

Minutes of the meeting of Earls Croome Parish Council held Virtually on Teams on Tuesday 24th November 2020

Apologies: Apologies were received from Jeremy Owenson (District Councillor).

Those Present: Jonathan Prior (Chairman), Mark Carlton-Smith (Vice Chairman), Penny Green, Margaret Herbert, Robin Tomkins, Tom Goodwin and Charlotte Bloomfield (Members), Paul Middlebrough (County Councillor) and the Clerk. Malcolm Tomkins (Lengthsman and Tree Warden).

Declarations of Interest: None were made.

Public Participation: The Clerk confirmed no Members of the public had requested to attend.

Minutes of the Last Meeting: These were proposed by Penny, seconded by Charlotte and agreed by all.

South Worcestershire Development Plan: The Chairman advised members that the recently circulated communication confirmed that the SWDPR consultation period would be delayed by approx. 12 months due to Covid-19. The Chairman advised that he and Mark had attended the virtual update meeting last month but there was nothing new to report back at this stage.

Highways Matters: Paul advised that the proposed 4 arm roundabout application (20/000032/REG3 A38/A4104) would not be on the December County Council meeting agenda and it was now likely to be on the February 2nd Agenda. Paul advised there had been a delay due to an archaeological discovery. Paul was aware of communications between EC PC and WCC relating to the planning application process.

Paul advised that the Ryall Quarry application would also be on Februarys agenda as the requested information had not been presented yet. Paul also advised that the Digaway Clearaway application regarding the rear doors was still not resolved as queries remained unanswered at this stage.

Mark raised a query regarding the WCC planning officers not publishing residents' objections to the roundabout due to GDPR but the opposite was the case with planning at MHDC. Mark also raised that other large applications had been through a far more rigorous process than the roundabout and that the approaches seemed inconsistent.

Paul asked Mark to summaries his queries in an email for him to raise at the County Council Meeting or he could arrange for Mark to address the query to the Council himself, Mark confirmed he had already registered to speak as an individual. The Chairman suggested that a PC representative would also be required. Paul would arrange this representation with Rob Adams the Chairman.

Paul advised that the public examination of the mineral plan was available to view on U-tube, this was accessible through the County Council website.

Paul updated members on the current Covid-19 situation in the County. The R rate in the north of the County was significantly more than the south and the County Council had invested money advertising to reduce contact rates in this area and was hopeful that the County could remain in tier 1. There were currently 72 cases in Worcestershire hospitals with 10 in intensive care. Paul also advised that the County and District Council was working in partnership to increase funding to vulnerable groups including access to free school meal support during the school holidays.

Electoral Review/Boundaries Commission: Mark & Margaret had attended the MHDC briefing last week. Mark confirmed that the review didn't appear to affect the Parish Boundaries, his view was EC PC would be unaffected. A general discussion was had regarding the ward boundaries. It was agreed to keep an eye on the updates.

Parish Paths: Malcolm reported, he was doing some additional work within the P3 budget and asked the Clerk what date the last reclaim was required, the Clerk confirmed it needed submission by 31st December. A discussion arose regarding the P3 budget. Malcolm queried the WCC reporting system, hopeful that if the Clerk reported footpath issues this may have more impact than a member of the public. The Clerk advised that if possible, Members of the public should report as well as it would add weight to any required maintenance. The Chairman thanked Malcolm for his work keeping the footpaths clear and passable.

Trees: Malcolm advised that he was taking delivery of the tree's the first week in December. The Chairman asked if he required any assistance with the planting. Malcolm confirmed this would be very welcome. The Chairman asked Malcom to email around the Members once he had suggested planting dates.

Lengthsman Scheme: The Chairman advised how sorry he was to hear of Malcolm's retirement from Lengthsman services, he stated how smart the parish was and how much Malcolm's hard work was appreciated especially in the wintertime. The Chairman asked Malcolm to confirm his planned retirement date. Malcolm confirmed his preference was 31st March at the end of the contract but if anyone was eager to take up post earlier, he wouldn't object. Malcolm confirmed the latest he could offer the services would be 30th April due to expiration of D12 roadside working permit.

Members discussed the best way forward to recruit a replacement. It was decided to approach some residents of Earls Croome who had shown interest in the past and the Chairman asked the Clerk to post an advertisement on the Village notice board. Further to that the Chairman asked the Clerk to contact neighbouring parishes to see if their lengthsman would be interested in the position.

Malcolm confirmed that the gullies on A4104 had all been emptied in October.

Litter Pick: The Chairman thanked everyone involved in organising and participating in the litter pick. It was very successful, and a significant amount of litter was collected. The Chairman noted that the next one would be planned for mid-late March.

Car Parking Signs: The Chairman thanked Penny for ordering the signs and Malcolm for erecting them. They looked very smart.

Commons:

Dunstall – The Chairman advised that correspondence had been received this week regarding the dog mess on key paths at Dunstall Common. Malcolm confirmed that the dog fouling signs provided by MHDC had been relocated to a more prominent position, but there were still repeat offenders not picking up after their dogs. Malcolm confirmed he had reported these to MHDC but without video evidence no action could be taken. The Chairman thanked Malcolm for his efforts and stated how disappointed he was at this disrespectful behaviour. A discussion arose regarding what more the PC could do. Suggestions included leafleting the cars parked at the Common, Leafleting the entire village, a newsletter and the use of social media. Penny advised that there were also cases in the Village playing field. The Members asked the Clerk to follow this up with MHDC and get advice on the next steps that could be taken.

Marsh – Malcolm asked if the Clerk had keys to the gates at the Common, the Clerk advised these were being held by S Coole, Malcolm strongly suggested that a set should always be held by the Clerk. The Members asked the Clerk to ensure she had a set.

Smithmoor – The Clerk advised that the sheep grazing had been completed successfully and that a payment for this had been received. The Clerk was hopeful the grazing could take place annually. The Clerk advised that one resident had complained regarding the fencing of the Common whilst the grazing took place. The Clerk had reviewed the fencing and it was temporary and correctly positioned to allow walking to take place on areas not being grazed and she had replied accordingly. The Members agreed that the grazing was essential for the maintenance of the Common and was lawful.

Tom advised the autumn grazing would still require the hay to be taken off the Common in the summer and that the PC should be remunerated for this going forward.

The Chairman advised that WCC Legal services had sent a map showing the track to Smithmoor Common included in the CL32 ownership of the Common indicating that the access track was owned by EC PC, a discussion arose around access rights and the Clerk updated Members regarding the ongoing enforcement case regarding Baughton Stud. She had been advised that an application to change of use to business was imminent. The Members were concerned regarding the additional traffic on what essentially was an access track for x2 residential properties and agricultural access to the fields. Any additional traffic would have an impact on the maintenance of the track and traffic flow off the main road.

Registration of Village Hall & Playing Field Deeds: The Clerk advised that the solicitor was awaiting response from the Land Registry, there is a back log due to Covid-19.

Planning: 20/00807/HP The Old Rectory, Church Lane. Erection of conservatory, extension to terrace and adj Garden Room and part demolition of existing outbuilding – PC offered no objections and MHDC have now approved application.

Finance & Cheques:

Precept Setting – The Chairman advised that there had been a significant % increase to the precept last year and whilst not wishing to increase as much this year, there may be a need for professional and or legal fee's going forward. He suggested a 10% increase, Charlotte and Margret thought that perhaps a 3% cost of living increase would be more appropriate in a year that may see other tax increases for household to bare. Penny stated that with the increased cost of the Clerk salary the 3% may not cover planned expenditure. Mark agreed that some contingency money for professional services would be prudent. The Chairman asked the Clerk to advise of planned costs and a budget proposal, a final decision could be made a January's meeting once this was reviewed.

Bank Reconciliation – The Clerk advised Members that she had moved the accounts to an excel spread sheet allowing a monthly bank reconciliation of receipts and payments. The Chairman asked for two Members to volunteer to oversee this. Penny and Charlotte volunteered, and The Clerk would send them the required information.

Payments made since last meeting:

Mr M Tomkins – Lengthsman payment – September	£117.00
Mrs Ann Smith – Clerk Salary (correction as last month wrong amount)	£969.15
Mrs P Green – reimburse car park signs	£42.50
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- October (S/O)	£204.30
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance October	£15.00
Mr M Tomkins – Reimbursement for tree purchase	£274.25
Mr M Tomkins – Lengthsman payment – October	£138.00

It was proposed by Penny and seconded by Charlotte to authorize the following payments:

a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – November (S/O)	£204.30
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance November (S/O)	£15.00
c) Mr J Prior – reimbursement for Clerk retirement gift	£80.07
d) Mrs M Herbert – reimbursement for Clerk leaving gift	£31.07
e) Mrs A Smith – reimbursement for Playing field grass cutting	£40.00
f) Mr M Tomkins – Lengthsman payment – November	£TBC

Remittance: WCC Lengthsman reimburse July -	£150.00
WCC Lengthsman reimburse August-	£135.00
WPD Wayleave payment-	£92.44
G.Gilder Grazing payment	£353.56

Dates of Next Year’s Meetings: Tuesday 26th January, Tuesday 16th March, Tuesday 25th May, Tuesday 13th July, Tuesday 21st September & Tuesday 16th November 2021.

Meeting closed at 9:45pm