

## GREAT COMBERTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

WEDNESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021

**Held by Zoom at 6.30pm**

**Present:** Chairman K Collingwood, Cllrs S Hamilton, S Inglis, G Hodgson and A Lavell, Tree Warden J Evans and 7 parishioners

**Apologies** were received from Cllrs Barnes and Peart

**In advance of the meeting** reports were circulated to Cllrs and the parishioners in attendance, and included the following - they are also annexed to these minutes:

- Parish Council Chairman's Report
- Village Hall Report
- Flower Show Report
- Social Club Report
- District Cllrs Report
- County Cllrs Report
- Police Report

### **Invitation to Parishioners to Raise Issues:**

- Drainage issues Joes Farm – problems have arisen because of a collapsed culvert. Cllr Inglis reported that works should have been carried out on 24<sup>th</sup> February but no contractors arrived. This is being chased up by WCC.
- HGV vehicles / lorries through Gt Comberton when Eckington Bridge is shut is an ongoing problem – a suggestion was made by a parishioner that signage on the motorway warning drivers that the bridge is closed may help alleviate some of the traffic. This is something that the parish council has raised before. Cllr Hardman advised that this would be a decision for Highways England. He also suggested that the bridge would benefit from a having weight limit, and that he would take this back to County Council.
- Litter – several references were made with regard the excess litter found in the verges and roadsides. Some parishioners had already taken it upon themselves to clear up some of the verges. The Clerk and Cllr Rowley advised of the Wychavon District Council initiative to Adopt a Street. The clerk would circulate details.
- Tree Warden (Jeremy Evans) - Mr Evans introduced himself to the parish council and advised that he works for the Woodland Trust. Initially, he intended to look at tree safety and put a list of priorities together but hoped that this could develop into an annual planting event in time. He agreed that there was some tree management needed at The Quay. Cllr Lavell asked if he would be able to access some Community Tree Packs. Mr Evans responded that there was approximately a six-month lead time but would be able to help. Cllr Hamilton added that her family had recently planted 1,000 trees on Bredon Hill

In addition to the reports circulated, Cllr Hardman reported that 2020 had been a difficult year for everyone, but felt that overall, Worcestershire had fared reasonably well.

Cllr Rowley concurred that County Council had done exceptionally well and that communication between County, District and Parish Councils had been very good. Business grants amounting to £44.25 million had been paid out to local businesses. Whilst most of WDC staff have been working from home, most of the services had continued. Covid cases within the over 60's were dropping, whilst cases within the younger generation were on the increase, proving that the vaccine is having a positive impact.

## GREAT COMBERTON PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMANS REPORT

This has been the year the Parish Council, along with many others have learnt to use zoom. Nevertheless business has continued. We have got grants for upgrading the outside toilets at the Village Hall and, we hope, for mending the cracks in the war memorial. We hope that we will be able to provide better broadband across the village thanks to a grant from WCC and Susanne's efforts in co-ordinating this. Thanks also to Art who managed to get us a grant for a new batch of Smartwater and organise the rollout to the village. We have also managed to get the storm drains through part of the village to be jetted to clear obstructions but this revealed the pipe to have collapsed and work on this is programmed for the near future. Severn Trent assure us that the foul sewer which is pumped out from the station on the Pershore Road towards Bricklehampton, is adequate to take the projected flow from the caravan site. Here in the village we know the covers blow off the sewers during heavy rain. We will only get any resulting problems dealt with if we can provide ST with photographic evidence so we urge all parishioners to send pictures to the Clerk for evidence. The water connection for the caravans caused a short road closure and showed the supply needed upgrading so another closure will be coming.

We continue to monitor roads, drains and footpaths and have requested work in various places. The lengthsman is working according to the covid rules.

We have seen a number of planning applications affecting the village, most notably for two houses in the field behind the war memorial which was refused and for the enormous shed at Hayloft Plants which was approved. We objected to both of these. Another application near there for an agro-forestry business with house attached was approved. We did not object to this one, although we do have concerns about the increasing tendency to force loopholes in the planning system to gain consent for dwellings in open countryside where they are not normally permitted, either by claiming them as affordable, or agricultural, or currently as ancillary accommodation as at Pool House. Also, the area between Great Comberton and Pershore College is becoming increasingly developed, and the cumulative impact on the setting of Bredon Hill should be a consideration we hope. Another current application for holiday chalets in the garden of Millcroft was also opposed as siting them insensitively on the neighbour's boundaries.

The SWDP review continues and we are keeping up with the proposals and commenting where appropriate. There is also a consultation on traveller sites and one on minerals, neither of which affects us directly although the former might do indirectly in that once the county has enough designated sites it will be easier to resist unplanned occupations. A further application at Ashchurch might have an effect on traffic around the hill. Tewkesbury are hoping to take advantage of a grant to build a bridge over the railway north of Ashchurch to give access to a large housing development. However the details of the development do not form part of the application, and thus cannot be assessed so potentially the bridge could be a complete waste of money. The Bredon Hill Conservation Group is objecting to the proposal on behalf of the villages around the hill.

## Great Comberton Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting

03/03/2021

### County Councillor's Report Adrian Hardman

It is with great pleasure that I can give you my annual report using a system that at this time last year I would not have anticipated that I will be able to use or indeed knew of.

It's been a year that the County Council has been dominated by one issue that emerged about a fortnight after last year's parish council meeting as a real threat. That is the question of responding to the global pandemic which is COVID-19. This has dominated the activities of the County Council for the past year with three lockdowns; and tragically some 370 deaths in our care homes; and over 700 deaths in our hospitals. At peak of the pandemic in the third week of January 2021 we had some 3480 cases reported in a day and some 260 people in hospital suffering from the virus. Currently the position is much improved with only some 122 cases per 100,000 in the District in the past week and some 6 cases reported in the two wards. The great news is that some 98% of the over 70s are now vaccinated.

Against this background The County Council did its best to keep services running during be locked down, and managed to restore most of them during the summer but our facilities for the disabled, for instance, were badly affected but we did manage to keep the household waste disposal services going and the bus service did still call in the village . Education of the pupils of Great Comberton has been badly affected by school closures and the lockdowns. Domestic and adult social care has continued to operate throughout this year, but the staff have had to learn new skills to stop the spread of the infection. Work on the highways has been sporadic due to the lockdowns but by large we have managed to keep the road network to a reasonable standard and works have been carried out.

The weather has been yet again rather severe. We have had a very wet autumn and winter which has led to disruption in Great Comberton due to Eckington bridge being closed. This means that the traffic is diverted through the village and we get a fair amount of verge erosion and damage to the carriage way but by large I believe that the condition of the roads in the surrounding area is reasonable. While we still have work to do on flood mitigation on the highway, we have done a considerable amount of this work over the past 10 years.

Against this backdrop I have been impressed by the way that the parish council and the residents have Great Comberton have managed to remain positive. I am optimistic that next year we'll see a return to a more normal way of life. It has been a privilege and an honour to be in your councillor for the past four years and I hope that you will consider re-electing me in May.

I would be delighted to answer any questions.

Adrian.

## **Great Comberton Parish Council – Annual Parish Meeting**

### **Wychavon District Councillor's Report**

#### **Overview**

In a year dominated by Covid 19 Wychavon District Council has continued to function throughout albeit in a different way.

Whilst other presenters will touch on their respective impacts of the pandemic I thought it appropriate to summarise the role of the District Council during this unprecedented time:

- Working in association with the County Council's 'Here 2 Help' and liaising with the local town and parish networks with physical and financial assistance;
- Staff redeployed to help other sectors;
- Financial help to food banks and other organisations
- Business support grants: Statutory grants to over 2,700 businesses  
Discretionary scheme – over 300 businesses supported  
Collective total to date £44.258m
- Wychavon car parks remain free to users at least until the end of the National lockdown.

These are just some of the areas where Wychavon District Council has been involved.

Council meetings and committees have continued virtually using the Zoom platform and Youtube, with most of the staff have continued to work from home during the lockdowns.

#### **Financial**

Wychavon's prudent financial planning continues. This year we will spend £13.07m (£12.64m in 2020/21) on services and this will mainly come from income such as Council Tax.

For the fourth year running Wychavon District Council has frozen its share of the Council Tax bill without cutting services. Wychavon's bill continues to be the lowest in Worcestershire and one of the lowest in the country.

The financial story goes back to the Wychavon's 'Grow Save Charge' business plan first introduced in 2013 to address reductions in Government grant funding without the need to make cuts in services. There have been no significant reductions in our services since 2010 when the Government grant started to reduce.

Instead Wychavon focused on shared services and joint working, notably with Malvern Hills District Council, other efficiency savings and developing alternative income streams.

#### **Promises**

Amongst new promises for 2021/22:

- a) Launch the new Wychavon business hub and engage at least 4 innovative businesses who can use its services to develop and grow in the marketplace by 31 March 2022.

- b) Refresh the Covid 19 recovery plan with an increased focus on supporting individuals, communities and businesses most severely impacted by the pandemic.
- c) Produce an ambitious economic strategy, setting out how we will support the recovery, regrowth and diversification of the local economy over the next two decades, by 31 March 2022.
- d) Work with partners to reduce the crimes most affecting our district through supporting communities, delivering education campaigns, co-ordinating community days of action and awareness campaigns on cyber-crime, domestic abuse and road safety by 31 March 2023.

### **Planning**

Work continues on the review of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) and the accompanying South Worcestershire Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). Both plans are progressing in conjunction with the South Worcestershire Councils which includes Worcester City and Malvern Hills and are also subject to ongoing public consultation.

Because of Covid 19 the SWDP has been delayed by 12 months. The final draft of the plan will be published in October 2021 with submission to the Secretary of State in Spring 2022.

The Traveller and Travelling Showpeople DPD will be subject to public consultation commencing May 2021.

The Worcestershire County Council Minerals Local Plan was subject to examination in Public (EIP) hearing in November and December 2020. A report from the two inspectors is likely to be submitted to the County Council in the first half of this year.

### **New Homes Bonus**

Wychavon is one of very few councils in the country that shares its New Homes Bonus (NHB) with the communities through the town and parish councils. Wychavon has introduced a NHB Protocol which includes the Community Legacy Grant Scheme. A third round of applications has commenced this year.

### **Summary**

In summary the good financial management efficiency savings and growth strategy continues and allows Wychavon to meet the challenges of reduced Government grants. Furthermore, the healthy position provides the opportunity to fund new initiatives and invest in the communities over the coming years. All this is possible in spite of the most challenging times we have faced in modern times.

Tony Rowley  
March 2021

## POLICE REPORT

“The last 12 months have certainly been different in the policing world and has brought with it new challenges. Half way through 2020 we had a new call recording system installed which has taken a lot of adjusting to and is not user friendly when it comes to producing reports such as these. That said due to COVID the crime figures have been skewed and to compare the figures to the previous 12 months would not achieve anything.

I have reviewed the last 12 months and there are only a handful of incidents. There has been no burglaries, probably as most people have been at home but I'm sure the introduction of Smartwater in to the village has also had an influence.

There were a couple of incidents in October, a possible intruder outside one address and then tools were stolen from an outbuilding of another nearby property.

A warning notice was issued to a property in Hands Orchard regarding alleged drug dealing and there has been no further reports.

We have had a number of COVID breaches reported to us but they were dealt with via the four E's 'engage, explain, educate, enforce'. None of these have gone to enforcement.

As a team we are grateful to everyone who has followed government guidelines and stayed at home however we have be made aware and have dealt with visitors to the area who have travelled from further afield causing disruption and concern to the residents of villages surrounding Bredon Hill.”

## Flower Show 2020 report for Parish meeting.

For only the second time in its 74th year history the Flower Show had to be cancelled, due to Covid-19. The previous time was in 1968 when it was cancelled due to Foot and Mouth. However we managed to organise a simple Village event to reflect the Flower show – but keeping to social distancing and ensuring that residents of the village felt comfortable that we were not going to be bringing Covid into the village. This entailed a lot of risk planning and thanks go to the village hall committee who allowed us to use the car park.

We were lucky with the weather and the enthusiasm of the village. The Charity Bring and Buy had some great donated produce and cakes at the village hall and people dropped in to buy. The raffle was won by Helen Whitwell. A lunchtime take-away BBQ was enjoyed along with the first Deer Park wine, and we had a small vintage car display. The village put in some fantastic displays with our 5 fun classes dotted around the village. So good to see people getting creative with vegetables and words – for the entertainment of us all and a good reason to stroll around the village.

Favourite Rose in jar,  
Limerick including the words “lock down”  
Unusual shape vegetable -  
Children’s Hand Paintings

Overall, the ‘Not the Flower Show’ was a lovely village day with people turning out in force to enjoy and support us. We raised £559 on the day, which included a £50 donation from Dee Whitehead and Helen Gardener for their wayside stall. My thanks also go to all the committee for their support and work in making this fabulous event happen. I have to say it was lovely to have a slightly simpler event to organise. As we had to pay a deposit for the marquee prior to the show for the first time this year which left us with a profit of £5.43 and increasing costs in all directions we decided not to distribute any funds this year, although we appreciate, we are ahead on the marquee payments.

We are hopeful with the current Covid plans that we will be able to run our special 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary show at the end of August this year. A 1940’s theme has been suggested reflecting the history of the show.

Suzanne Hamilton  
Chairman.

2020 7 23  
5 11 27  
Nice 10/11/20

## Annual Parish Meeting

### Great Comberton Social Club

Annual Report for 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 until 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Due to the very severe Covid rules and regulations the activities of the Social Club have been very restricted to say the least. All of our planned activities were either cancelled or put on temporary hold in case the Covid restrictions were relaxed. The committee decided that it should be possible to hold some virtual, and socially distanced, events for the remainder of the year.

In May VE Day was celebrated throughout the village and was very well supported, houses and garden were decorated with flags and bunting, some people put on period dress and suitable music was broadcast from several gardens.

VJ day was also celebrated in the middle of August, not quite as popular as VE Day but nevertheless well supported and enjoyed

On Friday December 18<sup>th</sup> a very successful Christmas Quiz via Zoom was organised and 17 village households joined in. During the quiz a total of £258 was raised by donation to the Caring Hands Charity based in the Evesham area for disadvantaged people.

The village was encouraged to participate in displaying a suitably decorated Advent Window in their house, all 24 numbers were quickly allocated and the village was beautifully illuminated throughout this dark winter period. The resulting windows were all photographed and made available on Google Drive to allow all in the village to see them even if they did not want, or were not able, to get out and see them.

The Social Club participated in the Church Christmas Tree event, the result was a beautifully decorated, Christmas themed, church over the Christmas period.

A similar event for Valentine's Day was organised and was quite well supported with colourful red hearts being displayed in many windows.

A further quiz night is being planned for Easter Good Friday together with an Easter themed window and/or garden display. Each house will be numbered to enable everyone to see how many Egg themed displays they can find, prizes will be awarded.

Forward planning can now start in earnest now that we have the much awaited Road Map out of lockdown.

Notes prepared by Geoff Hodgson - Chairperson



## **GREAT COMBERTON VILLAGE HALL**

### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

It has been a funny sort of year (or day, as Arkwright used to say in "Open all Hours"). The instructions have arrived thick and fast - 6 people, 30 people, no people, 2 meter markers, directional arrows in and out and up the wall, weekly inspections and tick charts, track and trace, health and safety and a Trustees Safeguarding Policy and Disclosure Barring Service (don't ask). Suzanne Hamilton has kindly volunteered and is now the Trustees Safeguarding and DBS Supremo.

And all this whilst the hall is closed! I thought bureaucracy was supposed to be reduced now we are out of the EU. In fact, the hall has not been closed all year. Those doughty pensioners the line dancers have wheezed their merry way around the hall all masked and distanced and I am happy to report no fatalities. Geoff Hodgson and his jazz band have used the hall on occasions and Paul Morris for his book club.

I do not have any accounts available, but our current financial state is extremely healthy. Shelagh magicked £10,000 from the Covid Grant Scheme and further sums of £6,239.21 and £1,334 were received from the WDC Business Rates Grant. Furthermore, we have had the benefit of £4,708 from the New Homes Bonus.

Work is now complete to the new toilet provision and we are now blessed with both male and female toilets. They are equipped with hot and cold water, electric hand driers, sensor operated lights, anti-frost heaters and, of course, WC's and wash basins. The overhead electric cable, in a dangerous condition for some time, is now safely routed underground in an armored cable. Problems with the existing drainage were discovered and have now been rectified. An attempt was made to resurface the car park and form a new entrance hall with reception and cloaks etc. to take advantage of the WDC Heritage Fund but the proposals were not considered grandiose enough.

There are changes afoot to the executive committee. Stevie Rennie is to be Committee Chair, Angela Elmer Secretary and Helen Whitwell Treasurer, all subject to election at the next AGM.

**Colin Cummins, Chairman**