



SIMPSON AND ASHLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting held on 5th September 2022 at Simpson Village Hall

Councillors present: Cllr Pye - Chair (DP), Cllr Barnes – Vice Chair (PB), Cllr Ezeh (CE),
Cllr Eatwell (RE)

Also present: Cllr Hall (Ward Cllr), Katherine Harmsworth, Parish Clerk (KH)

Apologies: David Tucker

Others present: 4 Members of the public (MOP)

37) Introductions and apologies for absence

David Tucker sent his apologies for being unable to attend the co-option for a new Parish Councillor.

38) To consider the nominations received to fill the vacancy in Ashland ward by co-option.

One nomination was received for the four outstanding vacancies on Ashland Ward. David Tucker was co-opted on to the Parish Council. In his absence, it was resolved that he would sign the declaration of acceptance after the meeting in the presence of the Parish Clerk.

39) Specific declarations of interest

No change to current declarations in place.

40) Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the council held on 7th February 2022 were received and signed as a correct record.

41) Public forum

- a) DP thanked everyone who participated in the Jubilee events for a successful celebration.
- b) St Thomas' Church highlighted that there is an issue with the path between the road and the entrance to the church, it is very uneven due to the roots of the nearby tree. Recently a member of the public has fallen at this point. Cllr Hall explained that Milton Keynes Council (MKC) take the condition of roads and paths very seriously. She will support this being raised as a H&S issue. The PC will report this issue to MKC.
- c) A resident thanked the parish council for agreeing to renovate the lettering on the war memorial. It was noted that the works should be completed in advance of Remembrance Sunday.
- d) Cllr Hall explained that in her role as a Ward Councillor she works on issues that the residents identify as important and is happy to work with the PC to, as far as possible, address these. One issue that has been raised frequently is the sightline when crossing the H9 at Marshworth into Tinkers Bridge. Every year the trees and bushes grow up from the underpass below and impinge on the sightline of cars trying to cross the dual carriageway. Cutting back the foliage is a work in progress and Cllr Hall will try to find a longer-term solution.

- e) Cllr Hall explained that due to the construction of Walton Roundabout concerns have been raised over the speed limit along the H9. MKC have informed the PC that there are no plans for a speed review for this section of road. Cllr Hall will investigate what options are available to the PC. A resident stated that a lower speed limit, such as 40mph, would be welcomed. Walton Drive, the road leading up to the new Walton Roundabout through the Open University is currently going through consultation to reduce the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph.

42) To consider the cost-of-living crisis and decide how the PC can support the local community.

- a) DP explained that the PC discussed the cost-of-living crisis at the last informal meeting and that since then, the situation has only become worse due to the projected rise in energy and other bills. The PC has already started to signpost residents to where they can find help, by displaying posters on the noticeboards, website and Facebook group but are keen to help in other ways.
- b) PB explained that MKC have advertised that they are looking into 'Warm Spaces'. Further details are yet to be shared but currently it is thought that MKC buildings will be open at specific times providing a warm space and a hot drink for anyone in need.
- c) The Church would have liked to open as a warm space, however due to the nature of the building this is not possible. The church community currently collect food for the food bank and are considering what else they could do to help local residents.
- d) It was suggested that the PC could open Simpson Village Hall when there is a particularly cold spell of weather.
- e) Another suggestion was to open Simpson Village Hall during the school holidays in order to provide a warm space, hot food and activities for children. The Church are planning to discuss this with the school, explore the possibilities and potentially liaise with the parish council.
- f) It was decided that the PC would explore the ideas raised. Cllr Hall stated that she would be happy to sponsor a leaflet drop, informing residents of what support is available locally. In addition to this it was agreed that any local residents could contact the Parish Clerk in confidence if they were in need of support.

43) Finance report and discussion

- a) The payments from 1st May – 31st August 2022 were reviewed and approved.
- b) It was noted that the external audit has been completed and that there were no matters arising.
- c) It was noted that the conclusion of audit has been posted on the website and noticeboard. The clerk was thanked for all her efforts in completing the audit.

44) Grant Applications

- a) The PC considered the grant application by the YMCA and agreed that whilst this is a very worthwhile cause they are mindful of the increasing need within the Parish. The PC agreed that they were unable to provide a grant of £500 but would like to support the ongoing work of the YMCA and would therefore make a donation of £100.

45) New website

- a) The new website has now been built and is ready to go live, pending approval of the policies below.

46) To review and approve the following policies:

The following policies were reviewed and approved:

- a) Scheme of delegation
- b) Code of conduct
- c) Comments, compliments and complaints procedure
- d) Data protection policy
- e) General privacy notice statement for website
- f) Disciplinary policy
- g) Equality policy
- h) Financial regulations
- i) Financial risk assessment
- j) Freedom of information policy
- k) Grant terms and conditions
- l) Grant application form
- m) Grievance Policy
- n) Health and safety policy and risk assessment
- o) Redundancy Policy
- p) Protocol for member/officer relations
- q) Staff sickness absence policy
- r) Statement of Internal Control
- s) Policy and Procedures Schedule
- t) Standing Orders

47) Planning Applications

- a) Five Acres – A revised planning application was submitted with a closing date, to receive comments, of early August. The PC submitted a response to this with the aid of a Planning Consultant. In addition, several residents submitted their own objections. PB explained that when the Planning Inspector rejected the first appeal a revised application was submitted and then validated by a Planning Officer at MKC. In time, another Planning Officer took over this case and decided that the application should not have been validated and was subsequently rejected. The applicant did not agree with this outcome and submitted another appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, citing the technical details. The PC awaits the outcome of both the planning application and the separate appeal.
- b) 22/01230/HOU 426 Simpson – Planning permission was originally approved. Once construction started it was clear that it was not being built in accordance with the plans. This was referred to the Enforcement Officers at MKC. A revised planning application was submitted, and the PC raised an objection to this. This has been referred to the development control committee on 15th September. It was agreed that PB will represent the PC at this meeting.
- c) 22/01223/HOU 47 Old Groveway – The PC returned a response of no comment. The application has now been approved.
- d) 22/01241/HOU 31 Shelsley Avenue – The PC returned a response of no comment. The application has now been approved.
- e) 22/02068/FULM 141 Simpson – The full application was previously approved. This is a technical amendment. The PC returned a response of no comment.
- f) 22/02026/HOU 12 Lexham Road – The PC returned a response of no comment.

- g) 22/02123/HOU 368 Simpson – The PC returned a response of no comment.
- h) (20/03226/FUL) Little Bears Day Nursery Appeal – MKC rejected this application by the Little Bears Day Nursery. They then appealed this decision which went to the Planning Inspectorate. The PC submitted an objection to the appeal. The Planning Inspectorate gave permission for the extension, with a number of conditions attached.

48) Open Space

- a) To receive a report on Open Space.
 - i) For a number of years SAPC have been operating as a ‘Third Option’ Parish. This means that whilst Serco are contracted by MKC, the PC monitors that contract and is able to attend meetings with the contract provider and supplier. MKC have renamed this option to a ‘Parish Monitoring Option’ and have reduced the monthly meetings to bi-monthly meetings. The last meeting was in May 2022 and new dates have yet to be organised. It was agreed that DP would contact MKC and express the disappointment of the PC at this change.
 - ii) The areas of grass that were left to grow contained a good selection of wildflowers but after the extremely hot weather in July and August they died off. These areas were mown at the end of August.
 - iii) Thanks were given to all residents that have been watering the new trees planted around the Parish. Despite the extreme weather they all appear to be doing well. Unfortunately, the hedge whips that were planted behind Warren Bank and along the canal have not survived.
 - iv) The Simpson Garden Group informed the PC that they are continuing their efforts to turn the small area of land opposite the Village Hall into a mini orchard (as previously agreed by MKC). They hope to complete their work by the end of the year.

49) Ashland Lakeside

- a) To receive a report on the progress of the construction of Ashland Lakeside (AL).

Thanks to Andrew, the Architect and Project Manager, who continues to work relentlessly on Ashland Lakeside. Thanks also go to RE and the steering group for their continued work. RE updated the PC on the current situation at AL; the internal carpentry work is almost complete and some outside landscaping has also been done. There should be lots more progress in the next 6 weeks, including the Parks Trust replacing the topsoil around the building and reseeding the area.

50) Simpson Village Hall

- a) To review payments and hire income for Simpson Village Hall (SVH).

So far this year SVH has received hire income totaling £2200. The hall is seeing reduced usage in comparison to the years prior to the pandemic. In total £3400 has been spent on utilities and maintenance, including the rewiring and replacement of the internal lighting in order to comply with new electrical regulations.

51) Young People

- a) To review the summer holiday play sessions held at Charles Warren Academy.

Overall, the feedback from the five play sessions was positive. More children attended this year in comparison to the previous year. A mix of children from Ashland, Simpson, Tinkers Bridge and Beanhill were seen. The PC would like more children from Ashland to attend the sessions and to achieve this next year, adverts will go out to a wider range of schools. The PC will consider running further activities in other school holidays.

