

SUNNINGWELL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on Monday 22 February 2021 via an online virtual meeting.

Present:

Councillors

Colin Weyer (Chairman), Oliver Isaacs, Elizabeth Bennett, Paul Wooldridge, Mike Wykes, Paul Darby, and James Greenman.

In attendance:

County Councillor Bob Johnston.
District Cllr Emily Smith
Brian Rixon – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
And about 12 parishioners

20/21 Questions and comments from visiting councillors and members of the public

County Councillor Bob Johnston commented on the Council tax increase and the Lodge Hill slip roads. He also reported that the County Council is now enthusiastic about 20mph speed limits and will help to implement them. They can be quite expensive and incur fees of about £8,000 for various legal orders. Parish Councils can instigate the applications. It is possible a group of Parishes within the same District could apply together and so incur just one set of legal fees.

Cllr Colin Weyer said that Sunningwell Parish Council has had discussions on 20mph limits and so Bob's comments were helpful.

Alla Cordery asked the Council to consider her four-point plan for the telephone kiosk in which she considers the defibrillator, and the book exchange can co-exist. She has written to the Council enclosing her plan. The matter will be discussed later in the agenda.

Simon Blower asked a range of questions covering the budget, repairs and maintenance, the village hall lease, the telephone box, asset register, the defibrillators, the village pond, sequestration of village hall financial assets, and the repair of the village green wall. Mr Blower said he will be writing to all parishioners to point out the ineptitude and utter crassness of how the council is run.

The chairman said the council had already replied by email to numerous questions previously raised and where needed further replies would be sent to the latest questions.

Belen Wilcox notified the meeting that she was assaulted by a cyclist two weeks ago. It was extremely unpleasant, and the police are taking it very seriously. Mr & Mrs Wilcox said that walkers are also damaging crops by not staying on paths on their land. They are again considering putting up signs stating that the path from Blagrove Farm road to Broom Hill Copse is not a public right of way and asked that the council help publicise this fact.

On behalf of the whole council, Cllr Weyer condemned the assault and said that official footpath maps were displayed on parish noticeboards and would be added to the parish website together with a statement that walkers should use only official footpaths.

Mike Woodward offered his opinion that the Parish Council's communication is poor and suggested the Council needs to address how it comes across to Parishioners.

District Cllr Emily Smith said the District report has been issued. Also, that the Parish Council will be notified about the Lodge Hill slip road development.

A Community Covid Testing Site will be operating from the Wantage Beacon with effect from 23rd February. Front line workers can be tested there.

Malcolm Hurdus asked about the Quarry footpath. Cllr Wykes said the Parish Council is soon due to meet The County Council's Rights of Way officer on site.

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21/21 Apologies for absence

None

22/21 Declarations of members' interests in respect of any item.

None

23/21 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council held on 25 January 2021.

Mike Cordery contacted the clerk to ask for the minutes to be amended as they mistakenly referred to him as Chairman of the Sunningwell Village Hall Management Committee, although there is no chairman at present. Cllr Weyer proposed the minutes be amended which was agreed and thereafter the minutes were approved.

24/21 Planning applications

P20/V2889/HH Linden House. Demolish and replace garage.

A review by Cllrs Elizabeth Bennett and Paul Wooldridge raised concerns with the Vale Planning Department in respect to the visual impact of the new building on neighbouring property and along Lincombe Lane.

Parish Councillors expressed concern that the proposal, at the November Parish Council, for a meeting to be arranged with planning officers to discuss planning decisions had not come to fruition. At today's meeting, Cllr Smith agreed to arrange for a Development Manager to meet Parish Councillors to discuss the reasons behind some recent planning consents given.

25/21 Appointment of new Internal Auditor

The Internal Auditor has, sadly, had to retire due to serious ill health. He is now registered blind and his daughter has been unable to retrieve his data base and the current year file on Sunningwell Parish Council.

There is a shortage of Internal Auditors and so it has taken a while to find one, especially just six weeks before the financial year end. It is proposed that we appoint Mrs Jane Olds, from Bicester, who has forwarded a Letter of Engagement, an Agreement of Terms and an eighty-six-page questionnaire on current procedures, standing orders etc. The Parish Council unanimously agreed to the appointment. The Chairman and clerk will sign the Letter of Engagement and return it to Mrs Olds.

Action: Clerk

26/21 Bayworth to Sunningwell lack of footpath

Cllr Paul Darby spoke to the Chairman of Oxford Ramblers to discuss a proposal to develop a safe walking route from Bayworth to Sunningwell. The County Council do not want to use the highway verge but say it is possible to seek a landowner's permission to use the edge of the adjacent field. Cllr Darby will speak to the County Rights of Way officer to explore the idea further.

27/21 Boars Hill waste bins

OPT promotes access to its land on Boars Hill but has seen an increase in the amount of litter being left. They would like to put three waste bins on the edge of the land. District Councillor Emily Smith said that the Vale waste team can come out to assess the situation and she will investigate and let the Parish Council know.

28/21 White gates at entrances to the villages

Cllr James Greenman suggested that consideration should be given to sanding down, priming, and painting the sets of white gates at the various village entrances. This was agreed unanimously, and Cllr Greenman will seek competitive quotations.

Action: Cllr James Greenman

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29/21 Sunningwell Defibrillator

Cllr Oliver Isaacs reported that the strong advice the Council had received was not to have the defibrillator and the book exchange in the same kiosk, as this represents a health and safety risk. If it caused delay in using the defibrillator in an emergency, then there could be a duty of care issue too. Cllr Weyer read a statement summarising the council’s position and it was agreed without dissent that the telephone kiosk will be used exclusively for the defibrillator.

30/21 Telephone kiosk

The Council agreed without dissent to repair the damage done by an unknown person affixing the “Library” tiles to the glass, and to allocate funds to repaint the whole kiosk. The “telephone” signs will be replaced with “defibrillator” signs.

31/21 Book exchange

The Council agreed without dissent to support the idea of the book exchange at an alternative location to the telephone kiosk. The Council will also provide funds to make the new location viable. This does, though, require villagers to come forward to develop and manage the facility.

After the passing of these three motions, Cllr Colin Weyer made a short statement admonishing the small handful of self-appointed individuals who arbitrarily sought to take over council property. They had further forfeited any claim to the moral high ground by having resorted to personal abuse against parish councillors and staff and by their criminal behaviour which the police are now investigating. Contrary to suggestions made, the council was very representative of the parish and, as it considers all parishioners to be equal, it makes no attempt to identify the race or sexuality of councillors.

All councillors must use their own judgement when making decisions in the best interest of this parish as a whole. He suggested that, instead of sniping from the side-lines, those who think they could do better would be well advised to put their money where their mouth is and stand for election in two years’ time. The statement was met with applause from fellow councillors and members of the public.

32/21 Communication

Cllr James Greenman reminded the meeting that we are a small Council and have a part time clerk. Other, larger councils have more staff resources. He also suggested the use of council email accounts, whilst Cllr Mike Wykes felt that more use should be made of the council website.

In order to enable the council more easily to communicate important messages, Cllr Colin Weyer proposed creating a new email database of those parishioners who voluntarily agreed to be included. The database would be managed by the clerk in accordance with GDPR rules. This was agreed.

33/21 Payments due

	Clerk	Salary, Office Expenditure.	542.63
	HMRC	PAYE	117.60

34/21 The next Parish Council Meeting will be on **Monday 29 March 2021 using video conferencing**

The Chairman closed the February meeting at 9:07 p.m.

2021 meeting dates:

<i>Monday 25 January</i>	<i>Monday 22 February</i>	<i>Monday 29 March</i>	<i>Monday 26 April</i>
<i>Monday 17 May</i>	<i>Monday 28 June</i>	<i>Monday 26 July</i>	<i>No meeting in August</i>
<i>Monday 27 September</i>	<i>Monday 25 October</i>	<i>Monday 29 November</i>	<i>No meeting in December</i>