

# SUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 20th MAY 2024 at 7.30 pm in SUCKLEY PARISH CHURCH

Present: Seventeen people attended the meeting including seven Parish Councillors

In attendance: Mrs Lynn Butler, Clerk

Chair: Cllr Steve Gray

### **Chair's Welcome - Cllr Steve Gray**

Cllr Gray welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **Suckley Primary School**

Cleo and Angus gave a presentation showing everyone what activities and learning had been taking place in school during the year.

September – Severn Trent visited the school to teach the children about hydration and saving plastic.

October – children donated items resulting in £204 being collected for charity.

November – saw the start of Anti Bullying week with the children wearing odd socks and £90 was raised for Children in Need.

December – Christmas tree festival and received CPR training

January – All children received an assembly by Ant and Dec. £154 was raised for Air Ambulance by wearing red.

February – importance of staying safe online.

March – celebrated World Book Day and Key Stage 2 received a visit from the Head of Music at Worcester Cathedral.

April – the younger children did cycling proficiency.

May – two teams took part in a rugby tournament at Malvern and both won their tournaments.

The Chair thanked the Cleo and Angus for their excellent presentation.

### **Apologies for absence**

Were received from Co Cllr Karen Hanks, Dist Cllr Peter Whatley and Dist Cllr Sarah Rouse

### **West Mercia Police Report**

Not available

### **County Councillor's Report - Co Cllr Karen Hanks**

Cllr Hanks' submitted a report which in her absence, was read by the Clerk.

## **Council Work 2023/2024**

I have attended all full Council Meetings. I have served as Vice Chair of the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel since May 2022 and became Chair in May 2024. On this Panel within the last calendar year, we have moved the meeting to Worcester City, Bromsgrove and Wychavon and we have scrutinized agenda items such as commercial property, broadband, in year budget monitoring, rail strategy and further items which are detailed on the Worcestershire County Council website.

In addition, I have served as a committee member on Worcestershire Pensions Committee and Worcestershire Pensions Sub-Committee.

From my divisional fund 2023/2024 I gave Suckley Parish Council funding for improved broadband at Suckley Space and Benches at the Playing Field.

Examples of other Divisional Funding to benefit Malvern Link Division: Dementia Friendly Signage at The Dementia Centre, St Matthias Church  
Flag and Forest School Activity Kit for the new scout early years project  
Wooden Gazebo Structure as weather protection for parents and observers  
Marketing support

A new Hot Trolley for St Matthias School

Marketing support for Malvern Link Traders including their annual Christmas Event  
Contribution to new Knightwick and Doddenham Notice board.

## **Recent County Council updates:**

### **New Members:**

David Chambers becomes the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education.

Emma Stokes becomes cabinet member for responsibility for Environment.

David Ross responsible for Health and Wellbeing.

Marc Baylis replaces Mike Rouse as lead for Highways and Transport.

Marcus Hart will remain as the Deputy Leader.

### **The Cabinet appointments in full are:**

Leader of the Council and with responsibility for Finance – Councillor Simon Geraghty  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communications – Councillor Marcus Hart

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education – Councillor David Chambers

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport – Councillor Marc

Bayliss  
Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care – Councillor Richard Morris

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Environment – Councillor Emma Stokes

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families – Councillor Steve Mackay

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Wellbeing – Councillor David Ross

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities – Councillor Karen May

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Skills – Councillor Adam Kent

### **Priorities of the Administration:**

Now in the final full year before County Council elections in 2025, which will incorporate the boundary review, the following projects will be prioritized:

## **The Funding and Delivery of the new Worcester City Secondary School A 5 Year Plan for Adult Social Care**

### **Worcestershire Environment Improvement Plan (EIP) 2024.**

Plan to deliver the council's ambition to becoming net zero by 2050 – an annual progress report will be delivered to cabinet. Cabinet has approved the inclusion of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy which is expected to be adopted in March 2025.

### **The New Autism School at Poolbrook Site in Malvern Shrub Hill**

The Chair thanked Co Cllr Hanks for her help and support during the year.

### **District Councillor's Report - Dist Cllrs Sarah Rouse & Peter Whatley**

Cllr Rouse and Cllr Whatley submitted a report which in their absence, was read by the Clerk.

Please accept sincere apologies that neither of us can be with you tonight. Peter is in London for his "day job", while Sarah had an operation at short notice last Friday. Missing this meeting is not what we would have preferred.

It's been a busy and rewarding year for us as your MHDC councillors. We've dealt with residents directly on matters such as waste bins and disputes between neighbours and interceded on a number of domestic planning matters. We've also tried our best to escalate highways related issues to Worcestershire CC with, we regret, mixed results. WCC Highways appear to live in a universe of their own.

During the year, we managed to contribute financially toward the SPACE project's "Warm Welcome" service and attend parish council meetings and Suckley Wombles on a regular basis. We have also been known to be seen at the Cross Keys and the Hop Shed. We hope those facilities and other local institutions continue to prosper.

The coming year will inevitably be dominated by the outcome of the general election. The two largest political parties both indicate that, if they form a government, local authorities will have less control over planning applications. That is a concern to us, since we believe that the more local knowledge a planning authority has, the better it can control inappropriate development. We would welcome the parish council's views on this topic.

It is a continuing privilege to act as your MHDC councillors. We look forward to serving you and all Suckley's residents in the coming year.

The Chair thanked Dist Cllr's Whatley and Rouse for their help and support during the year.

### **Chair's Report - Cllr Steve Gray**

#### **Suckley Parish Annual Parish Council Meeting 2024 - Chairs report**

Firstly, I want to thank my fellow Councillors and our Clerk Lynn for all their effort, hard work and commitment over the last twelve months. It is a privilege to be your Chair.

With 2/3rds of the last Council deciding not stand at last May's elections we knew that serving was going to be a challenge. A challenge which I believe we have risen too. We were joined in the autumn by Councillors Ricky Lewis and Becki Roper but sadly lost Anne Lewis a couple of months ago due to relocation. We thank her for her twelve years

of dedication to the Parish Council and also to the wider community. Since moving to the village in the late 80's her fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Church and Space project have been phenomenal and just show what can be achieved with the right attitude, effort and commitment.

We still need two more Councillors so if anyone fancies a bit of lively debate once a month please don't hesitate to contact the Clerk for more information. We might even go back to serving tea and cake!

I would also like to thank three residents, Roger Luton, Robert Chidlow and Ian Price for always being on the end of a phone when I've needed some help.

Our first task on being elected was having to close the playing field and cancel the school sports day after discovering that the field had been cut when wet using a tractor and mower that had left deep ruts all over the field. First indications were that it would take eighteen months before we could contemplate any organised sports. But with lots of hard work and some luck with the weather we managed to open the field once more and by November we were able to host an organised football match. This was as a result of a partnership with Worcester St.Johns FC who play in Division 2 of the Cheltenham Saturday League. The agreement we have with them enables us to have the field professionally cut on a regular basis through spring, summer and autumn. Sadly, the rains came and the club has managed just three home games. The manager remarked that it would have been cheaper to have hired Wembley! A drainage scheme is on our list of future projects. The Club finished just above the relegation places and reached a Cup Final which they lost. A decent effort given their average age is just eighteen and they are playing in a senior league against vastly more experienced teams. New goals have been purchased with the aid of a grant and we are in advanced negotiations with another club who play Sunday football and have men's, females and junior sections.

Whilst repairing the field we also began renovations to the pavilion which had been allowed to become run down and used as a dumping ground for other peoples' and organisations unwanted items. We could not access the garage at first as a tree was growing across the door and no keys were available. The football club painted the exterior of the building and in the coming weeks, now that we have warmer weather, the interior will be decorated. We cut back all the vegetation from round the building, cleared away the rubbish from the garage and the unwanted items from inside the building. A new door and windows have been fitted to make the building more secure. CCTV has been installed along with updated security lights. The CCTV has already proved its worth. The day after installation I was down at the field and noticed some hoof prints. I could see nothing untoward on the field but on inspecting the CCTV a cow ambled across the screen. Walking towards the swings I could see nothing further amiss until a cow poked its head out of the undergrowth followed by two more. I was extremely grateful to Mr Ed Holloway for coming to my rescue. We are now fitting a new gate across the new footpath from the car park to the pavilion to prevent any further bovine incursions.

A new footpath has now been installed from the pavilion to the all-weather pitch. There is a portable ramp for better access to the pavilion and a trolley for transportation of the tennis net from the pavilion to the court. The building itself benefits from a new hot water system, contained in a new purpose built and secure annexe and showers. The electrics have been renovated to make them legal whilst the flood lights on the all-weather pitch have been upgraded. We have repaired the septic tank cover and its surround as it was

open to the elements and a danger. We have made some improvements to the play area including the provision of a climbing wall. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Ed Holloway and County Councillor Karen Hanks we have obtained three picnic benches in response to residents' requests. There will be further improvements to come.

We are planning a village show for June 28<sup>th</sup> 2025. Over the coming months we will be revealing more of our plans for the show. In collaboration with Mr Holloway we will be making some infrastructure improvements to aid access to the field which will also be of help for the forthcoming Suckley Festival (formerly the BFG). We continue to support the Suckley Festival with a sizeable financial contribution and logistics. The playing field is always available to the organisers of the Festival in whatever way they wish to utilise it over the show weekend.

We were asked last year to try to find out what was happening with the Local History Society. Sadly, the listed contact refused to engage sensibly with us and ignored an invitation to a meeting. Ultimately, we took over the running of the Society on a temporary basis. When we eventually gained access to the History Society safe, housed in the old village hall, there was very little in it. According to the nursery staff an elderly woman and younger man had removed the contents. The police were informed and they wrote to the listed contact but were ignored. Without knowing what was in the safe, which has now been moved to a different location, the police are powerless to act. A very sad incident but we look on the positive side with the formation of a new Society with John Hammonds in the Chair and Annette Savage as Secretary. I hope more volunteers will come forward to help with this very worthy part of our community.

The village survey results have now been collated and will be published shortly on the Parish Council website. Type "Suckley My Parish" in your search engine. A proposal document is being drawn up for circulation in due course.

We continue to have a running debate with Worcester County Council Highways Department regarding how they utilise Tax Payer's cash. It would appear that just one man is blocking our attempts at lower speed limits. A speed check over the Knowl was conducted by Highways when the road was closed. The project over the Knowl cost in the region of £115,000. They argue that it will save money in the long run. This on a road which has been surface dressed once in thirty years. We asked why the verges had been built so high? The response was that it was to save the thousands of claims they get from motorists damaging their cars driving over verges. A plausible if somewhat extreme reason. However, a Freedom of Information Request revealed that there have been no such claims across the whole of the County. There will be further developments over the coming months as we engage with the media. I am grateful to our MP Harriett Baldwin and once again to Karen Hanks for their help with Highways issues. I also want to thank Karen for her help in obtaining the Parish Boundary signs and getting them installed after the Highways Department raised the price by almost 50% in the space of a few weeks. Karen was also instrumental in getting the footpath between Damson Way and Church Lane properly cleared and renovated.

I should also like to thank District Councillor Peter Whatley who has always been available to offer words of advice and encouragement when requested.

Twelve months ago I stood before you and promised that we would try to serve this community to the best of our abilities. No one is perfect but I believe we have delivered on that promise and we will continue to work hard on your behalf.

## **Reports from local organisations & Trusts**

### **Hill Trust report – May 2024 – by Cllr Howard Ormerod**

As the parish council's representative on the committee of the Trust, I am able to report on the latest meeting of trustees on 19 March, which I attended.

By way of background, the Trust operates under its governing document dating from 1955 and the main objects are recorded as (1) The Maintenance of Suckley Village Hall and (2) The Benefit of the Sick Poor of Suckley Parish.

There are 10 trustees, led by the new chairman, Felicity Beaumont who recently took over from the Reverend Anne Potter. Anne will however continue to be a trustee.

Most parishioners will be aware that the trust has faced the dual problems of needing to carry out a number of improvements and repairs to the village hall against a background of relatively low use and low income.

Use of the hall by Fledglings nursery during weekdays has provided a certainty of income and that, together with capital expenditure, has allowed for a number of improvements to be made both to the structure and fabric of the building. Both the nursery and trustees have recently declared themselves to be content with the arrangements.

At the March meeting, trustees had expressed some concern about the safe which had been located in the village hall for some time as it was not of direct concern to the trust. Doubtless the relocation the safe into the building at the playing fields will have been good news.

The next meeting will be on 7 October this year.

### **Alfrick Educational Charities May 2024 – Ned Mutter, Chair**

In the past 12 months the charity has made 10 Individual Grants to applicants in tertiary education from the qualifying area. In addition a grant was made to Suckley School in support of their initiative to create a new library space in Suckley Church. The total amount granted was £9,100.

### **The Suckley Charity – May 2024 – by Cllr Howard Ormerod**

As the parish council's representative on the committee of the Trust, as well as the clerk and treasurer for the charity, I am able to report on the latest meeting of trustees on 30 April.

There are currently nine trustee positions although only six are currently filled including the chairman (Rev Anne Potter).

The Charity has existed since the late 19th century and the governing document reflects on the style, language and objectives, some of which are probably less relevant today. The money available for distribution to worthy causes is, by modern standards, quite small and there are limits on the type of expenditure allowed. Recent years have seen most payments having been associated with the school, particularly as part of the income is reserved for paying prizes or awards to schoolchildren of an elementary

school, via tuition fees

With a relatively new set of trustees, the intention now is to review the Charity's investments, to seek Charity Commissions agreement to modernise the types of payments that are allowed and to investigate the possibility of adopting the status of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation which has less formal reporting requirements and would better align with the limited funds available.

The next meeting is on 27 June 2024

### **Village Survey**

Cllr Gray expressed his thanks to Cllr Mansell for his help with the survey.

### **Public Questions**

In response to a question when the survey results would be published the chair stated they would be published imminently.

### **Close of meeting**

Meeting closed at 8pm

***The Parish Council Minute Book - Accounts for 2023/24 - Reports & Annual Accounts for local Charities/Trusts were available for inspection***