

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Earls Croome Village Hall on Tuesday 16th May, 2023.

Apologies: Tom Goodwin (Parish Councillor) Jeremy Owenson (District Council), Martin Allen (District & County Councillor), Revd Jane Frasier & The Police.

Those Present: Mark Smith (Chairman of Parish Council), Penny Green (Member of Parish Council), Margaret Herbert (Member of Parish Council), Ian Wilson (Member of the Parish Council), Charlotte Bloomfield (Member of the Parish Council) Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden), Ann Smith (special advisor to the Parish Council), Giles Steiger and the Clerk.

Welcome by Earls Croome Parish Council Chairman: Mark opened the meeting and welcomed the Members and Members of the Public. Mark gave a brief overview of the Parish Councils achievements over the past 12 months including the acquisition of the Vehicle activated speed sign.

Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes of the meeting held on 10th May 2022 were reviewed, unanimously agreed and signed by the Chairman. There were no outstanding matters arising.

Report from District Councillor Jeremy Owenson:

The Clerk read the District Council report as follows:

Thanks to all who voted for me for the District Council elections. Now that we are partnered up with Upton, you have two district Councillors who will represent you going forward, myself and Martin Allen.

Martin and I will work together to best represent the residents going forward.

The first Council Meeting of the new administration is next week, so we shall know who the new leader is shortly, although I think that Tom Wells will continue as Leader.

Report from County Councillor Martin Allen:

Martins delivered his report during the Annual Parish Council meeting later in the evening – see the minutes of that meeting for further details.

Collate Queries for West Mercia Police: It was noted that it was disappointing not to have the Police attend.

There were no specific queries raised.

St. Nicholas Church: The Clerk read the annual report from the Church:

“We have had a very interesting year. We celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II’s accession to the throne, with a series of village events followed by a celebratory Songs of Praise service. We then mourned her death, with appropriate hymns & prayers and then, at the beginning of May 2023, we celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III, with an afternoon tea and a service of Thanksgiving.

We have also had a huge variety of services in our Church, including the baptism of three children. This service was led by our Archdeacon, the Venerable Robert Jones. We celebrated the Confirmation of six young people by the Bishop, the Right Reverend John Gladwin. They have now formed an 'eco group' to lead us in our aim to become a Bronze Award church, reducing our carbon footprint. Finally we had a wonderful wedding and, sadly, several funerals and internment of ashes of local friends known and missed by all.

We continue to have two services a month; 2nd Sunday of the month is Holy Communion, and 4th Sunday is Morning Worship. Christmas and Easter services are a traditional time for Church attendance, when we are joined by many people from the village. We had a very well attended service for Remembrance Sunday, with the laying of the wreaths at the Crucifix and the support of our Parish Councillors. Our Harvest Festival service resulted in donations of produce and money being taken to Maggs Day Centre. Our Carol Service, with carols, candles lit and mulled wine was also supported by many in the village.

The work on the Tower last year has been much appreciated. Our team of bell ringers offer us their skills and time in regularly giving us a peel before our church services, as well as covering special times in our history, such as the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, tolling the bell 96 times on her death, and also ringing to celebrate the Coronation on May 6th. We have had several teams of visiting ringers as well as training sessions for 'new' ringers, all of whom appreciate that ours are 'one of the best ring of six bells in Worcestershire'.

The churchyard is being ably mown by Jack. An ash tree at the back of the churchyard was initially trimmed back, due to age and damage to its base, but after discussion, it was felt that even though it was considered safe, there remained a slight risk, so it was decided to remove it. This was done during the winter. Bob Herbert and Malcolm Tomkins have continued to do trimming and maintenance to the churchyard in the winter. We continue to have mole and badger activity in the churchyard; the latter being the cause of the occasional ancient bones being brought to the surface, necessitating re-burial.

The graveyard extension area needs to be scanned prior to any applications being submitted for approval. There is cost to this which, unfortunately, can't be met from existing resources, so it is on hold while we seek funding. The Lychgate work should be commenced early this summer thanks to some financial support from the Laslett's Charity.

Finally, we have been busy with fundraising events during the year. The Trafalgar Evening, with good food and excellent entertainment, Plant Sales and refreshments, Spring Flower Walk and Jane's very entertaining talk with a Ploughman's supper. These all brought in much-needed funds and we are grateful for the continuing use of the village hall without charge, boosting any income raised.

We appreciate the commitment, time and energy contributed by all the members of the PCC in the support our Church and, in particular, we thank the Parish Council, the village and local community for their continuing support of our ancient Church."

Residents Forum:

There were no issues raised but a general discussion was had about trying to get more residents from Earls Croome to attend the Parish meeting – the Clerk made a diary note to advertise in the Bridge and a discussion was had about serving tea/coffee/wine & leafleting the Village explaining that it was a community meeting and a chance to drive the Parish Council objectives for the coming year. Making further use of the Earls Croome Facebook page was also discussed.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7.20p.m. The next Annual Parish Meeting will be at a similar time next year to coincide with the Annual Parish Council meeting.