

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.**

**PRESENT:** Cllr Mark Smith (Chairman), Cllr Penny Green , Cllr Ian Wilson, Cllr Tom Goodwin, Cllr Giles Steiger, Cllr Margaret Herbert.

**In attendance:** County Councillor Martin Allen & Nikki Nicholson (The Clerk)

### **1) APOLOGIES**

District Councillor Owenson, Cllr Charlotte Bloomfield, Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) & Ann Smith (Advisor to PC).

### **2) PUBLIC**

None

### **3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

### **4) MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 were proposed by Giles, seconded by Margaret, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

### **5) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS**

Jeremy's report had been circulated and it was pleasing to note that the DC discretionary fund had been increased from £500 to £1000PA.

Martin gave a summary of his report on **COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCIL MATTERS**

#### **ON DEMAND BUS**

The Community Bus to Tewkesbury ceased operations in January this year, it has been replaced with the Worcestershire On Demand Service.

The On Demand buses will take you to anywhere within the designated County Council Divisions of Croome and Powick, for example it will take you to Upton, Croome Court, Callow End, Powick, Longdon.

It will also take you to points outside the zone: Tesco's in St Peters, St Peters Garden Centre, B&M Bargains and Aldi. County Hall/The Countywide Centre, Worcester Parkway Railway Station, The Retail Park in Malvern, both of Malvern's Railway Stations and Church Street in Malvern. Finally, after much debate I have managed to get Tewkesbury added to the list.

The bus will run from 7am to 7pm, Monday to Saturday. There is a flat fare of £2.50 for all journeys, with additional passengers paying £1.25, ticket bundles are available as well as concessionary cards. There is an app, anyone who cannot use an app can phone 01905 846180 and choose option 0 for assistance.

#### **COUNCIL TAX**

2024 INCREASES FOR A BAND D HOME

WCC £73.14, MHDC £5.00, FIRE £2.82, POLICE £13.00

2023 INCREASES WERE: WCC £69.00, MHDC £5.00, FIRE £5.00, POLICE £14.84

### **WCC BUDGET HAS NOW BEEN APPROVED**

We have had the full WCC meeting on 15/02/2024 and the budget has now been approved.

WCC are going to spend £98.989 million pounds of its reserves, by the end of March 2026 it is expected that the reserves left will be just £45.208 million pounds, which may seem a lot, but isn't.

### **VETERANS BUS PASSES**

In November 2022 I presented a Motion to a full County Council meeting for all veterans who live in Worcestershire to receive a bus pass, similar to the pensioners bus pass. This passed unanimously and was to be become live this April. The majority of veterans who live here are retired and already receive a pensioner's bus pass, so the costs will be relatively small.

However, the ruling administration have now delayed the start of the scheme and intend to look at it again in September 2024. I feel very disappointed with this outcome.

### **HS2 MONEY TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL FOR 2025/2026 ONWARDS**

Following the Government's announcement that part of HS2 is now cancelled, WCC are going to receive £209 million pounds over 7-years. Personally I believe a quarter should go into reserves, however we will have to wait and see on how the administration intend to use the funds. I did contact the leader of the council, Cllr Simon Geraghty about this funding and its possible use for a Veterans Bus Pass and received this reply:

*Hi Martin,*

*Many thanks for your email regarding the Veterans Pass and the recent announcement of a new Local Transport Fund as a result of the changes made to HS2.*

*Whilst this source of funding for future transport projects is most welcome, the guidance has not been published yet as the fund commences in 2025/26 rather than the next financial year. My understanding is that the majority will be for capital rather than revenue projects and so unlikely to help fund revenue spending. However, we will have to await the guidance before this can be confirmed or otherwise.*

*I appreciate this will be disappointing news but hope it provides some clarity that it's not available for us in 2024/25.*

*Kind regards,*

*Simon*

As the funding is to be used for transport, I still have hopes it can fund the Veterans Buss Pass.

### **300 VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCIES FOR WCC**

WCC are currently looking for 300 voluntary redundancies.

### **150 WCC LONG TERM EMPLOYEES ARE FACING A PAY CUT**

WCC are about to cut the pay of some of the lowest paid employees of WCC by 5.4% from April this year.

## **HEREFORD & WORCESTESHIRE FIRE SERVICE CONSULTATION**

My group has two County Councillors sitting on the fire committee, following theirs and many others raised concerns I understand the Chief Fire Officer has changed his mind about removing one of the two crews in Malvern.

Worcester is still to lose a crew and go from three to two crews.  
This is the link if you need it again:

<https://www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/consultation/>

## **QUAY LANE ENTRANCE TO LANE FROM THE A38 JUNCTION**

As I reported last time this is now with Tina at WCC, she is looking for funding.

This matter is with Jacobs who will produce an initial price to design the alterations.

## **DEFFORD MILL RE SITE VISIT 04.08.2023 COUNTY COUNCIL AREA**

The signs have now been installed, the cost was £1345.68 plus vat

Regarding enforcement of the number of HGV's using the site, this is with the District Council.

## **EARLS GRANGE 2 X GULLIES NEED TO BE RELOCATED OR ADDED TOO #6016 JAN**

I have been given an update as to when the work will be carried out, it is expected the work will be done between 13.05.23 and 17.05.23.

There will need to be a road closure but access to properties will be ensured.

## **FUNDING**

I have managed to find you funding for £500.00, members thanks Martin for this and the clerk confirmed receipt of the money.

## **DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **SWDPR UPDATE**

The two inspectors Mr Dean and Mr Lewis have come back asking more questions. One of the main issues appears to be that the County Councils 2019 Transport Modelling/Data although having been revised since 2019 is not robust enough and more up to date information will need to be provided by the County Council.

I am aware the Wychavon, MHDC and Worcester City Councils are seeking to meet with the County Council.

Martin advised that following a NPPF briefing yesterday there would only be a four year housing supply requirement going forward but unfortunately MHDC still fell below this currently.

## **CARPARKING CHARGES FIRST INCREASE IN 12 YEARS.**

A consultation has commenced, any comments should be submitted to MHDC  
[www.malvern hills.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/consultations) before 12pm on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2024.

The following is proposed: The most popular tickets 50p for one hour, and £1 charge for two-hours parking will remain, these are some of the lowest charges in Worcestershire.

As well as this, there will be an increase to three hours for vehicles displaying a valid disabled person's blue badge across all sites.

Other changes could include a cost increase of a 24-hour stay car park from £3 to £4 at the Council House, Victoria Road, Hanley Road, New Street, Priory Road North, Priory Road South, and Teme Street car parks.

Also, an increase of the cost of the evening operating hours tariff (4pm to 8am) from £1.50 to £2 at all car parks and an increase in the cost of the Resident Annual Two Hour Permits from £25 to £30 per year.

I am disappointed the campervan issue has not been addressed.

### **MHDC 5-Year Plan**

MHDC have voted through the next five year plan. You can view it on their website if you wish.

The main points are that MHDC will continue to concentrate on Health & Wellbeing, the Economy including Tourism and the Environment. There was the possibility of consultation with district Councillors attending the Oversee and Scrutiny committee meeting prior to the full council meeting to vote this through.

### **INCREASE TO DISTRICT CLLR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND.**

The District Councillors Discretionary Fund has been increased from £500 to £1000. This funding can be used by CLLrs to support local projects. I supported this increase due to the fact that the number of District CLLrs fell from 38 to 31, plus with the boundary change last May. Also, while I need to support the wonderful work that Amy our Baptist Minister in feeding local people, I feel the increase is fully justified. Last year I helped Warners Supermarket purchase a Defibrillator.

There were no further question for Martin and he left the meeting at this juncture.

### **6) HIGHWAYS MATTERS-**

Margaret advised that the road surface from Quay Lane into Earls Croome reported last month had received some patching up.

The Clerk advised she had reported the faded road name signage at Orchard Close and North Quay to MHDC but she had heard nothing in response.

Penny reported the edge of the carriageway breaking up on each side all along Quay Lane to the motorway.

### **7) PARISH PATHS**

The missing Quay Lane finger pointer had been reported to WCC.

Malcolm had advised via email of some historic repairs that had still not be addressed the clerk would follow these up.

### **8) PLAYING FIELD**

Maple Tree removal – The tree had been felled and all the logs had been taken now. The clerk advised that the stump had not been treated and the tree surgeon didn't recommend herbicides. It was thought that any re-growth could be easily removed with secateurs.

It was noted the owners of 3 Earls Grange had not taken any action regarding their tree overhanging the playing field.

### **9) ANNUAL LITTER PICK**

The litter pick had taken place on Sunday and the Chairman thanked everyone for their efforts.

#### **10) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME**

Members agreed to retain A Millward as the lengthsman for the 24/25 season.

The clerk advised she had completed the reclaim for 23/24 and had claimed a small amount of admin fee from the scheme.

The clerk advised members of a new data entry system for 24/25 whereby the clerks input the lengthsman work task by task to be reimbursed.

#### **11) COMMONS**

Smithmoor – Tom advised that the sheep had now been taken off Smithmoor Common, it was just too wet. Tom would liaise with the Gilders for the payment.

It was thought it was still too wet for Steve Coole to address the winter maintenance items but the clerk would get an update for May's meeting.

Dunstall – The ownership of the poplar trees on Dunstall Common, non-native trees was thought to lie with the owners of Dunstall House and the clerk was asked to write to the residents to open dialogue about the trees.

CALC funding advice. The clerk advised that she had been investigating with CALC and The Malvern Hills Trust the correct ways to monitor and fund any tree works on the commons. The responsibilities lie with the Parish Council for trees upon the Commons land as the Commons are in Parish Council ownership. CALC advised it is reasonable to build up a future reserve for this and that it would need to be funded by the precept. The Malvern Hills trust had suggested getting support from WCC and or MHDC tree officers and had sent some useful guidance of how to sensibly review the trees. The clerk would contact the tree officers and Margaret would review the guidance sent by Malvern Hills Trust.

Marsh – nothing to report

#### **12) PLANNING**

23/00815/FUL Hollybeds Farm, Worcester Road, Earls Croome. Erection of agricultural building – Tom advised this had been approved.

24/00135/ADV Bluebell Farm. Freestanding to let "V" marketing board x2 (retrospective)

Members discussed and decided to object to the application, not only was the current board not in a good visual location, it was not in keeping with the rural area but on top of this there had been no community engagement by the developer, members were concerned that if the engagement was so poor at this stage how would it be once development started and the developers needed to think about communication with the Parish. Ian agreed to draw up some wording for the clerk to submit.

Consultation on planning application ref 23/000049/CM - Uckinghall Quarry – the Chairman thought ECPC should only comment if asked to do so by Ripple Parish Council as the quarry was in their parish.

#### **13) REVIEW STANDING ORDERS**

Ian took members through the key changes and queries, predominantly the new Standing Orders referred to the Parish Council GDPR Policy. The clerk would clarify this with CALC. Currently the clerk email asked recipients to advise her directly if they wanted all the data held to be removed. As far as she was aware this covered the basic GDPR requirements.

Ian would mark up a word copy to circulate to all members and the new Standing Orders would be adopted at the Annual Parish Council meeting in May.

#### **14) FINANCE**

The review of the annual grants was postponed until Charlotte could attend.

The monthly reconciliation of cash and other monies was confirmed for January & February by Charlotte & Penny via email.

Payments made since the last meeting were noted as follows:

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Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- January (S/O)	£269.57
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance January (S/O)	£20.00
Mr A Milward – Lengthsman Payment – January	£182.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – February (S/O)	£269.57
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance February (S/O)	£20.00
Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – February	£221.00
Mr M Harley – felling of Play Park Mapel Tree	£360.00

The following payments were proposed by Margaret, seconded by Tom and agreed by all:

a) Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – March	£TBC
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – March (S/O)	£269.57
c) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance March (S/O)	£20.00
d) Mr A Milward – Lengthsman payment – April	£TBC

Remittance: WCC Lengthsman reimburse January £182.00

WCC Lengthsman grant £500.00 Members discussed and agreed to approach Malcolm to see if he wanted to continue with the Parish path strimming and this funding could be used for that and or become an official or unofficial Parish Path Warden.

#### **18. CORRESPONDANCE Received since the last meeting.**

- Portrait of the King – ordered.
- WCC Town & Parish Conference 12<sup>th</sup> June
- WCC Community Orchard and mini forest funding.
- WCC minerals monitoring report
- WCC green infrastructure strategy
- WCC revised planning validation consultation.

#### **19. DATE FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May at Earls Croome Village Hall, 7.30pm – apologies received from Margaret & Tom

TO BE PRECEDED BY THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AT 7pm

There was a discussion on how to encourage wider resident attendance. The clerk would draw up an advert for the notice board and Tom would put this on Facebook, historically the AMP was not well attended and never had been!

The Meeting closed at 9.35pm.