

ELDERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Eldersfield Parish Council held on
27th July 2021 in the Vestry, Eldersfield Church, commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Mrs C Joseph (Chairman), Mrs W Burr, Mrs D E Holt, Mrs T A Owen

In Attendance: Mr Simon Joslyn; Mr Tony Reynolds

Members of the Public: 5

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Bronwen Behan

2. Members' interests

None

3. New Councillor

Mr Christopher Mills presented himself as a candidate for cooption to the Council. He explained that he had been resident in Corse Lawn for eight years and wished to do something active to help the community.

It was **RESOLVED that Mr Christopher John Mills be co-opted as a councillor.**

Mr Mills then signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of a Proper Officer of the Council and took his seat as a councillor.

4. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The draft Minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 2021 were accepted as a true record of that meeting and were signed as such by the Chairman of the meeting.

5. Matters arising

None

9. Safer Neighbourhoods Partnership

The Clerk reported that the Council had been contacted by the police who had proposed a 'partnership' and asked to know the Council's three most pressing policing concerns. After consulting Councillors, the Clerk responded: speeding traffic on the B4211 (past the school); thefts from outhouses; and speeding traffic in other locations.

The Chairman said that she had attended a Zoom meeting with the police and had found that they were very constructive; they recognised that with their limited manpower they needed to prioritise their service in an intelligent manner, and to do this they needed local input which would only be forthcoming if they had close and effective communication with local organisations such as parish councils.

6. Report from District and County Councillors

District Councillor Bronwen Behan submitted the following written report:

‘Currently PC John’s has said he [is keen] to help with any police related issues and in particular rural related crime and wildlife crime.

Examples of wildlife crime in the UK include offences such as killing or disturbing protected species, damaging breeding and resting areas and poaching. Work is being done on our boarder with Gloucestershire to prevent wildlife crime which relates to violence towards badgers, including badger baiting. Other forms of wildlife crime are Raptor persecution, trapping, poisoning or shooting wild birds and animals, theft/ disturbance of wild birds, their eggs and nests, habitat destruction, hunting with dogs etc.

I will provide any District updates if they arise before the meeting. We are currently rushing through the SWDPR meetings.’

7. Report from the Parish Footpaths Officer

Simone Bullen introduced herself as the Parish Footpaths Officer, having been appointed by Worcestershire County Council. She is a keen walker and is eager to see the parish’s footpaths open for use by, and indeed used by, the public. To this end she recommended that any walker who identifies a problem with a path should preferably signal it to Worcestershire County Council using the WCC website, giving both a precise location and a description of the problem; alternatively they may contact her on eldersfieldparishpaths@gmail.com. She also stated that she would set up a local WhatsApp group to encourage volunteers to help her with footpath checking and resolving any issues.

8. Public Comment

Two members of the public commented on the application by the Parochial Church Council for assistance in purchasing a marquee.

They remarked that much habitation within the parish was sparse and isolated and that this had the effect of undermining the feeling of community, an effect accentuated over the last eighteen months by the imposition of covid social distancing regulations. They believed that much could be done to combat these traits if a marquee were available to bring the community together for events of wide appeal.

10. Broadband

Mr Simon Joslyn explained to the Council the current situation with respect to broadband. The project had to date been led principally by two people, who had met with many difficulties and obstacles to overcome which enormous tenacity, forbearance and enthusiasm had been necessary.

Three areas within the parish had been defined where the provision of ‘fibre broadband to the premises’ (FTTP) was commercially possible: all would be capable of being supplied from a cabinet which has now been installed near the church. Cabling of Area 1 – from around the church and towards the marsh – is well under way and the connection to the first of about 80 properties who have contracted to take the service is expected to take place and go live within the next few weeks; the remainder will be connected shortly thereafter.

Mr Joslyn then explained that he and Mr Tony Reynolds must now increasingly divert their attention to other matters, and that if the project is to be extended to Area 2 (around the Staunton Road) and Area 3 (Corse Lawn, where only 15 out of about 80 properties have so far expressed interest) then it is vital that volunteers step forward to drive each of these sub-projects. Given that the terminal cabinet at the church has been installed, the main challenge will be to ensure that a sufficiently large number of residents within each Area expresses an intention to subscribe to the service: broadband providers, despite government subsidies, are commercial organisations and where they perceive that the likely up-take is insufficiently attractive they will invest neither their time nor their money.

He concluded his remarks by saying that an apparently high broadband speed today will be a low one in a few years' time; that a fibre broadband connection adds greatly to the value of a property; and that for those wishing to increase the speed of their connection the current project is likely to be the best opportunity for some considerable time to come. And if anyone in Area 1 now wishes to be connected but has not yet contacted them, they should make contact very, very quickly.

Councillors noted the significant benefits which were now becoming apparent and thanked both Mr Joslyn and Mr Reynolds for their dedication and hard work.

The Chairman, echoing the general sentiment of the meeting, said that the Parish Council would look to support, and work with, any future Broadband Working Party to ensure that parishioners in Areas 2 and 3 fully understand what their options are.

[Anyone desiring more information should contact the Clerk.]

11. Parish Plan

Cllr Mrs Dawn Holt referred to the draft plan which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Councillors warmly received the draft and expressed their thanks to her and to the Chairman for the effort which they had put into preparing the document. Members were asked to indicate any final changes they thought necessary in order that the document could be passed as a pdf file to the Clerk for publication.

It was agreed that the Plan would be made available principally in electronic format, but that paper copies would be printed for those parishioners who requested one.

12. Marquee

An application for assistance by the Council in the acquisition of a marquee had been submitted to the Council by the Parochial Church Council and had been circulated to members before the meeting.

Councillors were aware of the comments made by the public earlier. They were also aware that many parishioners lived in remote and isolated locations and that the sense of separation which this engendered had been exacerbated by imposition of covid distancing and isolation regulations. They agreed that initiatives to promote a greater feeling of community spirit within the parish were welcome and they believed that the availability of a marquee for use at community events would further that aim. They considered that the proposal had great merit.

After further deliberation, they decided that the optimum way of giving effect to the proposal was that the Council should purchase the marquee and lend it to the PCC.

Accordingly, it was **RESOLVED that the Council purchase a marquee and associated equipment at a cost of not more than £3,500 (excluding VAT) and lend this marquee and associated equipment to the Parochial Church Council under the terms of a contract to be decided by the Clerk, after consultation with the Chairman.**

13. Shed and Catering Equipment

Councillors reported that further to a recent inspection of the Council shed at the school it was obvious that not only were repairs to the shed required but that also some revision of the equipment stored therein was needed. The electrical equipment was now old and it was debatable whether it should be tested to ensure that it conformed with modern standards, or be replaced.

It was agreed that a working party be established to review the matter fully and to make a report at the next meeting.

14. Litter-picking

The Chairman reported that one litter-picking exercise had taken place along Link End Road; six volunteers turned out and a modest amount of litter collected. Two more sessions are now planned to take place, in October and March, in different areas of the parish; they will be preceded by appropriate publicity in order that volunteers in these areas may come forward to assist in this necessary, albeit unglamorous, work which is of value to all.

15. Defibrillator

a) Councillors forming the working party reported that the defibrillator on the outside wall of the School next to the front door was fully operational. A person needing it should dial 999 and would be informed of the code required to open the cabinet door; instructions on how to operate the machine are then available in writing and are spoken by the machine.

The working party were considering whether an improvement in the signage was appropriate and would report at the next meeting.

b) It was noted that the Clerk had paid for one set of replacement pads (usable once but with a service life of about two years) and it was **RESOLVED that he be reimbursed the cost of £107.94.**

It was agreed that it was unnecessary to keep spare sets of pads in the cabinet. [The machine has one set of pads for use on an adult and one set for use on a child.]

c) Working party members believed that further training on the use of the machine should be offered to the public and they undertook to make further enquiries and report at the next meeting.

16. Cheltenham Motor Club

Cheltenham Motor Club has invited applications for grants from its Community Support Fund. Councillors considered the matter and instructed the Clerk to apply for a grant for

a) the purchase of a marquee and b) the planting of a tree or trees to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

17. Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Chairman suggested that the planting of a tree, or trees, to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee would be a suitable means of commemorating the event. It was agreed that a working party would be established to consider the likely cost of such a project, a suitable location for the tree, and the type of tree to plant.

18. Council email

It was noted that the government recommended that parish councils adopt '...gov.uk' email addresses, but that there were accompanying costs. The benefits associated with this recommendation were not thought to outweigh the costs, a matter in which the relatively small size of the Council was relevant. Accordingly it was decided that no further action would be taken.

19. Lengthsman

Council noted the report from the Clerk on the services provided by the Lengthsman since the last meeting for which invoices had been submitted as follows: £118 April; £236 May; £236 June; £236 July.

Councillors asked that they be provided with a copy of the July report.

[A copy was circulated after the meeting. Council correspondence is generally available for inspection by Councillors and members of the public.]

20. Audit

Council noted that the Council's internal auditor had approved the statutory Annual Internal Audit Report 2020-21.

21. Authorisation of Disbursements

It was **RESOLVED** that the following disbursements be made for goods and services:

£ 186.12	J L Gabbott (Clerk)
£107.94	J L Gabbott (defib pads)
£46.40	HMRC
£826.00	Mr J Moore (Lengthsman, £118 Apr; £236 May, £236 June, £236 Jul)

22. Future Meetings

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Council be held on Tuesday 14th September 2021, commencing at 7.30 p.m. in the Vestry at Eldersfield Church

23. Any other business

None

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10.05 p.m.

JLG
28.7.21