

COATES PARISH COUNCIL (CPC)
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING TUESDAY 7 AUGUST 2023
7.00PM COATES VILLAGE HALL

Present:

Councillors and Officials:	
Whitfield, Robbie	Chairman
Torry-Harris, Gilly (GTH)	Councillor
Harris, Stephen (SH)	Councillor
Brown, Jacqueline (JB)	Councillor
Moorcroft, Alan	Clerk & RFO

Members of the Public:
Clough, Katharine (KC) (Director External Relations, Royal Agricultural College)
McKeown, Mike (MM) (CDC, councillor)
Hirst, Stephen (GCC, councillor)
11 members of the public attended

1. Introduction and Welcome

Councillors and members of the public were welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman.

2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15 November 2022

The minutes of the 2022 meeting had been considered by the councillors in advance of the meeting. They were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. It was proposed and seconded that they be adopted and were subsequently signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

3. Annual Report of the Parish Council by the Chairman, CPC

The year to 31 March 2023 had been relatively quiet. The main activity undertaken had been repairs to the children's playground following the annual safety report. There had been a change in the composition of the councillors; John Dobson and Andrew Hobson had stood down at the election in May and back in 2022 JB had joined the council. Special thanks were given to GTH for her diligence in dealing with council matters and for the behind the scenes work of the clerk.

4. Chairman's statement on the Parish Council accounts for Year to 31 March 2023

The Chairman introduced a Statement on the Parish Council's accounts for the year to 31 March 2023 (Appendix A). The Chairman gave a description of the main items of expenditure. The amount received by CPC had increased by the equivalent of 3.6% increase for a Band D Council Tax payer.

A parishioner thought the increase in the income was too low and might have an impact on the reserves held by CPC. A VAT refund of £1,400+ had been received. This had not been included in the budget calculations and so the reserves were in a healthy state. RW explained that the increase had been kept as low as possible, while CPC were still able to meet spending commitments.

The playground repairs were higher than originally anticipated. To cover the possibility of high repair costs in the future a proportion of the reserves had been earmarked for the playground.

A discussion was held about the grass cutting policy. The thrust of this was that CPC should consider the amount of cuts and whether some areas could be left to grow longer. This could reduce the costs of the grass cutting, allow wild flowers to grow and also be mindful of safety concerns at junctions.

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5. Guest speakers

KC explained that the RAU are looking to create an innovation village on part of the campus close to the Tetbury Road. An outline planning application is intended to be submitted this autumn, with a view to gaining full planning consent in 2024. Initially consideration was given to selling the land for housing but that has been rejected in favour of a more educational based project. Booklets were provided setting out the main details and principles driving the development. The aim is to attract entrepreneurs and small businesses looking at climate, environmental and food supply issues to obtain sustainable and environmentally friendly solutions, which should provide good quality jobs in the local area. The project was launched in January 2023 and will have an estimated cost of £100m. Funding will be a mix of investors, some are already interested, and government grants. The building work will be phased with work hoped to commence in 2024/25 and be completed by 2032. The RAU want to be “good neighbours” and as such would want to hear of any issues concerning the local communities.

The project was welcomed but questions were asked about obtaining both the skilled workforce required and also the impact on travel in an area that already suffers from considerable congestion. KC acknowledged both questions as relevant and assured the audience that considerable work is being done to address both issues.

KC accepted an invite from RW to return to the meeting to update Parishioners on progress and direction after investment had been secured.

MMc is the recently elected representative on CDC and gave an update on current issues being considered.

Solar panels have been installed on CDC offices reducing running costs. A community purchase scheme for solar batteries is under consideration; when agreed this will be available for CDC parishioners. Various areas of funding for community projects are available both for businesses and village halls designed at improving facilities, with an emphasis on the improvements being “green”. The management of Cirencester leisure centre has recently changed; CDC benefit financially from the arrangement by charging a fee to the company managing the centre.

6. To invite the public to raise any matters of interest or concern

An update on the development of the Tunnel House was requested. Planning permission has been granted for the development of the existing property and the installation of accommodation pods. Permission was granted following a public meeting where a number of objections were made on environmental grounds. Adjustments to the agreed position have now been made and it is understood that contractors are being engaged and it was thought that commencement of the work was imminent.

7. Close

The meeting closed at 7:50pm.

Chairman Signature: 

Parish Clerk Signature: 

Date: 18 June 2024