

Minutes of the Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

Held on Thursday, 29th November, 2018 at Rushock Village Hall, Rushock at 7.30pm

Present:

Cllr. T. Green (TG) (Chairman)
Cllr. D. Cutler (DC)
Cllr. L. McCurrich (LMc)
Cllr. R. Hampshire (RH)
Cllr. T. Jennings (TJ)
Cllr. G. Wilson (GW)

Also Present were:

The clerk, Mrs. B J Drew (BD), Lengthsman, Mr. Bill Waldron (BW), Mr. Malcom Linney (local resident), Mr. Nigel Cameron (local resident) Mr. Jon Cutress.
West Mercia Police – PC 1244 Derya Mustafa (DM), PCSO 6239 Kate Easthope (KE).
District Councillor Mr. Ian Hardiman (IH), Parish Councillor (Wolverley & Cookley) Mrs Lisa Jones.

1. Apologies for Absence:

Cllr. J Nicholls (JN)

Apologies were also received from:

County Cllr. Marcus Hart (MJH), District Cllr. Stephen Williams (SJW)

2. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations:

LMc declared an ODI in agenda item 13 Maintenance of Churchyard Funding as he serves on the PCC.

3. Public Question Time:

Mr. Jon Cuttress read an e mail sent from his wife to the Chairman regarding whether the use of an open fire in the village hall is definitely covered by the existing insurance policy and requesting the Parish Council seek absolute assurance of this.

TG explained that the Parish Council are Custodian Trustees of the hall not Guardian Trustees and it is the management committee who are responsible for the running of the hall.

DC commented that this is a worry as the hall is hired out to private groups and safety is paramount. LMc felt that the response given at the Village Hall AGM was reasonable that since the use of an open fire in the hall was not specifically excluded, it was therefore assumed to be covered and the committee had taken legal advice on the matter. Also, advice could be offered to hirers at the time of booking.

RH felt that the Insurance Company should be contacted to seek clarification, you cannot assume they will know there is an open fire in the hall. As the issue has been raised it would be helpful to have something in writing.

TG advised Clerk will write to Village Hall Committee.

4. Minutes:

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 20th September, 2018, after one minor amendment, were duly approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.

5. Progress Reports:

TG reported as follows;

Smart water signs have now been received, there is a spare if Councillors can identify an appropriate location. Superfast Broadband should be coming soon, BT have increased the value of vouchers for households from £350.00 to £500.00.

Bus Survey questionnaire completed and forwarded, also Highways Maintenance Survey.

6. County Councillor's Report:

Strategic Issues County Wide

Work continues to set up the wholly owned company for Children's Social Care. It will be October 2019 when the company is completely set up. We are considering putting Education and SEND services into the wholly owned company to ensure that we have a joined-up approach.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is an area of focus following a recent Ofsted and CQC inspection and WCC and the CCG's have agreed an action plan to ensure that areas of weakness are tackled.

We have a shortage of special school places which we are working hard to address and SEND is a huge pressure on our budget. This budget is overspending as well due to demand and we spend £7 million per year on home to school transport in this area.

I think it is fair to say that the County Council is facing unprecedented pressure on its budget from children's and adult social care. This year is already proving a financial challenge working within its approved cash allocations as in the first 4 months of the year, the Council's budget is £18 million overspent, of which £15.2 million is adult social care.

The 2018/2019 approved net revenue budget was £324 million, of which children's is £96 million and adults is £125 million. Work is being done to tackle this in year, but it will be tough and I very much feel that the 2019/2020 budget will be very challenging. With some management actions, the gap will be about £5 million and it has now been announced publicly that we are looking to reduce staff by 200 FTE's by 31st March, 2019. The work force is circa 2, 900 FTE's. This will be by voluntary redundancies wherever possible but they will not automatically all be approved as they depend on the need of the business and some areas are exempt such as children's social care front line staff.

I am very clear that our residents should have a well financially led Council and we have to manage the cash allocations we have, even if that means difficult decisions around spending reductions as we are not permitted to set a deficit budget and we do not want a 'Northamptonshire' situation to arise in Worcestershire.

I do get asked if a unitary authority is on the cards or whether it would help. There are no plans in Worcestershire for this. I do not believe it would be the answer as the social care pressures for children's and adult's still remains. It is currently 68% share of the council's budget and unitary authorities are struggling just as shire councils are. We believe that with recent Government announcements we will receive an extra £6.5 million in 19/20, this is only about a third of what we really need.

Government needs to have a strategy for tackling the problem of an ageing population. Likewise, given the risk averse nature of children's social care this adds to our pressures. At the start of 2018 we had circa 760 looked

after children, it is now circa 816, some packages of care costing as much as £7,000 per week, even average packages can cost £1,000. It is of course correct right that we protect the most vulnerable section of society but as you can see we are spending circa 68% of our budget doing so and demand is rising. This inevitably puts pressure on our non-statutory services and indeed other statutory services in terms of what standard we deliver them to.

The Ludlow Road short stay provision consultation has ended and a decision has just been made to retain the provision for 2018-2019 but there will be a further review.

We are also consulting on closing a number of children's homes and investing more money into what is called 'edge of care' ie trying to prevent families from breaking down and preventing children from having to go into a children's home as outcomes are better for children and young people if they can be maintained in their family setting.

The dualling of the southern Link Road at Worcester is progressing very well.

Work continues on the new park way station at Norton.

We are currently consulting on making changes in libraries but certainly the Kidderminster library should be unaffected. There is a proposal to save £1 million from the overall library budget. We have 21 libraries throughout Worcestershire, 3 of course in the Wyre Forest.

Wyre Forest Issues

The public realm work for Kidderminster Town Centre has now commenced. This is a £2 million project and will see Worcester Street opened up to traffic. This scheme is being funded by Worcestershire County Council, Wyre Forest District Council and the GBSLEP.

Work on Kidderminster Train Station continues as the highway work has now been complete and the work on the ticket office should start imminently. There was an engagement day recently and the artist's impression on what the new station will look like is now in the public domain. Work on this will start this calendar year.

The Grange reablement unit in Kidderminster is planned to close, after it had originally thought it could remain open. The 1970's building is not really fit for modern purpose and in order to get it up to modern standards and be compliant, a capital investment of £2-3 million was required. It is now proposed that the 5 bedded reablement unit that was going to be there be provided by the provision of the beds from the independent sector within the Wyre Forest which officers say can be readily sourced. I am pleased with this, my concern being that if a Wyre Forest resident needed the provision they had it. I would rather they have it in a fit for purpose facility and I am concerned about the service that our residents receive rather than a particular building. However, the facility was also to provide a 29 bedded dementia unit and this will now not be provided here for the reasons set out above. I am seeking assurances as to where and how this facility will be provided.

Rushock Issues

I am pleased that New Farm Lane has now been patched and had a full overlay over the whole lane. I hope councillors have found this acceptable.

As reported last time, whilst technically in Stone Parish and indeed parts of Wychavon District, WCC highways are going out to statutory public consultation on 6th December, 2018 to 3rd January, 2019 to reduce the speed limit at Podmore on the A442 from 50 mph to 40mph. It would be great if the Parish Council would write into Simon Mallinson at WCC and support this speed limit reduction.

Regarding the Rushock Wood speed limit and the request to reduce to 30 mph between the gateways, WCC are still looking into this. They have advised that, "Injury data has been collected for the last 3 years and there

has not been any. WCC do feel that the narrowness of the lanes are keeping the speeds far below the national speed limit and in many places under 30 mph. We run a serious risk if we reduce the speed limit to 30 mph that this suggests it is actually safe to drive at 30 mph”

However, notwithstanding the above, I have persuaded WCC highways to have a speed survey undertaken and this will be in the new year in order to fully understand the speeds and I can then report back further.

Due to the hot summer, WCC only cut the verges once and have not undertaken a second cut as usual. If there are any urgent safety issues please let me know.

I obviously deal with routine highways issues as and when I receive them.

If you have any issues that you need me to address then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

DC is pleased that a speed survey will be undertaken in the New Year and LMc pleased the gates have had some effect on reducing speed.

7. District Councillor's Report:

IH introduced Mrs Lisa Jones, Parish Councillor for Cookley then gave his report.

The District Councils Local Plan 8 drop in sessions are underway. The final session will be held on 30th November at St. Oswald's Church Centre in Broadwater's, Kidderminster. Residents have until 17th December to submit their consultation response to the Council.

The Council will submit the proposals and responses to the Secretary of State in July 2019. The Planning Inspector will examine in public in the Autumn of 2019 and the potential adoption of the new Local Plan. will be in Spring 2020.

Crown House, Kidderminster. Demolition has been put on hold; the tenant Telereal Trillium has pulled out of their agreement to demolish, as they have successfully applied to the Valuation Office agency to have Crown House taken off the ratings list, ie they no longer have to pay business rates. The District Council is however challenging this as it believes the building is economically viable for use.

The District Council is continuing to invest in property purchases, 3 so far, which is producing so far a net income per annum of £180,000 which will go right back into supporting important local services for our residents.

DC queried the capital outlay for the purchases, IH confirmed £7 million.

LMc asked the rate of interest for the loan, IH confirmed the loan is from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) so is very low at 2/3%.

8. Police Report:

TG welcomed PC1244 Derya Mustafa and PCSO 6239 Kate Easthope.

They reported 3 incidents of burglary, a garage broken into and lawnmower stolen, theft of a trailer from a yard and a shed broken into, padlocks cut but nothing taken. There has been a rise lately in crime in the Wyre Forest area.

The Police brought some crime prevention leaflets and UV marker pens. They are happy to do property marking at residents homes or an event could be held at the Village Hall. Property marking is very useful and does stop thieves selling property on.

TG queried why the Parish Council no longer receive a monthly report and KE advised that the data was not very accurate so these have been stopped for all Parish Councils.

KE enquired whether Rushock still run a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. LMc advised there is not a scheme but residents advise of incidents by word of mouth. KE advised West Mercia have a link that can be used to see any incident in the Wyre Forest area, also the police can be followed on Facebook. KE will provide link to the Clerk.

DC asked for any advice regarding vehicle safety which could be put in the local magazine. DM will send information to BD before the deadline of 8th December.

The police are still waiting to hear intelligence on the burglaries to see if there any common threads. Burglaries are more common this time of year, be vigilant, leave house lights on, remove anything valuable from cars. DC asked if any keyless car fobs are being read and KE advised yes so it is important to keep away from your front door, also credit cards keep secure in wallet to block it from being read. DM left some card blockers, if you hold next to your debit card it blocks it from being read.

9. Rushock Village Hall:

TG reported that the legal aspect has been on going and has been delayed by the Charity Commission, further problems have been raised and MJH and TG are meeting with the solicitor on 4th December. To date £2,000 has been spent on legal fees. ML expressed concern about the escalating costs. LMc expressed disappointment on the lack of legal support from Community First who have a team of lawyers.

The Village Hall is now complete and looks great, thanks were expressed to all involved and it was proposed LMc, seconded DC and agreed Parish Council write to Village Hall to congratulate them.

The AGM was held and all the committee re-elected.

10. Parish Localism Fund:

The application to the fund was successful and BD reported £750.00 has been received.

11. Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Review – Pre-Submission Public Consultation

LMc queried whether anything in the plan relates to Rushock. TG will review and circulate to Councillors.

12. Parish Precept 2019/20:

TG advised that the budget and precept will be agreed at the January meeting. The Precept is likely to increase due to the legal costs for the hall. Can Councillors please advise the Chairman or Clerk of any projects to be they wish to be considered to incorporate this into the budget.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). BD advised there is no longer a requirement for Parish Councils to have a Data Protection Officer.

13. Maintenance of Churchyard Funding:

TG reported that Worcestershire CALC have confirmed that the Local Government Act 1894 says that “parish councils do not have the power to maintain or improve property relating to affairs of the church, or property held for an ecclesiastical charity, nor to contribute to the cost of doing so” therefore cannot give a grant towards churchyard maintenance. They can, however, contribute towards the cost of church activities, or the cost of moveable property.

14. May 2019 Council Elections:

TG reported that Parish Council elections will be held on 2nd May 2019.

LMc advised that he would be happy to stand down if someone new could be found, DC re-iterated that the energy of new people would be welcomed.

15. EnviRecover, Severn Waste Services – Permit variations:

TG reported no surprise that Severn Waste Services is applying to increase the annual volume of waste that can be treated at EnviRecover by 30,000 tonnes per annum and asked for Councillors comments. The permit variations were discussed at the Community Liaison Group meeting held on 15th October 2018.

LMc said the facility is well managed and does not affect Rushock apart from Chimney emissions and questioned is this monitored and data available.

DC expressed concern and felt that some objection should be made which she will undertake.

16. Planning:

One planning application since the last meeting for proposed conversion and change of use of existing stables and hay feed store to living accommodation ancillary to Clattercut House at Clattercut House, Clattercut Lane, Rushock, application number 18/0601/Full, which the PC recommend approval.

Appeal Dismissed application number 18/019/Full – Proposed rear extension Clattercut House, Clattercut Lane, Rushock.

Notice of Appeal application number 18/0373/Full – Conversion of agricultural building to a dwelling house, including external alterations and parking provision at Beech Elm Farm, Clattercut Lane, Rushock.

17. Highways: ,

BW reported on work undertaken. The grit bin will need filling, RH will obtain grit if any is needed.

New Farm Lane looks great following re-surfacing.

GW commented on low trees on Cakebole Lane resulting in lorries unable to deliver as top of vehicle could be damaged. The trees need cutting, TJ will deal with.

TG advised that any surplus on the Lengthsman budget will need to be used. BD to ascertain funds still available.

18. Footpaths:

TG advised no action on finger signs, will chase with MJH. Stile repaired and vegetation cleared. DC advised of a stile in Park Lane that may need replacement. TG to inspect.

19. Finance:

The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated and it was in accordance with the bank statements. The current bank balance was £5,446.45. BD advised that 2nd instalment of the Precept has been received.

The following were approved for payment:-

£532.00	Thursfield Solicitors (further payment Rushock Village Hall)
£724.50	Salary (BD) 20 th August 2018 to 31 st March 2019
£288.75	Lengthsman Pay (BW)

20. CALC and Other Meetings:

Nothing to report

21. Minutes from Neighbouring Parish Councils:

These had been previously circulated. Elmbridge, BD to chase Elmley minutes.

22. Correspondence:

The clerk circulated the schedule of correspondence and presented the correspondence to the meeting. A number of items had already been discussed and the schedule was duly noted.

23. Agenda items for future meetings:

Parish Council Elections
Rushock Village Hall
Precept 2019/20
Enviro Recover
Dementia Friendly Communities

24: To note the dates of the next meetings:

All at 7:30pm at Rushock Village Hall.

Thursday, 24th January, 2019
Thursday, 16th May, 2019
Thursday, 19th September, 2019
Thursday, 21st November, 2019

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....