

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
NORTON-JUXTA-KEMPSEY PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
21 MARCH 2024

See Appendix 1 for Public Question Time discussions.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** C. Arrow, A. Job and M. Stafford. These apologies, and the reason for them, were accepted and approved.
Attending: K. Fincher (Chairman), C. Dawson, M. Pollard, C. Rega, P. Richmond, J. Waizeneker, Cllr R. Adams (WDC District Councillor), Cllr Mrs L. Turier (WDC District Councillor), Cllr Mrs L. Robinson (WCC County Councillor) and J. Greenway (Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer).
2. **Changes to Membership**
None.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
 - a) Reminder and requirements noted.
 - b), c) and d) Cllr Richmond declared an interest in planning application W/23/02496/FUL.
4. **2024/62 Minutes**
 - a) The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2024 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Proposed Cllr Pollard, seconded Cllr Dawson and agreed by all.
 - b) The minutes action summary was reviewed and will be updated following the meeting. Discussions pertinent to agenda items are recorded within the relevant section of the minutes. **Action: Clerk**
5. **2024/63 Reports**
 - a) **Cllr R. Adams and Cllr Mrs L. Turier (Wychavon District Council (WDC) District Councillors)**
Cllr Adams' report circulated in advance of the meeting was noted, with updates on proposals to clear brambles around the air raid shelter near to Woodbury Park, delays in the SWDP Review inspection/ adoption process and Government guidance regarding sensitive interests/home addresses being publicly available on Register of Interest Forms. WDC is due to consider re-signing of the Armed Forces Covenant, with Parish Councils also being invited to join. Cllr Adams will arrange for further information to be provided to the Parish Council for consideration. **Action: Cllr Adams**
Grant funding information from Cllr Mrs Turier was welcomed.
Following the Public Question Time (PQT) discussions, Cllr Adams will raise the drainage issues around the old Methodist Chapel with the WDC Land Drainage Officers. **Action: Cllr Adams**
 - b) **Cllr Mrs L. Robinson (Worcestershire County Council (WCC) County Councillor)**
Cllr Mrs Robinson's report circulated in advance of the meeting was noted, along with an update on potential highway patching/surface dressings works.
Following the PQT discussions, Cllr Mrs Robinson will arrange a site visit with the WCC Highway Liaison Officer to discuss the drainage issues around the old Methodist Chapel with the resident attending the PQT. **Action: Cllr Mrs Robinson**
The WCC 'Your Worcestershire' magazine was highlighted as a helpful guide to residents. Enquiries will be made to publish on the Parish Council website. **Action: Cllr Pollard**
Following discussions under agenda item 4b:
 - Efforts will continue to arrange a meeting between the WCC Public Rights of Way Manager and Parish Council representatives to discuss WCC changes to PRow management. **Action: Cllr Mrs Robinson**
 - Seek a reply to the Parish Council follow up letter sent to the WCC Chief Executive. **Action: Cllr Mrs Robinson**
 - Continue to press WCC Highways to take action to resolve flooding along Wadborough Road, Littleworth (in the vicinity of school), including enforcement if required. **Action: Cllr Mrs Robinson**
 - Continue to press WCC Highways to resolve the safety issue relating to the Crookbarrow Way Bridleway Bridge surfacing when icy. **Action: Cllr Mrs Robinson**
 - Continue to press WCC Highways to take action to improve safety along the ATC route, particularly the Woodbury Lane section. A near miss between a pedestrian and car along the Woodbury Lane ATC was reported, with many pedestrians and cyclists starting to wear high-visibility clothing as a safety measure. The Parish Council continued to stress that WCC needs to make the ATC route through the

Parish safe or to de-classify it as an Active Travel Corridor which promotes its use by pedestrians and cyclists.

Action: Cllr Mrs Robinson

- Arrangements will be progressed for a visit to EnviroSort on 4 April.

Action: Cllr Mrs Robinson

c) Finance

(i) Balances: current account £6,433.57, instant access deposit account £51,513.86, 32-day notice account £50,375.34 (21 March). Members were reminded that whilst balances are healthy, funds are committed or earmarked for future expenditure.

(ii) The monthly accounts and bank reconciliation to 29 February 2024 will be circulated to members following review by the Responsible Finance Officer.

Action: Responsible Finance Officer

(iii) 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) papers have been received. The Annual Return and supporting papers will be completed and submitted as required following preparation and agreement of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 and completion of the internal audit. The Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer work involved in completing the year end/audit work was noted.

d) Social Media Communications

The report circulated in advance of the meeting was noted, including most popular Facebook (FB) posts (local roadworks and Parish Council newsletter). The number of FB followers and website subscribers continues to increase (to 685 and 105 respectively), with website visitor numbers also rising (2023 – 39.3 visitors per day and 2024 to date – 63 visitors per day). It was agreed to add an item to the April Parish Council meeting agenda to consider issue of an annual newsletter in hard copy to all households within the Parish.

Action: Clerk

A suggestion to record/live stream the Annual Parish Meeting was considered. Whilst the opportunity to share the APM with a wider audience was welcomed, concerns were expressed regarding privacy of attendees, the risk of reducing face-to-face attendance, a lack of feedback from those attending online, potential 'misuse' of streamed/video content and availability of equipment to deliver live streaming. The Council remained keen for the Annual Parish Meeting to continue to be held as a face-to-face event. Enquiries will be made to establish if any other WDC Parish Councils live stream/record their Annual Parish Meetings.

Action: Cllr Adams

Guidance will be sought from CALC.

Action: Clerk

e) West Mercia Police

Police.uk data for the Pershore Rural South & Rural Norton area was noted.

g) St. James the Great Church, Norton

The report circulated in advance of the meeting was noted and further enquiries will be made regarding the new stained-glass window.

Action: Clerk

Cllr Dawson gave his apologies and left the meeting at 9.05pm.

6. 2024/64 Community Apiary

Updates received in advance of the meeting were noted, with the apiary group continuing to work well.

7. 2024/65 Parish Green Spaces Working Group (PGSWG)/Biodiversity Matters

PGSWG updates received in advance of the meeting were noted. The UK Share Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) £18,100 grant application has been successful and has been accepted; this will fund work to re-establish/re-define one of the tenanted field boundaries (following an area being relinquished by the tenant) and will assist with development of the area as 'The King's Meadow'. Other grant opportunities continue to be explored. A public consultation is planned in support of a full application for WDC Community Legacy Grant (CLG) funding. It was agreed to print the consultation flier.

Action: Clerk

A Parish leaflet drop will be arranged, with volunteers requested.

Action: Cllr Waizeneker

Areas of land included within the Parish Green Spaces Vision have been highlighted as providing the right environment for the rare Brown Hairstreak Butterfly, and this may allow for expansion of the population currently found in Stoulton Wood. It was agreed to explore publishing this information on the Parish Council website.

Action: Cllr Fincher

8. 2024/66 Public Rights of Way (PRoW) / Parish Paths Warden (PPW)

The PPW report was noted. Also see item 5b above regarding a meeting with the WCC Public Rights of Way Manager to discuss WCC changes to PRoW maintenance/management.

9. 2024/67 Public Open Space/Verge Maintenance, Highways and Drainage Matters

Works to rebuild/repair sections of the Barracks curtilage wall along Brockhill Lane continue but are currently paused until there is no risk of frost (due to use of lime mortar). See item 5b above for

discussions relating to WCC safety improvements to the Active Travel Corridor (ATC) and Wadborough Road flooding matters. An update regarding timing of the WCC public consultation relating to the proposals for revised parking restrictions along Wadborough Road, Littleworth has been requested. Pending appointment of the new Grounds Person, areas of grass previously maintained were agreed for mowing/trimming by New Farm Grounds Maintenance at a cost of £146 + VAT per cut (based on fortnightly cutting). Proposed Cllr Waizeneker, seconded Cllr Richmond and agreed by all. The contractor will be instructed. **Action: Clerk**

Persimmon Homes' contractors have undertaken further remedial work to the Gazala Drive grass verge and this was agreed as satisfactory. Work to uncover an old pavement at the base of the hedge opposite St Helena Court has not been completed, but due to the setting and other walkways available for pedestrian use, it was agreed not to pursue further. Proposed Cllr Waizeneker, seconded Cllr Richmond and agreed by all. Persimmon Homes will be advised. **Action: Clerk**

It was noted that the dog bin at the end of St James Close, Littleworth still awaits repair by WDC, and this will be chased for completion. **Action: Clerk**

Installation of wooden posts (with reflectors) along the edge of the Gazala Drive grass verge to reduce parking/driving on the grass was agreed. It was noted that these have the potential to be removed or be damaged by cars, but at a cost of c. £100 for 12, they were considered a relatively low-cost measure to improve the situation. Proposed Cllr Waizeneker, seconded Cllr Rega, and agreed by all. An order will be placed. **Action: Clerk**

The hedge between Orchard House and the old SMH site on Church Lane, Norton was reported as encroaching onto the highway. This was noted by Cllr Mrs Robinson and will be reported to Highways via the WCC website. **Action: Cllr Richmond**

10. 2024/68 Norton Connector (NC)

Passenger numbers continue to gently increase, with Thursdays generally being the most popular day for travel. WDC and WCC have given indications of financial support to assist in continuing the service for 2024/25, but this is yet to be confirmed. The Stay Connected Community Grant was highlighted as a potential source of further funding, and this will be explored. **Action: Cllr Waizeneker**

Cllr Mrs Robinson and Cllr Mrs Turier gave their apologies and left the meeting at 9.35pm.

11. 2024/69 Employment Matters

This item was discussed on a confidential basis, with minutes prepared on a summary/overview basis. The informal working group (Recruitment Task Force) is progressing with the agreed timeline of activities, with job specifications, person specifications and adverts drafted/in progress. Job/person specifications and adverts will be circulated to all Council members to provide the opportunity to comment prior to being issued. **Action: Recruitment Task Force**

12. 2024/70 Planning

a) Cllr Richmond declared an interest in application W/23/02496/FUL (Parish Council comments were prepared without input from Cllr Richmond). The following current planning applications were noted. It was agreed to continue to object to planning application W/24/00507/FUL: Land At (Os 8785 5016), Hatfield Lane, Norton - Proposed live/work unit. Amendment to application Ref. W/23/02506/FUL.

	<u>Application</u>	<u>Description of Proposal</u>
<u>Approvals:</u>	None	
<u>Refusals:</u>	None	
<u>Awaiting Decision:</u>	Land At (Os 9017 5117), Mucknell Farm Lane, Stoulton W/22/01955/FUL	Development of a 1MW solar farm and associated infrastructure. Parish Council objects.
	Retreat Inn, Woodbury Lane, Norton W/23/01207/FUL	Replacement barn and 3 no. 1 bedroomed log cabins and 4 no. touring bays, 2 no. tent bays and a toilet block. Parish Council objects.
	Land At (OS 8659 5192), Yew Tree Court, Norton Road. W/23/01836/FUL	Construction of 2 No. dwellings. Parish Council comments submitted.

	Cooksholme Farm, 3 Wadborough Road. W/23/02520/FUL	Conversion of 3 agricultural buildings to residential dwellings, erection of 4 new dwellings, change of use of agricultural land to residential use, partial demolition of agricultural buildings. (Variation of condition 2 Ref 17/00972/FUL). No comments submitted.
	Properties 1 and 2, Church Cottages, Church Lane, Norton, W/23/02496/FUL	Creation of 2no. Detached Bungalows. Comments submitted without support or objection.
	Rockilla, Hatfield Bank W/24/00312/OL	The replacement of existing overhead wires with new material to the existing overhead electricity line. There is no change to the alignment of the overhead line and the pole heights will not be increased. No comments submitted.
	Unit 8, Crucible Business Park, Woodbury Lane W/24/00356/DEM	Demolition of Unit 8. Existing Walls to Sub Station 1 to Remain. Comments submitted without support or objection.
<u>Internal Consultation:</u>	Land At (Os 8785 5016), Hatfield Lane, Norton W/24/00507/FUL	Proposed live/work unit. Amendment to application Ref. W/23/02506/FUL
<u>Other:</u>	None	

b) SWDPR: The Joint Parishes Group has met recently, with a Liaison Group meeting (with the SWDPR Team) to be held on 8 April. Progress appears to have stalled following the Planning Inspector's request for some evidence documents to be updated. Latest updates can be found at: <https://www.localplanservices.co.uk/swdpreview>

The Joint Parishes Group wishes to proceed with the previously agreed petition using change.org for an online petition alongside hard copy petitions available at various local signing points e.g. Parish Hall and St Peter's Garden Centre. Wording as previously agreed (other than minor revisions/clarification).

13. 2024/71 Parish Council Owned Land

The updated schedule of tree work (showing items by the year due) was noted. Quotes will be sought for works due to the end of 2024. **Action: Cllr Dawson**

14. 2024/72 Allotments

The update received in advance of the meeting was noted. A 2023/24 cost/income analysis will be undertaken at the year-end to assess progress towards the allotments operating on a cost neutral basis. **Action: Clerk**

It was agreed that allotment costs should be covered by rental income, without subsidy from the precept, and that tenants should have an understanding of costs involved. It was agreed for rent levels to be considered at the April Parish Council meeting, alongside the 2023/24 cost/income analysis and research regarding rent levels at other allotment sites. To reduce fluctuations/corrections to allotment water bills, efforts will be made to take monthly meter readings so that bills are calculated on an actual, rather than estimated, basis. **Action: Assistant Clerk, Cllr Richmond**

15. 2024/73 Parish Defibrillators

The defibrillator installation is due to be completed after Easter; the cabinet is installed but the defibrillator is in need of setting up. Proposed location signage for Little Treasures will be confirmed and once the defibrillator is set up, photographs will be taken to publicise. **Action: Cllr Stafford**

16. 2024/74 Parish Hall Recreation Facilities and Outside Space

The weekly play area/recreation facilities checks are being undertaken by the Assistant Clerk in the interim period pending appointment of a new Grounds Person. A summary of the Sovereign inspection report (7/3/2024 visit) and the Play Inspection Co annual inspection report carried out in June 2023 is being prepared for consideration at the April Parish Council meeting. An initial review highlights quite different findings, with the recent Sovereign report not detailing many of the annual inspection report findings. All findings in the Sovereign report are classified as no more than low risk (as were those in the annual inspection report). Sovereign has highlighted the need for fencing repair and has provided a quote to include repair to the rubber mulch surfacing. As a low-risk item, it was agreed to seek further quotes for consideration at the April Parish Council meeting. **Action: Assistant Clerk**

The baseball team will be asked to provide an update on its proposals to improve drainage in the area around the baseball pitch. **Action: Clerk**
The new Hall outside space sign will be installed w/c 8 April at a cost of £50. This will include removal of the old 'dogs on lead' sign and posts and making the area good. Agreed under Clerk's delegation. The Hall rainwater system and flow of water through the rainwater manhole covers in the Hall car park will be investigated as soon as weather conditions and councillor availability allows. Enquiries continue to obtain quotes for installation of resin/bonded type pathway surfacing around the main entrance to the Hall. Difficulties are being experienced in finding contractors wishing to quote.

17. 2024/75 Parish Council Website Domain Names and Email Addresses

Research continues.

18. 2024/76 Parish Hall

An update was received from Cllr Fincher (Chair of the Hall Trustees and Parish Council representative) in line with the agreed dispensation. Work to replace the windows, doors and 'skirting/panels' along the window wall of the main hall is due to take place in April, assisted by a £7k Rural Share Prosperity Fund Grant and a Parish Council grant of £2,500. The Trustees are seeking additional grant funding to assist with replacement of the floor in the main hall, the lobby and Mary's kitchen, having secured £2,500 funding from the Parish Council. To move the shop to a more cost neutral basis, changes have been made to stock (to reduce costs and waste) and to staff re-stocking hours, with electricity costs beginning to fall alongside more solar power being generated as the weather improves.

19. 2024/77 Worcester Norton Community Interest Company (WNCIC)

An update was received from Cllr Fincher (Parish Council WNCIC Board representative) in line with the agreed dispensation. Good progress continues to be made, with the project remaining on time and on budget. A visit will be arranged for WDC representatives to view progress. **Action: Cllr Fincher**
It was agreed to request release of the first two tranches of CLG funding (£34k - appointment of contractor and £33k – groundworks complete). Receipt in the 2024/25 financial year was confirmed. Proposed Cllr Waizeneker, seconded Cllr Richmond and agreed by all. **Action: Clerk**

20. 2024/78 Annual Parish Meeting (APM) – 9 May 2024

Invitations have been issued to speakers and for contributions to the APM Information Booklet (for receipt by close of 18 April). The agenda is being finalised and publicity using roadside signs and the Council's website/FB page will be arranged to seek to boost attendance. **Action: Clerk**
Also see discussions under agenda item 5d.

21. 2024/79 Martyn's Law - Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

Information received from NALC/Society of Local Council Clerks regarding the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill was noted. It was agreed for this item to remain on meeting agendas for discussion of guidance as this evolves.

22. 2024/80 Sentry Statue Landscaping Proposals

Spring planting will be carried out when ground/weather conditions allow and signs to explain the significance of plants are being planned. A budget of c. £600 remains for these costs. The Norton Worcestershire Regiment Group is carrying out maintenance e.g. weeding.

23. 2024/81 Neighbourhood Plan (NP)/ Parish Aspirations Document

An update on progress to revise the NP was received, with a meeting arranged with the WDC Planning Policy Officer towards the end of March. The Parish Aspirations Document quarterly review has been completed and the website updated. The next quarterly review is due in May 2024.

24. 2024/82 Annual Risk Assessment and Review of Fixed Asset Register

The annual risk assessment and register of fixed assets were approved. Proposed by Cllr Pollard, seconded by Cllr Richmond and agreed by all. The Council records will be updated. **Action: Clerk**

25. 2024/83 Policies

Consents to receive Parish Council meetings agendas by email were updated and will be obtained from those Members not in attendance. **Action: Clerk**

26. 2024/84 Norton Charities

Pending receipt of correspondence from the Treasurer for Norton Charities, it was agreed to re-appoint Mrs C. McGovern, Mr. M. Reeves and Mrs J. Franklin as the Parish Council appointed Trustees of Norton Charities for a further 4 year term. Proposed by Cllr. Waizeneker, seconded by Cllr. pollard and agreed by all. The Treasurer will be advised. **Action: Clerk**

27. 2024/85 Finance

a) It was proposed by Cllr. Richmond, seconded Cllr. Pollard **and all were in agreement** that the accounts presented to the meeting, as summarised below, be approved for payment/confirmation.

Accounts for Confirmation:

Category	Detail	Amount £ *
Administration	Website fees March 2024	5.98
	Mobile phone contract March 2024 DDR	10.29
	February/March 2024 printing	25.49
	Condolence flowers for Mrs Turvey and family (funded from Chairman's Allowance)	35.50
Community Services	Norton Connector February 2024	300.00
Grounds/ Parish Property Maintenance	Verge mowing at Norton 8 March 2024 (commuted sum)	224.40
	Repairs to entry gulley at entrance to Parish Hall car park	250.00
	Lengthsman duties February 2024	256.00
TOTAL		1,107.66

* Incl. VAT where payable on invoice

Accounts for Payment:

Category	Detail	Amount £ *
Staff Costs	March 2024 payroll (gross): Clerk and Assistant Clerk (incl. pension contributions)	1,932.94
Administration	Online postage costs	2.30
TOTAL		1,935.24
GRAND TOTAL		3,042.90

* Incl. VAT where payable on invoice

28. 2024/86 Correspondence for Information

See Appendix 2 for a list of correspondence received.

29. 2024/87 Clerk's Report on Urgent Decisions/Expenditure Delegations since the Last Meeting

As reported during the meeting.

30. 2024/88 Items for Update to Local M.P.

None.

31. 2024/89 Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agenda

None.

32. 2024/90 Date of Next Meeting

25 April 2024.

The meeting closed at 10.45pm.

Public Question Time Discussions

One member of the public attended to seek assistance with issues relating to water flow from the old Methodist Chapel site onto the highway and pavement along Wadborough Road, Littleworth. Information provided and key discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Methodist Chapel site changed ownership in 2019, with an additional area of land purchased from a neighbour to 'square off' the car park.
- Previously, a ditch (understood to have been dug by residents) ran to the rear of the site which acted as a holding area for water run-off from the fields.
- Part of this ditch appears to have been filled during work to install new fencing.
- It is understood that a pipe has been installed at the bottom of a remaining section of ditch to the rear of the site, and that this is taking water through new pipes installed under the car park, with an outflow pipe by the hedge at the front of the car park (part covered by shingle). From here, water flows onto the pavement and into the road.
- At times of heavy rain, water gushes from the site and even during dry spells, water continues to flow slowly onto the pavement and into the road. This creates continuous wet, slippery conditions (ice/moss), with the pavement being impassable at times (without boots) and with injuries reported to school due to slips by those walking to/from school. It is understood that school has reported to WCC.
- The car park and ditch previously acted as soakaway/holding areas to slow down release of the water onto the highway, with the new pipework appearing to speed up the flow of a greater volume of water (taking water from the bottom of the ditch and under the car park); the car park itself now seems to suffer less with surface water flooding.
- A WDC Officer has visited and understood the issues but advised that this falls within WCC responsibilities.
- A WCC surveyor has advised that the owners of the old Methodist Chapel have been written to, with a request to cease discharging water onto the pavement and highway. It is understood that this letter was sent in November 2023.
- It was suggested that the situation could be improved by:
 - Removing the pipe from the bottom of the ditch to the rear of the car park (at present any water in the ditch appears piped towards the pavement and highway due to the low position of the pipe).
 - Connecting the outflow pipe (by the hedge at the front of the car park) to the road drains/pipes.
- Cllr Mrs Robinson agreed to arrange a site visit with the WCC Highway Liaison Officer to discuss the drainage issues with the resident attending the PQT.
- Cllr Adams agreed to raise the issues with the WDC Land Drainage Officers.
- Cllr Mrs Turier also offered her support and assistance.

Cllr Fincher confirmed that this is a subject for discussion during the Parish Council meeting and that the Council will press WCC for the issue to be resolved.

The resident was thanked for attending the Public Question Time session.

<u>Correspondence Received for 21 March 2024 Parish Council Meeting</u>	
Sender	Subject
Clerks & Councils Direct	Newsletter March 2024
Community First	Newsletters/bulletins
CPRE: The Countryside Charity	Campaign updates, Countryside Voices magazine spring/summer 2024
NALC	Newsletters, Chief Exec's bulletins
One Network	Local roadworks reports
Police / Police & Crime Commissioner / Neighbourhood Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime prevention webinars • Online survivor pathway launches in West Mercia https://westmerciasurvivorpathway.org/ • Our News Neighbourhood Watch Newsletters March • PCC newsletters February and March 2024
Rural Bulletins	Bulletins: Rural opportunities/funding/vulnerability service/news
Soc. Local Council Clerks	Chief Exec news bulletins and updates
Worcs CC	WCC Town and Parish Councils Conference - 12th June
Wychavon DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Eco-warriors receive litter pickers from Wychavon • Free fruit trees for local community groups • Wychavon unveils ambitious new plan for the district • Help create new artwork for Droitwich Spa Town Centre
Wychavon DC Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda Planning Committee meeting 28 March 2024 • Agenda and minutes Planning Committee meeting 29 February 2024