



Wishing you all a Happy Christmas  
and Prosperous New year



## Latest News from the Parish Council

Your Council continues to hold their meetings online, the most recent being in October. The new format is not to everyone's taste but I understand from other councils that the convenience of not having to travel and find somewhere to meet appeals to some, who foresee future meetings being held online too. Add into the debate the lack of attendance by parishioners I can understand the logic. In any case the dispensation is in place until next May so there is no immediate need to review our procedures.

At the meeting, discussion took place in relation to ongoing matters including waste being dumped along Stanks Lane, the drainage at the corner of Ash Lea and the loose manhole covers at the crossroads. Each matter has been addressed and the necessary authorities informed. We expect to see further action early next year in relation to the drainage and the manholes have been scheduled for upgrading. The rubbish was removed by the landowner and there has been no repeat so far. We continue to monitor these issues and any others that are brought forward.

One important topic was the setting of the Annual Precept for the Parish for 2021. This is the sum requested by the Parish to satisfy the needs of the Parish Council, collected along with your Council Tax. For the first time in three years it was proposed that a small increase be applied and the figure of 2% was agreed. In real terms, this is an increase of £74.80. This is a modest increase but reflects the need to ensure increases in insurances and other costs are covered.

## Looking Ahead to 2021

There are some interesting times ahead. Next year sees the 2021 Census Return, something which always brings me joy in the knowledge that the next historical record, in this case 1921, should become available for research.

There is also a Boundary Commission review ongoing for Malvern Hills whereby it is planned to create changes to ensure more evenly balanced population levels per councillor. This may have an impact on the overall number of members in Malvern Hills Council chamber but there are no plans to change Parish boundaries.

In Parishes where there is more than one ward, it might be that for election purposes wards are in different local electoral areas. This element will not affect us, but the current ward of Ripple may well change. The outcome is awaited.

## Planning

We have few planning applications in the Parish but I draw your attention to the current one submitted for Baughton Stud along the A4104 opposite the lay-by.

The application 20/01827/FUL to be found on the website [MalvernHills.gov.uk](https://www.malvern-hills.gov.uk) planning portal. The full details are now published and it is your opportunity, should you so wish, to make your observations known to the Planning Department. The actual date of publication was the 11th December and we only have 21 days within which to comment. With the Christmas break and potential difficulties with the mail anyone wishing to respond should do so in good time. The Parish Council will be making a response in due course.

## Dog Issues

There are two issues upon which to report:

Firstly I have had a complaint in relation to the state of the public footpath leading up past the poo-bin and onto the open fields towards the motorway. The bin was originally placed at its current location along with a sign reminding owners of their responsibility to pick up and place in the bin, in the hope that it would encourage compliance. It is clear that we have regular walkers who do not give a hoot for the law or the fact that the land is owned by someone else. What you do in your own backyard is your affair, but in public there is an expectation that we all do our bit. The same applies for anyone using the footpath towards Naunton from the old workshop, but in that location you will have to carry it home for disposal.

The second issue is the recent spate of sheep attacks in and around the area. Several were maimed and I understand at least one put down. Add to these the loss of two of our small herd of roe deer that used to live across from the workshop and the problem is very real.

In the absence of evidence there has been no satisfactory conclusion to the problem and we need to remain vigilant. If there are dogs in the area capable of taking down deer and sheep it is not beyond the realms of possibility that they could behave in a similar manner with other dogs. Any animals out and about in the fields without an owner need to be reported as a matter of some concern.

## Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

It is with some regret that we must report a 'nil return' following the launch of this initiative last summer. Whilst we did not expect rejoicing in the streets or any huge excitement, to get no response at all is very disappointing. We have some signs to put up which may at least give potential thieves something to consider. This is the second time, along with the property marking scheme that attempts have been made to make our lives safer, but have been met with rejection. We only hope that as a community we do not live to regret it.



## Lengthsman

You will be aware that we parted with our previous lengthsman and have been looking in vain for a replacement. The job entails working within the County Council contract, clearing debris, pavements and similar tasks on the highway. If anyone is known to you that may wish to be considered for the role please get them to speak with me. The current contract equates to about 130 hours per annum at £12.00. (*correct as per 2020 contract*).

## Speed

We have been provided with two 'Community Speed Awareness' signs and will be putting them up soon. This reflects the occasional visits by the local policing team carrying out speed checks. I would like more visits at varying times but that is the wish of most small communities and the resources are simply not available. Let's see if there is any change once the signs are up.

## Village Green

We are now in the third full year of the project and you will have noticed—I hope—that the green has been cut regularly during the latter part of the growing season after we got the new mower. This is a slight change to the original scheme whereby it was envisaged that the green would be allowed to grow completely wild apart from under the trees. Doing that left us with patches of very strong, thick grasses that could not be tackled by our equipment and would be very expensive to deal with. Part of the reasoning for the original scheme was to reduce costs so the variation for the coming season is to have the sown areas left as 'wild' and for the rest to be kept neat. The hope is that more of the wild flowers will put in an appearance and they have been supplemented by some more bulbs for spring colour. We have also gained a new tree which should add extra interest.

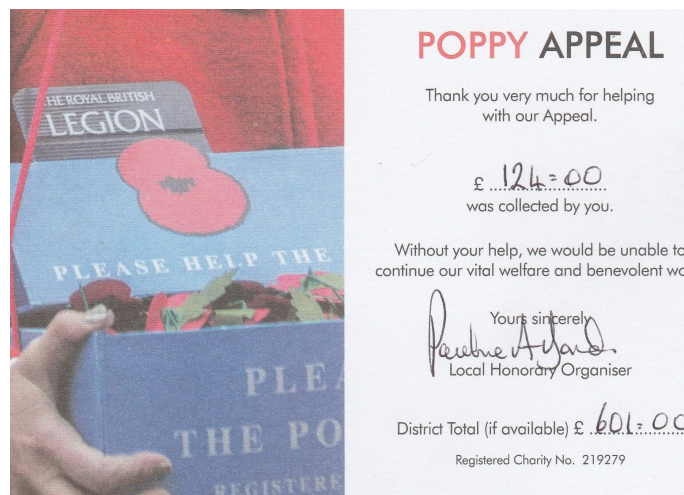
From the outset we knew that establishing a meadow, whilst taking into account the visual impact would divide opinion, so the proposal for 2021 is the latest twist in the tale.

As usual, I would ask that anyone wishing to help with the maintenance or progress of the scheme, needs to speak with me to see what can be done.

## Highways

The new island on the A38 is scheduled to be done next year and the work is expected to take 6 months to complete. It will not do much to offset next years potential for disruption but in the longer term I am sure it will make a huge difference.

I am now in possession of a number of litter pickers, bags and yellow waistcoats to enable us to carry out a pick sometime in the New Year. I routinely check for obvious deposits especially along Stanks Lane where items seem to come from the takeaways at Strensham, but a community response would be good. We can no longer rely upon the 'little man with a broom' from the local authority and I have no desire to be that man!



## Hill Croome Parish Council

The next meeting of the Council is due to be held on:

Tuesday 12th January 2021 at 7.30pm

It will be held online with 'ZOOM'.

The code and password will be published online and on the noticeboard before the meeting in line with the guidelines issued by our National Association and the Government. Everyone is welcome to join us.

For any correspondence or matters arising please contact

Michael Brooks, Clerk to the Council

c/o Vine Cottage, Baughton, Earls Croome, Worcester

WR89DQ

Email: [hillcroomepc@btinternet.com](mailto:hillcroomepc@btinternet.com)

Website: Worcestershire County Council—My Parish