

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
SWALLOWFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
ON TUESDAY 13th FEBRUARY 2024 AT 7.30PM
IN THE ROSE ROOM, SWALLOWFIELD PARISH HALL, RG7 1QX

Present: Mr. J. Anderson Mrs. C. Drew Mrs. L. Edmonds
 Mr. I. Fullerton Mr J. McDermott Mrs. M. McDonald
 Mr. P. Schulz Mr. S. Taylor

In attendance: Mrs. E. Halson

Members of the Public: 0

2793 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr. M. Binns

2794 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2795 COUNCIL BUSINESS

Annual Parish Meeting – it was **AGREED** that the annual meeting would be held on Wednesday 19th June. ^{1 2} It was **NOTED** that the Annual Report must be produced for circulation at this meeting. ³

2796 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

2796.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2024 – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the minutes of this meeting be **APPROVED**. All in favour. ⁴

2797 PLANNING

Chair of Planning Committee: Cllr. I. Fullerton

2797.1 Current applications – see details on 2024/1172.

2797.1.1	232795 – Tanners Dairy, Swallowfield Road, Arborfield RG2 9LA	Comment
2797.1.2	233096 – Brockendene, Church Road, Farley Hill RG7 1UH	Object
2797.1.3	240150 – Riseley Business Park, Basingstoke Road, Riseley RG7 1NW	No Comment

¹ MM to confirm with RPs

² All councillors to circulate ideas for theme/speakers

³ JM to collate, all councillors to consider content

⁴ JA

2797.2 Results – see details on 2024/1174.

2797.2.1 230422 – Land West of Trowes Lane and North of Charlton Lane, Swallowfield Refused
2797.2.2 231771 - The Red Lodge, Church Road, Swallowfield RG7 1TH Decision Made
2797.2.3 232783 - Walnut Tree Farm Benham Lane Riseley RG7 1RY Approved
2797.2.4 232837 - Farley Castle, East Wing Castle Hill Farley Hill RG7 1XD Tree consent given
2797.2.5 233078 - Nutbean Farm Nutbean Lane Swallowfield RG7 1XL Withdrawn
2797.2.6 233140 - Land North of School Road, Riseley, RG7 1XN Prior Approval not required

2797.3 Tree Preservation Orders

2797.3.1 240347 – Pond 73m from 1 Loddon Court Farm Cottages, Lambs Lane, Swallowfield, application for work to fell remainder of a fallen tree.

2797.4 Appeals

APP/X0360/W/23/3334221 (WBC Ref:223734) – Brockendene, Church Road, Farley Hill RG7 1UH – it was **NOTED** that an appeal had been lodged with the Secretary of State against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council to refuse planning permission. The appeal would be determined on the basis of written representations. It was **NOTED** that the Parish Council's objection to this application would be considered during the appeals process, so no further comment was necessary.

2797.5 Enforcements Investigations - it was **NOTED** that there are nine open investigations of which one is new. Three investigations had been closed, two *No Breach* and one application submitted.

2797.6 Neighbour Plan – it was **NOTED** that Cllrs. Taylor, Schulz and McDonald had met with several residents and Cllr. Taylor had corresponded with two others. He reported that there was no confidence that a plan would be beneficial, and no one had come forward to lead the project. It was **AGREED** that a short statement would be published to that effect in the next newsletter and if there is no more interest then this would not be progressed.

2798 FINANCE

(Budgets/investments/sinking fund/grants/risk assessments/insurance)

Lead Councillor: Cllr. J. Anderson

2798.1 Accounts Update – it was **NOTED** that the monthly accounts had been circulated. It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that these be accepted. All in favour.

2798.2 Bank Reconciliation Statements – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the bank reconciliation statements be **APPROVED**. All in favour. ⁵

2798.3 Risk Strategy – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the council adopts the presented Risk Management Strategy. All in favour. ⁶

⁵ JA

⁶ Clerk

2798.4 Outstanding Hall Fees – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that due to personal data relating to this item the press and public be excluded in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 & Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. All in favour.

2799 BILLS LIST

2799.1 February 2024 – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the payments as listed below be **APPROVED**. On-line payments would be authorised by Cllrs. Fullerton and Taylor. All in favour. ⁷

1	Deposit Refund	400.00
2	Stanhope Wilkinson	11722.65
3	Refund	190.00
4	Deposit Refund	100.00
5	Deposit Refund	100.00
6	Deposit Refund	100.00
7	Polygon	879.78
8	RES Systems Ltd	47.16
9	Lucas Plumbing & Heating	162.00
10	Coral Bell	135.00
11	Airsafe	420.00
12	Precision Plumbing & Heating	229.32
13	All Electrics	340.90
14	D2D Distribution	354.00
15	Select	128.59
16	Select	102.25
17	Select	76.03
18	Select	114.26
19	Karen Luke	234.00
20	Moorepay	158.02
21	Churches	60.83
22	Churches	141.94

⁷ IF, ST

23	CASTLE WATER	213.97
24	CASTLE WATER	23.09
25	Wokingham BC	89.00
26	Wokingham BC	60.00
27	Blucando	83.52
28	HMRC PAYMENTS	821.15
29	Lloyds Bank (Alto Card)	396.20
30	Payroll	10125.53
31	Southern Electric	62.44
32	Unity Trust Service Charge	100.00
33	BT	411.08
34	BACS Charge	17.12
35	BACS Charge	17.12

2800 PROPERTY

(Buildings, Land)

Lead Councillor: Cllr. C. Drew

- 2800.1 Fieldfare Residential Properties – it was **NOTED** that Prospects Estate Agency had acquired the WhiteKnights letting portfolio. There is no change in the current terms of business agreed. The council would review service in six months. ⁸
- 2800.2 Hall Upgrade - it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that due to commercial sensitivities of data relating to this item the press and public be excluded in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 & Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. All in favour.

2801 TRANSPORT

(Road issues/speeding/public transport/police liaison)

Lead Councillor: Cllr. I. Fullerton

- 2801.1 Local Transport Plan (LTP4) Consultation – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the council respond as detailed in the draft response prepared by Cllr. Taylor, see page 2024/1175. The letter would be sent directly to the WBC officers. All in favour. ⁹

⁸ Clerk

⁹ Clerk

2802 RECREATION

(Play areas/skateboard park/recreation grounds/football pitches/mpg court)

Lead Councillor: Cllr. L. Edmonds

Cllr. Taylor explained the updates in his paper and the background to the proposals.

2802.1 Inspections – it was **NOTED** that the cost of these is covered by the annual budget.

2802.1.1 Routine Inspections – it was **NOTED** that the caretaker carries out visual inspections weekly of all play areas. This is supplemented by more in-depth inspections.

It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that Reading Borough Council be engaged to carry out 2 inspections a year at each playground at a cost of £660 per year. All in favour. ¹⁰

2802.1.2 Annual Inspections – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the Play Inspection Company be engaged to carry out an annual inspection at each playground at a cost of £363 per year. All in favour. ¹¹

2802.2 Maintenance – it was **NOTED** that the total cost of this maintenance work is £3,054 plus VAT. It was **NOTED** that the following items were in the budget proposal for reserves funded expenditure so will come from the earmarked reserve for play equipment.

2802.2.1 Inclusive Roundabout Swallowfield – it was **NOTED** that it is not possible to estimate the work required to repair the roundabout until it is serviced. It is possible that repairs could cost 2k-3K, however, a replacement unit could cost £20K.

It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the roundabout is serviced at a cost of £545 plus VAT after which a decision can be made about its future. All in favour. ¹²

2802.2.2 Swings, Riseley – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the chains and seats are replaced at a cost of £691 plus VAT. All in favour. ¹³

2802.2.3 Swings, Farley Hill – it is **PROPOSED** that the chains and seats are replaced at a cost of £518 plus VAT. All in favour. ¹⁴

2802.2.4 Loose surfacing for natural play area – it was **NOTED** that the inspector had recommended that we do not continue to use the Cushionfall product which cost over £1K in 2022.

It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the council purchases this surfacing from the supplier recommended by Reading Borough Council at a cost of £1300 plus VAT. All in favour. ¹⁵

¹⁰ Clerk

¹¹ Clerk

¹² Clerk

¹³ Clerk

¹⁴ Clerk

¹⁵ Clerk

2803 COMMUNICATION

(Newsletter/Website/Annual Report/Media)

Lead Councillor: Cllr. J. McDermott

2803.1 Newsletter

2803.1.1 Print run – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the print run is increased to 1050 as there are additional properties in the parish. All in favour. ¹⁶

2803.1.2 Printing of newsletter – councillors discussed the quotes received and the samples submitted.

It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that The Alpha Xperience be appointed, and that the newsletter would be printed on 120gsm uncoated paper at a cost of £705.20 plus VAT (includes delivery costs). All in favour. ¹⁷

2804 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 12th March 2024 at 7.30 p.m. in the Rose Room, Swallowfield Parish Hall, Swallowfield Street, Swallowfield.

¹⁶ Clerk

¹⁷ Clerk

Due to personal and commercial sensitivities the press and public were excluded during discussion of the following items in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 & Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

2805 OUTSTANDING HALL FEES

2805.1 It was **NOTED** that the meeting requested by the individual had taken place with the Clerk and Cllr. Anderson but no new relevant information had been forthcoming, and the individual had declined to discuss a settlement. As agreed at the last meeting the council had now taken the next step in the proposed course of action.

2806 HALL UPGRADE

2806.1 Planning Application – it was **NOTED** that a planning application for the work had been submitted.

2806.1.1 Asbestos Survey – it was **NOTED** that a Demolition and Refurbishment asbestos survey had been carried out at a cost of £350 plus VAT.

2806.1.2 Bat Survey – it was **NOTED** that a bat survey had been carried out at a cost of £950 plus VAT.

2806.1.3 Award of building contract – it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the council delay the award of the contract to the March meeting to allow more time for the tenders to be studied. Cllr. Drew, on behalf of the Property Working Group, explained that it was disappointing that the tenders were higher than expected as the estimates prepared by the architect were not accurate in one part. However, a significant part of the additional cost was due to the change in specification of the doors to allow better disabled access, particularly by wheelchair users. Doing the project as a whole, as planned would achieve economies of scale and potentially avoid an increase in the aggregate costs. The tender had been circulated in December and the responses to the tender had been circulated in mid-January. The additional funding would come from the next tranche of CIL, due in April and from the earmarked reserves as laid out in the revised project budget. The cost of the project would not change if the decision was delayed until March. Cllr. Edmonds, who proposed the motion, explained that she felt further time should be allowed to consider the tenders in more detail.

After a detailed discussion a vote on the motion was taken. 2 in favour (Cllrs. Edmonds and McDermott), 6 against. Motion rejected.

2806.1.4 Award of the building contractor – it was **NOTED** that six contractors were approached, three declined to tender and one pulled out just before the close date.

After discussion it was **PROPOSED** and seconded that Lindum Construction Services Ltd be appointed to undertake the building works and the remaining fees for the architect and other incidental related costs be approved. The additional funding would come from the next tranche of CIL, due in April and the earmarked reserves as laid out in the revised project budget. 6 in favour, 2 abstentions (Cllrs. Edmonds and McDermott). Motion

carried. ¹⁸

2806.1.5 Delegation of authority – it was **NOTED** that all decisions and payments made under delegated authority would be minuted at the following meeting of the Parish Council.

2806.1.5.1 Logistical Arrangements and day-to-day decisions

It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the Clerk/RFO with advice from at least two councillors, being two of the following (having regard for the impact of the decision): Chair and Lead Councillor for the Finance Working Group, Lead Councillor for the Properties Working Group and Lead Councillor for the Halls Working Group, be delegated authority to agree and implement logistical arrangements and make day-to-day decisions of a non-commercial nature as necessary for the smooth running of the project. 6 in favour, 2 abstentions (Cllrs. Edmonds and McDermott). Motion carried.

2806.1.5.2 Variations in scope of works

It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the Clerk/RFO be delegated authority to exercise discretion, to agree or reject proposed changes to the scope of works covered by the Construction Contract as follows:

- a) Changes that do not increase the overall contract value
- b) Changes that do not increase the overall contract value by more than £10K (minor changes) and where reasonably practicable acting on advice from one councillor (normally the Chair/Lead Councillor for the Finance Working Group or the Lead Councillor for the Property Working Group)
- c) Urgent changes (in excess of £10K) and acting on advice from two Councillors (normally the Chair/Lead Councillor for the Finance Working Group and Lead Councillor for the Property Working Group up to a maximum of 5% of the original contract value (half the amount allowed as contingency) for all such changes.

The Chair/Lead Councillor for the Finance Working Group, the Lead Councillor for the Properties Working Group and the Lead Councillor for the Halls Working Group would be notified of all such changes.

Urgent changes are those where there is not time to bring the change proposal to full council for consideration without causing a delay to the project that is likely to incur additional costs.

6 in favour, 2 abstentions (Cllrs. Edmonds and McDermott). Motion carried.

2806.1.5.3 Specification changes

It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that SWA Architects be authorised to make changes to the specifications and detailed designs as necessary to facilitate the works provided such changes do not affect the overall contract value including Provisional Sums. The Clerk would be notified of all such changes. 6 in favour, 2 abstentions (Cllrs. Edmonds and McDermott). Motion carried.

¹⁸ Clerk

2806.1.5.4 Reporting to the council – it was **NOTED** that regular reports would be circulated to all councillors detailing building progress, financial considerations including progress against budget and any issues.

2806.1.5.5 Financial Considerations

a) Payment of invoices

It was **PROPOSED** and seconded that the Clerk/RFO be delegated authority to raise payment for progress payment invoices rendered by the builder for work completed once certified as valid by SWA Architects that become due provided they are in accordance with the contract. These payments would be authorised by two councillors as per the council's on-line banking approval policy. Councillors to make on-line approvals would be identified according to availability. 6 in favour, 2 abstentions (Cllrs. Edmonds and McDermott). Motion carried.

b) Payment of the final invoice for the retention

It is **PROPOSED** that this is made following approval by full council in the usual way. 6 in favour, 2 abstentions (Cllrs. Edmonds and McDermott). Motion carried.

[The meeting closed at 22:18]

Appendix A

2797 PLANNING

2797.1 Current Applications

Agenda Ref	App No	Type	Address	Application
2797.1.1	232795	Full Application	Tanners Dairy, Swallowfield Road, Arborfield RG2 9LA	<p>Full application for the change of use of land to a car recovery yard (retrospective).</p> <p>It was PROPOSED and seconded that the council request that if this application is approved WBC apply a condition which sets a limit for vehicle movements in and out each day. All in favour.</p>
2797.1.2	233096	Full Application	Brockendene, Church Road, Farley Hill RG7 1UH	<p>Full application for the erection of one dwelling with detached garage to the rear (east) of the existing dwelling of Brockendene, Foxhill, Farley Hill, Reading, with associated access and landscaping.</p> <p>It was PROPOSED and seconded that the council object to this application as it did for the previous one and restate the reasons as documented below. All in favour</p> <p>Swallowfield Parish Council strongly opposes this application for the same reasons as it opposed application 223734 which was refused, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overdevelopment which will change the character of the settlement - would set an undesirable precedent - access via Church Road, on a bend/blind spot, is already difficult for existing properties around the junction within Joudlings Lane, any additional properties and the associated services vehicles will only exacerbate the issues.

2797.1.3	240150	Full Application	Riseley Business Park, Basingstoke Road, Riseley RG7 1NW	<p>Full application for the change of use from office to education use with associated external alterations and its curtilage including provision of a fenced multi use games area.</p> <p>Cllr. Fullerton explained that this site, original established as a small business park, had been the subject of multiple applications in recent year, all aimed at converting the buildings for residential use. Some had now been converted into flats. The current application seeks to establish a school to provide specialist education for individuals with autistic spectrum disorders for up to 60 children, a wholly worthwhile development and one which may provide local employment, it is good use of what is otherwise an eyesore. Most infrastructure concerns would have been addressed when the original planning application for the office building was approved. Residents had raised concerns about traffic and parking, but as this school is addressing specialist needs many, if not most, children will arrive by minibus from further afield minimising these issues. Parking designed for the business park should suffice for the circa 40 staff.</p> <p>It was PROPOSED and seconded that the council do not comment on this application. All in favour.</p>
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2797.2 Results

Agenda Ref	App No	Address	Application	Result
2797.2.1	230422	Land West of Trowe's Lane and North of Charlton Lane Swallowfield	Full planning application for the proposed erection of 81 dwellings (including 40% affordable homes), open space, SuDS, landscaping, biodiversity enhancements, new vehicular access off Trowes Lane, pedestrian & cycle links, and associated infrastructure. The Parish Council objected to this application.	Refused
2797.2.2	231771	The Red Lodge Church Road Swallowfield RG7 1TH	SECTION 211 NOTIFICATION FOR WORKS IN A CONSERVATION AREA T1, Yew – Fell.	No objection
2797.2.3	232783	Walnut Tree Farm Benham Lane Riseley RG7 1RY	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed stationing of six additional caravans. The Parish Council objected to this application.	Approved
2797.2.4	232837	Farley Castle, East Wing Castle Hill Farley Hill RG7 1XD	APPLICATION FOR WORKS TO PROTECTED TREE(S) TPO 437/1988, AREA 5 T1, Oak – Fell to ground level.	Consent with conditions
2797.2.5	233078	Nutbean Farm Nutbean Lane Swallowfield RG7 1XL	Full application for the proposed erection of 8no. 6m lighting columns to accommodate existing mange.	Withdrawn
2797.2.6	233140	Land North of School Road Riseley RG7 1XN	Prior approval submission for the provision of an access road for agricultural vehicles	Prior Approval not required

2801.1 Local Transport Plan (LTP4) Consultation Response

Swallowfield Parish Council has reviewed the draft LTP4 document and looked at the survey you have posted on the Engage website. Most of the aims and aspirations of the Draft LTP are laudable. However, we are concerned that the measures proposed do not address the challenges of Swallowfield Parish; indeed, they seem not to address the part of the borough south of Arborfield.

There is not appropriate space in your online survey to address our points. Hence this separate response which the council agreed at its last full council meeting.

Our parish (Riseley, Farley Hill and Swallowfield) has significant travel challenges as follows:

Public Transport:

Our only bus service is the 600 line hourly to Reading Monday to Saturday: no service on Sunday. This service is not guaranteed to continue in the future. Farley Hill has no public transport at all.

No other public transport. No service to Wokingham.

Schools:

We have no schools in the parish or in walking distance. There are no dedicated catchment schools. There is no provision of school buses. Thus, almost all school transport is by private car. We believe that distance from schools and lack of transport are bad for children as it is more difficult for them to engage in extracurricular activities or to maintain friend groups. This affects the future of the parish as an attractive place for families.

Footpaths and pavements:

We are blessed with some attractive countryside. However, the pavements along our roads are poorly maintained and overgrown, meaning they are difficult and dangerous to use. In particular, the B3349 from Riseley to Spencers Wood has overgrown pavements that cannot be used with pushchairs or wheelchairs. The route from Swallowfield Parish Hall to Swallowfield Church is similarly compromised.

Roads:

While we appreciate that WBC is one of the better performing councils for road repairs, it is not apparent from the roads in our parish. The roads from Arborfield Cross to Swallowfield are in very poor condition, as is The Street in Swallowfield. Part Lane and Trowes Lane are also in very poor condition. In some places we consider them to be dangerous for cyclists.

Suggestions:

One of the main objectives of the LTP is to support "Thriving villages and rural centres". The LTP as drafted does not do this for Swallowfield parish. We would like the LTP to address:

- Provision of school transport (including review of catchment)
- Bus services to Wokingham (at the least some sort of "park and ride" provision to connect to the Arborfield bus services)
- Improvement to pavements
- Repairs to our very poor roads