

Cosgrove Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Cosgrove Parish Council held on **Wednesday 6 December 2023** at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr D Smith (Chairman), Cllr C Bird, Cllr A Bracey, Cllr S Comerford,
~~Cllr M Draddy, Cllr C Peacock~~, Cllr J Proctor, Cllr P Roberts

Mrs J Evans (Clerk to the Council)

	Action
CPC/23/12/1 The absences of Cllr Draddy (illness) and Cllr Peacock (compassionate) were approved	
CPC/23/12/2 There were no declarations of interest	
CPC/23/12/3 The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2023 were approved unanimously.	
CPC/23/12/4 The Matter arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere in the Agenda was the proposed reconfiguration of the playpark. This was to have been circulated ahead of the meeting (CPC23/11/11 Cllr Proctor). Cllr Draddy, leading on this proposal, had requested it be relisted in January 2024. It was decided the proposal with costings should be brought to the meeting in February 2024 or wait until the next financial year (2025-2026)	Clerk to relist in February. Proposal due 31/1/24
CPC/23/12/5 Meeting closed at 19.33 for Public Session: <p>Two members of the Stop3000Trucks campaign against the proposed warehouse development (WNS/2022/1741/EIA) were present to thank the Parish Council (PC) for their support – both financial and moral - over the past twelve months. The campaign group were now focussed on the Strategic Planning Committee and how to make the best use of the public speaking time when the application is tabled.</p> <p>The PC acknowledged the work of the campaign has been excellent and has achieved a level of support that is extraordinary.</p> <p>The campaign is currently seeking advice from a legal person specialising in Planning as the campaign needs to be ready for the SPC – there will only be around a week's notice of the application being considered at the SPC. The Canal and River Trust have changed their position slightly following the updated proposed flood mitigation measures.</p> <p>The installation of four give way signs at the Castlethorpe turn was noted.</p> <p>Cllr McCord also acknowledged with thanks the work of the campaign group. There were reports that a further ecological report might be needed but clarification was required about what – if any – creature had been identified. West Northants Highways were rumoured to be looking at a further traffic modelling exercise. The changes to mandatory biodiversity net gain started in November but it is unclear how this will affect the application.</p> <p>Cllr McCord mentioned there had been a number of applications locally for self-build accommodation outside the confines of villages which were not within the spirit of the rules. These had been refused but it is a tactic to be aware of.</p> <p>Cllr McCord alerted the PC to the daily reports of precautionary gritting from the winter service team at Kier Highways which show only Stratford Road and Yardley Road benefit from gritting. Even under adverse conditions the bridge over the canal would not be gritted. It was resolved to ask for the bridge to be included.</p>	Clerk to write to Kier
Cllr Roberts entered the meeting 19.57. Meeting reopened after public speaking at 20.10	

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CPC/23/12/6 The Clerk's report was circulated ahead of the meeting and is attached to these Minutes at Appendix A.

The PC **resolved** to increase the charges relating to Cosgrove Village Burial Ground (known as the Cemetery) and to review these charges annually. It was recognised that historically Cosgrove had been a poor village and although even with the increases the charges were still some of the lowest in the area, it was not felt appropriate to raise them further to be in line with adjacent burial grounds. It was also **resolved** to review the rules relating to the Burial Ground as this had not been done for some time.

The new charges with effect from 1 January 2024 will be as follows:

	Parishioner		Non-Parishioner
Cemetery			
Interment in Grave	£150		£415
Exclusive Rights	£125		£250
Double depth	£150		£275
Memorial	£105		£210
Garden of Remembrance			
Interment of Ashes	£105		£210
Additional urn	£85		£170
Exclusive Rights	£85		£170
Memorial	£75		£145

It was **resolved** to ask Old Stratford for an annual contribution to the cost of mowing in the Cemetery as one third of the graves were from people resident in Old Stratford at the time of their deaths.

It was agreed trees on the perimeter of the Cemetery are badly overgrown. One quote had been obtained but it was **resolved** further quotes should be sought with a view to making provision in the budget for 2024-2025 and the work being carried out next financial year.

It was **resolved** to accept the quote for £480 to cut back the laurel hedge and brambles in the children's playpark.

It was **resolved** to add four cuttings of grass on the triangle at the Castlethorpe turn to the mowing schedule and to ask Castlethorpe PC to split the cost (£15 per mowing).

It was **resolved** to seek further quotes for the removal of excess growth around the trees planted by the PC some years ago along Stratford Road.

It was **resolved** to accept the quote of £700 to replace two street lamps (OC1 and OC4) in Orchard Close with LED units.

It was **resolved** to ask Helen Howard, West Northants Highways to come to a PC meeting early in 2024 to brief Cllrs on road maintenance and other highway related matters.

Clerk to reissue fees notice

Clerk to circulate rules and update

Clerk to write to OS

Clerk to obtain 2 further quotes

Clerk to commission work

Clerk to inform contractor

Clerk to obtain 2 further quotes

Clerk to liaise

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<p>CPC/23/12/7 Finance</p> <p>a). The PC received the update on the current finances in comparison to the budget which had been circulated ahead of the meeting and is attached at Appendix B.</p> <p>b). The payment schedule, circulated ahead of the meeting, was approved. The payments to be made by BACS transfer, debit card or direct debit are:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 15%;">Date of Invoice</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Amount</th> <th style="width: 20%;">Payee</th> <th style="width: 50%;">Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="4">For payment by BACS transfer 6.23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>05.12.23</td> <td>£1816.54</td> <td>J Evans</td> <td>November salary, including back dated pay award and tax adjustment by HMRC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30.11.23</td> <td>£108.00</td> <td>DNH Contracts</td> <td>November dog waste collection</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30.11.23</td> <td>£628.32</td> <td>NJ Blackwell</td> <td>November mowing</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">Direct debit and debit card payments</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16.11.23</td> <td>£6.05</td> <td>FastHost</td> <td>email monthly charge</td> </tr> <tr> <td>13.11.23</td> <td>£11.99</td> <td>HugoFox</td> <td>website hosting - November</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>c). It was agreed to wait for advice from Cllr Peacock about placing £30,000 on fixed term deposit as he had offered to consult Charities Church and Local Authorities Asset Management (CCLA).</p>	Date of Invoice	Amount	Payee	Description	For payment by BACS transfer 6.23				05.12.23	£1816.54	J Evans	November salary, including back dated pay award and tax adjustment by HMRC	30.11.23	£108.00	DNH Contracts	November dog waste collection	30.11.23	£628.32	NJ Blackwell	November mowing	Direct debit and debit card payments				16.11.23	£6.05	FastHost	email monthly charge	13.11.23	£11.99	HugoFox	website hosting - November	<p>CP to liaise with CCLA</p>
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<p>CPC23/12/8 Planning: The list of applications had been circulated by email as the closing dates for comments were before the meeting. There were no comments but it was noted construction vehicles associated with building work in the village cause difficulties for residents owing to the lack of parking and narrow streets.</p>																																	
<p>CPC23/12/9 Councillor Updates:</p> <p>Cllr Roberts reported to CRT the increasing volume of water coming from the canal and flowing across Sawpits field is making it difficult to use the Public Footpath.</p> <p>Cllr Bird has applied for free trees from the Woodland Trust.</p> <p>Cllr Proctor has obtained four quotes to replace the fence between the bridlepath and the allotments. The fence is falling down and is a health and safety concern. The quotes were £1,415; £2,550; £4,000; and, £5,000. It was resolved to appoint Mr G Flack (£1,415) using the balance of the allotment startup fund to meet the cost. Cllr Proctor to look into the cost of wood chip to improve the surface of the public footpath that runs from the bridleway to Manor Close.</p> <p>Cllr Smith said he was able to see from statistics provided by website host HugoFox that, notwithstanding the ongoing issue with Google, there had been 188 visits to the website. There had also been 39 people registering for updates.</p>	<p>JP to instruct contractor Clerk to confirm in writing</p> <p>Cllr Proctor to get woodchip prices</p>																																
<p>CPC23/12/10 New Cemetery Fence It was agreed plastic coated chicken wire would not deter cattle from leaning over and through the fence of the new cemetery. After discussion, it was felt a stock proof fence would probably be needed with additional protection attached to the top of the existing fence. It was resolved to seek advice on the best way forward.</p>	<p>JP to liaise with contractor</p>																																
<p>CPC23/12/11 Advice received from the internal auditor after the Agenda was issued stated, 'budget discussions should be held in the open meeting in the interests of transparency'. There was, therefore, no need to close the meeting.</p>																																	

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<p>CPC23/12/12 Budget 2024/2025 The draft budget with workings approved by the Finance Working Group had been circulated ahead of the meeting. In line with guidance of the internal auditor, no figure was included for the precept and the budget was considered fully. Some changes were requested by the PC and the updated budget V4 is attached to these minutes as Appendix C. The budgeted expenditure for 2024-2025 is £28,541. Predicted income (not including precept) is £2,528.</p>	<p>Clerk to circulate amended budget V4</p>
<p>CPC23/12/13 Timings allocated to the Agenda items were felt to be useful, making better use of time and promoting more focussed meetings. The Clerk's report is informative but not all recipients were ready for discussion of items for resolution at the meeting. Clerk to consider trialling sending out briefing papers for items requiring resolution and asking for feedback on proposals.</p>	<p>Clerk to review Clerk's report and trial briefing papers</p>
<p>CPC23/12/14 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 3 January 2024 (*Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12 Part II para 8.1). In view of its proximity to the festive season, it was agreed the purpose of this meeting will be to consider Precept and authorise payment of outstanding invoices only.</p>	
<p>Meeting closed at 21.35</p>	

Appendix A

Clerk's Report – December 2023

Burial Ground

Cllr Bird helped me with the audit of the Burial Ground on 4 November. There were several partners missing from the records but mentioned on the headstones. We found one wooden cross in the yew tree and I have identified where that should be. Once the new plan of the burial ground is available, I will circulate it and post on the noticeboard. I note the burial ground fees have not been updated since September 2016. Using an online tool to calculate the value of the 2016 fees in 2023 gives the following amounts (rounded up):

	Parishioner		Non Parishioner
Burial Ground			
Interment in Grave	£140		£415
Exclusive Rights	£105		£215
Double depth	£140		£275
Memorial	£105		£210
Garden of Remembrance			
Interment of Ashes	£105		£210
Additional urn	£85		£170
Exclusive Rights	£85		£170
Memorial	£75		£145

For comparison: Committal at Cosgrove Church is £399 and committal of ashes is £192; Deanshanger Burial ground charge £280 for interment in grave and £148 for ashes interment and Roade charge £180 for interment and £95 for ashes. The Cosgrove Green Burial meadow charge £1,200 for a single plot plus £425 for interment. I recommend you **resolve** to increase the prices from 1 January 2024 to at least those shown in the table but possibly more given the comparison figures.

Additionally, it costs around £1,300 per annum for grass cutting in the Burial Ground. There are roughly 65 former residents of Old Stratford buried in the Burial Ground (roughly 165 from Cosgrove) but presently Old Stratford does not contribute to the maintenance of the Burial Ground. I recommend you **resolve** to ask Old Stratford to consider making an annual donation to the cost of grass cutting.

Some of the graves in the burial ground are overshadowed by overgrown vegetation which has not been maintained for several years. I have obtained a quote to remove some trees and cut back others in the Burial Ground. The cost will be around £1,860. This work could not be carried out until late March early April (ground is too soft) so I have time to obtain other quotes. Blackwells are not keen on tree work but would be prepared to quote to cut back the overgrown brambles. I recommend I seek further quotes with a view to making provision in the budget for 2024-2025 and the work being carried out next financial year.

Grass Cutting

I circulated the mowing schedule on 13 November. I then met with Nigel Blackwell to go over the areas that he mows for the Parish Council as he has been doing the same thing since 1993.... There are some inconsistencies – still cutting verges when homeowners usually get there first; cutting outside one property on Stratford Road because the owner did not have a mower; cutting a verge on one side of the

Appendix A

road because the owner of the property is elderly but not on the other side. As the cost of grass cutting works out to be a quarter of the precept, it is important to keep this under review.

Blackwells do not currently have a contract (and do not have contracts with the majority of parishes) with us. He would expect to give/receive around three months' notice. He is currently awaiting medical treatment (knee) but is hoping one of his employees will cover for him.

I have asked for quotes for reinstating the hedge alongside the recreation ground (first one received is £770), cutting back the overgrowth by the trees on Stratford Road and cutting the grass at the Castlethorpe turn three times per year. I have asked Castlethorpe PC to consider contributing to this last item as it affects their parishioners too. It should be done by WNC but given the number of incidents and the number of comments about poor visibility I think it is worth looking into.

Streetlights

I have not been able to switch the energy supplier for the unmetered supply as the deal had been withdrawn before the switch agent could sign us up. She continues to monitor deals.

Two streetlights are out in Orchard Close. Hickford Lighting confirm they both need replacing with LED units at a cost of £350 plus VAT each. I have obtained two other contractors' details from local parishes and will investigate how much they will charge as it is important to make sure we are getting value for money.

I also tried to find out what methods other PCs use for power for their Christmas lights. One PC said they had arranged metered supply but the others either do not do lights or use their office power supply. I will ask about the cost of installing a meter in due course.

Rowan Tree

The informal advice from the tree surgeon is to cut down the rowan tree that is growing through an adjacent tree and use a stump grinder to take out the stump. If the latter is not done, it will be a potential trip hazard and is likely to shoot out again.

Christmas Lights

I have received a polite request from a resident opposite the recreation ground for the Christmas lights to be switched off overnight as the flashing lights are causing a nuisance – the resident has to put up a blackout curtain!

Traffic/highways

There are so many complaints about traffic and the condition of the roads, I recommend we ask Helen Howard to attend a PC meeting next year.

School Letter

Ms Busari has written a letter of thanks for the PC's agreement to donate £2,000 to the school trim trail – circulated separately.

Appendix B

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December 2023 Summary of Financial Records

Revenues	YTD	Projected income to end of year	Forecast	Budget	Variance
Precept	(25,000.00)	-	(25,000.00)	(25,000.00)	-
Interest	(366.95)	(120.00)	(486.95)	(360.00)	126.95
Burial Ground	(475.00)	-	(475.00)	-	475.00
VAT Reclaim	(3,782.16)	-	(3,782.16)	(650.00)	3,132.16
Misc Income	(25.00)	-	(25.00)	-	25.00
Mowing Grant	(999.42)	-	(1,899.42)	-	1,899.42
Account Transfers					
Total Revenue	(30,648.53)	(120.00)	(31,668.53)	(26,010.00)	5,658.53

Regular Costs	YTD	Projected Costs to end of Year	Forecast	Budget	Variance
Clerk Salary	7731.85	2,610.00	10,341.85	7,716.00	(2,625.85)
Grass Mowing	6415.8	-	6,415.80	7,000.00	584.20
Clerk Sundries	240.68	100.00	340.68	1,200.00	859.32
Church Clock	195	-	195.00	195.00	-
Street Lighting	3529.33	513.00	4,042.33	3,500.00	(542.33)
Allotments	5775	-	5,775.00	2,000.00	(3,775.00)
NCALC	566.5	203.50	770.00	770.00	-
Old Mail	250	-	250.00	250.00	-
Dog Waste Bins	600	370.00	970.00	850.00	(120.00)
Village Hall	0	360.00	360.00	836.00	476.00
Insurance	734.36	-	734.36	580.00	(154.36)
Training	0	400	400.00	400.00	0
IT Costs	55.36	60.00	115.36	-	(115.36)
Play Park	132	1,000.00	1,132.00	1,000.00	(132.00)
Other	705.62	150.00	855.62	150.00	(705.62)
Capital Reserves		2,350.00	2,350.00	2,350.00	
Total Costs	26,931.50	8,116.50	35,048.00	28,797.00	(6,251.00)

Section 137 Costs (Max of £9.93 per electorate)	YTD	Projected Costs to end of Year	Forecast	Budget	Variance
NACRE	35.00	-	35.00		(35.00)
CPRE	36.00	-	36.00		(36.00)
Scout Camp Defib	204.00	-	204.00		(204.00)
Total Costs	275.00		275.00		(275.00)

Discretionary Spend	YTD	Projected Costs to end of Year		Forecast	Budget	Variance
Flooding Report	2,000.00	-		2,000.00		(2,000.00)
Poppy Wreath	27.98	-		27.98		(27.98)
Silent soldier	166.66	-		166.66		(166.66)
School trim trail		2000.00		2,000.00		(2,000.00)
Total Costs	2,194.64	2,000.00		4,194.64	-	(4,194.64)

Movement	YTD	Projected Costs to end of Year		Forecast	Budget	Variance
Net (Revenue) / Cost	(1,247.39)	9,996.50		8,749.11	2,787.00	(1,767.47)
VAT reclaim to date	4,194.53					
Total bank balance as at 15 November 2023	£ 64,603.94					