

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 6:15 pm in the Parish Room

Present:

Cllr Adam Quinney	Chairman
Cllr Peter Taaffe	
Cllr Nick Moon	
Cllr Rob Clarke	
Cllr Peter Hencher-Serafin	SDC Studley North
Teresa Murphy	Clerk

In attendance:

Manuela Perteghella	Parish Champion
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There were 27 parishioners present

Cllr Rammy Arafa tendered his resignation, with immediate effect, from his position on the parish council. The reason for his resignation was due to growing work commitments. He said that it had been a privilege to work with everyone over the past 12 months and he looks forward to seeing all the great work come into fruition.

The chairman thanked Rammy for his valuable contribution to the parish council. He completely understands the pressure of work commitments, but said that he hoped he would be able to call upon Rammy, on a voluntary basis, when the occasion arises. There will now commence a process of Co-option or Election for a new member of the parish council.

1. To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Justin Kerridge and Cllr Neil Edden

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 16th May 2023

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

Traffic in the parish

The amount and speed of traffic, mainly at the start of the day and late afternoon, still understandably causes concern to parishioners. There is some debate if the new style speed cameras on the Alcester Road is diverting more traffic through Sambourne and Middletown. This parish is not unique in facing these issues. In July 2023 members of the Parish Council

met with our local MP Nadhim Zahawi, seeking his help with possible remedies to help (noting that this is an area problem, Studley chaos is pushing traffic into Sambourne). He was receptive to our ideas of improving flow of traffic on the Bromsgrove Road joining the A435 and looking to change Government and Warwickshire County Council guidelines about the need for streetlighting for traffic calming measures, along with new technologies to safely reduce speed.

The community speed watch continues with new areas around the village, but has been hampered by bad weather through the winter and Spring. The group welcomed the addition of a retired traffic policeman, who has an eagle eye for number plate registrations! His help was greatly appreciated, especially as he did not live in the parish. A big thank you to Peter Taaffe for organising throughout the year.

Fly tipping

Fly tipping is still an issue, though mainly on the edge of the parish. This was another area that we brought up with MP Nadhim Zahawi. We are concerned that there seems to be little or no prosecution of offenders in the Stratford District. We also suggested to him that there needs to a change in the law to allow bodies, such as parish councils, to work with other authorities to gather evidence using covert cameras, as large signs saying CCTV camera results in the rubbish being tipped fifty yards further down the road! One improvement has been that there is now a national data base recording fly tipping.

Flooding

The autumn and winter of 2023 saw record levels of rainfall, putting pressure on three areas in the parish. Middletown Lane has been a key area, with several houses at risk from flooding. There has been some work carried out in the past, including new side drains and the cleaning out of ditches, but the problem has persisted. WCC has now agreed a plan of work to put in an extra culvert across the road. Hopefully this will be done before the winter.

Water running off the road by the Green into Middletown is causing flooding to a household. Some work has taken place by WCC, and more worked is planned to improve the situation. The road is still flooding badly in Oak Tree Lane, due to roots in the drains. WCC are aware of the problem.

Footpaths

Nick Moon has been highly successful in gaining funds to improve access to the footpaths in and around Sambourne. The first part of the work, the widening of three bridges to create better access, should start shortly. Wet weather and other access issues have delayed some of the work, but that can now commence during the summer months.

General running of the Council

The parish council has worked within its budgets and has not looked to increase the precept, even with inflation at a recent high. We have a policy of keeping things simple and to use local help as much as possible, in order to keep our costs down.

Sambourne Parish Council is also aiming to improve contact with other local parishes, to see if there could be ways of joint working. We are, however, only very much at the start of the process.

Many thanks to our clerk, Teresa, who has been professional in her administration and guidance to the council.

4. Annual Accounts of Sambourne Parish Council 2023-24

The Clerk reported that the accounts for 2023-24 have been finalised. As our income exceeded the specified amount of £25,000 it was necessary to complete AGAR Form 3. The reason for this excess income refers to the WCC grant for the improvement of footpaths.

- 1) The Internal Audit Report 2023/24 has been completed and signed by Eleanor Choudry, the Internal Auditor for Sambourne Parish Council,
- 2) The Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 was reviewed and agreed by a unanimous vote and signed by the chairman.
- 3) The Accounting Statements 2023/24 were approved by a unanimous vote and signed by the chairman.

The clerk will complete the required paperwork and forward it to the external auditors.

Action: Clerk

5. To receive a Report from the Sambourne Trust

The Clerk read the following Report from the Sambourne Trust:

2023–2024 proved to be quite a busy year, with some problems being very demanding on the time and dedication of the Trustees.

One of our properties become vacant rather unexpectedly which gave us the opportunity to undertake a complete renovation of the property. As this involved various tradesmen, some of whom needed to work in conjunction with each other, the work took some time. However, the property was brought up to the high standard we maintain. A new tenant was quickly installed.

With the ever- increasing cost of property maintenance, together with other demands on our finances, it was reluctantly concluded that a rent increase was necessary. As our tenants had not had an increase in rent for well over ten years, they accepted that this was justified and no objections were raised. The new rents are still well below the average of similar properties in the vicinity.

One of our Trustees has spent a great deal of time and effort upgrading the Trust website. It is now more informative and in keeping with the objectives of the Trust.

The two Air Ambulances which serve this area have received donations from the Trust as have the Myton Hospice, Shakespeare Hospice and Primrose Hospice. Donations have also been made to the Friends of the Alexandra Hospital and Cancer Research UK.

Lifelines have continued to be supplied to vulnerable people within the Parish, together with contributions towards the installation of stair lifts, in order to enable people to remain in their own homes.

The weekly shopping bus has been continued as it has proved invaluable to some of our residents who do not have personal transport. It is also seen as a welcome social service as some of the users would have little social interaction otherwise. The new provider has proved to be as reliable as his predecessor.

Parishioners of seventy years of age and over have continued to enjoy the annual distribution of cheques, regardless of need, and many letters, cards and emails have been received expressing appreciation.

Although there have been a number of applications for financial assistance, some for quite substantial sums, many were from as far afield as Nottingham and Derby. These were refused as they did not conform to the Trust's terms and conditions.

We have continued to reassess our investment strategy and, although it is early days, the results are most encouraging.

As far as is possible we continue to use local tradesmen who serve us well and act quickly when problems occur. The gardeners keep the communal areas of grass and hedges under control. They also ensure that the ditch is kept free from debris, essential with the amount of rain we have recently suffered.

My fellow Trustees make a point of keeping a watchful eye on our properties and liaise with the tenants in order to pre-empt any possible problems. My thanks go to them all for their thoughtfulness and hard work.

6. To receive a Report from Cllr Kerridge (WCC)

Cllr Kerridge was unable to attend the meeting but forwarded the following Report:

It has been a pleasure to help the parish council with County Council matters. Sambourne Parish Council has a good relationship with the Highways Locality Officer, which will serve the parish well.

Thank you to the council, and each individual councillor, for their time and effort on behalf of the parish.

7. To receive a Report from Cllr Neil Edden (SDC Studley with Sambourne)

Cllr was, unfortunately, unable to be present at the meeting.

8. To receive a Report from Cllr Peter Hencher-Serafin (SDC Studley with Mappleborough Green)

Cllr Hencher-Serafin reported that work is due to commence on the Railway Bridge in Green Lane. This is scheduled for the end of May 2024 and the road will be closed for some weeks. He also highlighted the need, as a safety measure, for two slabs to be put in front of the grit bin in Brickyard Lane.

Cllr Hencher-Serafin asked the parish council to encourage farmers to plant more hedges and trees as the County has declared a Climate Emergency. The chairman said that the Sustainability Farming Initiative, which is open to all farmers, should help to improve matters.

Action: Chairman

9. Other matters raised by an Elector of the Parish

The chairman invited any matters for discussion from the floor

Gail Smith drew attention to the drone that had been seen over the village on several occasions and asked if there was anything that could be done to stop it. The chairman agreed that this was not desirable and encouraged parishioners to report any sightings of the drone to the police, using the 101 service.

Alison Wheway mentioned that the bin in Middletown Lane is crooked. The chairman is aware of the fact and is planning to improve the concrete base of that bin and the one opposite the cricket club.

Action: Chairman

David McMullen thanked the parish council for the work they do; he said that the parish is properly run with all the work required done at sensible cost and it was notable that the parish council tax precept had not increased despite inflation. In short, the parish council does a good job, for which they get little thanks.

Indeed, it was disturbing that a small number of people raised continual objections to sensible actions taken, posted insults and personal rude comments on social media but would not come to meetings to make their comments face to face. In his view the parish council and councillors deserved thanks and support and should not be exposed to insults and ridicule.

This comment was greatly appreciated and there was a round of applause from the floor.

The meeting closed at 6:35 pm

Review of Actions from the meeting:

Minute	Name(s)	Action
4	Clerk	Audit paperwork
8	Chairman	Grit bin – Brickyard Lane
9	Chairman	Concrete bases for bins in Middletown Lane and opposite the cricket club

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