

DODFORD WITH GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the meeting of Dodford with Grafton Parish Council held on Monday 28 October 2024 in Dodford Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs Scott Fuller, Rory Lydon (Vice Chairman) and Jonathan Shapiro

In attendance: Clerk Kay Stone, District Cllr Kit Taylor and 2 members of the public.

1. Apologies

County Cllr Shirley Webb, Parish Cllrs Lynne Griffin, Rachel Jennings (Chair), Scottie Sanderson, and Jenni Schuett for reasons given which were accepted by the Parish Council.

2. Declarations and Register of interest

- i. None.
- ii. None.

3. Dispensations

No dispensation requests received.

The meeting was adjourned to allow members of the public attending the meeting to raise matters of interest.

A resident expressed an opinion that a second bench was not needed at the Memorial Garden which was noted by the Parish Council.

4. Meetings

Cllr Fuller proposed, Cllr Lydon seconded, and all approved the minutes for the Parish Council meeting held on 23 September 2024. The minutes were signed by the Vice Chairman as a true record.

5. Reports

- i. County Cllr Webb had sent a brief report to the Clerk prior to the meeting:
 - a. It looks like someone has driven over the corner and knocked down utility markers on the Alfreds Well island. This has been raised this with Highways and she is waiting for the bollards to be put in.
 - b. The Clerk added that the bridge in Church Road has been repaired. The Parish Council extended their thanks to Cllr Webb for her perseverance in getting this repaired. A resident pointed out that the old rail was still in place and looked as if it was about to fall in and block the brook. The Clerk to report this to Cllr Webb.
- ii. District Cllr Taylor reported that:
 - a. he has leaflets on how to claim benefits in respect of the cessation of the Winter Fuel Allowance payment and he will be dropping them through letter boxes;
 - b. he now has District Councillor funds of £2k for good causes. As a former School Governor, Cllr Shapiro pointed out that the School is always looking for funding, and
 - c. Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) has taken over enforcement actions from Bromsgrove District Council (BDC). There is now a form to complete on WRS website which can be used by residents if they see any issues.
- iii. Nothing to report on social media.
- iv. Clerk to report on setting up a .gov.uk domain
Currently the Parish Council web site comes under the umbrella of Worcestershire County Council (WCC) who has informed Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC) that this will not be the case going forward. When the cut-off date is given CALC expect there will be a 12 month period in which Parish Councils can set up their own web sites.
One advantage about setting up a .gov.uk domain is that Councillors can have a .gov.uk email address as well as the Clerk. The advice given is to shop around to obtain a registrar and the Clerk has a short list of 23 registrars that the Parish Council can choose from to get three quotes.

It could cost between £200 and £400 to set up a new web site with annual costs of around £50pa depending on the package the Parish Council decide on. At the moment advice from CALC is to sit tight but if the Parish Council wish to go ahead with obtaining a .gov.uk domain councillors will need to vote as to whether they wish to go forward. After discussion about suggested domain names being kept short, the Clerk was asked to obtain some quotes from potential registrars.

- v. The Clerk reported that:
 - a. NALC (National Association of Local Councils) has agreed with the trade unions to give Clerks a pay rise backdated to 1 April 2024. There is no need to formally agree to the pay increase as it is an existing contractual obligation.
 - b. she heard this afternoon from The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) of the government's announcement to introduce proposals enabling remote council meetings. Angela Rayner MP announced at the Local Government Association's Conference in Harrogate on 24 October, that the government will seek views on allowing councils to determine their own approach to virtual meetings and proxy voting. The government has opened its consultation on these changes on its website. The consultation is live and runs until 19 December 2024. The Clerk will put this item on the November agenda for discussion.

6. Planning

- i. Minutes of the planning committee meetings held on 17 and 30 September could not be approved as Councillors attending the meetings were not present at this Parish Council meeting. The item to be deferred to the November meeting.
- ii. No planning decisions received.
- iii. No planning appeals or appeal decisions received.
- iv. Enforcement and environmental updates:
No updates to report on.
- v. After a report of a wooden box being constructed at a property in Yarnold Lane by a resident at the September meeting, the Clerk is able to confirm that BDC received an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness which was approved by BDC on 30 August. The Clerk has sent the decision notice to the resident for information.
- vi. BDC are looking into the alleged breach of planning at Woodside Farm.
- vii. The response from the Conservation Officer regarding the Local Heritage List purpose and impact is:

“The purpose of the local list is to formally identify buildings of local importance as opposed to buildings on the national list. The 2017 Bromsgrove District Plan commits us to preparing a local list. Buildings on the local list will not have the same protection as those on the national list so listed building consent will not be required to make alterations and buildings will maintain their existing permitted development rights. If planning permission is required the impact of the proposals on the character of the building of a building on the local list will be taken into account when assessing the application, and likewise the impact of proposals on the setting of nearby buildings on the local list will also be taken into account, in the same way that the impact of proposals on the setting or character of a conservation area or setting of a listed building are considered.”

The Clerk is waiting to hear if hedges, streams, the woodland between Alfreds Well and The Dingle and the swimming pool in the orchard opposite the Church in Priory Road can be included in the Local Heritage List.
- viii. It was decided not to comment on the consultation for the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan as it is not relevant to Dodford or Grafton.
- ix. Any planning issues:
The Clerk is waiting for a response from BDC regarding the three conditions proposed by the Parish Council but not included in the decision notice for Croeso.

7. Highways and footpaths

- i. A single fitting light on the island at Alfreds Well will cost £129 and a double fitting light will cost £288. The Clerk is waiting for installation costs. Cllr Shapiro reminded the Parish Council that

Cllr Webb had offered to fund this cost. The Clerk confirmed there was enough money in the budget to pay for this.

- ii. No applications have been received for the Footpath Warden role.
- iii. A resident has reported that the footpath which runs from The Dingle up to Whinfield Road is full of brambles and nettles at face height. The Clerk to report this to WCC Countryside Team.

8. Community Orchard and Mini Forest Funding

In February WCC offered trees to Parish Councils to set up a community orchard. At the time WCC said no to individuals receiving trees, as the orchards would need to be accessible to other people. The Clerk reported that WCC still has trees left and are happy for them to go to individual residents. They need an indication of rough / likely numbers and then it's over to the Parish Council to distribute and vet residents. WCC are asking for a few lines and photos from as proof they were distributed and planted. After discussion the Clerk was asked to go through the usual channels to ascertain if there is any interest in the parish for the trees.

9. First Aid Training

Cllr Webb has suggested that the Clerk still contacts the person with whom she was in touch with at AgeUK Herefordshire and Worcestershire over the first aid training.

10. Motocross

District Cllr Taylor advised that WRS has not received any complaints and each time he was available to attend one of the motocross meetings, it had been cancelled.

11. The Local Government Boundary Commission

The Local Government Boundary Commission are recommending that 31 Councillors be elected to BDC in the future and Cllr Taylor reported that this consultation refers more to the boundaries. His ward will increase by 14% to 15% taking in Perryfields.

12. Memorial Garden

- i. The Utilities Survey has shown there are no utilities under the proposed Memorial Garden.
- ii. Cllr Lydon is waiting to hear from a supplier outside Dodford and asked for this to continue on to the November agenda.
- iii. Clerk is waiting to hear from RHS Wisley regarding their Corten sign.

13. Dodford Village Hall

- i. No updates on any issues raised
- ii. A resident attended the Dodford Village Hall Committee AGM and reported that many residents had come forward as volunteers. The three Trustees have withdrawn and the Committee has signed over to the Charity Commissioners.

14. Parish Council Grants

The Clerk has received three years audited accounts from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in Bromsgrove. The Chief Officer of CAB would like to attend the November meeting to answer any queries and this is postponed to the next meeting.

15. Finance

- i. Cllr Sanderson has written to the Clerk verifying the Q2 bank reconciliation. Acceptance of which was proposed by Cllr Lydon and seconded by Cllr Shapiro. The Clerk pointed out that:
 - a. There is still £1,065 unspent in the grant budget.
 - b. £500 in the training budget.
 - c. Just under £1,000 in the contingencies budget.
 - d. £1,000 in the Neighbourhood plan. As the current parish council has voted to not put forward a Neighbourhood plan this item will not be included in the 2025/2026 budget.
 - e. There is still £4,260.00 in the Memorial Garden budget and it was suggested a while ago that if a decision was made not to go ahead with the Memorial Garden by end of

October, then this money should be considered being granted towards maintenance for the Village Hall and or the Church. Cllr Lydon proposed that a decision on this should be postponed a little longer. Cllr Shapiro pointed out that the Parish Council should be transparent about where the money is spent.

ii. The October Financial Report:

Deposit account as at 30 September - £18,215.49

Current account as at 30 September - £247.99

Payments to be made by bank transfer on 29 October – Proposed by Cllr Shapiro and seconded by Cllr Lydon:

- a. Clerk's salary - £780.82 (made up of £803.22 plus back pay from 1 April 2024 as per NALC £172.80, less Tax of £195.20)
- b. Clerk's expenses - £403.58 (Travel 12 miles @ 45p per mile £5.40; Storage £5.00; Use of telephone and internet line £25.00; Heating £17.50; Stationery – black printer ink £42.16; SLCC Membership renewal by credit card £148.00; ALCC Membership renewal by credit card £50.00; Stationery – 2 reams of paper £11.97; Stationery – 1 pack labels £18.97 and Utilities Survey for Memorial Garden paid by credit card – see July 2024 Minute reference 11 for approval - £79.58)
- c. HM Revenue and Customs - £195.20
- d. Lengthsman duties for August 2024 plus VAT and mileage £205.20
- e. Lengthsman duties for September 2024 plus VAT and mileage £120.00
- f. Dodford Village Hall – Hire of halls on 2, 17 and 23 September £95.00

14. Correspondence received – for information

Cllr Shirley Webb has sent the Parish Council information of being a CAB Community Advice First Aider. A 3 hour training session on how to recognise vulnerability, recognise emergency situations and how to access local assistance with the cost of living. It also gives details of where to signpost and how to refer people into services at CAB. Face to face courses being held 10am to 1.30pm at their Bromsgrove office on Monday 4 November, Friday 8 November, Friday 22 November and Friday 29 November.

15. Councillors items

No Councillor items.

The meeting was closed at 8.14pm.

Signed..... Vice Chairman