

SWINFEN AND PACKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Ms Jayne Minor
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Our Ref: JM

13 March 2024

To: **All Members of the Parish Council**

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend the Meeting of the Parish Council to be held in the **Conference Centre, HMP Swinfen on Wednesday 27 March 2024 commencing 6.00 p.m.** at which the business set out below will be transacted.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Minor

Jayne Minor (Ms)
Parish Clerk

AGENDA

PUBLIC FORUM

To promote community engagement, the public now has the opportunity to attend and speak at all of the Parish Council's meetings. Please refer to the end of the agenda for details of how to participate in this meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATION

To receive declarations of interests and consider requests for dispensations.

3. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 17 January 2024 [Minute Nos. 58-66] **[ENCLOSURE]**.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

5. THE HIGH-SPEED RAIL PLANS

Members are requested to debate the up-to-date position relating to the High-Speed Rail Plans.

6. CIL MONIES [FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY]

CIL receipts

Total amount of CIL received in financial year 2023/24	£0.00
Total amount of CIL received in financial year 2022/23	£0.00
Total amount of CIL received in financial year 2021/22	£26,163.50
Total amount of CIL received in financial year 2020/21	£8,721.17
Total amount of CIL received in financial year 2019/20	£410.55
Total amount of CIL received in financial year 2018/19	£1,037.77
TOTAL RECEIVED	£36,332.99

CIL Spent

Total amount of CIL spent in financial year 2023/24 so far	£16,000.00
Total amount of CIL spent in financial year 2022/23	£10,424.50
Total amount of CIL spent in financial year 2021/22	£4,090.00
Total amount of CIL spent in financial year 2020/21	£1,930.50
Total amount of CIL spent in financial year 2019/20	£295.00
Total amount of CIL spent in financial year 2018/19	£1,037.77
TOTAL SPENT	£33,777.77

CIL Unspent

TOTAL UNSPENT	£2,555.22
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7. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

Members are requested to receive and note the attached report [ENCLOSURE].

8. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL AND ANNUAL REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

Members are requested to receive and note the attached report [ENCLOSURE].

9. STAFFORDSHIRE PARISH COUNCILS' ASSOCIATION (SPCA)

Members are requested to consider renewal of membership of the SPCA at a cost of £133.05 per annum.

The Association was founded in 1939 and:

- Saves you time and money by streamlining your Council's "business" using model documents.
- Provides legal/financial advice.

- Provides free quarterly newsletters to all Clerks/Councillors to keep Councils in touch with the latest developments.
- Suggests sources of funding for projects and provides guidance and advice on public sector borrowing approval
- Provides access to a database of suppliers who provide products and services for Councils, website design, Council notice boards, playground equipment, shelters, bins etc.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman will move:

That under the Public Bodies [Admissions to Meetings] Act 1960 [Section 2] [and as expended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972], the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

11. PARISH CLERK'S SALARY

Members are requested to approve the payment of the Parish Clerk's February 2024 and March 2024 salary [**PINK ENCLOSURE**].

12. DATE AND TIME FOR NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The next Parish Council meetings will be held on:

Wednesday 15 May 2024 – Annual General Meeting

PUBLIC FORUM

15 minutes will be set aside at the beginning of this meeting for you to raise issues relevant to the remit of the meeting. You will have up to 3 minutes and can raise more than one issue. However, the Chairman has the option to extend the time allowed to you if they think it is appropriate. So that the Members at the meeting can be properly briefed in order to enable them to provide a considered response to your question, please advise the Town Clerk of the question[s] you wish to ask the Parish Council at least five working days before the meeting. The Chairman of the meeting has the right to reject any representations that he/she considers not to be appropriate for the meeting. The public forum session will usually be the first item on the agenda and normally will last up to 15 minutes. In some instances, it may not be possible at the meeting to provide an answer. Where that is the case, a written response will be sent to your stated address. While audio and video recordings of this meeting are entirely legal, as a matter of courtesy to Parish Council members who work for this Parish and this Council on a voluntary basis, we would be grateful if you would let the Clerk or the Chairman know beforehand.

**MINUTES OF THE SWINFEN AND PACKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD IN THE CONFERENCE CENTRE, HMP SWINFEN ON
WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY 2024 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Barnes in the Chair
Councillors Armstrong, Dyott and Loescher

In attendance:

Ms J Minor, Parish Clerk

PARISH FORUM

No members of the public were present.

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Perks and Mrs Pope and Mrs Phillips.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

60. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 08 November 2023 [Minute Nos. 46-58] as circulated, be approved as a correct record.

61. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Packington Hall

Councillor Barnes informed Members that the development was nearing completion, however, there was still a number of properties for sale.

Tamworth Herald Article

Councillor Barnes informed Members that Mr Frank Bartlett had written an article under "Whittington Voice" in the Tamworth Herald about the ranges and 8,000 house development. The article was about the proposed 8,000 new houses south of Whittington and 1,800 more in something called Hopwas Vale. He informed Members that he could not find anyone who knows anything about it as yet, even the local Councillors.

Councillor Barnes informed Members that information had been posted on social media by a MOD employee, who goes under the name of Wiggle McAllister about the probable closure of the Whittington firing ranges and a proposed 8,000 house development south of the Whittington army medical training depot on land they own/control. This clearly is news to us all and was announced in the Tamworth Herald as well as on Facebook. He explained that he was well aware, living in close proximity, about the issue of the general

public going into Hopwas Woods while the flags are up. Councillor Barnes confirmed that he had emailed and had received a response dated 12 January 2024 from Toby O'Shaughnessy, Defence Infrastructure Organisation. Mr O'Shaughnessy had confirmed that the Defence Infrastructure Organisation [DIO] were responsible for the management of Whittington Range [including Hopwas Woods] and was pleased to confirm that there were currently no plans to close or dispose of this Defence Training Estate asset, despite the article in the Tamworth Herald.

With reference to the safety of the public entering Hopwas Woods, Mr O'Shaughnessy confirmed that community relations are of the utmost importance to the Ministry of Defence [MOD] and all efforts are made to keep the public informed of training exercises. For Whittington Ranges, the MOD advertises these activities through various channels including advertising firing times [and direction on public access] on the gov.uk website and provides regular updates to Lichfield District Council. Regarding Hopwas Woods in particular, public information map boards with permitted routes are displayed on all access points, in addition to danger signs on boundary fences and red flags/lamps displayed when Live Firing is in progress. DIO is aware of the impact of incursions and is currently considering a "Respect the Range" communication campaign for the Midlands area, which focuses on accessing the training estate safely.

Car Park on the A51 opposite Hopwas Woods – Fly Tipping

Councillor Barnes referred to emails he had sent and received to Councillors and officers from Lichfield District Council regarding the recent fly tipping of 4/5 loads of builders rubbish. Ms Tims, Assistant Director, Operations, Regulation and Enforcement at Lichfield District Council confirmed on 23 November 2023 that the EP Team had visited and pictured the debris to see if there was any evidence to collect. She advised that Operational Services do not have capacity for this work at the moment so the landowner should seek a registered waste disposal company to collection and remove the waste lawfully. She felt that the Parish Council should have been aware of the wider implications of the decision to invest in the land and the ongoing maintenance liability it creates.

Councillor Loescher informed Members that he had spoken to Barnes Skips and Recycling who had agreed to remove the "mixed municipal waste" on 12 December 2023 free of charge and it was **AGREED** that the Parish Clerk would send an email to Barnes Skips and Recycling thanking them for their support and assistance on this matter.

62. THE HIGH-SPEED RAIL PLANS

Councillor Barnes informed Members that BBV will resume work on "our patch" within the next 18 months. Councillor Loescher thought it may be a good idea that our previous questions and concerns were still raised "keep it live" and it was **AGREED** that Councillor Loescher would draft an email to be sent by the Parish Clerk.

63. CIL MONIES

RESOLVED That the CIL unspent to date totalling £2,555.22 be noted.

64. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (Section 2) (and as expended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

65. PARISH CLERK'S SALARY

RESOLVED That cheques be drawn in respect of the Parish Clerk's December 2023 [**cheque number 100702**] and January 2024 [**cheque number 100704**] salary, Staffordshire Pension Fund – December 2023 [**cheque number 100703**] and Staffordshire Pension Fund – January 2024 [**cheque number 100705**].

66. DATE AND TIME FOR NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

RESOLVED That:
Wednesday 27 March 2024
Wednesday 15 May 2024

All meetings will commence at 6.00 pm.

[The Meeting closed at 6.30 pm]

Signed

Dated

SWINFEN AND PACKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 imposes a duty on local councils to "maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control".
- 1.2 Internal audit is a key component of the system of internal control. The purpose of internal audit is to review whether the systems of financial and other controls over a council's activities and operating procedures are effective.
- 1.3 Local councils are required, at least once a year, to conduct, in accordance with proper practices, a review of effectiveness of internal audit. The council is required to sign the annual governance statement (on the Annual Return submitted to the external auditor) to evidence that this review has been undertaken.

2. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

- 2.1 The following criteria must be satisfied for internal audit to be considered effective:
- That the Internal Auditor is independent of the other financial controls and procedures of the Council which are subject to review.
 - That they are competent to carry out the role in a way that will meet the business needs of the Council.
 - That consideration is made of how many times in a year the systems and records should be subject to internal audit.
 - That the scope of the internal audit is sufficient.
 - That any internal audit report is considered in full by a meeting of the Parish Council.
 - That appropriate action is taken on any recommendations contained in the internal audit report.
 - The Council must also satisfy itself that the quality of delivery of the internal audit service provides reliable assurance about the Council's internal controls and its management of risk.
- 2.2 Considering these requirements for internal audit for Swinfen and Packington Parish Council:
- 2.3.1 **Independence**
- The Internal Auditor has no involvement in the Parish Council's financial controls, procedures or decision making. They are not related to, nor associated with, any member of the Parish Council or the Parish Clerk. The Internal Auditor has direct access to the Parish Council should they think this necessary.
- 2.3.2 **Competence**
- The Internal Auditor is familiar with the criteria on financial matters applied to local councils and the Audit Commission's current 'Light Touch' audit process and has

access to "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioner's Guide 2010 (England)". There is no evidence/reason to believe that the internal audit will not be carried out competently, ethically and with integrity and objectivity.

2.3.3 Frequency of Internal Audit

One internal audit undertaken after the annual accounts have been prepared is considered to be adequate for the Parish Council's needs given the current level of activity.

2.3.4 Scope of Work

The scope of the internal audit work carried out by the Internal Auditor follows the suggested approach to internal audit provided by the "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioner's Guide 2010 (England)".

2.3.5 Audit Report

The Internal Auditor will prepare a report in their own name and addressed to the Council following their completion of the internal audit. It will be presented to the Parish Council at the next meeting after it has been issued. Act actions to be taken on the recommendations made will be minuted.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Parish Council considers for itself whether the system of internal audit is sufficiently effective, using this report as prepared by the Parish Clerk as a starting point for those considerations.

**SWINFEN AND PACKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL
INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW CHECKLIST
PART 1 – MEETING STANDARDS**

EXPECTED STANDARD	EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT	YES/NO	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>1. Scope of Internal Audit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal audit work takes into account both the Council's risk assessment and wider internal control arrangements. ▪ Internal audit work covers the Council's anti-fraud and corruption arrangements. 	<p>Y</p> <p>Y</p>	
<p>2. Independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Internal Auditor has direct access to those charged with governance. ▪ Reports are made in own name to management. ▪ The Internal Auditor does not have any other role within the Council. 	<p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p>	
<p>3. Competence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no evidence of a failure to carry out internal audit work ethically, with integrity and objectivity. 	<p>Y</p>	
<p>4. Relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All responsible officers (Clerk/RFO and Finance Officer) are consulted on the internal audit plan. ▪ Respective responsibilities for officers and the Internal Auditor are defined in relation to internal control, risk management and fraud and corruption matters (job descriptions and engagement letter). ▪ The responsibilities of Council members are understood; training of members is carried out as necessary. 	<p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p>	

<p>5. Audit Planning and Reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The annual internal audit plan properly takes account of all the risks facing the Council. 	<p>Y</p>	
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Review conducted on behalf of the Council by:

Ms Jayne Minor, Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Report considered and adopted by Members at a meeting of the Parish Council held on 27 March 2024:

Chairman of the Council

Ms Jayne Minor, Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

**SWINFEN AND PACKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL
INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW CHECKLIST
PART 2 – CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVENESS**

EXPECTED STANDARD	EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT	YES/NO	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Internal audit work is planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned internal audit work is based on risk assessment and designed to meet the Council's needs. 	Y	
2. Understanding the whole Council, its needs and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The annual audit plan demonstrates how audit work will provide assurance for the Council's Annual Governance Statement. 	Y	
3. Be seen as a catalyst for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Internal Auditor supports the Council's work in delivering improved services to the community. 	Y	
4. Add value and assist the Council in achieving its objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council makes positive responses to the Internal Auditor's recommendations and follows up with action where this is called for. 	Y	
5. Be forward looking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National agenda changes are considered in formulating the annual audit plan. ▪ The Internal Auditor maintains awareness of new developments in the services, risk management and corporate governance. 	Y	
6. Be challenging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Internal Auditor focuses on the risks facing the Council. ▪ The Internal Auditor encourages officers and Members to develop their own responses to risks, rather than relying solely on audit recommendations. 	Y	Y

<p>7. Ensure the right resources are available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adequate resource is made available for the Internal Auditor to complete his work. ▪ The Internal Auditor understands the Council and the legal and corporate framework in which it operates. 	<p>Y</p>	<p>Y</p>
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Review conducted on behalf of the Council by:

Ms Jayne Minor, Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Report considered and adopted by Members at a meeting of the Parish Council held on 27 March 2024:

Chairman of the Council

Ms Jayne Minor, Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

SWINFEN AND PACKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL AND ANNUAL REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROL

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 imposes a duty on local councils to ensure "that the financial management of the body is adequate and effective and that the body has a sound system of internal control".
- 1.2 Local councils are required to conduct, at least once a year, in accordance with proper practices, a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control. The council is required to sign the Annual Governance Statement (on the Annual Return submitted to the external auditor) to evidence that this review has been undertaken.
- 1.3 In order for the Parish Council to review the effectiveness of the Internal Control System there needs to be clarity on the internal controls in place.
- 1.4 Some internal controls are listed in the Financial Regulations document but the system of controls goes beyond this. A Statement of internal Controls has been prepared and is appended to this report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Parish Council consider the attached Statement of Internal Controls and consider whether the controls currently in place are effective.

SWINFEN AND PACKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL

Cash Book/Bank Reconciliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Cash Book is kept up-to-date and reconciled to the bank statement on a monthly basis.
Financial Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A document listing the Parish Council's financial regulations, based on the model version prepared by NALC/SLCC, is maintained. The regulations are reviewed for continued relevance and amended where necessary by the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) with any proposed amendments subject to approval by the Parish Council. ▪ The Financial Regulations are complemented by the approved "Duties of the Responsible Financial Officer".
Order/Tender Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Financial Regulations list the number of estimates, quotations or full tenders that must be invited depending on the value and nature of the work. ▪ Official letters or emails are sent to suppliers for services which are not regular in nature.
Legal Powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A proper legal power is identified in advance of any expenditure.
Payment Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letters/emails ordering the work are matched to invoices. ▪ A Schedule of Payments is presented to the Parish Council for approval (such approval is recorded in the Minutes). ▪ All cheques and financial documents are signed by at least one Councillor and the Parish Clerk. ▪ Original invoices are provided to the Councillors signing the cheques. ▪ The cheque number used to settle an invoice is noted on the invoice for cross reference purposes.
The Free Resource, i.e. LGA 1972, s.137	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A s.137 account is maintained. ▪ The proper minute authorising expenditure from s.137 is prepared on each occasion.
VAT Repayment Claims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The RFO ensures that all invoices are addressed to the Parish Council. ▪ The RFO ensures that proper VAT invoices are received where VAT is payable.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Finance Officer/RFO maintains a VAT account to show that the correct amount of VAT is reclaimed in the year.
Income Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The RFO ensures that the amount of Precept received is correct in accordance with the Precept request submitted to the District Council. ▪ The Finance Officer/RFO ensures that all other receipts are received when due and correctly calculated.
Financial Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The performance to date and latest year end forecast against the agreed annual Budget are presented to the Parish Council.
Budgetary Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The budget is prepared in consultation with the Parish Council. ▪ The Precept is set on the basis of the budget by the deadline set by the District Council.
Payroll Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All staff are paid under PAYE. ▪ All staff salaries are set by the Parish Council and a minute is prepared to show the agreed salaries. ▪ Salaries are currently paid by cheque; all cheques are signed by at least one Councillor and the Parish Clerk. ▪ The RFO will ensure that all the necessary payroll returns are made to HMRC and will retain evidence that this has been done.
Asset Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Finance Officer/RFO maintains a full Asset Register. ▪ The existence and condition of assets is checked on an annual basis. ▪ The adequacy of insurance of the Parish Council's assets is considered annually in advance of the insurance renewal.

Report considered and adopted by Members at a meeting of the Parish Council held on 27 March 2024:

Chairman of the Council

Ms Jayne Minor, Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer