

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 17th SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.

PRESENT: Cllr Mark Smith (Chairman), Cllr Penny Green, Cllr Ian Wilson, Cllr Giles Steiger, Cllr Margaret Herbert & Cllr Charlotte Bloomfield.

In attendance: County Councillor Martin Allen, Ann Smith (Advisor to PC) & Nikki Nicholson (The Clerk)

1) APOLOGIES

District Councillor Owenson, Cllr Tom Goodwin & Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden).

It was noted that Tom had not attended in 6 months which could result in loss of his seat. All members agreed to extend Tom's leave due to birth of third child.

PUBLIC – none

2) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3) MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2024 were proposed by Penny, seconded by Margaret, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

County – Martin reported that the 'On Demand' bus was still running, please encourage residents to use the service. A training session planned at Upton Library on how to use the app.

Martin reported there had been considerable traffic disruption caused by the Sunshine Festival. With traffic backed up on the M50 causing police to be involved. The festival had been closely noise monitored by Worcester Regulatory Services and has not once breached the noise restriction.

Martin advised he no longer sits on the WCC Planning Committee.

Martin advised there was no way forward to improve the passing bays at Quay Lane, the Chair advised that he thought the changes at the entrance junction were unnecessary. Martin advised that now it had been identified by WCC it would sit on the improvement plan but it was not priority.

There was a discussion regarding the County Councillors pay review.

There was a discussion regarding the proposed 27 homes and a shop at Holly Green, no local complaints had been received so it was thought it would be passed by the MHDC planners.

Martin advised that the permission sought for development at Furrow Close, Holly Green turned down by MHDC was being appealed, via a planning hearing, Martin had registered to speak at the hearing on 21st November.

Members discussed the need for a Neighbourhood Plan, the costs, grants and work involved. Martin advised they had strong weighting in Planning terms and he advised linking with Ripple and Hill Croome Parishes to create a local plan. Hanley Castle had a Neighbourhood Plan and could be consulted for advice.

District - Jeremy had drawn attention to the new proposed NPPF and the MHDC lack of land supply suggesting that house building could be sought nearer to Earls Croome in the future

5) HIGHWAYS MATTERS-

None

6) PARISH PATHS

Nothing to report

7) TREE SURVEY

The Chair advised that three quotes had been sought to address the items identified in the recent survey, only two contractors had submitted quotes, these were reviewed in detail and it was agreed that it was best to address all the 1 and 2 year safety concerns in one go. Namely the reduction of the poplars at Dunstall Common, the felling and limb removals at Marsh Common and the cracked willow tree at Quay Lane, this would address all required works and not necessitate further works for at least three years at a cost of £2450, with Chris Arnold being the most competitive quote. It was proposed by Penny and seconded by Charlotte agreed by all, to go-head with this work and request a £500 grant from County Council via Martin.

The clerk was asked to notify residents adjacent to the works and engage the contractors to do the work when conditions were favourable over the autumn/winter period.

It was noted that the Elm at Dunstall Common identified had blown down in a storm and been cleared from the highway by WCC. This had left a section of the tree requiring removal on the Common, the residents at Red Deer Farm had offered to pay Steve Coole to clear this in return for the firewood – all members agreed to this solution.

8) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

The Chair advised that during the summer the current lengthsman had resigned. The clerk had approached a local experienced lengthsman who was willing to undertake the role at £14 per hour for the circa 14 hours per month. Brian Arrowsmith, had been shown the area and briefed by Malcom, Malcolm had advised that he found Brian to be knowledgeable and would support his engagement.

It was proposed by Giles, seconded by Margaret to engage Brian's services from 1st October. Members asked if the clerk could ask Brian to meet with them at the next meeting to 'put a face to the name'

Members asked that a thankyou letter be sent to Andy and for the return of the lengthsman equipment, strimmer & VAS battery charger, to be arranged.

9) PLAYING FIELD GRASS CUTTING

The Chair advised that during the month sadly the current grass cutting contractor had been taken ill and would not be able to continue, at least, for this season.

The Clerk has started to get grass cutting quotes with the area looking to cost £85 per cut which was a big increase and not in the budget.

Charlotte offered to see if her husband would do it using his mower and PC reimburse for the fuel, there was a concern regarding getting this to the site, but Charlotte would investigate and let the clerk know.

10) COMMONS

Smithmoor – The Chair advised that sadly the hay crop had been ruined by recent rain and had been unable to be bailed, the new grass was already reportedly growing through, but it was advised, that the sooner sheep could get on and graze the better, the Clerk was asked to contact Tom to see if grazing could be implemented this autumn.

The Chair advised that Tom had asked for permission to work with Steve Coole to reinstate the drainage ditch at the top left right hand side of the Common adjacent to his field, it would be at his cost as the benefit to his land was significant. It was thought to be a good improvement for the Common too. All members agree to give permission.

Dunstall – Fallen Elm as discussed under item 8

Marsh – nothing to report

11) PLANNING

Mark confirmed that he, Ian and Margaret had met with Cllr England from Ripple PC and a working group of approximately 12 interested parties had been set up to communicate and assess impacts of the Blue Bell Farm development. Mark advised he had put feelers out to communicate with the trustees of the Croome Estate.

NPPF Briefing note and consultation – members reviewed the briefing note from MHDC planning department. The clerk advised that District Councils were keen for Parish Councils to respond directly to the Government consultation, it was thought to be 106 questions and the closing date was 24th September. Mark and Ian were nominated to complete and submit to the consultation on behalf of ECPC.

M/24/00660/HP 3 North Quay, North Quay Lane, two storey side extension. No objections but concerns raised regarding residents parking across the pavement. Mark noted the parking was not a planning issue but nevertheless the comment would be visible to the applicant.

12) FINANCE

New Financial Regulation – The clerk thanked Penny & Charlotte for their detailed feedback, she had not finalised the document for circulation but would do so for adoption in the November meeting.

The Bank reconciliation for July & August had been checked and confirmed by Penny & Charlotte via email.

Payments made since the last meeting were noted as follows:

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Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- July (S/O)	£289.66
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance July (S/O)	£20.00
Mr A Milward – Lengthsman Payment – July	£188.50
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – August (S/O)	£289.66
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance August (S/O)	£20.00

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

a) Earls Croome PPC - Churchyard Grant	£175.00
b) EC Village Hall – annual room hire	£100.00
c) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – September (S/O)	£289.66
d) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
e) Mr B Arrowsmith – Lengthsman payment – October	£TBC
f) Ann Smith – reimburse grass cutting July	£40.00

Remittance: WCC Lengthsman reimburse June £159.50

HMRC VAT reimburse 23-24 £84.63

18. CORRESPONDENCE Received since the last meeting.

- District Councillor Owenson – re housing encroachment
- District Councillor Owenson – re Proposals surrounding Fish Meadow and the rowing lake, Margaret circulated 'A future for Fish Meadow' briefing document.

Members agreed that Mark should arrange for the planning working group to meet with Cllr Owenson to discuss both of the above, issues include flooding, flood clear up, infrastructure and community engagement. Giles joined the working group.

- Remembrance Service and War Memorial. It was discussed that ECPC should have more involvement in the remembrance service. The clerk was asked to order the wreath and someone to lay the wreath would be agreed via email. A thought was to ask a known veteran in the Village.
- Penny asked if there were any further thought on the .gov.uk email addresses. The clerk advised that she was looking at how this would or could be funded for smaller councils like ECPC and advised there had been no announcement to make the change compulsory.

19. DATE FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday 19th November 2024 , to be held at Earls Croome Village Hall, 7.30pm

Meeting closed 9.15pm