

Clerk – Tammy Williams

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD MONDAY 9TH JULY 2018 AT 7.00PM

AT HOPWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE, REDDITCH ROAD, HOPWOOD

18/036 Present: Cllrs A Humphries (Chairman), M Ball, J Cypher, A Helmore, A Smith, A Wallis, A Willetts, N Wise & M Worrall

In attendance: Tammy Williams (Clerk), Sally Oldaker (The Village), District/County Councillor C Hotham, the Parish Lengthsman and 2 members of the public

Cllr Humphries opened the meeting by thanking Cllr Willetts for chairing the June Parish Council in his absence.

18/037 Apologies for Absence

District Cllr K Van der Plank
Cllr P Freeman
Cllr R Chima
Cllr S Lambert
PC S Albutt

18/038 Declarations of Interest

Cllr A Humphries – agenda item 6.4

18/039 Reports from Alvechurch Ward, District & County Councillors

Report From County Councillor, C Hotham

County Cllr Hotham updated Council that:

- The County Council has decided to resurface the pavement on the Snake Lane service road which was not a decision he was party to.
- County Cllr Hotham has recommended that the footway between Snake Lane and Tanyard Lane is resurfaced
- Swan Street Gas Leak resolution took so long because gas had been leaking into the ground for a long time.
- In response to the resident's complaint to the Parish Council regarding the volume of traffic using Old Rectory Lane, County Cllr Hotham advised that there are signs advising that the road is not suitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles at each end but it is a public highway and there does need to be a lot of evidence that there is a problem because of the knock-on effect on the surrounding roads.
- The County Council is still working through the issues faced in Children's Services

Report From District Councillor, C Hotham

- District Cllr Hotham advised that he attended the Planning Committee meeting and advised that the recent planning application for new houses on Ash Lane, Hopwood was not approved on design grounds and not because the application was in the green belt and outside the village envelope. It was also noted that the response from Highways was in regards to the visibility splay and that couldn't be enforced because it involved a 3rd party's property. It was suggested that the Parish Council wrote to Bromsgrove District Council Planning department to voice their concerns about the decision. Parish Councillors noted that the Planning Officers didn't seem to know about the village envelope and didn't respond to the Planning Application in line with BDC's own policies. Thanks were also given to District Cllr Hotham who had called the planning application into the District Council's Planning Committee for consideration.
- It was also noted that the Parish Council Planning Committee had written to Dale Birch (BDC Planning Officer) regarding their concerns about Planning Enforcement and a response has been received. The Planning Committee may ask District Cllr Hotham to represent their concerns at the District Council. It was also noted that NALC may raise that there is a national issue with a lack of funds to fill vacancies in Enforcement.
- Councillors also raised that it is important that the District Council starts to consider planning applications received for the Parish in line with the Parish's Neighbourhood Plan now that it is in its final stages.
- Alvechurch Football Club's planning application to enable them to move to The Hayes was granted and means that the club will remain in the Parish.
- There is a follow up meeting in regards to the Wood/Hearn Report.

Report From District Cllr Kate Van der Plank, Alvechurch Village Ward

District Cllr Van der Plank had sent her apologies and had sent a report to the Clerk which will be sent round Parish Councillors by email.

No report or apologies were received in respect of Alvechurch South ward.

18/040 To Approve the Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 11/06/2018

The Minutes were **agreed** by Council and signed by Cllr A Humphries.

Councillors discussed the lessons to be learnt from the impact of a major road closure in the village including whether the Parish Council could in the future co-ordinate public information. The Parish Council had asked the County Council to do this following the sustained highways issues at the Weights Lane development last year.

18/041 Clerk's report: Including actions completed since last meeting, report of complaints, emergency expenditure and matters arising from previous meeting, including:

- a. Update on the installation of new play equipment at The Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields through Section 106 monies

Cllrs Smith and Humphries delivered letters with a programme of works to Meadow Lane residents prior to work commencing.

Sutcliffes have provided the following programme of works:

- The Play Equipment will be delivered tomorrow morning
- The Gym Equipment Bases have been installed
- The Play Equipment & Gym Equipment Tops will be put on once the surfacing has been laid.
- The extra Heras Fencing which is currently stacked, will be put up tomorrow ready for the cableway installation

The Clerk will ask the surfacing contractor to look at the mulch around the existing toddler unit as it is very spongy. The Clerk has also requested that the contractors need to lock the site whenever they leave it.

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b. Update on Bridge 64 by the dead arm of the canal

A Project Manager from the Canal & Rivers Trust confirmed last week that the demolition of Bridge 64 will begin today. Photographic evidence will be taken beforehand of the condition of the site and the Althestan Close prior to work starting. We are also advised that an Ecologist has approved the works. A security firm has been employed to make regular checks on the bridge to reduce trespassing following report.

c. Update on the resurfacing of the paddling pool edges at the Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields

The Clerk advised that work began on Friday to resurface the paddling pool edges and will finish tomorrow.

d. Update on the installation of an overhead barrier at the Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields

The Clerk met with the contractor to confirm details and advised Council that there is a 6-week lead time on the installation of the overhead barrier.

e. Update on the New Homes Bonus Grant Funding application to Bromsgrove District Council

After the last meeting, the application was finalised and submitted. Arrangements are being made for representatives to attend the Panel meeting at BDC.

f. To note the referral of the Complaint regarding the Planning Committee to the Monitoring Officer at Bromsgrove District Council

At the June Parish Council meeting, the Parish Council had considered a complaint received and on 18th June the complainant had written to the Clerk to advise that he was dissatisfied with the Parish Council's response and had referred the matter to the Monitoring Officer at Bromsgrove District Council. The Clerk noted that to date she had not received a communication from the Monitoring Officer about this.

g. Update on Phase 3 of the Street Lighting Upgrade

Prysmian has confirmed that the Phase 3 Upgrade will begin next week with the exception of the street light on Birmingham Road, Hopwood. The office staff have written to the homeowner whose tree is overhanging the street light on Birmingham Road, Hopwood to request for the overhanging vegetation to be cut back first.

h. Update on the Swan Street Closure & the Change to the 146 Bus Route During the Closure

The Parish Council has been closely monitoring the community impact of Swan Street closure and in recent days has been in regular contact with the Cadent project manager to understand how the work has progressed. The gas main infrastructure in Swan Street is quite complex, some of it relatively old, and Cadent has closely followed Health & Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines in monitoring gas levels from a number of excavations. The safety of local residents is paramount and this is why the road has been closed. Diversion routes were planned by Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and Worcestershire County Council and the Police have been monitoring instances of poor driving eg. in School Lane. Due to the complexity of the gas pipework and community wishes to expedite the work, Cadent decided to decommission the older of 2 gas mains so that all properties are supplied from one, newer main. Gas levels have since reduced and Cadent will now fill in the excavations, and assuming no new leaks are reported, they plan to reopen the road in around 7 days' time. APC understands that many Swan Street residents have been very understanding and co-operated well with Cadent which is a good example of the community spirit in our Parish. Council was also advised that last week, a member of the public contacted the office because three older residents had been dropped off in Hopwood and had had to walk back to Alvechurch with shopping because of the route the buses were taking as a result of the Swan Street closure. The Clerk contacted Diamond Buses to advise and assisted Diamond Buses with an alternative route which they have adopted and it is noted that this was publicised on social media.

i. To note the Parish Council's Policy Regarding Comments to the Press

It was brought to the Clerk's attention that the press had contacted Parish Councillors regarding the Swan Street Closure. All Councillors are reminded that the Parish Council's policy states that any enquiries from the press should be referred to the Chairman and the Clerk. No individual Councillors should speak to the press.

j. Update on the allotments

Following representations at the office and the Youth Sports and Recreation Committee Meeting, the office has written to allotment holders to advise that a spot check will be undertaken by The Assistant Clerk and Cllr Wallis, Allotment Association Chairman, to begin formal dialogue with allotment holders regarding unworked plots, weeds and any other safety concerns noticed. This process will be in line with the Allotment Association Agreement.

The Clerk has issued the rent cheque to the land owner and asked him to contact the office if he would like to discuss the allotments at all.

k. Update on the Tree Surveys

The YSR Committee reviewed the tree surveys received and recommendations made. The Clerk to obtain quotations for the tree surgery recommended in the report.

l. Update on Incredible Edible

The Clerk wrote to Tim Reading after the meeting to thank him for attending the meeting last month and to advise that Council would like to plant flowers as planned this year in their planters but he was welcome to re-appraise Council early in 2019 of the project's progress and Council would re-consider the use of the planters for the 2019 growing season. The Clerk also advised that the Parish council would be happy to advertise the project via social media and at the allotments. Finally, the Clerk provided him with a copy of the grant application and timescales.

m. To note residents' feedback regarding recent street lighting upgrades

A Councillor advises that both the residents on Snake Lane and Latimer Road who were affected by the upgrade of street lights in front of their properties have thanked the Parish Council and advised that the work undertaken was a positive experience for them. The Clerk to pass on thanks to Western Power as well who took time to meet with the resident at the bottom of Latimer Road and allay concerns about the impact on their garden.

n. Outstanding Items: Updated Standing Orders & Financial Regulations, Highways Matters & GDPR Training

The Clerk advised that updated Model Standing Orders and Financial Regulations would be reviewed at the July Finance & Resources Committee Meeting, Highways matters would be reviewed at the September Parish Council meeting and that the Council's GDPR training would be completed as soon as possible.

18/042 Finance & Administration

a. To receive a list of invoices for payment and consider any exceptional items

The cheque list was reviewed and approved by Council and signed by the Chairman.

b. To consider Prysmian's costings for maintenance to our street lighting stock from the 2019/20 financial year and the costs for replacing Sodium Street Lights

The Clerk provided Council with details of the increased costs associated with our Street Lighting stock including that the cost of replacing sodium bulbs currently used in 102 of the Parish Street Lights has increased from £10 to £35 per bulb because Prysmian's only known supplier has shut down one of their production lines making the lead time from order now 9 months and demand greater. Prysmian advises that they have sourced an alternative bulb but they still cost around £35 each. The alternative is to install LED lights which are cheaper to run and last about 10 years but they have a greater upfront cost of £199 each (if 10 or more are installed at a time) or £240 each if done on a case by case basis.

In addition, Prysmian has advised that from the beginning of the 2019/20 financial year they will be rolling out a maintenance contract and this contract will include:

- Electrical testing every 6 years at £20 per point

- Cleaning and visual inspections every 2 years at £15 per point
- Night patrolling of points every 4 weeks £2.00 per point per month
- All light out repairs including new lamps, photocells, fuses, wiring and emergency attendance and make safe of dangerous situations (not LED) which would cost on average £75.60 per point

The Clerk estimated that this would cost around £5,587.50 per annum. The Clerk recommended that the Parish Council adheres to its Financial Regulations and contacts other local councils via the CALC newsletter in to obtain details of other companies that offer the same service to get 2 more quotations on a set, comparable basis in time for the budgeting process in November. Councillor Worrall proposed that a steering group is set up to include the Clerk and Cllrs Worrall and Humphries to look into what regulations and obligations there are around street lighting and to look into getting comparable quotations for Council to consider at a later date. Council **agreed** to this proposal.

c. To consider Quarter One's Expenditure and Receipts against the Budget for 2018/19 Financial Year

The Responsible Financial Officer provided Council with the flexed budget report detailing expenditure and receipts against budget for the 2018/19 financial year. Councillors reviewed this.

d. To consider the advice from CALC regarding the payment of a grant to St Laurence Churchyard

Cllr Humphries withdrew from discussions due to his already declared personal interest. Cllr Cypher led the discussion having provided Council with a Briefing Note which stated that at the March meeting the Clerk brought a Topic Note from NALC regarding the provision of financial assistance to the Church. Following the Parish Council meeting, Cllr Cypher asked Cllr Sue Baxter (NALC Chairman) at a CALC Area Meeting to clarify NALC's position on this Topic Note.

The Topic Note stated that NALC's legal view was that the 1894 Act stated specifically that a Parish Council cannot provide financial assistance for maintenance to churchyards and this Act supersedes the more general powers in the Local Government Act 1972 which says that a Parish Council can. The possible implications to a Parish Council paying out a grant for churchyard maintenance could be that the External Auditors could qualify the Parish Council's accounts and insist that the money is reclaimed from the recipient.

The Clerk has spoken to CALC and no formal response has been received from NALC. Additionally the auditors for this area will not give a view in abstract about whether such expenditure for churchyard maintenance will be challenged.

CALC has advised that an alternative option for the Parish Council, in lieu of providing churchyard support, would be that the Parish Council could consider providing financial assistance for services provided that are of parish benefit under Section 137 of the 1972 Act and Cllr Cypher proposed this to Council. Councillors debated this extensively but concerns were raised about whether other community groups, including other Churches who had previously applied for a grant and been turned down, might wish to have an application for financial support considered under this Power as well in this financial year.

It was proposed that the Clerk write to St Laurence Churchyard to advise that the Parish Council cannot approve the grant payment to the Churchyard group this financial year but that in November the Finance & Resources Committee will meet again to review applications for the next financial year and community groups will be able to apply for funds through this process.

2 Councillors abstained; 7 agreed. The motion was carried

Cllr Hotham left the meeting at 20.13.

18/043 Committees/Sub Committees/working parties

a. Reports from Committees and minutes circulated since last meeting

- i. To receive an update from the Youth, Sport & Recreation Committee Meeting held on 25th June 2018

It was noted that all pertinent matters discussed at this Committee Meeting were already raised in the Clerk's Report.

- ii. To receive an update from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Neighbourhood Plan is currently 2½ weeks into a 6-week consultation period with Bromsgrove District Council. BDC Cabinet approved it on 27th June 2018.

- iii. To receive an update from the Planning Committee Meeting on 2nd July 2018

The Chairman of the Planning Committee advised that a number of Rowney green residents had attended the meeting to express their views on a particular Rowney Green planning application. In total the Planning Committee had reviewed and considered 6 planning applications raising 3 objections. The Planning Committee has slight concerns about Enforcement and it was noted that the Assistant Clerk had followed this up with the Development Management Manager at BDC.

- iv. To receive an update from the WW1 Remembrance Working Group

Cllr Humphries advised that there had been a recent meeting with the Ex-Servicemen Association to get a feel for their views on how to commemorate the centenary. On 9th November there will be a community choir concert in the Village Hall, Alvechurch (there may be one or two concerts). On 11th November the Reverend Bubbers will carry out an extended Remembrance Service on the Village Green. It was noted that the Historical Society will be holding Open Days in September and the Alvechurch Village Society may hold a talk with speakers in November.

It was noted that the Parish Council can help with logistics on 11th November and intends to buy a new flag and service the flagpole as well as cleaning the benches. Cllr Humphries advised that he is making enquiries about sourcing a PA system for the events and which can also be used for the Christmas Light Switch On. The events will be publicised from September onwards.

- v. To receive an update from the Christmas Arrangements Committee and to ratify the Christmas Light Switch On date of 30th November 2018

Council was advised that Father Christmas will be switching on the lights on 30th November. A Councillor queried whether there could be a programmed switch on with other shops. Council **agreed** that the switch on will be on 30th November 2018.

b. Reports from Meetings with Outside Bodies

- i. To receive an update regarding the June Area CALC Meeting

Cllr Cypher advised that Mike Dunphy gave a presentation on the Hearn Report and it was reiterated that the Hearn Report was not a done deal. It was also noted that there was some controversy about one of the authors of the Hearn Report also working on Bromsgrove District Council's Green Belt Review. Councillor Cypher pressed for when BDC will decide on how many houses will be built in larger settlements and was advised that those figures weren't available now but if it was pressed a number could be reached. Councillors were also advised that there were vacancies which Councillors could choose to fill and would involve attending meetings.

- ii. To receive an update on the meeting with West Midlands Trains Regarding Future Progress on Alvechurch Station Car Park

Cllrs Humphries and Worrall with County Cllr Hotham attended a meeting at West Midlands Trains offices. During the meeting it was suggested that the station car park should have Worcestershire County Council involvement and County Cllr Hotham has advised he will lobby on the Parish's behalf. It was also noted that this will also continue to need Network Rail involvement. Progress is slow but the meeting sounded positive and encouraging.

18/044 To consider residents complaints and queries, as received:

- a. Resident's complaint regarding the speed limit along Old Rectory Lane and its use as a "rat run"

Standing Orders were suspended to allow Ron Rand to speak who advised Council that he had previously lobbied for a 20mph speed limit and got a 30mph speed limit instead. He noted that cars go faster than before and Mr Rand suggested some potential signage. Standing Orders were resumed. Councillors asked that our Highways representative drive down the lane and provide Council with recommendations.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to raise this with our Highways representative.

18/045 Around the Parish - to consider developments and issues raised by Councillors present as they relate to Hopwood, Rowney Green, Bordesley and Alvechurch.

- i. Hopwood

Cllr Smith advised that he had received complaints regarding the state of the pavement alongside the A441.

ACTION POINT: Cllr Smith to provide the Clerk with photographs to be passed on to the relevant authority.

- ii. Bordesley

No issues noted

- iii. Rowney Green

Concerns were raised that the memorial bench for Mr Rippington hadn't been replaced yet.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to raise this with the footballers who had installed it in the first place.

A Councillor asked for an update on the Horse Safety signs that had been agreed with Highways.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to chase up Highways about this.

- iv. Alvechurch

A Councillor thanked the office staff and Bromsgrove District Council for clearing up the fly-posting on the fence to the entrance of Tanyard Lane Car Park.

A Councillor advised that discussions had taken place about Japanese Knotweed getting into the yard at the rear of the garage on Birmingham Road, Alvechurch.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to speak to our Japanese Knotweed eradication contractors for an update on their programme.

18/046 To consider, and if considered appropriate, to pass the following resolution to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of agenda items 11 & 12 which contains confidential employee information:-

"RESOLVED: that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Section 1 Sub-Section 2 a body may, by resolution, exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature from that business or of the proceedings; and where such a resolution is passed, this Act shall not require the meeting to be open to the public during proceedings to which the resolution applies"

This was **resolved**

18/047 To consider the Parish Council's staff pension arrangements

The Clerk updated Council on staff pensions advice received.

18/048 To receive an update on the financial arrangements for the Japanese Knotweed Treatment Programme

The Clerk advised Council that it had been recompensed £1320.00 in respect of the costs associated with the Japanese Knotweed treatment programme following the spread of Knotweed from the land to the rear of 2A Birmingham Road.

18/049 Date and time of next meeting – 10th September 2018 at 7pm at Hopwood Community Centre

This meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Signed..... Date.....
Chairman, Alvechurch Parish Council

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