

Cosgrove Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Cosgrove Parish Council held on **Wednesday 4 October 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

Ward Cllr McCord Ward Cllr Pritchard

Mrs J Evans (Clerk to the Council)

	Action
CPC/23/10/1 Apologies for absence and reasons approved: Cllrs Bird, Comerford, Proctor	
CPC/23/10/2 Cllr Peacock declared an interest in the matter of the Primary School (by virtue of having a child at the school)	
CPC/23/10/3 Minutes of September meeting approved	
CPC/23/10/4 One matter arose from the Minutes not covered elsewhere in the agenda. It had been brought to the attention of the Clerk the assertion in CPC/23/9/8(d), that discussion had been held behind closed doors was unlawful. The Parish Council (PC) had not resolved in accordance with Section1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude members of the public (required whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business). The meeting noted the observation. The PC also recalled all members of the public had left the meeting before the confidential discussion took place. The PC resolved not to amend the minutes retrospectively.	
<p>CPC/23/10/5 Public Session</p> <p>The following matters were raised by members of the public:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for update on the moving of the Gigaclear green box on the recreation ground adjacent to the memorial bench for Mrs Frances Childs. No progress has been made as registration of the land was still with the Land Registry (since August 2022). Once this is resolved, the PC will follow up with Gigaclear. • A representative from the Furtho Development Opposition Group (FDOG) thanked the PC for their continued support of the campaign. The second hydrology report (funded by Cosgrove and Castlethorpe PCs and Stony Stratford Town Council) has been referenced by the Environment Agency (EA). The EA has maintained their objections to the proposed warehouse development. A request made for Cosgrove PC to ask Old Stratford PC again for financial support for FDOG was declined. • The outstanding improved signage and line marking at the Castlethorpe turn on Yardley Road should be completed within 8 weeks from 8 September 2023 according to an email received by one resident. The PC were pleased and noted the work should be carried out by 3 November 2023. • The state of the roads in the village was raised, particularly where they have been dug up by service companies. General frustration by all at the inferior relaying of road surfaces and advice to report on FixMyStreet. <p>Cllr McCord said school admissions were now open for those with school age children. There had been several road closures affecting the A5 and the A508 – request made to West Northants Highways for more effective co-ordination. He had observed a degree of cynicism creeping in on social media about whether the FDOG campaign could result in the application being refused. It was rare for a statutory consultee (EA) to change their minds (over the environmental impact of the development) and this was due in large measure to the Stop3000Trucks/FDOG efforts. Cllr McCord had taken to social media to congratulate the campaign and urge everyone to redouble their efforts.</p>	

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<p>Cllr Pritchard reported he had spoken to the Planning Officer for the warehouse development. She had indicated it was unlikely the application would go to the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) in October or November.</p>	
<p>Cllr Pritchard left the meeting.</p>	
<p>CPC/23/10/6 The Clerk's report had been circulated ahead of the meeting and is attached to these minutes at Appendix A for information. Points to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision to appoint a speaker to represent the PC's views on the proposed warehouse development at the SPC meeting was delegated to the Planning Subcommittee. • PC resolved to switch to Yu Energy for the unmetered streetlamp electricity supply. • PC resolved to donate £265 to the Old Mail for 2023-2024. • PC resolved to include in the 2024-2025 budget a donation of £1 per elector to the Old Mail. • PC resolved to purchase one Silent Soldier from the British Legion for £175 (the donation of £40 agreed in September to be offset against the cost). Soldier to be stored, until a permanent home is identified, with Cllr Roberts. • PC to consider obelisk proposal at November meeting. • PC to consider request for donation to the School trim trail/playground at November meeting at which time the Headteacher will be invited to make a short presentation. • Clerk to seek volunteers to join working party to audit burial ground – possible dates 28/10, 4/11 or 25/11. 	<p>Clerk to arrange Planning Subcommittee meeting in due course</p> <p>Clerk to arrange switch Clerk to inform Old Mail</p> <p>Clerk to order Secret Soldier</p> <p>Clerk to table Clerk to table and invite Headteacher Clerk to seek volunteers</p>

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CPC/23/10/7 Finance

- a) An update on current finances in comparison to the budget (appended to these minutes at Appendix B) and a financial commentary had been circulated ahead of the meeting.
- b) The following invoices were unanimously approved for payment under BACS payment 2023/4

Date of Invoice	Amount	Payee	Description	BACS reference	minute reference
22.09.23	158.40	Wicksteed Leisure	Annual inspection of playground	4.2023	CPC/23/7/6
30.09.23	£90.00	DNH Contracts	Sept dog waste collection	4.2023	
04.10.23	£253.22	J Evans	September salary	4.2023	
04.10.23	£329.18	HMRC	tax PAYE	4.2023	
30.09.23	£746.52	NJ Blackwell	Sept mowing	4.2023	
30.09.23	£378.00	PKF Littlejohn	Annual external audit	4.2023	
16.09.23	£6.05	Fast Host	Email service Sept	Debit card	CPC/23/9/8
17.09.23	11.99	HugoFox	Website hosting October	Direct Debit	CPC/23/9/8

- c) The earmarked reserves allocations for 2023-2024 were agreed as follows:

Item	Amount
Contingency (6 months precept)	£12,500
Repair or replacement of up to 4 streets lamps	£18,500
Children's playpark repairs and refurbishment	£10,000
Allotment start up grant - balance	£2,000
Obelisk	£5,000
Community projects (to be decided)	£2,000
Total earmarked reserves @ 1 April 2023	£50,000

CPC/23/10/8 **Christmas Lights Switch On Event** to remain an event outside the PC umbrella for this year. Advice received from Northants County Association of Local Councils (NCALC): PC has the power under Section 145 of Local Government Act 1972 to "arrange for.....the provision of an entertainment of any nature...".

- The PC can make charges for entry to events or can sell things at events but this potentially has implications for claiming back VAT
- Collections for charity at events may need a licence – more common to donate any surplus from event and make a grant to a local charity or community group.

It was decided to retable for November meeting to resolve if a donation should be made to the event (previous year £200 for band and £50 donation to electricity costs of neighbour). Decision also to be taken about making it a PC event for 2024.

Clerk to retable Christmas Lights at November meeting to consider donating to the event

CPC/23/10/9 It was decided to form a working party to remove the cages from the PC planted trees on Stratford Road (raised under public speaking in September). Cllr Bracey to make exploratory attempt to dismantle one cage. Cages to be transported and installed in new burial ground using tractor and trailer supplied by Cllr Bracey. Permission of farmer to be

Cllr Bracey to dismantle one cage.
Cllr Smith to arrange working party

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<p>sought by Cllr Roberts to allow delivery across the fields. Some clearance of undergrowth to be attempted. Quote from Blackwells to be obtained for clearing around the trees and another for adding additional mowing twice per season.</p>	<p>Cllr Roberts to approach farmer for access Clerk to seek quote for removing debris & adding additional mowing</p>
<p>CPC/23/10/10 Planning Late notification was received from Milton Keynes Council under 23/01222/FUL: proposed static caravan for residential warden's accommodation at Cosgrove Park. This is an application to designate one of 24 static caravans to be the site caretaker's residence – unit to be occupied 365 days per year. It was resolved to make an observation by 13 October on the MK Planning Portal that the unit should be clearly identified as the caretaker accommodation; no present for 365 day occupancy should be presumed, and, if the unit was no longer required for use by the caretaker, it should revert to seasonal usage only.</p>	<p>Clerk to draft letter to MK Planning</p>
<p>CPC/23/10/11 Councillor Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Draddy reported the fence around the new burial ground had been damaged by cattle. It was resolved to get a quote for fence repair and to measure up for plastic coated chicken wire to fixed to metal fence to deter cattle from leaning through to crop grass and trees. • Cllr Draddy reported one rowan tree was getting entwined in an adjacent tree on the edge of the recreation ground and offered to remove the smaller tree. It was agreed Cllr Smith would review the situation and liaise with Cllr Draddy over action to take. • Cllr Smith reported making progress with ivy removal on the burial ground wall. • Cllr Bracey raised the matter of overgrowth of bushes on the corner of Stratford Road (opposite Old Cosgrove Road) hindering visibility of road users. It was recalled this had been raised in July and again in September in public speaking and reporting on FixMyStreet had been advised. 	<p>Clerk to obtain fence repair quote Cllr Draddy to measure fence Cllr Smith to review entwined trees and liaise with Cllr Draddy over any work needed</p>
<p>CPC/23/10/12 Traffic The Speed Indicator Device (SID) data reported at the September meeting had been shown to be incorrect when cross checked with the SID on Stratford Road (now working again). The movements for August in Bridge Road needed to be revised down to 41,000 with the fastest speed recorded to be 64 mph. The number of movements in September in Bridge Road was 32,500 with a fastest recorded speed of 53 mph. This figure was supported by the data from the Stratford Road SID which recorded 31,000 movements and a top speed of 54 mph. Only 0.3% of vehicles were recorded as exceeding the 30 mph speed limit.</p>	<p>Clerk to amend letter submitted on the Planning Portal referencing the number of vehicle movements</p>
<p>Cllr McCord left the meeting</p>	
<p>CPC/23/10/13 Playground An outline of a proposal to alter the axis of the children's playground had been provided by Cllr Draddy ahead of the meeting but, in the absence of a drawing, it was felt proper consideration could not be achieved. Decided Cllrs Draddy and Proctor to circulate a formal proposal accompanied by drawing ahead of November meeting.</p> <p>The annual safety report by Wicksteed had once again identified several areas of concern with the degraded area around the large slide considered to be a moderate risk. It was resolved to obtain a quote for rejuvenation of the rubber with a "wet pour" as this slide would not be affected by the proposal above. It was resolved Cllr Peacock to commission the repair if it can be carried out within a budget of £1,500 excluding VAT. Cllr Roberts to share details of a third company to approach for a quote.</p>	<p>Cllrs Draddy and Proctor to circulate proposal and drawings by 22 October 2023</p> <p>Cllr Roberts to provide details of third contractor</p> <p>Cllr Peacock to commission repair</p>
<p>CPC/23/10/14 Meeting Appraisal It was felt the imposition of timings for each agenda item had been reasonably effective (over run on timings by 35 minutes) and worth trying again in November. It was agreed sharing information well ahead of the meeting was crucial.</p>	
<p>CPC23/10/15 Date of Next meeting will be Wednesday 4 November at 19.30 at the Village Hall.</p>	
<p>Meeting closed at 21.25</p>	

Appendix A

Clerk's Report October 2023

1. The Chair of the West Northants Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) briefed members of our Planning Subcommittee and other invited guests on Thursday 7 September. The record of the meeting has been circulated already. The briefing provided a good oversight of the work of the SPC and attendees found it useful. Although the proposed warehouse development was not mentioned, Councillors need **to decide** who will represent the Parish Council when the application is considered at the SPC. The spokesperson will have 5 minutes to present to the SPC after which members can ask questions. The next meeting of the SPC is at 14.00 on Tuesday 17 October but it is not known at the time of writing if the development will be tabled.
2. I used the NCALC approved price comparison company Clear Utility Solutions to review the unmetered supply for the streetlamps. The recommendation is to switch from Npower to Yu Energy. The projected savings are £315 per annum. The rate will be fixed for three years. I recommend the PC **resolve** to move the supply to Yu Energy.
3. The Old Mail has asked if we will consider increasing our annual donation this year. We donated £250 in March 2023. The Consumer Price Inflation rate rose by 6.3% in the year to August 2023. If that percentage was applied to the donation for 2023 it would be £265. I recommend the PC **resolve** to donate £265 to the Old Mail. The OM would also like you to consider making a significant increase in the amount of the annual donation next year. If you decide now it can be included in our budget for next year. I believe there are around 480 people on the electoral roll and Trevor McCarthy-White has told me 287 copies of the Old Mail are delivered monthly. The OM goes to every home in the Parish and even if not everyone reads it, it is a useful communication tool for us. Under Section 137 we can spend up to £9.93 per member of the electorate (2023-2024 rate). The donation could be tied to the electoral roll going forward and could be set at £1 per elector for 2024-2025. If the PC is happy with this, then **resolve** to donate at the rate of £1 per elector (£480 according to the current electoral roll).
4. I have researched a memorial obelisk and a silent soldier. An [obelisk](#) will cost around £1,500 plus engraving and installation from a company in Northamptonshire. Prices for a silent soldier from the Royal British Legion start from £175. There has been a pledge to contribute towards the silent soldier but those funds are not currently available so the cost will fall to the PC, at least in the interim. With a lead time of 2 weeks, it is possible the silent soldier could be ready for Remembrance Sunday on 12 November. As there is limited space available on the triangle near the school, it is advisable to consider where both these additions could be placed before taking the proposals any further. PC to **decide** where an obelisk and a silent soldier can be placed. PC to **decide** if a silent soldier should be ordered immediately.
5. I have also received an email from the school asking if the PC would consider donating towards the replacement cost of the school trim trail. The preliminary estimate for replacing this much loved item is around £20,000. The school have started fundraising with the Autumn Fair raising £1,960. I asked for the numbers of children on roll and it is 43 with 60% coming from the village. Taking into account the rationale given above for increasing the donation to the OM, it is difficult to see how the PC can justify a meaningful donation to the trim trail replacement fund at this time. The PC, however, may wish to be creative in their response and perhaps allocate the proceeds of the Christmas lights switch on if that becomes a PC event – see item CPC23/10/8.
6. There has been an issue with the placing of a memorial headstone in the Burial Ground. The family was not able to say where the grave was as the widow had moved away. Using the burial records and register of grave spaces, I gave the details of the space to the memorial company. Their masons were unable to identify the space. Using the plan of the burial ground, I worked out

Appendix A

where the space would be – not easy as the rows are not straight. The headstone was installed. The family came to see the headstone in place and said it was in the wrong location and marked where it should be. I rechecked the records and compared these to the unmarked grave the family said was the right one. There was no record of the space being used and as there clearly was someone buried there, I concluded it had to be the gentleman in question. The memorial stone has been moved and fortunately the memorial company are not charging the PC for the additional work. This is clearly very unsatisfactory and I recommend an audit of the burial ground records is carried out. The plan needs to be checked against the gravestones. The requirement to mark reserved spaces needs to be reinstated and enforced. The rows need to be marked. I should be grateful if a working party could be arranged to help me with the audit. Possible dates are Saturday 28 October, Saturday 4 November, Saturday 25 November.

JM Evans
Clerk
27 September 2023