

DRAFT

Little Comberton Parish Council

2024/12

Parish Council Meeting - Minutes Tuesday 16th April 2024, 7.30pm Village Hall

Parish Councillors Present: N Jamieson, L Schmitz, N Smithson, D Smithson, District Cllr B Hardman

Clerk/RFO: Nicola Harding

In attendance: No parishioners

1. Apologies

Received from Cllr Rabbette and County Cllr A. Hardman.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

3. Parishioner's Comments

Concerns have been received regarding smoke nuisance created from bonfires. Although Parish Councils have no specific responsibilities regarding bonfires, Cllr Hardman noted that practical advice is available via Worcestershire Regulatory Services, advising that the best form of communication is initially in person. WRS advocates such engagement, as this is often the most successful means of resolving problems and preventing them from recurring. A discussion ensued and Cllrs noted that it might be helpful if future bonfires could potentially be coordinated at an agreed day or time, though it was acknowledged that this may be difficult due to weather conditions. In the interim, it was agreed that Cllr Jamieson would adapt and re-circulate to Cllrs the previous bonfire reminder forwarded to residents, identify the complainant and make a personal approach/email to residents who regularly light bonfires. It was also agreed to revisit this as an agenda item at the next meeting. Further practical advice is available via:

<https://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk/all-services/nuisance/bonfires/domestic-bonfire/>

Action: Cllr Jamieson.

4. Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 6th March 2024

Proposed Cllr N Smithson, seconded Cllr Schmitz, all in favour, to approve the minutes as a true record.

5. Progress reports from Parish Activities: brief updates:

a. Lengthsman: The Clerk drew attention to Worcestershire County Council's new digitalisation of the parish lengthsman scheme, which went live on 8th April. The administration of the scheme has now been passed directly onto Clerks to input lengthsman's monthly tasks online. This will utilise additional Clerk's time compared with the previous system, therefore it was agreed to monitor this as the new system embeds. Liaison between the parish lengthsman and Cllr Jamieson will remain the same and the Clerk has prepared and received a new contract for 2024-25 and requested a copy of the lengthsman's public liability insurance documentation.

b. Highways: Speed proposals & costings from WCC & ElanCity were circulated for consideration ahead of the meeting, following a site meeting on 3rd April with WCC Highways representatives. Cllr Jamieson provided a summary of the meeting and suggestions proposed by Highways in order to address proposals for a new speed zone on entrance and exit to the village. The Clerk prepared a spreadsheet of costings and current funding available, which was shared and discussed. Confirmation of a potential contribution from County Cllr Hardman would be circulated once received, in addition to quotations for an additional set of village 'steps' as a second gated entrance to the main village. Cllrs were unanimous in their support of options A and B, as recommended by WCC Highways, and once outstanding figures have been confirmed, Cllr Jamieson agreed to draft a proposal via email to Cllrs, to be shared with the wider village thereafter.

Action: Clerk to forward further details as received. Cllr Jamieson to draft subsequent updates to Cllrs/parishioners.

Land ownership details had also been received from the Communities Officer at Wychavon District Council which were circulated to members for information, regarding the potential future creation of a permissive footpath on land adjacent to Pershore Road, should this be agreeable with the landowner.

Action: Revisit at the May meeting.

c. Casual Vacancy: Confirmation has been received from Wychavon's elections team that the Council may co-opt to fill the last remaining casual vacancy.

d. Airband poles: A response has been received from MP Harriet Baldwin regarding the Council's request for the removal of poles at Wick Road, with a subsequent update received from Airband. As there is still no confirmed date for the pole's removal, it was agreed to make further contact in one month. In the meantime, Cllrs agreed to liaise with Elmley Castle parish who are also currently in communications with Airband, to establish if a coordinated approach may accelerate a resolution.

Action: Cllr Jamieson to liaise with the Elmley Castle Parish Clerk.

e. Trees, Wick Road: Updates had been received from Wick Parish Council. It was confirmed that works downstream of the culvert at Mary Brook are included in the local farm's schedule to remove excess branches, once the drier weather returns and the land is more accessible. It was agreed that once the works have been completed, this should be noted and a letter of thanks forwarded to the landowner on behalf of the Parish Council.

Action: Cllrs/Clerk.

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The Clerk also reminded Cllrs of the next tree inspection due of the two large trees at the Memorial Garden, following the last inspection in 2019. It had been advised to complete a formal inspection and report every five years, and a visual inspection every 12-18 months during the seasons by a ‘competent countryman.’ The parish tree warden and lengthsman had agreed to complete these and report any defects direct to the parish council for attention.

Action: Clerk to obtain quotes for a formal inspection for discussion and approval at the May meeting.

6. District and County Councillor’s reports:

County Council:

Local elections: Parishioners are reminded of the forthcoming elections in May for Evesham and Pershore Town Councils and West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner. Applications can also be made online. As little information is currently available to assist parishioner’s in engaging with the voting process, it was agreed to forward details of the five police and crime commissioner candidates via the village email.

Action: Cllr Schmitz & Jamieson.

District Council:

Weather: Recent local weather monitoring has confirmed exceptional rainfall in the district, with usual 12 month averages seen in 6 months. To this end, parishes are reminded to monitor their ditches as they are filling quickly as a result.

Leisure Centres: Substantial government grant funding has been received by the District Council, to address the energy efficiency of the heating systems at Pershore & Evesham Leisure Centres.

7. Planning

W/23/01896/FUL: An amendment to the retrospective distillery application at Ringsmere Orchard has been received, for the submission of a Vehicle Access Appraisal. Comments were shared and forwarded on 15/4/24.

W/22/01053: The Manor House - Conversion of the existing barns to single residential dwelling – this application has now been approved.

W/24/00031/HP Associated Ref: W/24/00032/LB: The Old Thatch, Pershore Road - addition of new obscured glass window to the upstairs bathroom, rebuild and extend the garage/workshop, replace all existing windows, timber rose arch between house and detached garage to form covered pedestrian link – a decision remains pending.

W/23/01876/FUL: Construction of a general purpose agricultural building – this application has now been approved and it was agreed to check the conditions granted within the approval documents, in line with the Parish Council’s comments submitted.

Action: Cllr Schmitz.

Cllrs are also reminded of Calc e-learning planning training available. The online training is one-hour in duration @ £16 per learner.

8. Finance

a) Current Balances at 9th April 2024

Treasurer’s Account:	£11,765.00
TOTAL	£11,765.00

b) Payments to report:

*Clerk’s expenses: February 24	£12.00
*Hall hire: February 24	£13.00
*Lengthsman: February 24	£165.00
*Lengthsman: March 24	£165.00
*Swarco: VAS key	£12.00
<i>*Payments authorised by CR after March meeting</i>	

New payments presented:

Clerk’s salary: April 24	£388.70
Clerk’s expenses: March 24 & Ink	£31.39
Hall hire: March 24	£13.00

TOTAL **£800.09**

*Income received:

Worcs CC Lengthsman: February & March 24 work-plan	£330.00
HMRC: VAT refund 23/24	£77.32

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c) Proposal to consider quotation for mistletoe removal on four apple trees, Wick Road @ £420.00

The tree warden had sourced a quote from a local tree surgeon for the removal of mistletoe, which has spread within four trees along Wick Road. Cllrs were in agreement that given the level of infestation and recurrence of this problem, this was a costly expense to commit to every three years, therefore it was agreed to liaise with the Senior Greenspace Officer at Worcestershire County Council to explore the Council’s alternative options for further discussion.

Action: Clerk to liaise with tree warden/Cllr N Smithson and provide updates at the next meeting.

d) Audited accounts & Annual Return: 31st March 2024:

Internal auditor report: Following the inspection of the 2023-24 accounts, the Clerk shared the report received from the internal auditor and the contents were noted. Based on the work undertaken to date, the council continues to maintain adequate and effective internal control arrangements. One item was raised regarding receipt of VAT claimed and the Clerk confirmed that this was received following inspection of the accounts.

(i) Certificate of Exemption: 2023-24 accounts: The Clerk had prepared the certificate of exemption and circulated to Cllrs for information, given that the Council’s gross income and expenditure for 2023-24 was below £25,000.

(ii) Proposal to approve and sign Section 1: Annual governance statement – The Clerk read each statement, each of which were considered and approved by the Council.

(iii) Proposal to approve and sign Section 2: Accounting statements: These were noted by the meeting.

Approved Cllr N Smithson, seconded Cllr Schmitz, all in favour to approve the payments presented and AGAR forms submitted for checks and verification.

Action: Clerk to publish online, in line with Transparency Code requirements.

e) To note the period of public rights to inspect the financial records of the Council, to commence on 3/6/24 – 12/7/24. This was noted by the meeting.

9. Correspondence

Harriet Baldwin, MP	An update had been received regarding the Parish Council’s request for support from Airband for removal of poles along Wick Road, as reported under item 5d.
Avon Vale river action group	Confirmation has been received of attendance by two members at the Annual May meeting to provide updates and information.

10. Councillor’s reports and items for future agenda:

Cllrs noted to request updates regarding lay-by maintenance agreed along Wick Road by WCC Highways, in addition to a road repair section opposite the Church gate which is in need of attention. Future planting of bulbs in the area was also discussed, which would require a planting license from the County Council.

It was also agreed to request any further updates from WCC Highways Drainage engineer, who had previously agreed to jet the drains at the village crossroads following a site meeting in December 2023, once a team becomes available.

11. Date of Next Meeting: Annual Parish Meeting & Annual Meeting of the Parish Council – Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 7.00pm

Signed

Date.....

Chairman