

ALVECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

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Clerk – Tammy Williams

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD MONDAY 17th DECEMBER 2018 AT 7 PM

AT HOPWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE REDDITCH ROAD HOPWOOD

The meeting began at 7.07pm.

18/110 Present: Councillors A Humphries (Chairman), M Ball (arrived at 7.20pm), R Chima, J Cypher, A Helmore, S Lambert, M Worrall, A Willetts & N Wise

In attendance: Tammy Williams (Clerk), Richard Peach (The Village), District Cllr K Van der Plank & District Cllr Kit Taylor, PC S Albutt, and 2 members of the public

At the beginning of the meeting, PC S Albutt asked to provide Council with an update on crime statistics in the Parish (Appendix 1). Two members of the public also addressed Council regarding the impact of the overhead barriers on Meadow Lane (Appendix 1).

18/111 Apologies for Absence: Cllrs A Smith, P Freeman & District & County Cllr C Hotham

18/112 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr R Chima (18/116c Rowney Green Shared Church)

Cllrs S Lambert & A Humphries (18/116c St Laurence)

Cllr N Wise (18/116c Alvechurch Village Hall)

18/113 Reports from Alvechurch Ward, District & County Councillors:

District Councillor Kate Van der Plank

District Cllr Van der Plank noted that she had received enquiries from residents regarding:

- Policing and crime
- The Library consultation

In addition, District Cllr Van der Plank congratulated Cllr Worrall on his chairmanship of the recent meeting regarding the station car park. Cllr Van der Plank was surprised that the Network Rail representative claimed that this was the first time that he had heard about the issues at Alvechurch Station car park. As a result, District Cllr Van der Plank has compiled several year's worth of emails for his perusal.

It was also noted that at the last District Council meeting, District Cllr Hotham put forward a motion to investigate a North Worcestershire Unitary Authority but the Independents were defeated. District Cllr Van der Plank was disappointed as the motion was only to investigate its and there is a need to protect front line services and be creative with budgets.

Cllr Cypher added that at the recent CALC AGM the Chief Executive of Worcestershire County Council had stated that he had been involved in establishing a unitary authority in

previous role and he had stated that the effort to achieve the change out-weighed the results.

District Cllr Kit Taylor

District Cllr Taylor advised that he had received queries from residents regarding the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Taylor added that he would have a word with the Returning Officer at Bromsgrove District Council as well as the Bromsgrove District Council Planning Officers to get a layman's explanation of what a Neighbourhood Plan is. District Cllr Taylor had attended a Highways meeting between Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council representatives in a bid to re-energise Worcestershire County Council's response to Highways issues in North Worcestershire, like the A38 through Bromsgrove.

District Cllr Taylor noted that District Cllr Hotham put forward a compelling argument regarding a Unitary Authority but there is no appetite for it throughout County. It was noted that there were no plans to close the library and if there were there would have to be another consultation beforehand.

With regards to Burcott House, there will be no fat cats running the property. District Cllr Taylor advised that 6 units would be for sale on the open market, 18 units would become Housing Association properties and the remaining 37 units would be affordable to Bromsgrove residents.

A Parish Councillor queried the persisting matter of Alvechurch South representation at the District Council and whether there was a policy for long-term sickness at Bromsgrove District Council. District Cllr Taylor replied that he was happy to continue representing Alvechurch South and has tried to put pressure on the Leader to resolve the situation. District Cllr Taylor noted that there is a policy for long-term sickness but will review the policies held by St. Albans and Malvern Hill Town Council.

18/114 To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th November 2018

The Clerk advised Council that she had been made aware of some typing errors which she had rectified as these did not alter the information provided within.

However, a Councillor requested the inclusion of the following into the Minutes:

Minute Reference 18/093, at the end of the 3rd paragraph, after .. need to do or speak...to..to add that "BDC should in an automatic acknowledgement to objectors, give information about the procedures for a committee call- in of a planning application". Council approved this amendment which was added to the Minutes and signed by the Chairman.

The November 2018 minutes were then **approved** by Council and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting order then moved on to Agenda Item 6.4:

18/115 Following Social Media and Residents' Requests to Consider Installing a Height Restriction Warning Sign at the Entrance to Meadow Lane and Also to Consider the Implications of the Overhead Barrier on High Sided Vehicles Using Meadow Lane

At 8.10pm District Cllr Taylor left the meeting. Councillors debated the implications of the installation of a height barrier including the use of our car park as a turning circle for Meadow Lane residents and their visitors, notifying motorists that there is a Height Restriction Barrier at the end of the lane by means of a sign and the Meadow Lane residents in attendance request that the barrier remain open in the winter months and close it when there are travellers in the area. The Clerk noted that if Council wished to do this they would need to consider who would be responsible for opening and closing it, particularly out of office hours, as this used to be undertaken by the former Parish Lengthsman.

It was proposed and **agreed unanimously** that the Clerk should investigate the costs for installing a warning sign at the entrance to Meadow Lane. The Clerk will also clarify any regulations regarding the installation of a sign in a conservation area.

It was proposed that the barrier is left open unless intelligence is received to indicate that there are travellers in the area.

Four councillors voted in favour of this motion; 6 voted against the motion. The motion was not carried.

A counter-proposal was made that we defer a decision on this and invite Meadow Lane residents to come up with and bring some suggestions to a future meeting about how this situation can be better managed.

Five Councillors voted in favour of this motion; two voted against the motion; three Councillors abstained from voting. The motion was carried.

The order of the meeting then moved on to Agenda Item 5:

18/116 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 Parish Lengthsman Arrangements

The Clerk has met with Bromsgrove District Council representatives to begin the new Lengthsmans arrangement. It was decided to focus initially on Alvechurch village and filling grit bins which has happened and then widen the scope around the Parish. The Clerk will meet with the Team Leader in the new year. The Clerk notes again that the scheme is working well as they are noting jobs and passing them off to other BDC departments.

b. Update on the Overhead Barrier at the Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields

The barrier was installed last month. The feedback received has been positive and the Clerk has put in a combination lock with the code being passed on to the Emergency Services and the Bromsgrove District Council's Refuse Collection team. The contractor did come out to rectify a couple of issues with the barrier.

c. Update on the Letter to the Leader of BDC Regarding Alvechurch South Representation

A letter was received from Councillor Geoffrey Denaro dated 15th November in response to our letter about Alvechurch South representation advising that Cllr Taylor is covering any queries on behalf of Cllr Griffiths while she continues her recovery and that Cllr Taylor had attended the November Parish Council meeting to explain how residents could contact him. Finally, that BDC's website explains these arrangements and that it was hoped that this now resolves the matter for the Parish Council.

d. Update on Community Resilience (Emergency Planning) Arrangements

Cllrs Lambert & Cypher and the Clerk met with Rachael Pritchett, North Worcestershire Emergency Planning Officer to review the Parish Council's Emergency Plan. Cllr Cypher is undertaking some additional work to the plan which will be included on the January Agenda for consideration.

e. To Note the Annual Review and Update of Councillors' Declaration of Interest Forms

Please can all Councillors return these to me by the January meeting at the latest.

f. Update on the Budget Process for the 2019/20 Financial Year

The Assistant Clerk has prepared the calendar of meetings for 2019. Please can all Councillors review and notify the office of any issues.

g. Update on Playground Checks

The Caretaker continues to undertake playground equipment checks however, the training from Sutcliffes remains outstanding.

h. Update on Elections in 2019

Following Elections training, the Clerk has provided all Councillors with a copy of the Elections timetable for information. BDC's Electoral Services has estimated that a contested election for Alvechurch Parish will cost £5643.95 and for an uncontested election it will cost

approximately £281.76. It is stressed that these are approximate amounts as there are a number of factors that could affect the final cost.

i. Update on Resident's Request for Fencing to be Replaced by the County Council on Bear Hill

The Clerk noted that a resident had advised both the Parish Council of the poor state of the chain link fencing at the top of Bear Hill near St Laurence Close and Snake Lane. The County Council replaced this pretty quickly afterwards with a metal fence.

j. Update on Tree Surveys at Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields

The Clerk and Councillor Smith spent the morning at the Wiggin marking trees that require work to be undertaken on them. The Clerk will now arrange for three tree surgeons to quote for the work to be undertaken. Also, there were some trees that were scheduled for some work at the 12-month stage to remove deadwood and the Clerk and Cllr Smith will review these in the Spring when deadwood will be more apparent.

k. Update on the Replacement Bollards at the Pinch Point on Swan Street

The Parish Council advised the County Council of safety concerns about the holes left in the ground from the knocked over bollards. The County Council has advised that these will be replaced imminently but will be slightly different from those still in situ. As such all bollards will be replaced in due course so that they are all the same.

l. Outstanding Items: ROSPA Inspection of Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields

18/117 Finance & Administration

a. To Receive A List Of Invoices For Payment And Consider Any Exceptional Items

The following items were noted as exceptional items:

The cost of the hire of a PA system for the Remembrance Service

Purchase of padlocks for the overhead barrier

Purchase of a new swing seat for Rowney Green Playing fields as it was split

Purchase of prizes for the Best Dressed Window competition and Best Dressed House Competition & sweets handed out by Father Christmas at the switch on event

Also, a cheque for street lighting was re-issued as a previously signed cheque had not been received by SSE. The Responsible Financial Officer has cancelled the other cheque and noted this in the cheque book.

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

b. To Consider the Draft Budget for the 2019/20 financial year

The Clerk provided Councillors at the meeting with a copy of a draft budget for consideration. Thanks were expressed to the Responsible Financial Officer and Cllr Wallis who had compiled this document for Council. Councillors reviewed the document and it was noted that this is a draft budget and is subject to confirmation of certain costs and overall income received by the end of the financial year. Also that the budget has increased due to the following reasons:

- Provision for election costs estimated at £5643.95
- Cost of new play equipment at Hopwood Community Centre – whilst some funds have been raised already and ring-fenced the Parish Council awaits to hear from Awards4All if an application for £10,000 has been successful.
- Street Lighting costs have increased to reflect an increase in street lighting maintenance and a transition to LED lights which have a greater upfront cost associated to them. A tender exercise will take place in 2019 to get best value.
- Employment costs – pay rise to be ratified still and also potential new staff member

BUDGET	
Cost Centres	2019/2020 Financial Year
Administration	£24,859
Employment	£61,301
Expenses	£2,250
YSR	£57,000
Street Lighting	£22,000
Youth Fund	£1,000
Grants	£8,000
Neighbourhood Plan	£0
Highways	£6,428
Car Park	£400
Total	£183,238

Council **unanimously agreed** the draft budget. During discussions it was noted that Alvechurch Parish Council only holds roughly three months of average monthly expenditure in Reserves and that neighbouring Parish Councils often hold more than that.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to provide details of grants paid out in previous years.

c. To Consider Grant Applications as Received for 2019/20 Financial Year

Council debated the grant applications received which were as follows:

Applicant	Reason Applying	Amount Requested	Power to Provide
The Lounge <i>Community Cafe & Youth Group in Alvechurch</i>	Running costs for the Community Cafe & also Youth Group. The local police has stated that since the inception of the Youth Group anti social behaviour has been eliminated.	£7600	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19 Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.31
Citizens Advice Bureau <i>Charity</i>	May be providing advice to local residents	£100	Section 142 of Local Government Act 1972
Incredible Edible	To provide a multi-purpose waste disposal unit in the Precinct	£200	Litter Act 1983, ss. 5,6
Alvechurch Village Hall	Carpets in 2 small meeting rooms	£400	S133, Local Government Act 1972
Alvechurch PCC (St Laurence Church)	To help fund activities at St Laurence Church to provide a direct benefit to the community	£500	Local Government Act 1972, s.137

Rowney Green Shared Church	Grant to cover the expenditure of quarterly breakfasts to encourage attendance at Rowney Green Shared Church	£200	Section 138B Local Government 1972 Act
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Council had also been provided with copies of accounts provided (with the exception of Incredible Edible which is a newly formed community group) and applications for all applicants.

A Councillor proposed that we accepted the applications for the amounts requested which would breach the ceiling of £8,000 budgeted for in the 2019/2020 draft budget.

Five Councillors voted in favour, five voted against it was therefore a tied vote and the Chairman cast his casting vote which was to vote against the proposal. Therefore the motion was not carried.

The Clerk notified Council that a Councillor had advised that another community group other than those listed had intended to apply for a grant and the Clerk was concerned that this may have been overlooked in recent months in error.

A counter-proposal was made that the Parish Council would approve all smaller grant applications as requested with The Lounge receiving the residual amount and should it work through that the Parish Council hasn't spent its entire 2019/20 budget then it will pay the difference to The Lounge.

Nine Councillors voted in favour.

No Councillors voted against the proposal

One Councillor abstained from the vote.

The motion was therefore carried and Council **resolved** to pay the grants in their entirety with the exception of The Lounge which will receive £6,600. It should be noted that Council **resolved** to pay Alvechurch PCC (St Laurence Church) £500 using Section 137 of the 1972 Act and this will be noted in the Council's accounts accordingly. The amount that can be paid under Section 137 of the 1972 per elector for the 2019/20 financial year is £8.12 and therefore the Parish Council is within its limits in paying £500 to Alvechurch PCC.

A Councillor queried whether the Picnic in the Park Committee might consider re-directing all of the funds raised at the 2019 Picnic in the Park event to The Lounge.

ACTION POINT: Cllr Wise to raise this with the PIP Committee

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to write to all grant applicants to advise the outcome.

The meeting then moved on to Agenda Item 6.5:

d. To Consider Purchasing New Office Equipment and Computer Software for the Office Staff

The Clerk had consulted Cllr Wallis regarding the purchase of a laptop for the office. It was proposed that a Dell Vostro 15 3568 laptop be purchased at a cost of £339.

In addition, the office staff had ongoing issues with emails in recent months and it was also noted that there hadn't been any software upgrades made to office computers in a few years. So, Boxer IT had recommended upgrading our Microsoft Office to Microsoft Office 2016 via two possible methods: purchasing two Office packages or paying a monthly amount of £9.40 excluding VAT which would mean that the Parish Council wouldn't own the licence but would provide automatic upgrades in the future. Either option would require paying a fixed fee to Boxer to setup an Exchange Online and migrate emails for 3 mailboxes and setup on 2 computers at a cost of £340 excluding VAT. The Clerk recommended opting for the monthly subscription to take advantage of the future upgrades. It was noted that it was important to have up to date computer software and this would be an investment in the office equipment. Council voted **unanimously** to both these proposals. The Clerk noted that she would have to purchase the laptop personally and asked for a cheque to cover the costs as soon as possible.

e. To Consider Filling Two More Grit Bins in the Parish: one in Rowney Green and another on Robins Hill Drive

The Clerk advised that the Rowney Green Association had requested an additional grit bin following heavy snow in the winter of 2017 & 2018. Similarly, a resident had requested a bin

at the entrance of Robins Hill Drive as this is on an incline and bend making access treacherous in bad weather. County Cllr Hotham had offered to purchase the bins if the Parish Council would fill them with grit each year. It is now noted that a Highways assessment is required for each new bin and the RGA has offered to complete theirs, the Parish Clerk will complete the one for Robins Hill Drive, Alvechurch. Council **agreed unanimously** to pay for the grit to fill these new bins, subject to a successful outcome from the Highways assessment.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to notify the RGA and complete the Highways assessment.

18/118 To Note the Outcome of a Meeting on 19th November With Network Rail, Worcestershire County Council, and Other Stakeholders Regarding Future Improvements to Alvechurch Station Car Park and to Note Initial Discussions with Adjoining Landowners

Council was advised that a meeting took place on 19th November at Network Rail offices in Birmingham. The Parish Council dictated the agenda and Cllr Worrall was the Chairman. A number of key stakeholders were there and thanks were expressed to County Cllr Hotham for attending and inviting County Council representatives as well as District Cllr K Van der Plank who attended with Bromsgrove District Council's Finance Officer. Three representatives from Network Rail were in attendance and a Network Rail representative declared that he had no knowledge of the issues at Alvechurch Station Car Park and as a result, District Cllr Van der Plank has taken a lot of time to collate information for Network Rail representatives. Going forwards it is hoped that the issues can be addressed and the car park capacity be future-proofed. Worcestershire County Council is going to undertake a feasibility brief for the car park: which will include looking at the infrastructure, highways and future proofing requirements. It was a very good meeting, well attended and it is hoped that in the new year we can look at a proposal and make some progress. It was noted that landowners in the vicinity have been made aware of the situation and the meeting that took place.

18/119 To Consider a Proposal for a Lovelock Tree and Bench at the Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields for the Finlay Church Memorial Garden

The Clerk advised Council that she and Cllr Smith had recently met with Andy de Comyn and Penny Church to review the proposed lovelock tree. Concerns were raised by Councillors about health and safety implications for the structure. Possible suggestions included surrounding it with a rockery (which should be covered in wire meshing) to provide a natural barrier to small children accessing it. A Councillor also suggested that it would have to be locked down to reduce the possibility of it being stolen. Finally, a Councillor recommended that the Church family seek independent advice on how to mitigate any health & safety issues. The Clerk advised that ROSPA would charge over £400 for a one-off inspection and a Councillor advised that he uses the Children's Play Advisory Service and their costs would likely be more reasonable.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to contact Penny Church to ask her to have the lovelock tree independently reviewed from a health and safety perspective, prior to installation.

Councillors **agreed unanimously** that the proposed bench could be purchased from Earth Anchors using the funds donated from the Picnic in the Park profits in 2018. Equally, Councillors agreed that the Church family could install a sign with the proposed words provided to Council by the Clerk

18/120 To Receive an Update on the Christmas Light Switch On Event, Best Dressed Window Competition and Best Dressed Window Competition

This item was deferred.

a. To Consider Holding a Christmas Light Switch on in Alvechurch in 2019

This item was deferred

18/121 To Consider Quotations to Carry Out Water Safety Risk Assessment

The Clerk advised the Parish Council had previously undertaken a water safety risk assessment at Hopwood Community Centre and Rowney Green Pavilion and following the

recommendations from that, a new water heater had been installed at Hopwood Community Centre; the extent of the plumbing changes now meant that a new risk assessment would be required. Similarly, the office had never been risk assessed. The Clerk advised that she had recently undertaken an online training module and now had greater insight into the risks and requirements for our Parish Council at each of its venues. The Clerk is therefore recommending that Council considers instructing a company to undertake new risk assessments at its three sites and also consider employing the company to undertake regular monitoring at each of the sites. The Clerk noted that prior to the meeting one company hadn't confirmed the costs for regular monitoring it was therefore agreed that this item will be back on the January agenda.

18/122 Committees/Sub Committees/working parties

a. Reports from Committees and minutes circulated since last meeting

- i. To Receive an Update From the Finance & Resources Committee Meeting Held on 26th November 2018

This item was deferred. Please see the Minutes from the meeting for further information.

- ii. To Receive An Update From The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and to Consider Publicity Arrangements for the Public Referendum on Thursday 10th January 2019

It was noted that the Referendum will take place on 10th January 2019 and Council will promote it as widely as possible.

- iii. To Receive an Update From the Planning Committee Meeting Held on 3rd December 2018 and to Note Representations Made to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust Re Newbourne Hill Parking Arrangements

This item was deferred.

- ii. To receive an Update from the Alvechurch Library Working Group

It was noted that there is a presentation at Alvechurch Library on Friday 21st December regarding the Library Consultation.

b. Reports From Representatives to Outside Bodies

- i. To Receive a CALC Update

This item was deferred.

18/123 To Consider Residents' Complaints and Queries, as Received

- a) A Request From a Local Business for an Ongoing Parking Issue on Bear Hill, Alvechurch to be Resolved Either by Installing Appropriate Signage to Confirm the Area is Not a Parking Bay or to Convert it Into a Parking Bay to Provide Additional Parking in the Village

This item was deferred.

18/124 Around the Parish – to Consider Developments and Issues Raised by Councillors Present as they Relate to Howood, Rowney Green, Bordesley and Alvechurch

This item was deferred.

18/125 Date and time of next meeting: the next meeting will be the Parish Meeting on 14th January 2019 at 7pm at Hopwood Community Centre, Redditch Road, Hopwood

This meeting ended at 10.02pm.

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

DRAFT