

Minutes of the SWINDON PARISH ANNUAL MEETING **held on 14th May 2024 at Swindon Village Hall**

Present:

Lisa Whitaker (Chair of the Parish Council)
Shaun Cullimore (Clerk to the Parish Council)
18 members of the public

Minutes of Previous Annual Parish Meeting:

The minutes of 26th April 2023 were accepted as a true record.

Presentation of the Freedom of the Parish Award

Borough Councillor Flo Clucas spoke of the long professional relationship she had enjoyed with the late Parish Councillor Helen Wells. Helen had worked very hard over many years, both as a member of the Parish Council and through the Save the Countryside organisation, to minimise the impact of housing developments on the parish.

Cllr. Clucas had asked Helen if she would consider joining the Borough Council but Helen had made it clear that her family always came first.

Helen's energy and activism was a key factor in securing the Local Green Space, which should preserve a green area for the benefit of all residents, old and new.

Cllr. Clucas presented the Freedom of the Parish scroll to Richard and Emma Wells.

Report by Parish Councillor Lisa Whitaker (Chair of Swindon Parish Council)

See attachment 1.

Report by Shaun Cullimore (Clerk to Swindon Parish Council)

See attachment 2.

Report by Borough Councillor Flo Clucas

Cllr. Clucas brought up the issue of the long closure of Manor Road and the resulting disruption. More descriptive signage was required.

Renaming of the Amenity Area

A number of alternative names had been put forward for the Amenity Area. Meeting participants were invited to enjoy pizza, tea and coffee while they voted for their preferred option.

There used to be a mill in the area and "Old Mill Way" narrowly received the most votes. Thanks to all who offered their suggestions.

Any Other Business

The Local Green Space allocation was discussed. It had not yet been decided who would own the area, or how it would be used and maintained. There were many options (e.g. nature areas, allotments, orchards, etc.).

Tom Harcourt expressed interest in doing work along Old Mill Way to encourage wildlife.

Bill Hawkes proposed a vote of thanks to the Parish Council for the work they had done on behalf of the community in the last year. The vote was carried. Thank you Bill.

The meeting closed at 8:55pm.

Shaun Cullimore
Clerk to Swindon Parish Council

ATTACHMENT 1 – CHAIR’S REPORT

Good evening, everyone. I'm Lisa Whitaker, recently elected Chair of Swindon Parish Council.

It's a pleasure to see so many familiar faces gathered here tonight for our Annual Parish Meeting. Before we dive into the details of our progress over the past year, let's take a moment to reflect on the journey we've been on together.

First, I'd like to acknowledge the profound loss we experienced with the passing of our dear colleague, Helen Wells. Helen's commitment to our community left an indelible mark on all of us. In recognition of her exceptional service, we have posthumously conferred upon her the Freedom of the Parish. It's a small gesture compared to the immense impact she had on our lives, and on the parish.

On behalf of our entire community, I want to express my gratitude to all of the Parish Councillors and Shaun, the clerk, for their tireless work and dedication. I'd like to extend this thanks to James Cornish who has stepped down as Chair after two years, due to his growing family commitments, and formally congratulate him and his wife on their recent birth of their son.

Now, let's turn our attention to the strides we've made as a community over the past year. As a Parish Council we have been committed to road safety for a number of years, doing what we can to work to improve things within our sphere of influence. This year we have successfully applied for and distributed speed awareness stickers along key roads in our parish. These small but significant measures contribute to the overall safety and well-being of our residents, and those passing through. In other positive developments, the installation of new grit bins on Church Road and Quat Goose Lane/Brockhampton Lane will enhance safety during the winter months.

Our collaborative efforts with Gloucestershire Constabulary have also yielded positive results. By engaging in open dialogue and partnership with our local law enforcement, we're able to address concerns and ensure the safety and security of our community members. This has included positive engagement around the security of the park, and around anti-social behaviour and associated littering of nitrous oxide gas cannisters.

Our partnerships with borough and county councillors, as well as neighbouring parishes in Cheltenham, have proven to be invaluable. We jointly organised a successful event held last autumn that brought all five parishes together, fostering greater cooperation and solidarity within our wider community. It's through these partnerships that we're able to amplify our voices and effect positive change on a larger scale.

As ever a rumbling concern to us as a community is over planning matters and this year the Parish Council has responded to updates to the Elms Park application, as well as the application to develop Home Farm at the end of Quat Goose Lane. Part of this involved publicising and raising awareness within the community of both the consultations themselves and the methods by which residents can respond.

Our successful monthly litter pick has helped to keep our neighbourhoods clean, and we are proud and grateful for the team of volunteers who turn up rain or shine to tidy up our verges, footpaths and green spaces. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who continue to dedicate their time and energy to keeping our parish clean and tidy looking.

ATTACHMENT 1 – CHAIR’S REPORT

I'd also like to recognise the efforts of Sharon, Barry, and the volunteers who generously gave their time to restore the sundial in the park. Their hard work and dedication are a testament to the strength of our community and the pride we take in preserving our local heritage. Similarly, the restoration of the war memorial in the churchyard took place this year. It serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by previous generations, and it's a local landmark we are committed to.

Last year I told you we were going to be working on improving the amenity area – we have done several tree works including felling the dead Chestnuts. Unfortunately these works can take time to put in place due to restrictions of being in a conservation area, and some individual trees having protection orders, however safety is a core issue and this came into play when the willow near the bridge fell in the storm. This coming year we will commission a tree survey for the whole area and develop a maintenance plan. We are also looking to rename the area to give it a more inspiring a local feel – more on that a bit later.

The ongoing process of purchasing the Village Hall car park represents a significant step forward in improving accessibility for all residents. As with many of these sorts of things progress has been slow, however I am pleased to report that we are nearing the conclusion of this project that will see the car park some into the Council's ownership.

I will address the challenge of filling the three vacancies on our council. I encourage anyone who is passionate about our community and eager to make a difference to consider stepping forward and getting involved.

Finally I want to take this opportunity to thank our Parish Councillors and Shaun, for their outstanding work over the past year. We are grateful for their service, and we look forward to continuing our work together to make our community an even better place to live, work and thrive

Thank you all for your continued dedication and support. Here's to another year of growth, unity, and shared success.

Lisa Whitaker

Chair of Swindon Parish Council

ATTACHMENT 2 – CLERK’S REPORT

It is my role tonight to provide a summary of the Council’s activities from a financial perspective.

The Council is mainly funded by the precept; the money that the Parish Council demands from the Borough Council. This forms part of your council tax bill. I say “demands” rather than “requests” as the precept is entirely within our control; no-one, including the Borough Council, can say we are asking for too much or too little. We do, however, have to produce a budget to say what our spending plans are, and to justify the precept.

The precept was set at a figure of £12,175.58. The precept was reduced in 2021-2022 and was maintained unchanged for the following 2 years. For a household in council tax band D this equates to a bill of £17.21 per year.

We received income from allotment rental (£1,391.00) in 2023-2024. I would like to thank Chaz and Gill, who manage the allotments so well and collect the rents on my behalf.

One of our major expenses is the publication of the Village News. Advertisements placed in the Village News contributed £360.00 towards our costs. The advertising income dropped off during Covid but has largely recovered. My thanks to Karren who manages our advertisers as well as doing sterling work actually publishing the Village News.

A major expense has been, and will continue to be, tree works in the Amenity Area. We had long planned to deal with two chestnut trees but were blind sided by the willow near the bridge on Manor Road deciding to shed a major limb. Public safety has to be our prime concern. We plan to move towards a more proactive approach to managing the trees, taking regular action as required rather than having to respond to disasters in short order.

We have long been negotiating the purchase of the Village Hall car park from the Borough Council. In Prestbury the Borough Council sold a car park to a developer. Courtesy of Councillor Bernard Fisher, our County Councillor, we successfully applied for a £30,000 grant to secure our car park’s future for the community. There are problems with the sewer outflow from the Village Hall. Before signing on the dotted line we need to understand exactly what our liability might be.

We believe in transparency. As a Local Authority we must make certain information publicly available. Our financial information is available on our website, including our budgets, our accounts and the results of our audits.

Every authority must declare a 30 working day period during which the public can exercise their right to view the authority’s detailed financial information, including receipts, bills, contracts, etc. This year the period will be from 3rd June through 12th July. In practice I am happy to give people sight of documents at any time, given reasonable notice.

In summary we had income of £44,238.15, expenditure of £14,390.28 giving a surplus of £29,847.87.

My thanks to my wonderful Parish, Borough and County Council colleagues who give their time to the cause with good humour and make my job a pleasure.

Shaun Cullimore
Clerk to Swindon Parish Council

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
INCOME				
Precept	£12,175.58	£12,175.58	£12,175.58	£12,218.28
Other income				
Allotment rents	£1,391.00	£1,247.00	£1,271.00	£1,193.00
Village News adverts	£360.00	£162.00	£72.00	£387.00
Misc (see note 1)	£170.23	£20.23	£37.42	£260.23
Interest	£141.34	£7.35	£0.36	£1.00
Growing Our Communities grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2,000.00
"Being a Better Councillor" course (see note 3)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£550.00
Support grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Transparency grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
"Build Back Better" grant	£30,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Total income	£44,238.15	£13,612.16	£13,556.36	£16,609.51
EXPENDITURE				
Staff costs	£6,481.17	£6,081.74	£5,637.76	£5,588.20
Other costs				
Administration	£1,323.36	£1,993.46	£1,201.41	£2,189.82
Communications (see note 2)	£2,957.78	£2,814.73	£2,645.48	£2,432.82
Ground works	£0.00	£6.00	£112.36	£462.08
Allotments	£72.66	£7.24	£0.00	£17.29
Meeting room costs	£270.00	£270.00	£240.00	£0.00
Grant to Royal British Legion	£110.00	£100.00	£90.00	£90.00
Volunteer Support	£25.31	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Chairman's allowance	£0.00	£50.00	£0.00	£0.00
Special projects	£3,150.00	£1,504.69	£1,383.20	£580.87
Total expenditure	£14,390.28	£12,827.86	£11,310.21	£11,361.08
Surplus (deficit) for year	£29,847.87	£784.30	£2,246.15	£5,248.43
Net assets brought forward	£32,679.87	£31,895.57	£29,649.42	£24,400.99
New assets carried forward	£62,527.74	£32,679.87	£31,895.57	£29,649.42
REPRESENTED BY				
Cash at bank	£65,155.67	£34,015.67	£34,072.59	£31,831.57
Debtors including reclaimable VAT	£791.24	£312.07	£259.83	£240.77
Pre-paid expenses	£10.99	£232.98	£10.38	£22.37
Creditors	-£1,430.16	-£1,880.85	-£2,447.23	-£2,445.29
Pre-paid income	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	£64,527.74	£32,679.87	£31,895.57	£29,649.42

Note 1 – Includes waiving of room hire fees by Village Hall in 2020-2021

Note 2 – Cost of Village News and web site

Note 3 – Swindon Parish paid £450 to GAPTC for putting on the course and collected £550 from attendees from other parishes