

## Minutes of the Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

held on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2024, 8.15pm, Rushock Village Hall

### Present:

Cllr. T. Green (TG) (Chairman)  
Cllr. S. Davies (SD)  
Cllr. R. Hampshire (RH)  
Cllr. T. Jennings (TJ)

### Also Present were:

The clerk Mrs. B J Drew (BD), County/District Councillor M J Hart (MJH), PCSO Nicky Thomas (NT) and PCSO Alice Owen-Jones (AOJ).

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr D Cutler, Cllr D Pugh, Cllr Mr R Drew (District Councillor), Cllr I Hardiman (District Councillor).
2. **Declarations of Councillors Interests:**  
None declared.
3. **Public Question Time:**  
No Public Questions.
4. **Minutes:**  
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were duly approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.
5. **Progress Reports:**  
TG reported on CALC meeting attended on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. It was mentioned that Worcestershire County Council may not continue to support the myparish websites.
6. **County Councillor's Report:** *Report previously circulated*  
Rushock Issues
  1. I am aware that the issue of verge cutting is still an issue and Terry has mentioned it to me again we did discuss this, and Hayley is going to see what she can do for 2024. I have raised it with her again.
  2. As you will of course be aware, Park Lane is currently having a major edge of carriageway repair scheme. This was initially scheduled for 25-26, but I pushed for it to be done in 24-25 and it is in fact being done as an emergency repair, hence the short notice of the closure.
  3. I have raised the issue of the diversion route of Lunnon Lane being unsuitable due to its narrowness.
  4. In respect of the A448 road closure at Brockencote, due to the Severn Trent works, obviously I am very pleased these were completed well ahead of schedule and did all I could to ensure appropriate signage to try and ensure the narrow Rushock lanes were used as rat runs. This wasn't easy but things did at least settle down. Following the end of the works, I have asked for all of the verges along the lanes to be inspected and ensure that any damage is repaired. If you have any specific examples please let me know.
  5. I was pleased to be able to support and attend your biodiversity event on 3rd March and Louis had a great time.

## Wyre Forest Issues

Bewdley Bridge continues to operate 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

Worcestershire has a fantastic website Here2Help which is a community action response to Coronavirus. There is also a dedicated phone number 01905 768053 for those without access to the internet. There is now a Here2Helpbusiness scheme as well. (simply google Here 2 Help Worcestershire and it comes straight up.)

Full Council met on 15th February and approved the Council's submission to the boundary commission, based on the boundary commission's proposals and supported them 'en bloc'.

As stated, the proposal for the Chaddesley Division is to retain the Spennells estate and the parishes of:-

Broome  
Chaddesley Corbett  
Churchill and Blakedown  
Rushock  
Stone

In addition, to add in the Lea Castle development, currently in the parish of Wolverley and Cookley.

We will know the final proposals from the boundary commission when they are published on 2nd July and then the order needs to be laid before Parliament to be formally made.

WCC, like all upper tier authorities are facing significant financial pressures on demand led services, children's and adults social care and in particular on our placement budgets, together with Home to School Transport. This has been in the national news recently and in fact, £500million has been made available. Worcestershire's share is an extra £5million and whilst not nearly enough is helpful.

Full Council met on 15th February and by majority vote agreed its budget. No alternative budgets were put forward by alternative groups.

Our net revenue budget is £401m for 23/24 and at the end of Period 8 (30th December) we are already forecasting a £21.6m cost pressure following the use of budgeted risk reserves without further action.

The forecast overspend is as follows:-

Childrens	£29.4m
Adults	£5.6m
Communities	£0.6m
Economy and Infrastructure	£0.7m
Commercial and Change	£1.0m
Total	£37.3m

Less forecast underspend/reserves/additional income as follows:-

Corporate underspend	£2.6m
Use of reserves agreed at budget setting	£9.0m
Business rates additional income	£4.1m
Total	£15.7m
Net overspend	£21.6m

In adult social care, long term placement numbers have increased by 4% in Q1, equating to a net increase of 238 packages of care. Over the last 3 years – April 2020 to April 2023 there has been an overall increase from circa 6,400 to 6,900 packages of care. In terms of Older People services we have seen an increase in 171 packages (3%). There is an increase in service users going into residential care with an average 10% increase in unit costs which is an average £73 per week. Nursing care packages have increased by 15 with an average 9% increase in unit costs. Home care packages have increased by 64 with an average 7.6% increase in unit costs which is an average £23 per week.

In terms of Learning Disability services we have seen an increase of 62 and significant increases are being seen in the average unit cost of placements with residential placements increasing by 10% (£170) per person per week and supported living costs by 9% (£105) per person per week and home care by 11% (£43) per person per week.

In terms of Physical Disabilities services home care average weekly costs have increased by 15% (£43) per person per week and nursing care by 6% (£64) per person per week.

In Childrens Services placements for Looked after Children are currently forecast to overspend by £16.9m, which is 18% above budget. Current placements are 1,039, a 11% increase from 939 in June 2022. There has been a sharp increase between January and March 2023 alone.

For example, some packages of care are costing £10k per week, over £500k per year per child and some packages of care are now costing £20k per week, over £1m per year. The average weekly cost has gone from circa £1,000 per week to £1,500 per week over the last 3 years.

It is absolutely or statutory duty to keep young people safe but this is an example of the financial pressures WCC and all other authorities are currently facing.

Home to School Transport (HTST) is forecast to overspend by at least £9m this year due to inflationary pressures on providers. There is also an increase in demand with more parents seeking to use transport with a 12% increase in mainstream numbers over the last 12 months. The predicted overspend could also increase further if there are more children requiring transport as part of their (Education, Health and Care Plan) EHCP.

Clearly, the Council is cognisant of its budget framework and is working up plans to mitigate the end of year overspend by looking at ways it can make further savings, reschedule its large capital programme and if needs be the use of reserves.

The net revenue budget for 24/25 is £438million. Council tax has increased by 2.99% and the adult social care levy by the maximum 2%, thus 4.99% overall. A Band D property will therefore pay £1,538.92, which is WCC's share of the overall council tax bill. WCC makes up circa 70% of the bill. This is an increase of £73.14 per annum per household on 23/24, or £1.41 per week.

Council tax income will bring in circa £336million towards the net revenue budget requirement. Worcestershire will still remain in the lowest quartile of comparative county councils.

Across the council there is a structural deficit of £35million, together with £51.5million of new investments and pressures, totalling £86.5million. These are to be funded from £22.5million additional government funding, £19.6million additional council tax income and £37.2million of savings and efficiencies. This leaves a gap of £7.2million to be funded from general reserves.

The capital programme is £389million.

The net revenue budget for adults and communities have been set at £168million, children's services £102million and therefore circa 2/3 of our net revenue budget is spent on protecting our most vulnerable residents. There are circa 600,000 residents in Worcestershire and this spend would represent about 2% of the population.

As a result of the significant savings and efficiencies required it is proposed that the way the council operates internally is restructured with the deletion of a corporate directorate and therefore a strategic director and associated assistant director posts. A number of other posts across the organisation will be deleted and a voluntary redundancy scheme was launched before Christmas. The proposals are of course subject to formal consultation and employment rights and law in the usual way. To date a considerable number of redundancy requests have been approved.

It is also proposed that when the Worcestershire Children's First contract ends in September this year it is not renewed and Children's Services is brought back into the council and the company cease. You may recall it was government that requested this alternative delivery model when children's Services were inadequate 5 years ago. Last year we were ranked good.

We are considering options for the future use of County Hall, given the RAAC issues.

Finally, there will be a Parish Council Conference to be held at 6pm on 12th June at Wyre Forest House, (WFDC HQ) for all Parish Councils in Worcestershire. Please do send a representative, you would be most welcome.

MJH touched on the verge cutting and confirmed that Rushock will be done last and he has asked the green team leader to look at options for Rushock to undertake it's own verge cutting.

Park Lane – work commenced as of Monday and is due to last 4-6 weeks but hopefully 4 weeks, The closure is lifted from 5pm. The diversion is via A roads and not Lunnon Lane. The surface dressing between 16<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May on Cakebole Lane and Lunnon Lane and Church bank will be one day only and the preferred date is 17<sup>th</sup> May. The day that is done the road closure on Park Lane will be lifted.

MJH advised of a change in his County Role, he now has corporate responsibilities.

TG mentioned Item 4 lanes that were damaged due to A448 works and advised Well Lane needs attention.

TJ reported a flooding issue outside his house as a result of the previous resurfacing, water was directed away from the drain instead of into it. MJH will report this to WCC Highways. TJ also reported cones had been removed at Cakebole Lane that were protecting where the verge has collapsed into the watercourse. MJH will report this.

TG reported one of stiles down on Park Lane, disturbed by works, MJH advised this will be put right.

**7. District Councillor's Report:** *Report previously circulated*  
Local Issues

We have been dealing with the usual routine casework, reporting litter and fly tipping on the main A roads and along the country lanes.

Wyre Forest Issues

Work is well under way with the Connectivity project in Worcester Street, Kidderminster where 4 large redundant retail units have been demolished to open up this area of town. We now await the letting of the contract to the construction contractor and work should complete by the end of the year.

There will be much more gradual steps to what are currently there now called the 'Step Entry' and also a gradual path down, with benches and a park/public open space. 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. Planning consent has now been granted for this project.

Work is also well under way at the former Magistrates' Court, 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.

We have commissioned a feasibility study for Worcester Street, Market Street, the former Crown House site and Lionfields (former Glades site) and this will report later in the year. We are keen to see more residential development in the town centre.

**8. Police Report:**

PCSO Nicky Thomas and Alice Owen-Jones were in attendance.

Whilst there have been no incidents reported in the Rushock area, we have had reports of suspicious vehicles and poaching taking place in other rural areas.

Officers from Wyre Forest Safer Neighbourhood Team executed a drugs warrant at an address on the Rushock Trading Estate near Droitwich on Saturday (April 20). Three rooms were found to have 500 hundred cannabis plants being grown in them which were seized at the scene to be destroyed. No-one was at the premises at the time of the warrant and no arrests were made however enquiries are ongoing. Though no arrests were made, enquiries are ongoing into this cannabis grow.

TG thanked the Police for a noticeable increase in police patrols and invited them to the coffee mornings.

**9. Appointment of Lengthsman:**

TG reported that Mr Russell Peach had been interviewed and appointed as Lengthsman to replace William Waldron. He commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 at an hourly rate of £17.00. He is fully trained and has all the required equipment.

**10. Finance:**

The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated and it was in accordance with the bank statements. The bank balance as at 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024 was £8,340.59 with unpresented cheques making it £8,195.59.

The following were unanimously approved for payment: -

Already Paid;

Birdbox Project	£243.87
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Print- Serve	£25.00
End of Year Payroll	

To Be Paid;

DM Payroll Services (Internal Audit Report)	£70.00
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Worcestershire CALC (Annual Subs)	£111.87
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Mrs B J Drew (WW Thankyou gift)	£23.50
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Zurich Municipal (Insurance)	£214.00
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SD/TG will go into Lloyds to check on progress with bank mandate update.

**11. To discuss training requirements:**

TG encouraged attendance at Training events.

**12. Update on memorial post:**

SD reported that it is sanded and looking good. RH will drop to Mike for carving and it needs oiling.

**13. To discuss Biodiversity Project:**

TG reported that the bird box making was excellent and enjoyed by many.

SD is thinking of arranging a wildlife walk with the children in the future. Also considering bat boxes and hedgehog homes, possibly in conjunction with the Church.

TG suggesting looking at wildflower seeds in Park Lane when all the work has been finished. TJ advised to leave until late summer / autumn.

**14. Planning:**

TG reported on Planning since the last meeting.

Concerns about the current use of a field on Clattercut Lane had been raised by residents and was discussed by Parish Councillors.

The field in question had been used for grazing sheep for more than 20 years but following a change of owner the field was divided into paddocks and occupied by horses last Autumn. Permission for an agricultural building has also been granted. Whilst it is not a planning matter there has been a lot of concern locally about the conditions that the horses are being kept in as the land is seriously overstocked and there is no shelter on the site. The RSPCA have visited the site to address welfare concerns.

MJH will raise this with Sam Hawkins, Enforcement Officer at WFDC to investigate and take action if necessary.

**15. Highways and Verges:**

TG enquired about the road counting on Clattercut Lane. MJH has queried this and no-one knows anything about it.

ML queried whether the parking area in Lunnon Lane that was chewed up will be re-instated. MJH confirmed it will.

- 16. Footpaths:**  
TG advised WCC have been advised of paths to be cut.
- 17. Rushock Village Hall:**  
TJ advised pub nights are very well attended. The committee are looking to organize more events in the summer and they are looking at alternative heating arrangements. TG advised Clerk has obtained a free framed portrait of the King which will be given to the village hall.
- 18. Correspondence:**  
Noted.
- 19. Agenda items for future meetings:**  
Please advise Clerk.
- 20. To note the date of the next meetings.**  
Clerk/Chairman to agree further dates for 2024 meetings.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.00pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....