. It was difficult to see how local infrastructure could

accommodate a housing development of the proposed size. The studies that will examine the impact of the proposed developments on the existing communities have not been published (e.g. Traffic Management). The Borough Council appears to expect Parish Councils to liaise with developers with regard to traffic issues but the developer will only be concerned with the interface of their development with the road network; they do not consider the knock on effects that will be felt elsewhere in the area.

Finally, Cllr. Allen noted with concern the continued expansion of the Wingmoor Farm land fill complex, with new businesses and processes being accommodated.

Report by Shaun Cullimore (Clerk to the Parish Council)

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council finances. See attached.

Any Other Business

The meeting was opened to questions and comments from the floor.

It was noted that there would be a JCS meeting tomorrow hosted by the Cheltenham Alliance in Hatherley Village Hall.

The JCS team had indicated that the Parish Council could seek to have an area of land designated as a Local Green Space. If the development were to proceed it might be possible to create a buffer between the development and parts of the parish.

Again if the developments proposed in the JCS were to go ahead it might be possible for the Parish Council to make use of Section 106¹ money. The Borough Council had undertaken to put together a presentation on this topic.

The Borough Council had also agreed to arrange training in planning matters for the five Cheltenham Parish Councils. Cllr. Allen would prefer the Borough Councillors and the Parish Councillors to receive training together but the Borough Council is currently considering doing the sessions separately.

Discussions had taken place between the Parish Councils and the Borough Council regarding double taxation. In parished areas residents have to pay an additional precept to enable the Parish Councils to provide services. In unparished areas the Borough Council must provide these services with no additional charge to residents. Double taxation refers to the fact that people in parished areas are effectively paying twice for some of the services they receive. It does not seem unreasonable to expect the Borough Council to recognise the saving they are making and to return some money to the Parish Councils. To date the talks have been inconclusive.

Blocked watercourses were discussed. In general it is the responsibility of the owner of the land through which the watercourse runs (the riparian landowner) to ensure that it is free flowing.

It was noted that the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) remains the major concern of the Parish Council at present.

The meeting closed at 9:35pm.

Shaun Cullimore
Clerk to Swindon Parish Council

1 [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 106](#)

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Report of the Parish Council Clerk to the Annual Parish Meeting 13th May 2014

The Parish Council's year runs from 1st April to 31st March. Following expenditure during the year of £12,100.27 the Parish Council finished 2013-2014 with a deficit of only £68.43. This compares with deficits of £2,142.62 in 2012-2013 and £1,675.19 in 2011-2012. In fact the Parish Council has had to draw on its reserves in each of the last five years.

It is the stated policy of central government to devolve responsibility for services to the grass roots level and to free local councils from red tape and bureaucracy. However, they wish to maintain a tight grip on the purse strings. The government is considering requiring Parish Councils to hold a referendum if they wish to increase their precept by more than a small percentage. The Parish Council would be required to pay for the referendum, a cost of perhaps £3000. If the Parish Council set a low precept and this measure was then introduced the Council would effectively be trapped with low income.

The same financial pressures are being experienced by the Borough Council. As a result they have been looking to save money by withdrawing services they are not required to provide in law. It now falls to the Parish Council to maintain trees previously looked after by the Borough Council and to pay its share of election costs.

Against this backdrop the Council set a budget for 2014-2015 that recognised the likely impact of its increased responsibilities. The difficult decision had to be made to raise the precept ahead of inflation for 2014-2015. Despite this our projections show a continuing reduction in reserves.

Parish Council elections take place every four years. As I have mentioned, to date the Borough Council has taken responsibility for all election costs. In future our part of these costs will be recharged to the Parish Council. In the interests of democracy it would be good to see many candidates standing and a contested election. However, from a financial point of view this would result in considerable expense, money that could be put to good use elsewhere. In the event eight candidates declared themselves for the election on 22nd May (those being the existing Council members). There are nine seats available so the election is uncontested, the existing members are re-elected and these costs have been avoided. We will now renew our efforts to fill the one vacant seat.

The Village News, our monthly magazine, is popular with many people in the parish. It offers a great way for the Parish Council, the church and other local organisations to get their news across. The Parish Council pays for the printing whilst members of the church take care of delivering a copy to every home in the parish. Printing costs have gone up dramatically in the last couple of years and we continue to review how to produce the News as efficiently as possible. The costs are offset to some extent by the income we receive from the advertising. I am sure traders see the great value to their businesses that this local advertising medium offers and will continue to support us.

Moving on to the allotments, there had been some confusion over rent collection in 2012-2013. With the help of our allotment manager and the goodwill of the tenants this has

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

been resolved. The Parish Council now has an allotment working party to provide a link between the tenants and the Council. We also held a get together of the allotment holders and some of the councillors. This took the form of a social evening at the Village Hall. It gave everyone an opportunity to share their views and was a great success. One of the bug bears of the tenants was the presence on the allotments of a large fir tree. The tree had grown large enough to shade an area of ground and make it unproductive. We were able to get the tree felled (though the wet weather resulted in the contractor's truck becoming stuck in the mud for several days).

During the year the Council met with a member of staff from the Borough Council with responsibility for flower planting schemes in the parks and gardens of the Borough. A planting scheme for Swindon Park was discussed and agreed. As part of the commemoration of the start of the First World War an area of ground has been prepared for the planting of poppies.

I would like to record a couple of "thank you"s. Firstly, Karen Evans edits the Village News with skill, patience and good humour. The News has now been going strong for forty years. We are lucky to have it and to have someone like Karen to keep it going. Secondly, Ian Brown manages the allotments on behalf of the Council. Ian has collected rents (including his own!) and got together with some of the tenants to undertake repairs and maintenance. The Council are grateful for his support.

Finally, just a reminder that there is still a vacancy on the Parish Council. The Council aims to protect and improve the quality of life within the parish for all residents. The Council would welcome a public spirited soul stepping forward to contribute a little time and wisdom to their deliberations.

Shaun Cullimore
Clerk to Swindon Parish Council

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2013-2014

	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012		
INCOME					
Precept	£9,431.82	£9,500.00	£7,100.00	Box 2	
Other income					
Allotment rents	£1,200.00	£112.00	£669.01		Note 6
Support grant	£618.18	£0.00	£0.00		Note 3
Village News adverts	£450.00	£216.00	£430.00		Note 4
Misc	£329.93	£18.55	£0.00		Note 5
Interest	£1.91	£4.03	£7.62		
Total income	<u>£12,031.84</u>	<u>£9,850.58</u>	<u>£8,206.63</u>		
EXPENDITURE					
Staff costs	£4,434.44	£5,188.07	£4,403.78	Box 4	Note 7
Allotments	£993.61	£145.83	£47.20		Note 8
Meeting room costs	£300.00	£280.00	£294.00		
Maintenance	£0.00	£0.00	£245.79		
Salt bins	£0.00	£0.00	£341.94		
Ground works	£950.00	£732.49	£0.00		Note 1
Administration					
Audit fees	£230.00	£255.83	£265.00		
Insurance	£272.95	£265.00	£265.00		
Loan repayments	£1,843.42	£1,844.03	£1,843.42	Box 5	
Subscriptions	£570.43	£450.45	£662.94		Note 9
General admin	£59.90	£63.07	£396.27		
Training	£392.35	£173.25	£97.40		Note 11
Advertising	£2,003.17	£2,326.88	£969.08		Note 2
S137 payments	£50.00	£83.30	£50.00		
Village sign	£0.00	£185.00	£0.00		Note 10
Total expenditure	<u>£12,100.27</u>	<u>£11,993.20</u>	<u>£9,881.82</u>		
Deficit for year	-£68.43	-£2,142.62	-£1,675.19		
Retained surplus b/f	£10,720.49	£12,863.11	£14,538.30	Box 1	
General fund c/f	<u>£10,652.06</u>	<u>£10,720.49</u>	<u>£12,863.11</u>	Box 7	
Represented by					
Cash at bank	£11,114.59	£11,798.92	£13,111.20	Box 8	
Debtors including VAT	£685.92	£243.68	£494.93		
	<u>£11,800.51</u>	<u>£12,042.60</u>	<u>£13,606.13</u>		
Creditors	-£1,148.45	-£1,322.11	-£743.02		
	<u>£10,652.06</u>	<u>£10,720.49</u>	<u>£12,863.11</u>		
Box 3 (total income less precept)	£2,600.02	£350.58	£1,106.63		
Box 6 (expenditure less staff and loan repayments)	£5,822.41	£4,961.10	£3,634.62		
Box 10 (total borrowings)	£6,684.09	£8,178.45	£9,608.19		

Note 1 – Includes major tree works previously undertaken by the Borough Council.

Note 2 – Printing costs, having increased substantially, have now reduced.

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2013-2014

Note 3 – In previous year Council Tax Support Grant was included with the precept.

Note 4 – Advertising revenue is back to the level in 2011-2012.

Note 5 – Includes the following exceptional items:

- (1) a credit from Cotswold District Council (£133.78)
- (2) receipt of a training bursary (£100.00)
- (3) the writing off of an untraceable liability (£77.06)

Note 6 – Rents not collected in 2012-2013 were recovered in 2013-2014.

Note 7 – 2012-2013 figure included payment of two clerks in hand over period.

Note 8 – Works undertaken included felling of a tree and flood alleviation.

Note 9 – Includes 9 subscriptions to “Clerks and Councils Direct”.

Note 10 – Due to higher costs the village sign project has been postponed.

Note 11 – Training cost includes clerk's CiLCA enrolment.