

# DRAFT

24/07

## Great Comberton Parish Council

### Parish Council Meeting - Minutes Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024, 7.00pm Village Hall

**Parish Councillors Present:** K Collingwood (Chair), S Hamilton, G Hodgson, A Lavelle, D Wilks  
District Cllr B Hardman

**Clerk/RFO:** Nicola Harding

**In attendance:** Two parishioners

#### **1. Apologies:**

Received from Cllr Hickey & County Cllr A Hardman.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations made.

#### **3. Election of Chairman & signing of declaration of acceptance of office**

Cllr Lavelle noted that a more periodic change in chairman may be beneficial and proposed to nominate Cllr Hamilton as Chair. Cllr Hamilton thanked Cllr Lavelle for his nomination however declined, due to limited time available. Cllr Hamilton therefore proposed Cllr Collingwood to continue in the role as Chair. Comments were invited by the chairman from those Cllrs present and Cllr Hodgson agreed that rotating this role could bring new ideas to the council.

The following proposals were thereby received:

Proposed Cllr Hamilton, seconded Cllr Wilks to nominate Cllr Collingwood as chair,  
Proposed Cllr Hodgson, no seconder, to nominate Cllr Lavelle as chair.

Cllr Collingwood accepted the role and signed the chairman's declaration of office.

#### **4. Election of Vice-Chairman**

Proposed Cllr Lavelle, seconded Cllr Hodgson to nominate Cllr Hamilton as Vice-Chair. Cllr Hamilton agreed to accept this role.

#### **5. Casual vacancy**

Following the recent resignation of Cllr Inglis, a casual vacancy exists on the parish council. The Clerk had notified the elections team at Wychavon District Council and a vacancy notice had been prepared for publication. The Council will be further updated after 29<sup>th</sup> May: if a request for an election has been received by ten electors, an election will be held to fill the said vacancy not later than 31 July 2024, otherwise the vacancy will be filled by co-option.

*Actions: Cllr Hamilton to advertise vacancy on notice board.*

*Clerk to publish notice via [Notice Board \(worcestershire.gov.uk\)](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)*

Should the Parish Council be notified that they are free to co-opt to fill the remaining seat on the council after 29 May, it was agreed to advertise the vacancy as widely as possible. Cllr Lavelle offered to post information to Hands Orchard residents and to discuss the role of Cllr with any interested parishioners. A notice would also be prepared for circulation via the village email and Cllr Collingwood agreed to obtain a list of parishioners who are not currently on the email circulation list, so that an update may be reached to all parishioners.

*Actions: Clerk to provide updates as received, Cllr Collingwood/Cllr Lavelle.*

#### **6. Parishioner's Comments**

A smell of sewage was reported near the war memorial following a recent spell of heavy rain. As the sewage system is a combination of foul and storm water, it was noted that this is a typical problem faced by rural villages, as the systems are no longer adequate for the number of homes and residents they serve, becoming overwhelmed during heavy rainfall. It was agreed to continue to report any future issues to Severn Trent, for their attention and action.

*Action: Parishioner to report & Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council.*

Following information received and circulated from the Avon Vale River Action Group, a discussion ensued regarding their voluntary water monitoring and testing of the River Avon & local tributaries. Data had been shared and an unexplained incident noted in February 2024 at Mary Brook, where an unknown substance had pooled across the surface. Although this was reported to the Environment Agency & Severn Trent, no known issues were confirmed. Regular testing of this area is therefore essential in an attempt to establish where any issues are arising, in order to avoid future events.

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Cllr Hardman recommended collaboration with Little Comberton Parish Council for voluntary testing of key areas such as the Quay, as this is downstream from Mary Brook, ideally after heavy rainfall. Funding is available from WDC for the supply of testing kits and Cllr Lavelle agreed to volunteer as a tester.

*Actions: Clerk to invite Avon Vale River Action group to the September meeting of the Parish Council to receive further updates. Clerk to forward information to Cllr Collingwood for future village circulation.*

#### **4. Minutes of meeting held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

Proposed Cllr Lavelle, seconded Cllr Wilks, all in favour to approve the minutes as a true record.

#### **5. Progress reports from Parish Activities: brief updates:**

a. Eckington Bridge: A site meeting had been arranged for Cllr Collingwood, Cllr Hamilton & County Cllr Hardman to meet with MP Harriet Baldwin on 10<sup>th</sup> May. Issues concerning frequent closures of Eckington Bridge and subsequent diversions through Great Comberton were discussed, which are resulting in greater volumes and speed of vehicles through the parish. Cllr Collingwood noted that the Parish Council's preferred option would be the construction of a new bridge, or to raise the causeway either side of the existing bridge. Worcestershire County Council had confirmed that the Flood Management Risk Team have undertaken a study to review options to raise the approaches to Eckington Bridge and increase its flood resilience, however this did not proceed further due to the very low cost benefit ratio, meaning that such a project would not attract the necessary funding. The listed status of the bridge would also present significant challenges.

MP Baldwin agreed to compile and circulate a survey, as a community led initiative to gauge local opinion. An Environmental Analysis would also be conducted to project future weather patterns and the impact of new homes upon the bridge, which will see further volumes of traffic in the future.

Cllrs noted that frequent closures not only impact local residents in neighbouring villages but also local businesses and although additional signage is now implemented in Bredon by WCC during closures, those with local knowledge are still not adhering to the diversion route. It was agreed that larger vehicles make the situation worse in passing through the village, but previous attempts to have a weight restriction implemented have been unsuccessful. Cllr Collingwood has raised the possibility of advertising closures on the matrix signs of the M5 south of Tewksbury in an attempt to alleviate the problem, which Cllr Hardman has been pursuing with the Highways Agency.

It was agreed that in the interim, the Parish Council could consider conducting their own survey to establish local views on these issues and agreed to draft ideas for circulation.

*Action: Cllr Collingwood.*

#### **b. Highways: Pershore Road verges:**

Cllr Hardman had also been updated regarding the recent report of deep ruts that have emerged along Pershore Road, which have become very dangerous for vehicles and cyclists, especially during road closures. Confirmation had been received from WCC that no health and safety issues had been detected and that as the verges each side are turfed, only top soil could be used to fill the ruts. Cllrs agreed that this would be inadequate and await further intervention from Cllr Hardman who had confirmed that he would support this concern, however there is currently little revenue for roads maintenance due to budget restrictions.

#### **c. Footways: Scheduled repairs:**

As outlined in County Cllr Hardman's report circulated to the meeting, scheduled repairs for the resurfacing of the footway below Joe's Farm to the junction, have been confirmed for completion this financial year.

#### **d. Lengthsman Scheme:**

The Clerk drew attention to Worcestershire County Council's new digitalisation of the parish lengthsman scheme, which went live on 8<sup>th</sup> 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 the Clerk will monitor this as the new system embeds.

#### **e. Grant funding:**

Following a discussion at the March Parish Council meeting, ideas for future developments & applications for potential grant funding available were discussed. Enhancements to the village hall tables and chairs were suggested, however Cllr Hardman noted that grant funding tends to be available for 'Fit for Life' projects as promoted by the NHS and Social Care, which support living well for longer. A discussion ensued regarding the recent successful fitness class for over 60's and those recovering from surgery

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at Little Comberton Village Hall, as a potential idea for Great Comberton Village Hall. It was agreed that Cllr Hamilton would liaise with the organiser and personal trainer of this class and report back to Cllrs.

*Action: Cllr Hamilton.*

9. **To note model Calc standing orders and approved financial regulations (attached)** These were noted for information. The Clerk drew attention to the revised 2024 Nalc Financial Regulations which had been circulated for information, with all statutory requirements highlighted in bold. It was also noted that quarterly bank reconciliations should be completed and verified by a Cllr other than the chair or existing signatory. *Action: Cllr Lavelle agreed to complete these.*
10. **To note the Code of Conduct (attached)** This was noted.
11. **To consider and appoint Councillor roles: Finance/lengthsman liaison/police liaison/notice board** Cllr Hamilton agreed to continue to liaise with the Clerk regarding the annual budget, Cllr Collingwood agreed to continue liaising with the parish lengthsman, Cllr Hodgson to liaise with the Safer Neighbourhood police team, Cllrs Collingwood & Hamilton to publish notices and Cllr Lavelle to complete quarterly bank reconciliations.
12. **District and County Councillors' reports:** These had been circulated and are appended to the minutes. Cllr B Hardman also notified the meeting that the newly revamped water park in the Abbey grounds in Pershore has been completed.
13. **Community Infrastructure Levy 2023/24:** Notification had been received from Wychavon District Council that Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund @ £1074.00 has been received by the parish council for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, in respect of development at Tibbett's Farm, Russell Street. In accordance with regulatory requirements, this money must be spent by the parish council within five years of receipt or returned to the district council, and must be used to support development by:
  - the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure or,
  - anything else concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.

Various suggestions were noted and it was agreed to consider these for further discussion and action at the next parish council meeting.

*Action: Cllrs.*

14. **Dog waste:** Concerns had previously been received regarding dog waste and bags left in the churchyard, however it was noted that this issue appears to have now been resolved. The village currently has two dog waste bins and the litter bin by the phone box is also used extensively by dog walkers, suggesting there is a potential need for an additional bin in another area of the village. It was agreed to remind people to ideally utilise the dog bins available initially.

## 15. Planning

**W/24/00060/HP:** The Pound - Addition of solar panels to one slope of existing garage roof: application approved.

**W/24/00721/HP** Valley House, Church Street – Demolition of detached garage & erection of new garage & summerhouse.

There were no comments to submit.

## 16. Finance

- a) Current Balances
- b) To consider payments to be made as on the attached list
- c) To approve and sign the Certificate of Exemption for the year ended 31 March 2024
- d) Audited accounts & Annual Return: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 – Internal auditor report &
  - (i) Proposal to approve and sign Section 1: Annual governance statement (copy attached)
  - (ii) Proposal to approve and sign Section 2: Accounting statements (copy attached)
- e) To approve the period of public rights to inspect the financial records of the Council, to commence on 3/6/24 – 12/7/24

*Proposed Cllr Lavelle, seconded Cllr Wilks, all in favour, to approve the payments presented.*

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The Clerk shared the findings of the internal audit report of the 2023-24 accounts prepared. The key finance systems and processes were reviewed and it was confirmed that following examination of the financial records held by the clerk, no significant areas for improvement or weaknesses were identified and the audit report was thereby completed.

*Proposed Cllr Wilks, seconded Cllr Hodgson, all in favour to approve the 2023-24 certificate of exemption, annual governance statement and accounting statements.*

Updated year-end figures and approved 2024/25 budget headings were circulated by the Clerk and Cllr Hamilton reminded Cllrs that £500 is ring-fenced as income received from the closure of the WI account and therefore separate to the council’s reserves.

**17. Correspondence**

- Worcs      A news bulletin had been received and circulated with details of new training sessions available for both
- Calc      Clerks & Cllrs
- AVRAG    Details of findings received from the Avon Vale River Action group, regarding the water quality of Mary Brook & River Avon, as noted under item 6, parishioner’s comments.

**18. Councillor’s reports and items for future agenda:**

- Proposal to approve the transfer of Open Gardens Funds:  
Prior to the meeting, Cllr Hamilton had updated Cllrs that HSBC Bank had requested to close the account containing Open Gardens funding, as a result of no recent transactions. Following a recent village hall meeting to discuss this request, it had been confirmed that in line with regulations, this is to be agreed at an open, public meeting in order for the bank to release the funds. Following consideration by those present at the village hall meeting, it had been agreed to allocate the funds where there is a greater need for the benefit of the whole village, and Cllr Hamilton therefore put forward a proposal, seconded by Cllr Lavelle, to transfer the balance of funds to Great Comberton Church for infrastructure improvements, and to continue to fund raise and apply for grants for alternative projects needed.

Following an opportunity for questions, there were no objections to this proposal, however one parishioner commented that this item was not widely publicised. It was clarified that the proposal had been included under item 18 of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council agenda, however Cllr Lavelle noted that this was not considered under open forum, therefore an open village meeting would be called to finalise this proposal, to be advertised via the village email.  
*Action: Cllr Hamilton.*

- Community First Aid training: awareness training of how to use a defibrillator is available by local volunteers. The suggested donation of £100 for the training provision was noted and agreed by the meeting and it was agreed to establish availability for a potential session in September.  
*Action: Clerk.*

**19. Date of Next Meeting: Monday 2nd September 2024 at 7.00 pm**

The following dates were also agreed for future parish council meetings:

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024, Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 & Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025.  
*Action: Clerk to book the village hall.*

Signed .....

Date.....

**Chairman**