



# Rous Lench Parish Council

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## **DRAFT MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Monday 20th May 2024, at 7pm**

**Present:** Cllr D. Browne (Chair)                      Cllr S. Davis  
                 Cllr S. Harrison                              Cllr G. Hughes  
                 Cllr K. Hicken                                  Kerry Williamson (Clerk)  
                 5 Parishioners

### **1. Chairman's welcome**

Cllr Browne welcomed all attendees to the Annual Parish Meeting.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillor Ben Hurdman and parishioner, Neil Curnock.

### **3. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 22nd May 2023**

The minutes of the meeting of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 22nd May 2023, were **agreed** as a true record and approved.

### **4. Matters arising from the minutes**

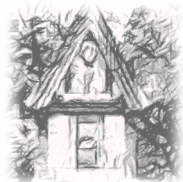
None.

### **5. Annual Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council – given by Chairman Cllr Browne**

Financially, the Parish Council has sought to try and minimise costs to allow council tax rates to stay as close to 2022/23 rates as possible. Our precept budget has been fixed to prioritise maintenance of the village, whilst keeping our precept low, resulting in only a below inflation increase on last year.

This year we have spent some money but wisely and justifiably whilst keeping a tight rein on our finances. We are well insured, in the black and hopefully financially sound. Key purchases have been.

- We have procured another Vehicle Activated Sign in recognition of continued concerns of speeding within our Parish and this will be up and running soon. Anecdotally there has been a notable difference in speeds through the village as a result of our current signs, which has been welcomed by all.
- We have supported the ongoing development of the Rous Lench and Radford Community Garden and were delighted to be able to attend the opening of this garden on 4th May. We have backed the Trustees in their latest Rural Fund application.
- We also continue to support the grant funding application made by the Parochial Church Council for the development of our church and the facilities within,
- We will be commissioning necessary works to trees on the village green seek to have these completed in time for the Pig Roast on Saturday 29 June.



Clerk: Kerry Williamson  
Email: [rouslenchpc@gmail.com](mailto:rouslenchpc@gmail.com)  
Telephone: 07721 889703

Other activities have included an organised litter pick in March in both Radford and Rous Lench. Another good turnout with residents getting involved in clearing the lanes and footpaths within the Parish.

We spend time deliberating any planning application being made within our parish and will often contribute to proposed developments just outside our boundary. We aspire to making comments that are factually and legally correct and not led by emotion.

This year, we welcomed Kirsty Hicken on to the Committee. We still have a further vacancy, so, if you would like to join us, just make yourself known.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Council for their help and support. Also, to Ben Hurdman, our District Councillor for his attendance and contributions. Particularly to our Clerk, Kerry, without whom we certainly would not have been able to function as effectively as we have.

To conclude, we are here for the parish, so please do use us. You will find details of all that we do on our website.

#### **6. Annual Report from the County Councillor**

No report was provided.

#### **7. Annual Report from the District Councillors**

Cllr Ben Hurdman sent the following report to be shared:

This month the Wychavon councillors will be looking at the contract for the Home Improvement Agency which is up for renewal in March 2025. We will be scrutinising the performance of the current contractors and reviewing what they do and do not cover in the field. It is vitally important that especially in our rural communities elderly people and people with a special need can remain in their homes with the correct care to maintain a good quality of life.

Wychavon have committed to using HVO fuel where possible in their diesel equipment in parks and gardens. This should reduce Co2 emissions by 90% in comparison to white diesel. We are also using environmentally friendly herbicides rather than pesticides.

Over the past six months everyone is aware of the amount of rain we have had. However, there is a weather station at the Civic Centre which gives us a bit of detail. We've had:

61mm in Jan (slightly lower than average)

143mm in Feb (highest ever recorded)

122mm in March (just below highest ever)

Over the last six months we have seen the highest percentage of winter water run-off in the last 39 years.

Planning – There have been 5 planning appeal decisions over the last month with all 5 being dismissed by the government inspector. This is promising and gives me confidence that the planning committee and officers are making the correct decisions where necessary. Applications are currently being processed in 3 days and last month 320 were processed.

Regarding the applications in Rous Lench, I have chased the officer regarding the application at The Caravan, at Radford Rd, unfortunately there is very little to report. Having spoken with the officer at present the agent's application still has discrepancies with what the applicant requires and what he has presented. I will keep chasing weekly and have asked Gemma to keep me updated.

I am concerned by the amount of live/work applications that keep popping up. I don't think this is always of value to the villages and can be used as a back door to gain permission for a property in a desirable location, whereas normally they would be refused. It also concerns me that those people who really need live/work units may miss out. I am going to speak with our new head of planning regarding this matter in the near future.

Finally, I would like to thank you for welcoming me so warmly into the role of councillor. Over my first 12 months as a district councillor I have learned a great deal and have been reassured by the Parish Council's commitment to preserving Rous Lench and Radford and continuing to strive for the best for the villages. It is a credit to the Parish council that we have a desirable village with lots of facilities and a community spirit.

#### **8. Annual Report from the Police**

No local issues to report at this time.

#### **9. Annual Report from the Village Hall Committee -given by Fran Herdman**

Fran Herdman, Chairperson of the Rous Lench & Radford Village Hall Committee, sent the following report to be shared:

It's been a challenging year for the village hall as dry rot was discovered in the stage area in December 2023 resulting in the entire stage floor being removed and timbers and surrounding areas treated for dry rot. The floor was then replaced, and walls replastered and redecorated. The work took about 4 months in all and necessitated the hall being closed for most of that time. Hopefully it will soon be back to normal and can be used again. Work has also been carried out in the back yard to make it tidier and the plan is to eventually lay gravel out there. Some repairs are required to the roof, and these will be looked at later this year. Otherwise, the hall is in good shape.

A couple of events were held and were well attended by residents. Pub nights continue to be popular and will restart in the autumn. The hall was also used for church services for some of the winter.

The small committee (5 members) continue to maintain the hall and encourage it's use.

#### **10. Annual Report from the Public Paths Warden (PPW)**

David Knight sent the following report to be shared:

A remarkably warm, dry summer and autumn saw continued steady use of most paths which made them clearly visible and there was little need to clear the usual summer growth from gates and stiles where nettles and brambles would normally need frequent trimming. The only notable exception being the gate at the North end of path 530 where a thriving blackthorn thicket defies my efforts and the landowner's hedge-cutting. On that subject, every one of the new finger posts was still standing by the end of hedging. (Is this a record?). Gates and stiles mostly stood this usage well with the exception of one on path 524, reported last year, which has been replaced with a robust new

one incorporating a dog access, by the landowner.

Winter brought rain to rival that in Flanders and Swann ditty "A Song of the Weather". Despite the resulting mud, most paths still saw considerable use with the exception of 532 (reported as flooding last year) which is little used in winter because it is impassable!

Another continuing issue is that of paths 513 and 536 which should cross into Kington parish at their western ends but users are left to find their own ways in the absence of any gate or stile.

A problem at Radford where path 508 had been unofficially diverted was resolved when our area officer from the Countryside Access Team contacted the new land holder.

Should anyone encounter a problem with one of the paths or bridleways please let me know so that I can deal with minor matters or pass the relevant requests through to the County Access Team.

Cllr Browne extended his thanks to David Knight for his continued efforts as Parish Paths Warden.

### **11. Annual Report from the Parochial Church Council**

Lloyd Wing provided the following update regarding the PCC's Community Legacy Grant application:

The main driver behind the project is to secure the long-term future of the village's oldest asset – grade I listed St Peter's Church (800 years old). Currently facilities are limited and a lot of maintenance is required on the building.

There are 4 unique areas to the project:

1. Coffee shop
2. Artisan craft centre
3. Champing
4. Heritage of the village and the Lenches

Community engagement via emails, Facebook and door-to-door visits have been conducted, resulting in 67 responses to the community survey. Most of the responses to the questions asked were positive. Lloyd shared a report showing the graphical results (see attachment). Some negative comments had been received, including too ambitious and a large responsibility and concerns with the cost of the equipment.

Lloyd thanked the Parish Council for their support with the application so far and confirmed that he would send the final full application to the Parish Council for them to look through before submitting.

### **12. Annual Report from the Rous Lench and Radford Community Gardens**

Tina Whitfield, trustee of the Rous Lench and Radford Community Gardens shared the following report:

The garden had its official opening on May 4th. The chairman of the council attended as did Ben Price, Community Officer who has been liaising with the Trust over the implementation of the Community Legacy Grant so far. David Browne, chair of the Parish Council said a few words and planted a tree in commemoration of King Charles' Coronation. The garden was officially opened by RHS judge John Cunningham.

The sun shone! With over 100 people in attendance, it was a great success and so lovely to see so many people from the villages enjoying the sunshine, a walk around the gardens and catching up with friends. We raised £500 for the Charity which will help maintain the gardens going forward.

Following the event and in receipt of comments from some of the neighbours we are currently undertaking some consultation to get feedback on the event and the garden in general. An online survey and paper copies have been circulated to all those who left details on the day and to every house in the villages of Rous Lench and Radford. So far the feedback is overwhelmingly positive, with over 90% of people 'loving' the garden, with some great ideas for things they'd like to see, and some constructive criticism which the Trust will be taking on board going forward.

We will share the results with our contact list and the Parish Council and on our website in due course.

As the Parish Council is aware, we are currently awaiting news of our Rural Fund Application to which the Parish Council has generously committed match funding. This will enable us to complete the garden in line with the aspirations set out within the original Community legacy Grant application. We hope to hear whether we've been successful in the next month.

We're planning The Big Lunch as our next event over the summer. We look forward to seeing you there.

**13. Matters raised by parishioners**

None.

*Meeting closed at 7.30 pm.*

**SIGNED..... Chairman**

**Date .....**

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*Kerry Williamson  
Clerk and RFO*