

SOUTH SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL
(CENTRAL SWINDON SOUTH PARISH COUNCIL)

LEISURE & AMENITIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020 at 6.30pm
at a VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

Present	Cllr N Hopkins	Chair
	Cllr J Firmin	Vice-Chair
	Cllr S Allsopp	
	Cllr V Ayris	
	Cllr M Gladman	
	Cllr S James	
	Cllr L Kasmaty	
	Cllr J Miah	
	Cllr J Milner-Barry	
	Cllr C Watts	Not Committee Member
Cllr T Philpot	Not Committee Member	
	Rob Core	Clerk
	Jake Mee	Deputy Clerk
	Matt Bradley	Communications and Events Manager
	Oliver Saunders	Projects Officer
	Theresa Gordon	Planning & Agenda Clerk

Public Five

Public Session

A member of the public said that at a recent Parish meeting intention had been stated of approaching Swindon Borough Council to take on the lease of tennis courts at Quarry Road and the grassed area on the opposite side that leads to Lethbridge school therefore would the Parish also consider taking on the Goddard Avenue tennis courts.

The Clerk said that the tennis courts at Quarry Road have not been taken on by the Parish Council as yet; Goddard Avenue courts are owned by Swindon Borough Council, and leased by the Goddard Avenue residents association, and the Parish would not be taking them on.

A member of the public asked if the Parish Council should obtain a lease on Rushey Platt wildlife area; previously leased to the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust who the member of the public thought the Parish had funded in the past.

The Clerk said that the Parish had not worked with or funded Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

A member of the public asked if it was time that the Parish Council step up to the maintenance of Radnor Street Cemetery.

The Clerk said that Radnor Street Cemetery is still an active burial site, managed and maintained by SBC under cemetery regulations, it is also designated as a local nature reserve and as such is only cut three times per year by the borough Council to encourage both flora and fauna, there is a volunteer group working with SBC to maintain the site so there is no requirement for the Parish to “step up” at this time.

Pam Jones from Friends of Shaftesbury Lake said that they are working with other Parishes and had done a lot of work with Nythe/Eldene and Liden Parish Council on that side of the lake. The group would like to work with South Swindon Parish Council and volunteers to work on the Park South side of the lake so that the circular route of the lake would be well maintained. Cllr Hopkins said that the Parish had recently put in dipping platforms and had plans in place to do further maintenance on the Shaftesbury Avenue side of the lake.

Gail Collins said that anything that could be done to encourage wildlife, butterflies, bees,

insects and at the back of the hill wildflowers could be planted creating a lovely view. Residents and children are becoming more interested in what is being done, so a noticeboard on the Shaftesbury Avenue side could be added to provide information for all residents. Cllr Hopkins said that the area would need to be developed carefully and that the Parish could feasibly help with notice boards that give wildlife/wildflower descriptions. Matthew French said that he would like to create and involve the public in a non-profit public allotment at Carstairs Avenue to help local residents with wellbeing and mental health issues; he thought that growing vegetables for the community with raised beds and an orchard with disabled access included and a small café project. Cllr Hopkins said that he agreed that supporting mental health during Covid 19 is essential and the Parish would do what they could to help with the project.

Cllr Neil Hopkins thanked the residents for their contributions and insight.

1229 Apologies

Cllr S Pajak
Cllr MJ Miah

1230 Declaration of Interest & Applications for Dispensation

None

1231 Queens Park – Disabled Access

The Clerk submitted an update regarding disabled access to Queens Park.

The Clerk said that Queens Park lacks disabled access at the Groundwell Road entrance and that there are two ramps in the secret garden that need to be replaced as the current ramps are in poor condition. There are two walls at the entrance to Durham Street that need to be secured and the gates will need to be re-hung. The Projects Officer would get quotes for the works and bring them back to a future meeting.

NOTED

1232 Town Gardens Gates

The Projects Officer submitted an update on the Town Gardens restoration project.

The Project Officer said that Town Gardens gates restoration at Quarry Road entrance is in the final stages although no final date had been arranged yet. Groundworks at the entrance will include bollards to stop vehicles from reversing into the gates/pillars and will be put in prior to them being fixed. Dependant on the weather the contractor will erect each pillar and gate on successive days when the groundworks are finished, and it is hoped to be completed this month.

NOTED

1233 Enhancements to Shaftesbury Lake

The Communications and Events Manager gave an update on the enhancement of the South Swindon Parish side of Shaftesbury Lake.

The Communications and Events Manager said that he, Parish Councillors and officers had visited the site in August with members of the Friends of Shaftesbury Lake group to agree work to be done on the Park side of the Shaftesbury lake area and would like the support of the committee for the following:

Cutting back of brambles to provide a better view of the Park South side of Shaftesbury lake, works to be done by the Parish Council in-house team who had recently transferred to the Parish Council.

To encourage designated wildflower areas as agreed with the Friends of Shaftesbury Lake group on the park side of Shaftesbury lake.

The installation of an additional bin in the area to address some of the litter issues faced on the park side of the lake.

Councillors discussed how the work would fit in with the Parish programme for the area and asked if a budget to help with planting would be available. The RFO said that there was existing budget available.

NOTED

1234 Rushey Platt Wildlife Area

The Clerk submitted a report and gave an update regarding Rushey Platt Wildlife Area a copy of which appears as Appendix A in the Minute Book.

The Clerk said that the Rushey Platt Wildlife Area had been leased to Wiltshire Wildlife Trust on a 20-year lease, by Swindon Borough Council (SBC). The lease had ended in September 2020 and maintenance had reverted back to SBC control; SBC had no plans to maintain the site other than low level maintenance; the low level maintenance had been included in the Parish’s general maintenance deed. It is a valuable area which borders Rushey Platt play area on its Northern side and on its eastern side borders the proposed wildlife corridor. The Clerk asked if, going forward do the Council wish to pursue a lease from SBC to manage the site which will safeguard the area borders.

Recommendations

- 3.1** To pursue a lease for the site from Swindon Borough Council under similar terms to the previous Wiltshire Wildlife Trust agreement, based upon the revised management plan in appendix 1. To further protect the site, a longer lease in line with other Parish assets could be explored.
- 3.2** If leasing the site was agreed, to adopt the revised management plan suggested by Neil Pullen (WWT)
- 3.3** If neither of these options are considered viable by the Parish Council, then it could be agreed to maintain the surrounding paths and allow nature to take its course and rewild the area.

RESOLVED that recommendations 3.1, and 3.2 be approved.

1235 Community Allotment at Carstairs Avenue Open Space

The Communications and Events Manager submitted a letter to ask for residents’ views on a local community Garden on open space off of Carstairs Avenue, a copy of which appears as appendix B in the Minute Book.

The Communications and Events Manager said that the Parish Council had been contacted by Mr Matthew French who had set up a community group called Friends of Park South Community Garden. Mr French said that he would like to create a Community garden in this disused space. The Parish Council Chair Cllr Chris Watts, Parish Council officers, members of the public and Cllr Bazil Soloman met at the site to discuss how it could be used as a community space creating an allotment/garden. A resident’s letter including a map and draft design of the site was shown to Councillors on screen at the meeting.

The Parish Council had asked the Borough Council if the space could be used as a Community Garden, they confirmed that the Parish would have to apply for a licence and would require the support of residents before the Borough Council would consider any use of the site. Mr French had previously consulted with residents via social media and had a positive response to date, however the Parish Council felt that a letter to residents in the immediate vicinity of the green space should be sent to find out if local residents supported the plan and would be interested in taking part. When a response had been received the Parish could go back to the Borough Council.

RESOLVED to approve that the letter be sent to residents.

1236 East Wichel Play Area

The Projects Officer gave a verbal update on the refurbishment of the East Wichel play area.

The Projects Officer said that the project had been delayed due to Covid-19 but Phase 1 of works at East Wichel play area was in the final stages with new safety surfaces and play equipment which included disabled accessibility. The site is on low lying ground and is subject to saturation in wet weather but the drainage had been improved, with an existing ditch being cleaned out allowing water to drain away and new pipework installed that now re-directs the overflow of water. A new pond with very clear signage had been added for biodiversity, also wildflower seeds had been sown and the difference will be noticeable in the next few years. Residents will have accessibility via pathways although there will be some residual water and mud around until the spring. Phase 2 of work will further improve drainage on the site.

NOTED

1237 Wildflower Planting Pipers Way Embankment

The Chair gave a verbal update regarding clearance of the Old Railway Embankment for wildflowers.

Councillor Kasmaty said that the grass had not been cut this year and noted that a few sites had been found where orchids had been growing. Knowing that the grass had to be cut prior to winter and cuttings have to be removed straight away residents were asked to do some raking and two sessions at specific areas were arranged which had been enjoyed by the participants who would like to carry it on as an annual event.

Approximately thirty people joined in planting two lots of wildflower seeds which had been sown on the embankment and both sides of Pipers way as far as the Marriot Hotel and would be a great enhancement to the area.

NOTED

1238 Spring Bedding

The Clerk gave an update on the spring bedding planting

All bedding had been bought in by the Parish and by ordering the right number of plants had made savings, also helped the carbon footprint and there had been no wastage. The staff had worked hard, and all plants are now in place and looking good.

NOTED

1239 Allotments Working Party

The Chair of the Allotments Working Party, Cllr Steve Allsopp said that the Parish will be obtaining a lease from the developer of Badbury Park for an allotment site and that the site should be available in the spring. There is work being done at Westcott allotments where tracks are being improved and new fencing to deter deer's getting onto the site is being quoted for. New quotes are also being obtained for fencing at Shrivenham Road allotments. Work on tidying up allotments can be progressed now there is a Parish in-house team.

The full value of allotments had been shown to help both the mental and physical health of plot holders, and the waiting lists for sites had increased; there are currently 250 Parishioners on waiting lists. A strategy is required to increase plots/allotments across the Parish.

The Allotment Officer Patrick Victory is doing great work keeping the level of vacant plots down and working with allotment holders to keep up the standard of the sites, which had been neglected previously by Swindon Borough Council. The plot holders annual meeting cannot be held but we will look to hold a working group meeting with plot holders later in the year if possible. The RFO said that the Parish had invested £20,000 in allotments last year and it had been a bonus as this year the spend had been 10% of that sum and going forward with more in-house staff there will be more savings.

NOTED

1240 Events Working Party

The Chair of the Events Working Party said that currently there are very few inquiries. A small number of enquiries had been received but with COVID-19 still an issue queries can only be replied to and anything significant would be taken to the Working Party and Committee in due course.

NOTED

1241 GWR Working Party

The Deputy Clerk gave an update on behalf of the Chair of the GWR Working Party.

The Deputy Clerk said that the GWR Park WWI memorial had been tidied and a Remembrance Day wreath would be laid by the Parish on Sunday 9th November.

Crocus planting had been done by The Rotary Club of Swindon Thamesdown and will bloom in spring 2021.

The Parish are working in partnership with the Swindon Heritage Action Zone Project through Swindon Borough Council and a projects officer will be appointed who will identify heritage projects within GWR Park. The Parish will work to see which projects they wish to take part in and will bring that information to Council at a later date to decide as to what they want to do within the park.

The toilets at GWR park could be converted into a base for the extra street cleaner who had been taken on and is currently sharing his time between Broadgreen and GWR area it would be easier to have a base at GWR park to enable an increase in his capacity.

The Clerk said that the Parish need to secure works in Queens Park and Town Gardens first.

NOTED

1242 In Bloom, Gardens and Wildlife Working Party

The Chair of the In Bloom, Gardens and Wildlife Working Party said that a map would soon be available for locations where grass is cut and not cut so that the public will be able to identify areas maintained by the Parish and we hope to provide notice boards to keep the public informed.

The Project Officer is looking at obtaining signage for the green corridor which is looking good and we are hoping to walk it next spring.

Britain In Bloom did not take place in 2020, but we hope to start planning for next year and the Swindon Road garden is a big project planned for 2021 although we are not sure when work will start hopefully by summer 2021 when we should see a change and the garden being maintained by local residents.

We are hoping to be able to organise some litter picking soon.

Swindon museum/art gallery put an art display on trees at Lydiard Park, Coate Water, Town Gardens, and Stanton Fitzwarren which was lovely, and the Parish have asked if Queens park can also be used next time.

NOTED

1243 World Wars Working Party

The Chair of the World Wars Working Party said that posters would be put up at the GWR and Queens Parks for a week in remembrance of WWI and WWII, however due to the current Covid 19 restrictions there would be wreath laying on Remembrance Sunday only by individual Councillors.

Cllr J Howarth

Cllr N Hopkins

Cllr T Philpot

Cllr D Griffiths

Parish Officer on behalf of
SSPC

GWR Park WWI Memorial

Town Gardens WWII Memorial

Queens Park WWII Memorial

Radnor Street Cemetery Memorial

Royal British Legion Memorial

NOTED

The meeting closed at 19.55pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Chair of the Council