

**LITTLE COMBERTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Held by Zoom at 6.30pm**

**Present:** Chairman C Rabbette, Vice Chairman L Haycock, Cllrs S Britten, P Morris, A Dermont and N Jamieson, County Cllr A Hardman and District Cllr T Rowley

**Apologies** – none received

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

- Parish Council Chairman's Report
- County Cllrs Report
- District Cllrs Report
- Police report
- Bredon Hill Conservation Group
- Church Report
- Sports & Social Committee Report

**Invitation to Parishioners to Raise Issues:** There were no parishioners in attendance

Cllr Rabbette thanked everyone for attending and their contributions with reports, and referred to special thanks from a resident: *"As it is the AGM, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Parish Council for the wonderful work that they have done during a most difficult time. No-one in the village felt that they were left to their own devices, unlike many other villages. The Parish Council has been wonderful in all the work they do for no reward. I would therefore just like to say thank you for all your hard work"*

# LITTLE COMBERTON PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021

### Chair's Report

Firstly, a huge thank you to our great team of Parish Councillors for all their support throughout this very challenging year. Thank you also to County Councillor Adrian Hardman for all his help and advice, and to District Councillor Tony Rowley for supporting us so well during Cllr George Mackeson's absence. Tremendous thanks also to our Clerk, Lynne Yapp, for her tireless efforts in support of the Parish Council.

#### **Over the past 12 months:**

**Coronavirus response:** The Parish Council quickly established a network of neighbour volunteers to support villagers as the country went into lockdown last March. Fortunately our input was limited to shopping and other errands, but this and other village initiatives such as the VE Day commemorations, the village Gmail group, and in particular The Pantry, have helped to support residents through a year of lockdowns and uncertainty.

**Planning applications:** The Parish Council has been asked to comment on fewer planning applications than normal over the year. It did not make any comments on applications for a replacement garage and a shepherds hut. A number of enforcement issues have been raised, however, and our thanks to the Clerk for liaising with Wychavon's Enforcement Team to seek to resolve these.

**Planning Policy:** The Parish Council submitted a response to the Government's Planning Reforms White Paper in October. It is also keeping a watchful eye on potential issues associated with the Minerals Local Plan.

**Traffic and Highway Issues:** The speed of traffic travelling through the village remains a concern. The Vehicle Activated Sign has been moved to different locations around the village and data compared. A new pole for has been requested from the County Council in a more prominent location. Grateful thanks to Cllr Andrew Dermont for leading on this initiative.

At long last Pool Close has been resurfaced, having been postponed to enable drainage works to be undertaken following several incidences of flooding. Although the road has flooded again in recent months, the water has quickly drained away. Our thanks to the County Council for completing this work and also for surface dressing Wick Road.

**Ditches and watercourses:** Following investigations we are awaiting drainage works at the junction of Pershore Road and Orchard Drive, where the drain under the road has collapsed, but otherwise the heavy rainfall this winter has not caused any major problems with ingress to properties.

**Lengthsman:** Brian Arrowsmith continues to fulfil his duties around the parish, paying special attention to maintaining the grips to keep runoff water away from the village. Our thanks to Cllr Nigel Jamieson who has been liaising with Brian to help prioritise his workload.

**Footpaths Warden:** Our grateful thanks to Pat Wilson who has taken over as Footpaths Warden. She has been monitoring the condition of footpaths and reporting issues to the County Council, although there is now quite a backlog of work needed because of Covid restrictions.

**Trees:** An application for the final tranche of New Homes Bonus funding has been submitted to Wychavon for some Red May trees to be planted in suitable locations around the village to replace the avenue planted for George VI's coronation. Our thanks to Cllr Laura Haycock who took on the role of Tree Warden last year, keeping a close eye on trees in the village and reporting issues to the clerk.

**Bredon Hill Conservation Group:** our thanks to Cllr Sue Britten who has represented the Parish Council on BHCG and highlighted any issues that the Parish Council has needed to consider.

**Memorial Garden:** Our grateful thanks to Pat Perry, Sandy and Kevin Lloyd for their continued care of the garden and grass area, which always looks colourful and neat and tidy, and is a real focal point for the village. The Parish Council has recently agreed to remove the litter bin from the Memorial Garden as it is frequently filled with dog mess, detracting from people's enjoyment of this space and making it very unpleasant for those maintaining it.

**Dog mess** – despite the dog waste bin by the Well Furlong footpath and some new signage, there have been a number of complaints about dog mess along Wick Road, and in Pool Close and Orchard Drive. Our thanks to County Cllr Adrian Hardman who has agreed to fund an additional dog waste bin, several different locations along Wick Road are being explored to ensure minimal impact on residents in the locality.

**Phone Box:** The phone box has now been working well as a book exchange, and has been a valuable resource during lockdown. A larger noticeboard has recently been installed.

**Litter:** Our grateful thanks to Cllr Mark Kibble who has been regularly collecting litter from the roads around the village. In future the Parish Council may need to organise litter picks or seek other volunteers.

**Bonfires:** The Bonfires Protocol has been sent out to several residents who have complained about bonfires to help them resolve the issue using Worcestershire Regulatory Services' framework.

**Crime:** One of the few benefits of lockdown has been reduced crime levels, although there has been one attempted burglary from a van. At a national level the Neighbourhood Watch scheme has been very quiet as resources have been focused on other priorities. Our thanks to Roger Bigg, the village's Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator who has recently stepped down.

**Village Website:** our grateful thanks to Cllr Nigel Jamieson for the huge amount of work that he has devoted to refreshing and enhancing the village website. This now includes the catalogue of Dave Parker's collection of village resources; we are very grateful to Dave for building up such a collection of archives for the village and to other contributors, especially Harold Hemsley-Hall.

**Village Gmail Group:** Grateful thanks also to Cllr Jamieson for coordinating village communications via the Gmail group and also for setting up the Virtual Noticeboard, as well as his and Pauline's work on The Link, which has been invaluable in keeping villagers in touch during this year of limited social contact.

**Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme:** Cllr Jamieson has also taken a lead on submitting a community application to upgrade the broadband to the village, and his extremely hard work on coordinating this is much appreciated.

**Agriculture post Brexit** – Cllr Andrew Dermont has highlighted the implications of Brexit on the way that farming is going to be funded in the UK, and the opportunities that this may provide to liaise with the farming community, which will be an important area to explore in the coming year.

**Finance:** Accounts will be presented as soon as possible as we have not yet completed the financial year. Indications are that expenditure will be in line with budget. The issue of the Parish Council funding the mowing of the churchyard still needs to be resolved following advice from the Diocese Office.

Carol Rabbette – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021

## Little Comberton Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting

10/03/2021

### 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 60 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 Little 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 Little Comberton, but by in 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. And I would applaud the efforts of the parish council has put in over the years so that the flooding even when we had as much rain as we had in 2007 did not cause the same scale of trouble. The other key thing to note from a County Council perspective is at long last and not before time; Pool Close was resurfaced to a high standard and despite some teething problems it appears the drainage is now working.

Against this backdrop I have been impressed by the way that the parish council and the residents have Little Comberton have managed to remain positive, And at once stepped up and formed their own community self-help group which Linked In to the County councils own" here to help" scheme. 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.

## **Little 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. These are just some of the areas where Wychavon District Council has been involved :-

- Working in association with the County Council's 'Here2 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.

Council meetings and committees have continued virtually using the Zoom platform and Youtube, and 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.

#### **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 the majority were concerns for safety and a couple mentioning speeding.

There was a suspicious incident reported in January when a torch was found on someone's drive and a couple of males were seen acting suspiciously but nothing was stolen and no further reports.

We have had a number of COVID breaches reported to us, though I don't think there has been any for Little Comberton. 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 been 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.

## BREDON HILL CONSERVATION GROUP

BHCG. Notes for 2020/21

It has been a quiet year for BHCG. We have sadly had to watch the packing shed go up at Hayloft nursery and the start of work at Great Comberton Golf club! 2 projects that we fought against. The traveller site on the Eckington to Brendon road is growing fast too, although I think they may now be up to their maximum of 5 chalets & 5 caravans. Not that that will stop them!

The latest thing we are fighting against is the bridge to know where, The Ashchurch road bridge over the Bristol to Birmingham mainline railway is proposed to be built just north of Ashchurch thus opening up the land running across towards Kinsham and Brendon. This is still with the planners awaiting a decision. Tewkesbury council obviously has some thing up their sleeve with this. For the time being it will be unused as it will literally go know where and cost millions! BHCG have been contacted by a solicitor who lives in Kinsham asking to work on their behalf. He said if you go on to the TBC website and look at the application 20/00896/FUL there are no objections recorded however if you go to the letters part the objections are all filed in there, well over 300 of them! Is this a cover up for a planning application they have made to themselves! It was meant be discussed at the planning meeting in mid February but nothing reported yet. Watch this space.

We are still looking for a secretary to replace Sally who finishes at the end of this month. Our next meeting is to be held on Wednesday 14th April 2021

## Church PCC Report for Parish Council February 2021

The effect of the Covid pandemic has been profound on the church, as it has on all our lives. Church buildings had to close completely during the first lockdown last March, and the church in Little Comberton has not held regular Sunday services since then. This is because of the social distancing requirements laid down by government; Elmley Castle has the only church in the parish which has the space to accommodate the Covid-secure administration of Holy Communion. Since churches were allowed to reopen under strict Covid regulations, St Peter's has been open every Saturday for private prayer and has held two non-Eucharistic Sunday services.

Worcester diocese has decided to appoint a second priest to the Bredon Hill group of parishes, to work alongside the current Vicar of Eckington in providing priestly ministry to all the 14 villages around the hill (previously 3 priests served these parishes). That priest will live in the rectory in Elmley Castle, but will be licenced to serve in the whole group, not just this parish. The appointment process has been started, but Covid has delayed progress.

During the early summer, a new electronic organ was installed in the church, to replace a very old and unreliable pipe organ, and this was inaugurated with a service of Evensong with a recital in September. During the year, the main footpath through the churchyard was resurfaced, the unsuccessful attempt to develop a wildflower garden was abandoned, and a series of bird nesting boxes donated by a local charity were fixed in the trees of the churchyard. We are deeply grateful to Pat Perry for her continued care of the churchyard.

The two main annual church fundraising events, the Street Market and the Jazz Night, both had to be cancelled in 2020 because of the pandemic.

Since October there has been no churchwarden in the village, with the legal aspects of the role being held by the PCC and the churchwarden of Great Comberton, Bill Graham. Any concerns noted by villagers can also be referred to Edith Powell or Penny Spiller.

## LITTLE COMBERTON

### SPORTS & SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Little Comberton Sports & Social short report for the year 2020 till the present: Unsurprisingly, as the last 12 months have been dominated and mainly locked down by Covid19, I have very little to report. Fortuitously, our last event before the lockdown was a sell-out and a complete success: our first time ever Murder Mystery Evening suggested by one of our Committee members. It was run by a small outside professional group who organised all the murder 'entertainment'. The evening was full of fun, laughs and a lovely meal, I had trouble keeping track of the evidence because I was laughing so much!

I am SO pleased we had such a lovely evening to look back on because what was to follow was not enjoyable at all. We were in the throes of planning/rehearsing for our now annual "Here We Go Again 6", a mixture of home grown singing, music, poetry and entertainment. This was due to be held in early March 2020. It was typical of the pattern of how life has been. At that time when trying to decide what to do, the Government were allowing such large public event as Crufts, Cheltenham Races and a Liverpool European football match. We were still rehearsing but one of our Committee and a member of the HWGA choir informed me that a close relative, a Health professional, had advised against it. Despite what major events were being allowed, information was coming out and more of us became uneasy about holding the event which fortunately meant that we did cancel in good time and I'm very glad we undoubtedly did the right thing. It was SO nice that we had the memory of the Murder Mystery Evening for 2020.

The only other thing of note was that there was a grading for Karate club members a couple of months before HWGA, when I'm delighted to say that one of the Little Comberton Karate club was graded as a Black Belt by the Senior Instructor at Inkberrow with a very good pass. Currently, we are looking to hold an event *hopefully* sometime in late Summer in line with Government guidelines. There are possibilities for the Jazz Evening to take place – not our event but one we are more than happy to support. After that, there may well be an opportunity to hold a *safe* Summer BBQ in late July or August. But after the last 12 months, who knows?

I always thank members of the Committee (including, I'm delighted to say some new members) at this point, even in Covid times and with gratitude for some excellent guidance from Councillors, Committee members made sure they kept in contact with people who needed anything by way of shopping or just a friendly email or phone call to make sure the were alright. It is a privilege to live in such a friendly Village and I sincerely hope my next report will be Covid-free! Graham Knight Chair Sports & Social Committee. 10.3.21