

KIDDERMINSTER FOREIGN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Annual Parish Meeting
held remotely using ZOOM on Monday 19th April 2021 at 7.30pm

Present Councillor Mrs. C. Gammond Councillor Mr. J. Gammond
Councillor Mr. C. Grainger Councillor Mr. C. Holford
Councillor Mr. C. Jordan Councillor Mrs. L Green
Councillor Mr. B. Phillips *Approx. 12 members of the public were identified and present on line*
Mrs E Whitehouse (Clerk)

1. Welcome by Chair + a Minute's silence to respect the recent passing of HRH Prince Philip

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and a respectful 1 min silence ensued.

2. Matters the public raise in Open Forum – No matters were raised, with the Chair willing to invite public comment on issues as they arose in the full Parish Council meeting.

3. Police Report – although the police were not present, the Chair related incidents of reports of quad bikers trespassing on private land, and Cllr. Grainger advised that a tonne back of sand had been stolen from a Crundalls Lane property. Clerk advised that there was currently an initiative across local parishes/towns to ask councils to name 3 things that each community would like addressed in their locality. A lengthy discussion took place on what was felt to be the main priorities for attention in this parish. It was finally agreed, after many problems were discussed, mainly involving groups of youths and illegal activities, often near Northwood Lane, reservoir or railway, that the Clerk should reply giving three main priorities – namely speeding vehicles on the lanes, illicit fly tipping, and anti social behaviour by local youths.

4. Report from Mrs. Sally Merritt-Collins re Clare Witnell Blount Charity.

The parish council appointed representative on this Charity tendered her resignation from the post. Although not present at the meeting, she tabled the following report, which the Clerk read out.

"The latest quarterly financial statement prepared by our Clerk, Paul Johnston, has been supplied for Parish Councillors to review. He has previously advised the trustees that the reduction in income caused by having a property vacant for a long time will have an adverse impact that will be exacerbated by the requirement to start paying Council Tax on that property.

Covid has contributed to make the past year particularly difficult, since it has been almost impossible to hold trustee meetings, due partially to lack of IT capability of some of the Trustees to be able to hold these meetings electronically. It is my opinion that the Charity Trustees have a longstanding failure to have competent governance in place. Almshouses charities are required to undertake a quinquennial survey to facilitate regular and planned maintenance. It is unknown when the last such survey was actually completed, and it is evident from the state of the properties that one is long overdue.

It is also my opinion that the charities need to engage professional help to understand and prioritise the many problems with the buildings. Funds are available to do this, but there is no recognition on part of the board of trustees of the urgency and importance of the problem which would justify this spending. Professional help is also needed to continue to manage the buildings and grounds as there is no real property management competence on the current board of trustees.

There is a lack of training for trustees on the legal requirements of the position, and there is a need to recruit new trustees which has proved impossible despite my efforts for over two years. The last WFDC nominated trustee has retired from the position after attending only one or two meetings, and there has been no replacement.

There have been no policy or procedure documents in place at all. I myself have written policy documents to cover safeguarding, health and safety, trustee recruitment, new resident selection, and GDPR (with assistance from the Clerk).

Issues occur with the properties, since there is no requirement or process for residents to have an annual inspection of their properties by the trustees to allow for issues, such as hoarding, failure to clean and ongoing suitability of the property for the resident to be addressed before they become an entrenched problem.

The lack of Governance to address and manage these statutory requirements or basic good practice is of deep concern to me, and in light of the many problems, and lack of a supportive Board of Trustees, I cannot, in all conscience, continue in my role a nominated Trustee representative from the Parish of Kidderminster Foreign, and I tender my resignation with immediate effect."

It was agreed that Cllr. C Jordan, given his experience with local charity, the Emily Jordan Foundation, should make investigations into this worrying report, and to progress the matter with a possible report to the Charities Commission.

There being no further matters for the Annual Parish Meeting, this was immediately followed by the monthly Parish Council meeting.

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1. Present Councillor Mrs. C. Gammond Councillor Mr. J. Gammond
Councillor Mr. C. Grainger Councillor Mr. C. Holford
Councillor Mr. C. Jordan Councillor Mrs. L Green
Councillor Mr. B. Phillips *Approx. 15 members of the public were identified and present on line*
Mrs E Whitehouse (Clerk)

2. Apologies For Absence: District Cllrs. John Byng and Paul Harrison, and County Cllr. I Hardiman.
One member of the public also advised she was unable to attend.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Cllr Mrs. C. Gammond and Cllr. J. Gammond declared interests, being members of the Village Hall committee. Cllr. Grainger declared an interest in any item concerning Riddings

Brook. Cllr Mr. C. Jordan declared a non-pecuniary interest in planning application 19/0754, and also litter picking at Trimpley reservoir. Cllr. Mrs. Green also expressed an interest in any discussion taking place in respect of the Clay Pigeon Shoot at Honeybrook. Cllr Grainger declared an interest in planning application 21/0042, being a neighbouring property to his land.

4. **Approval of the Minutes** The minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council Meeting held on 15th March 2021 were approved and signed.

5. **District and County Councillor Reports -**

County Councillor Ian Hardiman's Report: The County Council is now very quiet as it is in Purdah regarding the County Council Elections for all 57 seats on the County Council on Thursday 6th May. (Other local matters updates were included in the progress reports.)

6. **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL:**

a) **New Planning applications: -** (several new Certificates of Lawfulness were advised to councillors (for information only) in relation to chalet/shack residences on Hill Farm)

21/0272/FUL - Retention of replacement cabin - The Shack , 5 Folly Point, Trimpley, Bewdley, Comment: *"We would comment that in theory we have no objections to the replacement cabin, being smaller in size than the original. However, even though it is stated as being a holiday home, we are concerned that in response re disposal of foul sewage, the answer given was "unknown", and we were also concerned that there is no known arrangements for household waste collection."*

21/0192/HOU - Single storey side extension to existing outbuilding - Upper Birch Farm , Upper Birch Road, Shatterford, DY12 1TR

Comment: *"We would offer no objections to the proposal, but would comment that due to the considerable extensions which have taken place over the years, the property bears little resemblance to the original. With this in mind we would ask that every care is taken to ensure, if permission is granted, that materials used are in keeping with the original property."*

21/0042 - Change of use from grazing area to menage/all weather exercise area – land at Hoarstone Lane, Trimpley, Bewdley

(Councillor C Grainger declared an interest in that the property bordered land in his ownership).

Comment: *"No objections in principle, but would ask that steps are taken to ensure no pollution is incurred to the bordering stream."*

b) **Update on Previous applications**

19/0754 - Retrospective application re COU to Swimming Pool at The Guildings Eymore Lane, Trimpley – still pending decision.

21/0029/FUL New purpose built dog kennels, office and store room at Northwood Farm , Northwood Lane, Bewdley, DY12 1AP – still pending decision

21/0032/FUL Replacement Office Building Land Adjacent, Highfield, Crundalls Lane, Bewdley, - still pending decision

21/0109/HOU: Two storey side extension at Ivy Cottage, Habberley Valley Kidderminster, DY11 5RH

- **Approved** (It was understood that the property was also having Permitted Development work undertaken in addition to this application.)

c) **Local Plan Update – Proposed development adjacent to Habberley Road** – there was little to update on this. For the Low Habberley development to be granted, the field would have to be taken out of the Green Belt, which had not yet happened.

d) **Compliance Issues/Appeals – Easter Cottage** – Still awaiting a planning application, which planning officer was hopeful of receiving shortly.

e) **Hill Farm / Mary Moors –**

Various matters had been reported to the Planning Dept. for investigation – including further tree removal, and also the making of new surfaced tracks in fields on Mary Moors. Clerk had also reported the destruction of a pool to English Nature, who declined to investigate, it not being part of an SSSI.

With regard to the reported **Light Pollution** – when the most recent site visit had been planned for Worcester Regulatory services to view the lights at Hill Farm/Mary Moors the resident contact had advised the officer that the lights were not now working. Hence no further action had been taken.

7. **Progress Reports and other Outstanding Items**

• **Highway Matters –**

Parking on Grass Verge near to Low Habberley Farm – Bollards have been received at the depot, but it will be several weeks before installation can commence owing to a work backlog.

Hoarstone Lane – Drainage Sump – Hannah Davies at County still chasing for silt clearance.

Drainage Problems, Low Habberley – Hannah Davies liaising with District Council for clearance of sand/silt from Gutters. Gully Cleansing will then follow. With regard to an **unsafe raised manhole** Severn Trent have inspected, and work to repair is awaited.

Hollies Lane - Highways teams currently doing tests re drainage.

Bus Shelters – Clerk had forwarded information to Hannah Davies on both the Trimpley and Low Habberley proposed sites. It had been ascertained that the site at Low Habberley was in fact in the ownership of Highways but no official approval of either site had yet been received. Meantime, clerk had contacted Ade Williams who agreed to hold his price for provision of the next shelter, but he was unable to give a quote for the base as he would not undertake the groundwork required. Cllr. J Gammond stated that he had a contact who could undertake the installation of the base pads. It was reported by Cllr. Hardiman that Hannah Davies was still awaiting spec details for the shelter at Low Habberley. Clerk would progress this.

Other Matters

- **Broadband provision up-date** – Vouchers had been received by those who had signed up, and it was hoped that the project would go ahead, with fibre to premises in the area in about 12 months' time.
- **Restoration Project – Black Pools** - Clerk still awaiting a further permission letter from Mrs. Briggs and would follow this up. Cllr. Grainger stated that he hoped to be able to get a further quote for a 360 deg. digger to undertake the cleaning out of the pools.
- **Clay Pigeon shoot at Honeybrook** – It was understood that the shooting was about to recommence.
- **VA Sign** – an investigation arranged by Cllr Jordan found there to be a faulty wire in the unit, which was remedied, and it now appeared to be working satisfactorily. However, it was to be checked periodically since it was unknown if there was sufficient light getting to the solar panels, and monitored before further action was taken. Cllr. Jordan advised the drop in power charge if even a small portion of the panel was in shade. If the sign ceased to operate it may be necessary to investigate moving to a different location. However, this would require purchase and installation of a new pole.
- **Consideration for the installation of village gateway structures / planters / bins** Cllr. Hardiman had stated that it may be difficult to provide data with regard to how effective village gateway structures are at reducing traffic speeds. The clerk had provided prices and sizes for councillors to consider. Further deliberation was required before ordering and organising installation, and a check with the County Council to confirm sites. No final decision was made as to exactly where the installation sites were required. Clerk was also investigating planters for the gateways, and was asked to enquire of other clerks what impact they felt gateways had in their parish. Also, it was felt that gateways would give the two villages a “sense of place”, but if the aim was to slow traffic, then other measures were discussed as possibly having more impact – including dragons teeth, staggered chicanes, speed humps, or cushions, since it was feared that considerable money may be spent with little result, whereas the latter measures may have more impact on speed. A community camera project was also discussed, and members of the public felt they would be able to operate such a scheme. Cllr. Green stated that she had done a traffic count and assessment around 4-5 years ago, and the majority of the traffic then was not speeding. In respect of bins, Cllr. Jordan was optimistic that Severn Trent would install a large bin in their car park at Eymore Lane, and service it. Other sites for new bins were discussed in Low Habberley and Crundalls Lane, but no decisions were taken.

8. **Lengthsman** Clerk had received the new contract from the County Council for 2021/22, which all agreed should be signed. The worksheets which the lengthsman was required to fill out had been radically altered including coding requirements for the work undertaken, and they would also serve as the official invoice to County. Clerk would ensure the lengthsman is briefed on the use of these, and would also produce a new contract with S Archer for 2021/22, with a clause stating that the contract would be reviewed towards the end of the year. Additionally, the Clerk would ensure that she was supplied with a copy of S Archer's public liability insurance. Clerk would also remind the County Council that the lengthsman is due for training, and request that this is *not* offered in a virtual remote format.

Councillor Phillips confirmed that he was willing to continue as lengthsman liaison for the coming year.

9. **Financial Reports –**

a) **Payments** – (all agreed, and would be signed remotely).

Cheque 120 - HMRC – Clerk's PAYE - £75.80

Cheque 121 – Worcs CALC – Annual Subscription - £641

Cheque 122 – E Whitehouse – Clerk's expenses, including litter picking sticks - £175.43

b) **Internet Banking progress** – Clerk had arranged for all councillors to phone Barclays, and arrange access to the bank accounts via the internet. It was hoped that all councillors would do this to enable BACS payments. The Mandate had also to be changed to include the Clerk as a signatory, to enable her to set up any BACS payments to be made. The payments would always have to be authorised by at least one other signatory. Whilst talking to Barclays the clerk had checked the Mandate with them, and found that Cllr. Holford had not yet been added, and that they had not deleted Cllr. G. Yarranton. Clerk had obtained new mandate forms to correct these errors, and to add herself as a signatory which would be implemented during the course of the next month.

c) **Documentation for Audit** – The following documents had been circulated to councillor and were approved - End of Year Payments and Receipts, Exemption Certificate, Agar Parts 2 Documents, including Annual Governance Statement, and Accounting Statements. These documents were all unanimously approved. The Chair would now add signatures where required in readiness for audit. The Clerk advised that this council had been selected for part of a regulatory 5% review by PKF Littlejohn. However, it had been confirmed that as we were claiming exemption (having neither income nor expenditure of more than £25,000) then an external review would not be necessary. Clerk would also ensure that all the regulatory documents were scanned and copied as legally required to the website and noticeboards.

10. **Worcestershire CALC Reports & County and District & other Correspondence –**

District Council meeting with Parishes re Localism (18th March 5p.m.) – Clerk and Cllr. Jordan attended, and it was noted that the District would be looking to permanently passing responsibility for already agreed devolved services to Town and Parish Councils. This would have implications for this parish in respect of the Litter Bin contract, which we had been undertaking for several years. The grant, after the agreed amounts up to March 2023, is also likely to disappear, and the parish would be required to undertake this service permanently, and increase the parish precept accordingly to cover.

Joint Parish/CALC/District Forum (18th March) – Clerk had informed all local parishes and the District Council about the implications from the events happening at Hill Farm – not just for our parish, but also for the district as a whole.

Litter on Roadsides of A442 – no litter pick yet done, due in the main to staff absences. Councillor Hardiman had advised that he would continue to chase.

Report on Planning Seminar attended by Cllr. C Holford

Cllr Holford thanked the Parish Council for funding his attendance at this and previous courses. He found this particular seminar very enlightening and worthwhile attending, in informing how much pre-work goes into development of land, with officials and developers working closely together. The whole process is well advanced before any consultations are sent out at all by the Planning Authority, and the whole system appears, for the most part, to be money-led. He also advised that even if contraventions of planning permissions are highlighted to the authority, then enforcement by them is entirely discretionary, and may not always happen.

CALC Website – Clerk had circulated details to Councillors as to how to log in to the Worcs. CALC website. Councillors were encouraged to do this, so that the CALC circular (normally fortnightly) could be sent to them direct, rather than the Clerk forwarding it. They could also access a large amount of useful Council information, including legal topics, and best practice. It was hoped that all councillors would take this step, and that the Clerk would not therefore need to forward the CALC circulars.

Other Correspondence

Visit to Habberley Valley – Clerk had arranged this for 6p.m. on 30th June. It is hoped that all Parish Councillors would be able to meet then with Paul Allen, Manager.

11. **Road Accidents** – None.

12. **Other Matters** -

Newsletter – Clerk had distributed the newsletter to councillors for distribution, and would post others.

Litter problems in the Parish

Although no Parish Council led litter pick was being organised, several local people advised that they regularly did a voluntary litter pick, and would continue to do so. It was hoped that a work party could officially be organised to do a litter pick in the coming months.

Churchyard

A question was posed re the maintenance of the churchyard. Cllr. Phillips reported that he still did mowing/strimming in the churchyard, but has recently been much more careful and selective with this, in light of the many wild flowers growing there, and also timing his cutting of the major part of the area until after the flowers had set seed.

Date of Next meeting – confirmed as Monday 17th May at 7.30p.m. in Trimpey Village Hall. Clerk advised that this would be the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, when officials were appointed. Apologies received in advance from Cllr B Phillips.

The meeting closed at 10.05p.m.

Chairman :