

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting of Cowbit Parish Council, held on Monday 13th of November 2023 at 7:30pm at the Cowbit Village Hall

Present: Trevor Tyrell, Janet Barnes, Eric Fragale, Daniel Sandhu and James Stamp

Clerk: Mrs Harrison

District Councillors: T Sneath, A Woolf and A Casson

County Councillor: N Pepper

7 members of the public.

In the Chair: Trevor Tyrell

49. Chairman's welcome and Public Forum.

- Cllr Casson advised members that the new bin had been erected the day after the last PC meeting and that the old bin had been scrapped as it had rusted through and the catch had gone.
- A young resident, Kyle, spoke about a proposal for using the playing field for Community football teams, both young and old.
 - He is currently a football coach.
 - Looking to get funding
 - Start at the younger ages then work up.
- TT asked about the required pitch dimensions, as the field is currently only set up for youth teams.
 - Kyle advised that Crowland and Castle Sports in Spalding both have pitches available.
- DS spoke about the current pitch usage and gave some advice on sponsorship and that the local press might be interested too.
 - The PC were encouraged to support Kyle's venture and advised that training sessions for mixed ages and abilities at the weekends would be good whilst getting teams together.
- Members agreed that it should be added to the agenda for their next meeting.

Parish Council Meeting

50. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Apologies had been received from Carol Clark and Peter Simpson. It was resolved to approve these apologies.

51. To receive Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and to consider any requests for dispensations.

There were none.

52. Notes of the last PC meeting held on the 18th of September 2023 to be approved as the minutes and signed by the Chairman.

The notes were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chairman and formally adopted as the Minutes of the September meeting.

53. Matters arising from the minutes, (not covered on this agenda).

There were none.

54. Allotments: to receive an update on suggested options.

- The Clerk advised that she had contacted Crowland PC, as requested, but their reply, as expected, was that their allotment plots are solely for their residents.
- The piece of land that was mentioned at a previous meeting is in private ownership and not available for use as allotments.

55. Police matters: Online crime report distributed by the Clerk.

The report showed crime figures for the month of September, with 3 reports of antisocial behaviour and 1 report of theft in Cowbit.

56. Highways matters and to receive the CSW report.

- The Clerk advised members that the request for double yellow lines required the support of the County Cllr Nigel Pepper. Email received today from Cllr Pepper giving his support to this request.
- TT spoke of a recent incident where he turned into Backgate from Barrier Bank, to be confronted with a car parked one side and a builder's van parked directly opposite, leaving no room to get through. The car had been parked earlier that morning, so Mr Tyrrell knocked at number 82 to ask the builder to move his van. The owner of the property stated that the builder would not be moving his van, and as traffic was stacking up and drivers getting irate, the lady opposite came out of her house and moved her car.
- A manhole cover is raised outside number 55 Backgate and needs to be reported as it is dangerous especially as it gets dark so early now.

ACTION: Report on Fix my Street (JS & Clerk)

- A resident added that delivery vehicles often pull up onto the pavement and this could be causing the damage to the manhole covers.
 - TT stated that unfortunately there is nothing the PC can do about this.
- Members advised that a number of vehicles were parking in the road outside number 93 Backgate, even though they have a large parking area at the front of their property, behind an electric gate.

ACTION: Clerk to write to the homeowner.

- TT added that the hedge outside of number 2 Clarkson Avenue is very untidy and full of brambles which are dangerous to pedestrians. He had put a slip through their door a couple of weeks ago, but nothing has been done.

ACTION: Clerk to write to the homeowner.

CSW Report

- The Chairman read out the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting.
- The group of volunteers have been out regularly and are doing a great job of reporting speeding vehicles to the Police.

b. To agree the budget and Precept for 2024-25

A draft budget had been put together by the RFO/Clerk, and distributed to members prior to the meeting.

- The Clerk/RFO advised members that due to rising costs, 2024/25 would require a minimum budget of £17,717 as shown on her report.
 - The Precept for 2023/24 was £15,076 so this would mean an increase of £2,641 for the upcoming year.
 - The Clerk advised members that, if preferred, they could discuss it further at a separate working party meeting, rather than making the decision now.
- Cllr Sneath advised that the Clerk at another PC had advised that the date had been moved forward to the end of December this year.
 - The Clerk had no knowledge of this, and neither had the other Cllrs present.

ACTION: Clerk to find out when the Precept amount is due.

A discussion took place and members expressed concern that £17,717 would not leave any 'wriggle room' for unexpected expenditure.

- The Clerk/RFO advised that there were funds in the Reserve account which could be moved over, provided they were not earmarked for anything specific.

After much deliberation, it was suggested that the Precept be increased more substantially to cover the rising costs, especially fuel and electricity.

EF proposed £19,000

JS seconded the proposal

- A counter proposal was put forward:

DS proposed £20,000

TT seconded the proposal

A vote was taken by a show of hands on the counter proposal, which was unanimous.

It was resolved to request a Precept of £20,000 for 2024/25.

58. Planning matters:

- a. **H01-0914-23 Lapwing 72 Backgate, Cowbit PE12 6AP**
 Proposed Storage Building 16-10-23 FULL Undecided

There were no observations or objections to this application.

59. To receive reports from representatives on outside bodies.

- a. To receive an update on Village Hall matters.

The Clerk read out the report which had been received via email.

I'm sorry for not being at the Cowbit Parish meeting tonight.

As many of you would have noticed we have the new lights installed in the car park and fitted with a 7-day timer, this was mostly funded by the UK Prosperity Fund and the rest with profits from the Bingo.

Big thanks to Lisa Thomas for taking over the role of booking secretary and also Kate Rivett for social media and publicity

A big thanks to the volunteers who helped cut back the bushes in the car park, and gave access to the path again.

We are still waiting for the money, promise from the Parish Council towards the "Coronation Fun on the Field" as the invoice for the marquee is still outstanding
We have started to discuss events for next year but I will not be running a Fun on the Field in 2024 to give myself and everyone a rest from the 2 huge events we've had in 2022 and 2023

Events up to Christmas:

Make your own Christmas Wreath Workshop run by the church on 25th November.

Christmas fair at the hall on Sunday 10th December.

preschool Christmas party on Sunday 17th December

Thank you, for everyone's support in 2022 and I look forward to next year

Darren,

Chair

Cowbit village hall

- Members were grateful for the report and the efforts made by the committee to get the lighting for the car park and the hedge cut back.
- There was some confusion regarding the mention of an unpaid invoice for last year's marquee, as members and the Clerk, believed this had been resolved at a meeting earlier in the year.

ACTION: Clerk to ask Darren for clarification.

- b. To receive an update on the Playing Field/Pavilion.

DS gave a verbal report at the meeting.

- No vandalism or bad behaviour reported.
- Bins have been emptied and the area kept tidy by the litter pickers who are doing a great job.
- He advised members that he will discuss usage fees regarding the increase in electricity costs moving forward.

60. General correspondence for inspection at the meeting not included in the agenda.

- i) The Clerk had received correspondence regarding Scribe Light, a cheaper option offered to small Parish Councils for their accounts.
 - Scribe is a software package designed specifically for Parish Councils and will provide reports, bank reconciliations, invoices and the end of year AGAR for external audit.
 - The Clerk uses the package for DSN PC and at Crowland prior to that. She advised members of how much easier it would be as opposed to working from Excel spreadsheets. The annual price for the package is £288 + VAT which the Clerk felt was not justifiable for Cowbit PC, but was offered Scribe Light for £12 per month with a month's free trial.
 - Members felt this would be a worthwhile cost and make reports easier to produce.

The Chairman proposed that the PC sign up for Scribe Light as described.

JS seconded the proposal

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was resolved that the Clerk accept the offer of Scribe Light.

ACTION: Clerk

- ii) Lloyd's Bank have advised that they will be going paperless from November this year. The Clerk advised that this would not be a problem to the PC as they have online banking and can download bank statements as and when required.
- iii) Carol Clark had received a handwritten letter from a resident whose property backs onto the playing field, complaining about damage to her property from footballs. The resident was suggesting the PC spend £6,000 on football nets to protect her property.

TT explained that nets were only required if a property is situated directly behind the goalposts, and that unfortunately there was nothing that the PC could do.

Updates

Poppies: There weren't many put up this year, so JS has offered to take this on board for next year.

- JB will liaise with JS as she was involved with Crowland's display this year.

Welcome Gates: The Chairman had posted the original map to the Clerk so that she could seek permission from LCC to erect the gates, but unfortunately it has not been received.

ACTION: Clerk to look on Parishes Online to print out a map to take to TT.

Information Boards: EF held up an example of one of the boards.

- He is focusing on the Wash.
- Spoken with Darren and each board will be different.
- The boards will be both informative and show the area's heritage.

61. Items to be included on the next meeting's agenda.

Community Football (Kyle)

62. To confirm the date of the next meeting, provisionally set as 8th January 2024.

Due to the Chairman being unable to attend on the 8th of January, it was resolved to move the next meeting to **Monday the 29th of January**.

Meeting ended at 20:40