

## Minutes of the Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 7.00pm, Rushock Village Hall

### Present:

Cllr. T. Green (TG) (Chairman)  
Cllr. D. Cutler (DC) (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr. S. Davies (SD)  
Cllr. R. Hampshire (RH)  
Cllr. T. Jennings (TJ)  
Cllr. D. Pugh (DP)

### Also Present were:

The clerk Mrs. B J Drew (BD), Cllr R Drew (District Councillor), Cllr I Hardiman (District Councillor).

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr M Hart (County / District Councillor) and West Mercia Police.
2. **Declarations of Councillors Interests:**  
Cllr T Green declared an interest in Planning Application 23/0893, 9 Clattercut Lane as he lives next door to applicant.
3. **Public Question Time:**  
No Public Questions.
4. **Minutes:**  
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 23 were duly approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.
5. **Progress Reports:**  
TG enquired how the new Tree Warden is getting on. DC advised he is still awaiting the co-ordinator to contact him. DC will chase.
6. **County Councillor's Report:** *Report previously circulated*  
TG commented that Verge Cutting is still an issue and there appears no progress from WCC. Cllr Hardiman will ask County Councillor Hart to make enquiries and report back to the Chairman.

TG reported that the Park Lane verges are in a bad state. TG/RH will meet to look at work needed and instruct contractor to carry out repairs using Lengthsman funding.

TG reported Cakebole Lane / Church Bank works signage was not good and very misleading.

### Rushock Issues

I am aware that the issue of verge cutting is still an issue and we did discuss this and Hayley is going to see what she can do for 2024.

We did look at the verge issues in Park Lane and Hayley is going to put this forward for an edge of carriageway repair scheme for 2024-2025. I have confirmed that with appropriate traffic management the Parish Council can have their contractor put scalplings on Park Lane funded from your lengthsman's budget.

I was aware there were some issues with access recently around the Cakebole Lane/Church Bank area of the Parish due to the road closures and acted swiftly to send an inspector out to make sure all the

signage was correctly placed and that there was appropriate signage indicating access for local residents.

### Wyre Forest Issues

Bewdley Bridge is now operating one way over the bridge into the town for approximately 18 months whilst the Environment Agency (EA) undertake the work for the construction of the flood defences. This is now circa a £9.3m scheme, of which £500k is from WCC and the rest from the EA. The Government increased the capital funding by an additional £1.5m from the original funding grant for additional work.

### Strategic Issues County Wide

Here2Help is now also co-ordinating our Ukranian Refugee programme working with the 6 District Councils. We now have several hundred refugees in the County and a number of families have now come to the Wyre Forest and young people are taking up places in local schools.

The County Council's cabinet met on Wednesday 10 th January and approved its draft budget for consultation with a view to final recommendations being considered at its 1 st February meeting when it will make recommendations to Full Council who will need to approve at budget at its meeting on 15 th February.

We are facing significant in year pressures as I have previously reported in respect of Children's and Adult's Social Care and SEND and Home to school transport.

The proposal is to increase our net revenue budget from circa £400million in 2023-2024 to circa £430 million in 2024-2025.

The proposal is to increase council tax by 2.99% (maximum is 3%) and to increase the Adult Social Care Levy by the maximum 2% therefore 4.99% overall on a Band D property.

We are receiving an additional £11million for Adults as a result of the Local Government Settlement however overall in respect of grants we are circa £1.5million less.

In month 7 we are already showing an overspend of £22million due to the pressures outlined above.

The gross structural deficit forecast for 2023-2024 is circa £35million (circa 9% of our net revenue budget, £19million for Childrens, £6million for Adults, £9.5million Home to School Transport and £0.5million for Communities). This is being mitigated in part by an additional £4million income from business rates and a use of £9million worth of reserves and thus a net forecast overspend of circa £22million.

As you can imagine, inflation, wage costs (the minimum wage is increasing too), demand going up and placement costs going up are all adding to the structural deficit. Looking forward this means the Council is facing additional cost pressures of £51.5million plus the £35million makes a total pressure of £86.5million. It is proposed to mitigate this by £21million of additional government funding overall, £20million of additional Council Tax income, £25.5million of identified savings and efficiencies. This still leaves a gap of £20million and further savings/further use of reserves are currently being looked at.

The Boundary Commission proposals have just been released and are now out to consultation until 18th March, it would be very helpful if you would support the proposal for the Chaddesley Division, which retains Rushock within it. The proposal is to retain 57 county councillors for Worcestershire, but the average number of electors increases from 7,992 as of 2022 to 8,687 as of 2029. (These are the years the Boundary Commission is using to forecast from and to). Chaddesley increases from 7,064 electors to 9,010.

## 7. **District Councillor's Report:** *Report previously circulated*

### Local Issues:

Robin, Marcus and Ian are pleased to report that there are no local issues outstanding.

### Wyre Forest:

Work is well underway with the Connectivity project in Worcester Street, Kidderminster where 4 large redundant units are being demolished to open up this area of town. We need to make this area of town attractive to urban living and link up the former Glades site which we want to see developed

for residential, with the wider town centre.. This will be the subject of formal planning application and we would not want to pre-judge this.

Work is also well underway at the former Magistrates' Court in Worcester Street, which is being branded as the 'Creative Hub'. This will be office spaces that can be permanently let and there will be flexible lets and venue space too.

There will be free parking in Bewdley for 1 hour Monday-Friday between 8 am-6pm till March 2025 in Gardners Meadow to encourage people to visit Bewdley due to the unprecedented disruption of the Bridge being only open one way whilst the flood defence work is undertaken by the E.A. You will need to display a ticket for this.

WFDC is currently consulting on its budget and please have your say. Details of how to comment are on the WFDC website. We are proposing increasing council tax by the maximum 3% allowed which is circa £7 per year for a Band D property! We are proposing investing in services that are important to the public unlike the previous administration. For example we are proposing two full time litter pickers across the District to act as a litter blitz squad responding to non-routine work. We are also proposing an additional Civil Enforcement Officer to tackle parking on double yellow lines. We plan to be more open and transparent than the previous administration and will be funding the webcasting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. We are further proposing 1 hours free car parking Monday-Friday, 8am-6pm in one car park in each of the District's 3 towns. We will also be investing £50k in accessible play equipment at Brinton Park and Stourport Riverside. Each District Councillor will also have £1,000 for the community leadership fund to spend on projects or organisations in their ward.

We are also proposing additional commercial income from a wide variety of areas to fund our investments. We will still have circa £3million of unallocated reserves in 2024-2025 and indeed will still have reserves at the end of the 3 year medium term financial strategy. We are also taking a totally different approach to localism and not simply transferring services to town and parish councils unless they want to.

Cllr Hardiman advised that the Callimore Farm application WF/ 23/0107 has been permitted with 23 conditions attached.

## **8. Police Report:**

Other than the theft of the pear tree that we have had reported to us today, there is nothing of note to report for Rushock. We don't have anyone on a late shift to attend the meeting, so if there is anything of note please let us know.

TG advised that DC had paid for a replacement pear tree which has been planted. TG has done a map of the trees in the Orchard and all labels have been removed and smartwater stickers attached to deter further thefts.

DC advised of numerous DPD delivery cards scattered on Clattercut Lane. The cards and photographs were passed to the Clerk who will ask Wyre Forest District Council enforcement to investigate and track the driver.

Police Crime Commissioner Grants noted.

The three Policing Priorities were agreed as Burglaries, Speeding and Wildlife Crime.

## **9. Finance:**

a) Clerks Salary – TG reported that the Clerk has remained on Spinal Column Point 20 since her appointment in 2018 and proposed this be increased to SCP 22 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. This was agreed.

- b) To agree the Budget for the Financial Year 2024-2025  
The proposed budget for 2024/2025 had been circulated and was agreed.
- c) To agree the Precept for the Financial Year 2024-2025 – 5% increase  
After discussion it was proposed to increase the Precept by 5%, giving a total Precept payable of £3,788.40. This will show as a 5% increase on the Council Tax Bill as the property base has not changed. This was unanimously agreed.
- d) The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated, and it was in accordance with the bank statements.  
The bank balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 was £6,461.28 with 3 unrepresented cheques and 1 account for payment making the balance £6,173.58.
- e) The following were unanimously approved for payment:

Already Paid;

Worcestershire CALC	£36.00
D Pugh Training	
Mr W Waldron	£187.00
Lengthsman November 23	
Mrs B J Drew	£32.70
Crib Service Chocolates	
Mrs B J Drew	£16.00
Microsoft Office	

To Be Paid;

Mr W Waldron	£119.00
Lengthsman December 23	

- 10. **To discuss consultation on new electoral arrangements for Worcestershire County Council:**  
The Boundary Commission proposals have just been released and are now out to consultation until 18th March, although Rushock is not affected it was agreed to support the proposal for the Chaddesley Division, which retains Rushock within it. Clerk to reply.
- 11. **Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Consultation:**  
Noted.
- 12. **To discuss co-option to Parish Council:**  
TG advised that there is still one vacancy on the Parish Council which can be filled by co-option. It was agreed TG and Clerk produce a flyer that can be put in the magazine, on the noticeboard and delivered to every household in the Parish.
- 13. **Update on memorial post:**  
SD reported that they now have the square Oak post which RH will sand and prepare. SD has spoken with the engraver regarding a design which will be a simple flower design. SD has also contacted the firm regarding brass plaques which will cost £30.00 to include engraving. The post will go outside the village hall on the corner at the front.
- 14. **To discuss Biodiversity Project / Birdbox Project:**  
TG reported that more bulbs have been planted.

SD/DP have been liaising regarding the Birdbox project. The proposed date is Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, pm but this will be confirmed. It will be at the Village Hall and children should attend with an adult. SD/TG will do an introduction and this will be followed by making a birdbox / bug hotel. RH has ordered the wood, which will be pre-drilled. Paint needs to be water based and natural colours. There will be enough to make 52 birdboxes, any left over can be delivered locally. DP will produce an information sheet giving advice on the boxes, eg height, not in direct sunlight etc. Refreshments will be provided. Clerk to invite Cllr Hart and Louis as he has funded this project.

If any funds are remaining bat boxes and owl boxes will be the next project.

**15. Planning:**

Planning Spreadsheet had been circulated.

TG reported on Planning since the last meeting.

23/0862/Dem – Plot 6A Rushock Trading Estate, demolition of a building – For Info Only

23/0896/HOU – Oak Tree Cottage, 1 Well Lane, Recommend Approval

23/0893 – 9 Clattercut Lane, Recommend Approval, TG did not vote

23/0107 - Callimore Farm, Approved with 23 conditions

**16. Highways and Verges:**

RH reported that Dave Jordan can start work on Park Lane next week, weather permitting. RH/TG to meet prior to this to agree work to be undertaken.

**17. Footpaths:**

TG advised that the following paths need to be reported to WCC for cutting. Clerk to report.

RS 504b – back of church to Chaddesley (wooded area)

RS 523 – by Industrial Estate

**18. Rushock Village Hall:**

Next pub night is 23<sup>rd</sup> February. Coffee Morning are well attended.

**19. Agenda items for future meetings:**

Advise Clerk.

**20. To note the date of the next meetings.**

9<sup>th</sup> May 24 (DC Apologies)

5<sup>th</sup> September 24

21<sup>st</sup> November 24

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.55pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....