

# PEOPLETON PARISH COUNCIL

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Address: Walcote, Top Street, Charlton WR10 3LE

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 7.00pm in Peopleton Village Hall

- 1. Introduction:** Cllr Mason opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present
- 2. Present:** Cllrs Phillips, Bailey, Wall, Baxter, Harbon, Darby, CC Robinson and five members of the public, they were joined by Marc Bayliss Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and Charlotte Avery from West Mercia Police
- 3. Apologies-** Cllr MacCalman
- 4. The minutes** of the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were approved as true and correct.
- 5. Chairman's Report-Tim Mason**

The major item that the Parish Council have considered this year is the issue affecting many residents - the level of crime. The thefts, often from garden sheds, and the damage to property have caused many people distress as well as financial loss. As a council, we have kept in touch with the police and encouraged them to take the incidents seriously and try to do something about it. Obviously, the more information they have, the more likely they are to be able to do something. Mark Constanduros and I met Ashley Smith (acting PCSO) in September, then, in November, Jo Smith organised a drop-in meeting with the Police and other agencies to give help and advice. Following this, Jo Smith took the initiative to try to get Peopleton recognised as a "Smart Water Village". The council heard from Nick Hall in January about the Smart Water scheme and this was followed by a well-attended public meeting with Inspector Wise in March and a sign-up session for Smart Water later in the month. With the help of Peopleton Charity Lands Trust (aka Parish Lands) and the Police and Crime Commissioner, we were able to offer a Smart Water pack to every household in the parish. It is hoped that the fact that so many people have Smart Water will deter thieves.

I am pleased to say that the community buses to Worcester on Tuesdays and to Pershore on Fridays are guaranteed until the end of this year. Worcestershire County council are still discussing demand-responsive bus services and we are hopeful that these bus services will be included in their plans.

We continue to monitor the use of land to the south of the village where materials are stored and the hedgerow was cut down last year. There is little that the parish council can do except draw breaches of planning permission to Wychavon District Council and encourage them to take appropriate action.

Councillor Wall and I met with the Environment Agency and representatives from Worcestershire County Council and Wychavon District Council to discuss the risk of flooding in the village. The alleviation work which was done in 2010 seems to have helped but we wanted to know if any further work was needed. Wychavon and WCC are assessing the situation for us.

Last summer we celebrated the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee. We are grateful to the Village Trust for organising the celebrations at the Playing Field last June at which the parish council planted two trees and the WI planted one. We supported the Crown Inn in arranging a celebration of the Coronation of King Charles III with support from the Brennan family and Parish Lands. We have also planted a tree to mark the occasion.

During the year, three parish councillors stood down for various reasons. I am grateful to Andrea Whittingham, Peter Hennerley and Phil Smith for their efforts as councillors and to Grant MacCalman and David Harbon for agreeing to be co-opted to the council. Following the recent election, we have a vacancy for another councillor should anyone wish to put themselves forward.

Jill Phillips is stepping down from the vice-chairmanship of the council. I should like to put on record the thanks of the whole council for her hard work over the last 7 or 8 years as chair and vice chair. In particular, I am grateful to her for ably chairing meeting when I am absent.

I am grateful to all councillors for the work that they have put in during the past year. We would not be able to do our job without the support of our clerk, Lisa Cope. I should like to record my gratitude for her work and support for me over the last year. Steve Pike, our Lengthsman, also does a lot of work to help keep our village in good condition and we are grateful for all of his efforts. Finally, I should like to record the thanks of the whole council to Linda Robinson, our District and County Councillor. She attends all of our meetings and takes our concerns to the relevant people at County Hall or Wychavon District Council. We are lucky to have such good support.

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## 6. County & District Councillor's Report- Linda Robinson

I am delighted to have been re- elected as your District Cllr in last week's elections a position I have held for the last 16 years and have also represented you at the County now for half of my four year term which has and continues to be quite a learning curve.

### Budget update.

A five per cent rise in Worcestershire County Council's share of the Council Tax was approved last month

The £935million budget for the year ahead will fund delivery of a wide range of essential services including services to keep the most vulnerable people in the county safe. As part of the budget, the council will be putting in place an uplift to its Council Tax. The 2.94 per cent rise in Council Tax will help to fund the increased costs of delivering improvements for residents and businesses while an additional two per cent uplift in the rate for the Adult Social Care levy will support vulnerable adults.

Major improvements for Worcestershire residents which includes improving roads, pavements and street lighting, in addition to funding a brand-new school in Worcester to help with school places more of that later. County Hall will spend £268million over the next 12 months to ensure residents who need Adult Social Care support will continue to receive it.

A total of £146million has been allocated to ensure the County Council can continue to improve the lives of children and young people across the county. £91million is being invested into supporting people to live independently for longer, through the dedicated work of the county's Public Health and Communities teams. The budget also includes investment to maintain bus services with £3.5million invested on top of the £1.5million commitment made this year. An additional £500,000 to enable minor highway works to be actioned more quickly such as the pruning of trees and the replacement of damaged street furniture and signage. The council is facing similar challenges too, from both the impact of inflation on costs of materials and services to increasing demand for services, all of which adds significantly to the pressure on our budget.

"With more vulnerable people needing our support than ever before and with the cost of this care increasing significantly, our budget for next year reflects this added pressure. "Our Council Tax remains one of the lowest of any County Council in the country.

### Update from the Acute Trust at Worcs. Royal

ALL non-emergency operations will be moved away from the city's hospital in an attempt to cut the huge backlog for treatment and cut long waiting times.

The county's health bosses have agreed to a plan which will see only emergency and vascular operations performed at Worcestershire Royal Hospital in Worcester with the rest moved to the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch and Kidderminster Hospital by the end of May. NHS England has tasked the county's hospital trust with cutting the longest waiting times – which includes 18-month delays and two-plus-year waits – for all 'planned' hospital appointments and treatment. The ever-mounting wait for care has built up since the Covid-19 pandemic when a decision was made to pause all non-emergency care – with hospital staff told to focus only on treating the virus, most planned operations and cancer treatment.

A 'recovery' plan, which was published by the NHS in February last year, called for all two-year waits for care to be "eliminated" within six months, 18-month waits to be removed by April this year and year-long waits to be wiped out by March 2025.

The target before the Covid-19 pandemic for GP referral to treatment was 18 weeks but astonishingly the hospital is now having to battle to make sure people are seen within a year for some treatments. Matthew Hopkins, the chief executive of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, said two-year waits had been "largely eliminated" last September and the trust is currently focusing on cutting 78-week-plus waits before attention shifts to cutting 65-week and then year-long waits.

Mr Hopkins, who has revealed the trust's biggest priority was cutting waiting times even if this came at the expense of balancing the hospital's budget, said the biggest challenges to cutting wait times were staff shortages as well as previous and pending strikes by hospital staff. The acute trust boss said recent industrial action – which saw junior doctors strike for 72 hours straight earlier this month – had caused "significant problems."

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Junior doctors went out on strike for four days as part of a 96-hour walkout between April 11 and 15.

“To be honest the main constraints are our theatre nurses because there is a challenge,” Mr Hopkins told Worcestershire County Council’s health and overview scrutiny committee on March 13.

“As the NHS looks to gear up elective capacity, theatre staff will be the group that becomes the sought-after nurses and allied health professionals... We have done quite well with overseas recruitment into theatres, that is going to be a particular challenge if we are increasing the actual quantum of operating theatres and lists.

“We’re going to need more staff.” Bosses are looking overseas to fill the gap with the vacancy rates for nurses at the trust at around eight per cent – up from five per cent after more posts were created – and a recruitment drive in the Philippines is said to be “going well.”

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust is also building two more operating theatres at the Alex to add to the seven theatres already in place. A further four theatres will eventually be built in Redditch with a completion date so far unknown.

The trust said its plan to separate its care in this way was in line with best practice guidance and would lead to shorter waiting times and reduce the risk of cancellation.

It would also help the recovery from the impact of the pandemic and ease pressure on urgent and emergency care, the trust said.

## **Alternative Fuel Payment scheme expanded till the end of May 2023**

The government recently announced that it has expanded the Alternative Fuel Payment scheme, supporting more households using heating oil, Liquefied Petroleum Gas, biomass and other alternative fuels.

The government has increased the period that applicants can provide evidence of the purchase of alternative fuels by three months to June 2022, instead of from September 2022. This means those eligible for £200 Alternative Fuel Payment can now apply using receipts from June 2022 until May 2023. This ensures that households who purchased fuel in bulk ahead of the winter can receive the £200 energy bill support they are entitled to.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/increased-flexibility-of-alternative-fuel-payments-so-more-households-will-be-supported-with-their-energy-bill>

## **7. Reports from Village organisations:**

### **Village Trust- Les Bailey**

Cllr Bailey reported that the Village Trust is doing well and the Hall is busy with numerous village events having successfully taken place this year, the next one is the Pony and Dog Show- it was highlighted that fundraisers such as these are the events that take a lot of hard work and local residents to be engaged in order for them to be a success. Cllr Mason shared his thanks to Steve Smith the Chairman of the Village Trust and Les Bailey along with the rest of the committee for the great job they all do.

### **Village Shop- Cllr Mason**

The AGM takes place on 31<sup>st</sup> May, the annual turnover is down and therefore the shop needs more visitors and the average spend per visitor to increase.

### **Flood Group-Cllr Wall**

The Parish Council are be congratulated on managing the installation of the flood alleviation scheme following the devastating floods of 2007 which overwhelmed the village, resulting in 50 houses being flooded.

You will read that Peopleton Parish Council became the first Parish Council nationally to be given the authority by the Secretary of State for the Environment to manage and install a flood alleviation scheme. I am pleased to report that despite the abnormal rainfall experienced recently the flood alleviation scheme continues to operate very efficiently.

The Parish Council also continue to remind landowners to please keep ditches well maintained and clear of debris. Wychavon continue to carry out annual maintenance on the Peopleton ditch. As mentioned in the Chairman’s annual report Tim and myself met with the Environment Agency, Wychavon and the County Council to discuss the BNIB summary and report that the Parish council arranged. They did not consider there was a flooding problem in Peopleton at present but the County Council are to undertake a further investigation and report back to the Parish Council in due course

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## 8. West Mercia Police- Marc Baylis Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

Marc Baylis introduced himself and also highlighted that he is local and knows Peopleton as he is also County Councillor for Bowbrook.

There are now more officers in West Mercia with approx. 2,500 and an additional 250 PCSO's with a budget of £280 million with a plan in place to build public confidence and improve the level of Police visibility, however the job is a lot bigger than it ever was before. This is due to many crimes now being addressed that weren't historically such as hate crime and cyber-crime. It also takes time to recruit and train all of the new officers coming in and so the effects will not be seen immediately.

The confidence is much higher in West Mercia than other locally with a survey indicating 84% of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police.

Reports suggest crime has increased by a third in Peopleton since pre-covid and burglary has increased 33% since last year.

## 9. Open Session with Marc Baylis and parishioners

Concerns were raised by parishioners that burglaries that occurred were just given a crime number and then closed with no further investigation. Mr Baylis confirmed all burglaries should be attended by the Police however if it was classed as criminal damage (a shed or outbuilding not part of the house) this would be not attended. All house burglaries should definitely be visited by the Police. Rural Crime Officers should be attending also.

Concerns were also raised as to why when 5 or 6 crimes were all committed and reported to the Police in the same time frame of one morning why the Police didn't link these together- this was due to the call centre receiving a high volume of all level crimes and it being difficult but Rural crime officers should be able to make these connections.

One parishioner said the lack of confidence isn't helped by requesting speeding checks for the School and speeding checks were then undertaken on a Sunday morning when the School is closed. It was stated however that there is extra money in the budget for speeding and new technology will make it much easier for safer neighbourhood teams to undertake this and for tickets to be issued to drivers.

## 10. The date for the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Signed (Chairman).....

Date