

SULGRAVE PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF AN ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 5th MAY 2022
IN SULGRAVE CHURCH HALL AT 7.30PM

Councillors Present

Richard Fonge (Chairman), Jen Castle, Neil Higginson, Mike Powell, Will Priestman

Christine Coles (Parish Clerk) and nineteen villagers

22/53. Elections

Election of Chairperson

It was proposed by Cllr Priestman and seconded by Cllr Castle that Cllr Fonge be Chairman.

Signing of Acceptance of Office form

Cllr Fonge signed the form which will be kept on file.

Election of Vice-Chairperson

It was proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Powell that Cllr Priestman be Vice-Chair.

22/54. To receive apologies for absence

Cllr Staples (family), G Roberts, I Lloyd, A Dyde and Mr and Mrs Lockwood

22/55. To receive Declarations of Interest under the Council's Code of Conduct relating to business on the agenda

No interests were declared.

22/56a. To approve and sign the minutes of the meetings held on 10th March and 7th April 2022

The minutes were both approved as a true and accurate record of the meetings.

22/56b. To note any matters arising from the minutes not included on this agenda for report only

There were no matters arising.

22/57. To receive an annual report from Sulgrave Village Shop

Neil Johnston gave the following update.

The village shop opened in 2004 and is a not for profit community shop and Post Office. It is owned by the Sulgrave Village Shop Association and made up of 160 members who pay a one off £5 membership fee. The success is hugely dependant on the volunteer base. There is also a hidden team of volunteers serving on the Management Committee who provide oversight and expert support to the shop. Financially the shop has had a successful 18 years increasing turnover from £130K in 2005 to £171K in 2021. Turnover for the current year 2022 is £166K and the trading profit for the last financial year (unaudited) is £6K. The shop employs one part time assistant and two part time shop supervisors. They are currently recruiting for a shop manager in a competitive and difficult climate.

Sadly there is an emerging crisis. Important longstanding and older members of the volunteer Management Committee as well as the employed Shop Supervisor are standing down or leaving the village in the next few months. Current difficulties facing households and the broader economy will have an impact on the shops recent profitability and performance.

Increasing payroll costs, increasing prices, increasing energy costs, increasing security costs, increasing insurance costs and labour shortages.

Unless they can rejuvenate the Management Committee and increase volunteers support the shop may soon be facing an existential crisis. The shop has an ongoing need for a roster of volunteers prepared to commit to a volunteer rota and serve in the shop for short sessions.

The Management Committee needs volunteers with some oversight expertise. The shop has proved to be of enormous benefit to the village, adding value to quality of life, community spirit and house prices. Without it a quintessential quality of village life will disappear. The future of the shop is in the village's hands.

The Chair asked how the PC could help? They could spread the word and emphasise the urgency of the appeal. The articles in the newsletter have helped. The Councillors thanked the shop committee and volunteers and will help where they can. From the floor a villager noted that he started the project and a public meeting was held. 90 people attended the meeting. It was agreed a public meeting should be arranged with job specifications provided. Another villager thanked them for what they have done. He felt that numbers have declined with competition from the shop in Culworth. There has been a drop in footfall. There is a volunteering co-ordinator but someone is required to shadow her and help when she goes on holiday. The Post Office is used and requires a skilled and trained person.

22/58. To receive an update on HS2

There was little to report. The next stage of work is the Greatworth T Junction which will start in late June.

22/59. To receive an update on the moving of the 30mph sign and new village sign

Cllr Priestman has chased Highways again re the moving of the 30mph sign. There is no new update. The new village sign for the Magpie Road end has been ordered and paid for.

22/60. To discuss the new flagpole and agree a protocol

The flagpole has been ordered and should be in place on 23rd May. A hole has been dug ready on the west side of the church. The agreed protocol is to fly the St Georges Union flag and Stars and Stripes flags.

22/61. To receive an update on the Best Village Competition

The village entered the competition two years ago. The Parish Council are meeting the judges on 18th May 2022 at 10.30am outside the shop. Villagers are encouraged to pick up any litter before 17th. The visit order will be the Shop, Church hall, Castle Green and Pocket Park.

22/62. To receive an update from Sulgrave Manor

The Manor is open 3 days a week and the Dames of America are visiting soon. Numbers are picking up.

22/63. To receive an update on Pocket Park

A small sign has been put on Bens Den to protect it. A new piece of timber has been put on top of the climbing frame. The whole frame needs looking at and is eleven years old now. Playscapes are going to make suggestions and give prices. All the signs have been cleaned. Dogs have been seen inside pocket park despite a hook in place to put leads on. The Chair noted how nice the bluebells and cowslips look around the pond and are worth a visit.

22/64. To receive an update on the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

A recent meeting was held and everything is in hand. It will be a simple Bring Your Own Picnic from 1pm with decorations and bunting. At 2.30pm a glass of wine will be raised and the church bells rang. The Sulgrave Photography Club will take a joint photo. After the photo is taken, there will be children's games to play such as skittles and welly throwing. There will be a Kings and Queens Competition.

22/65. To discuss the costs associated with putting bollards in front of the shop

The Chair met Helen Howard, Community Liaison Office of Northants Highways to discuss ideas to provide extra security at the shop following another break in. Highways have quoted £1208.16 & VAT to install 2 metal bollards at the front. It was agreed to accept the price and proceed with the work.

Action: The Parish Clerk to contact Helen Howard.

22/66. Finance

The following payments were approved under statutory powers:

£344.46 to NPower (electricity for street lights)

£222.50 to R Fletcher (internal audit)

£272.53 To Parish Clerk (hours)

£68.00 to HMRC

£32.25 to Parish Clerk (mileage)

AGAR for year ending 31st March 2022

To approve and sign the Certificate of Exemption, Section 1 and Section 2

The documents were approved and signed by the Chair and Responsible Financial Officer.

Action: The Parish Clerk to send the Certificate of Exemption to the External Auditor by 30th June and prepare the papers for the website.

To discuss the costs for WNC to empty the dog bins

To carry forward to the next meeting.

To review the budget sheet

The Parish Council are currently working to budget.

22/67. To receive an update on Planning

One new application had been received since the last meeting:-

WNS/2022/0804/TCA, One Yew – To reduce overall by circa .5m to shape and compact. With a height reduction of up to 1.5metres at the Old Post Office, Church Street. For information only.

22/68. To receive Councillors Reports

The ditch (owned by Hook Norton Brewery- HNB) at the side of the allotment area requires cleaning. The Chair suggested that they ask HNB to pay for the hire of a digger and Graham Trower will do the work over one day.

22/69. Public participation session (Members of the public are invited to address the council. The session will last for a maximum of fifteen minutes with any individual contribution lasting a maximum of 3 minutes)

The Chair confirmed he will meet Ingram Lloyd at the Church Hall on 18th May at 11am for the Best Village Competition.

Possible dates were suggested for the Open meeting about the shops future. The meeting could be held on 23rd or 30th June and Cllr Priestman to ask Sulgrave Manor if it can be held there.

22/70. To consider matters for the next meeting

Dog bin emptying costs.

22/71. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 9th June 2022 at 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 8.30pm.