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Little Comberton Parish Council

2024/24

Parish Council Meeting - Minutes Wednesday 11th September 2024, 7.30pm Village Hall

Parish Councillors Present: N Jamieson, C Rabbette, N Smithson, D Smithson.
District Cllr B Hardman, County Cllr A Hardman.

Clerk/RFO: Nicola Harding

In attendance: One parishioner

1. Apologies

Received from Cllr Schmitz.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

It was agreed to postpone this item until the next meeting when there is a full complement of Cllrs.

4. Proposal to fill casual vacancy by co-option

Proposed Cllr N Smithson, seconded Cllr Rabbette, all in favour to co-opt D Smaylen as new Cllr.

Action: Clerk to forward register of interests form for completion and return to Wychavon District Council. Clerk to notify electoral services team at WDC.

5. Parishioner's Comments

One parishioner was in attendance to request an update regarding a suggestion to explore the possibility of applying for a weight restriction along Wick Road. This had been acted upon by the Parish Council and an update was provided following advice sought from the Senior Highways Liaison Manager at WCC. It was confirmed that there is nothing structural with the culverts that would warrant a weight restriction in the vicinity and any such restriction would need to be environmental, to be considered by the traffic management team. It was also noted that there is currently a box sited on a pole along the lane which is monitoring the volume of traffic in the area. County Cllr Hardman confirmed that access cannot be restricted to a site, however 'single track ahead' signage could be requested from Highways at the junction of Wick Road and the B4084 and also near Pool Close, in order to deter traffic movements. It was noted that current passing places are poor and still require attention (see item 7b below,) therefore following assurances made by WCC, it was agreed that the Clerk would continue to pursue this with Highways for completion. It was also agreed to reinforce with WCC the benefits of Wick Road as a quiet lane for residents to walk along, therefore options to reduce traffic would be welcomed by Cllrs.

Action: Clerk to update Highways that the remaining lay-byes still require attention and request single track road ahead signage.

6. Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 17th July 2024

A minor error was noted under item 9b, payment (i) to PPC for grass-cutting expenses, which should read as:

PPC: Grass-cut (i) £125.00

Proposed Cllr Rabbette, seconded Cllr Jamieson, all in favour, to approve this amendment and the minutes as a true record.

Action: Clerk to amend.

7. Progress reports from Parish Activities: brief updates:

a. Lengthsman: Weed removal, drain clearance and strimming have been undertaken in the village during the last month.

b. Highways: Speed initiative: WCC Highways had obtained a quotation for the installation of six village posts to create an entrance 'gateway' to the start of the inner village, ahead of new dragon's teeth road markings. Three timber effect posts of 1m length would be installed either side of the verge, to be cut down on site in order to create a staggered effect upon entrance, as a further speed reduction deterrent. It was confirmed that there would be no charge to the parish council for their installation, as Highways prefer to install in order to research any underground utilities. It was therefore agreed to proceed with the quote, as formally proposed under item 10c.

Updates had also been provided by Highways regarding the condition of the lay-byes along Wick Road. Although one has been attended to, several others still require attention. It was agreed to notify Highways and request completion when the parish team can re-attend.

Action: Clerk

c. Highways: Drainage: Further updates had been requested by the Clerk from Worcestershire County Council's drainage engineer, following a recent survey which detected few defects in the system and mass roots removed in order to alleviate any future flooding. A buried manhole had also been detected, which WCC advised should be exposed by the property owner to aid future maintenance, however the owners had no knowledge of this. It was therefore agreed to explore the exact location of this further when the jetting team are due to return to the parish in December. Works have been scheduled to install a new pipe across

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the road at the Orchard Drive junction to take two road gullies outside number one, in addition to some ditch clearance in the locality.

d. 'Our Community Can' initiative: Updates were shared by Cllr Rabbette and Cllr B Hardman following a meeting in August with representatives from Pershore Volunteer Centre, Wychavon District Council and the Combertons/Elmley Castle Parish Councils. Heritage Lottery funding is available to support rural communities to reduce social isolation and bring communities together, through fun and engaging creative and physical activities. This is a community led approach whereby volunteers and communities who understand local needs and motivations network with other individuals and organisations to deliver taster sessions, support new active or creative opportunities, in order to become sustainable and access potential funding. Applications close after 5th September, however as the three Parish Councils have expressed an interest, there is an opportunity to acquire up to £3,000 per community ahead of the end of the financial year.

Given that there are currently regular bookings for activities already offered in the village hall, concerns were raised that these should not be undermined by such a venture or clashes made with neighbouring parishes, however it was agreed to circulate a survey via the next edition of The Link to establish what other activities may prove useful, following confirmation from the village hall secretary of existing activities. It was noted that potential activities do not necessarily need to be held in the village hall, and attention was also drawn to the importance of male loneliness and mental health when considering possible new ventures.

Action: Cllr Rabbette to work with Our Community Can Group to help finalise survey for circulation via The Link to all residents, assist in assessing responses and help plan taster sessions accordingly/Cllr Jamieson.

e. Footpaths: An overgrown footpath LC-515 noted by Cllr Rabbette had been reported online by the Clerk to WCC – it was confirmed that this will be dealt with as soon as possible as part of the Summer strimming programme.

Paint markings are now visible on the footpath alongside the village hall towards the church, which is earmarked for resurfacing at the end of the financial year.

f. Airband poles: Wick Road: After several requests from the Parish Council for the removal of the fourteen redundant poles at Endon Hill, Cllr Jamieson provided an update following a recent visit to Airband's offices. The company has seen significant downsizing and staff changes in recent times, however a manager contact had been provided and Cllr Jamieson agreed to continue to pursue. County Cllr Hardman also agreed to provide an Airband contact from neighbouring Birlingham parish.

Action: Cllr Jamieson & Hardman.

g. Trees: Following the recent health & safety survey of the Scott's Pine and lime trees at the Memorial Garden, a quote had been obtained and shared with members for the crown reduction of the lime tree, as formally considered under item 10, finance. The quote also included the removal of large balls of mistletoe which the tree surgeon had noted were forming in the canopy. The parish volunteer tree warden has explored options for the new Scott's pine tree recommended at the memorial garden, which was also shared by the clerk for consideration.

h. Avon Vale River Action Group: District Cllr Hardman confirmed that Wychavon District Council will provide a training course with 'Safe Avon' to address health and safety, insurance and correct procedures for water testing sections of Mary Brook to volunteers, after which testing kits will be provided. It is anticipated that future testing will be under the guidance of Avon Vale River Action Group. Twelve volunteers from the Combertons have volunteered, therefore further updates will be provided once a training date has been confirmed.

Action: Cllr Hardman/Clerk.

i. Bonfire Protocol: Cllr Schmitz, supported by Cllr N Smithson and Rabbette have produced a draft email highlighting the Parish Council's bonfire protocol, following recent episodes of noxious bonfires in the parish. This will be forwarded to all Cllrs for consideration ahead of circulation via the village email, also hand delivering copies to those not on the system, in order to raise awareness of this wider community concern and guidance provided by Worcestershire Regulatory Services. A letter has also been drafted for approval to send to a local contact and Rooftop Housing group, following several complaints from villagers in the Summer. It was also agreed to request clarity from Rooftop for future reference, regarding protocols in their tenancy agreement surrounding bonfires.

Action: Cllr Schmitz, Smithson & Rabbette.

Thanks were extended on behalf of the Parish Council for this work in reinforcing the Parish Council's bonfire protocols.

8. District and County Councillor's reports:

District Cllr Hardman

'Our Community Can': There are few updates to report following the quieter Summer period, however Cllr Hardman provided a summary of the 'Our Community Can' initiative, as reported under item 7d.

Waste collections: Wychavon have announced future changes to their waste collection in order to reduce food waste. A new bin for food waste collections will be introduced in the next 18 months.

Housing: There will be an 89% increase in housing allocations in the district following proposals approved by the new government. More increases will be applied in Wychavon compared with Worcester City & Malvern Hills Councils. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of infrastructure to meet such an increase in demand, in addition to any potential implications for the Cotswold AONB. A new briefing note on the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, along with other changes to the planning system has been circulated and a consultation runs until 24th September. Proposals can be viewed via the following link:

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907215/200805_Changes_to_the_current_planning_system_FINAL_version.pdf

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County Cllr Hardman

Food waste: Further to the district council's future food waste proposals, the county council is exploring opportunities for an anaerobic digester to generate usable gas from food waste.

Budget: Austerity measures are expected to continue, with further pressures predicted in adult social care and pension reforms following the change in government.

9. Planning

W/24/00941/AGR Land at (OS 9652 4375) Wick Road: Prior Notification for a new agricultural building:

A prior approval requirement has been approved and granted by the delegated officer at Wychavon. Letters of concern were forwarded by the Parish Council on 21st August following a consultation between the working group and planning consultant, however it was noted that as the criteria has been met, as outlined in the delegated decision report, there is no further action that the Parish Council is able to pursue, as a judicial review would be extremely costly. District Cllr Hardman confirmed that she is working with the planning department to produce extra clarity on the different types of planning applications received and their implications, in order to better support parish councils in their future responses and submissions. Cllr Hardman also offered to share an example she was made aware of in another area in the district, where green scaping was used to positively screen an agricultural building in order to reduce its visual impact.

Action: Cllr Hardman to explore further and advise.

10. Finance

a) Current Balances at 1st September 2024

Treasurer's Account:	£15,187.17
TOTAL	£15,187.17

b) Payments to report:

Salary August 24	£388.70
Salary September 24	£388.70
Clerk's monthly expenses August & September 24	£24.00
Expenses: Ink: barn application documents	£16.93
Lengthsman July 24	£165.00
LCVHC: July hall hire	£13.00
TOTAL	£996.33

*The Clerk had received an invoice after circulation of the agenda from Wychavon District Council, for the annual cleanse and emptying charges of the waste bin along Wick Road. This was noted.

Income to report:

WCC: July lengthsman invoice	£165.00
LCVHC: Hall lease – 2024/25	£441.56

It was confirmed that Cllr D Smithson had checked and verified the first quarterly bank reconciliation documents for the period ending 24th June 2024, and these were noted at the meeting and signed. Details relating to the second quarterly reconciliation for the period ending 30th September 2024 would be completed and forwarded in due course.

Action: Clerk.

c) Proposal to approve expenditure for 6 x village posts @ £1,284.36 exc VAT

The Clerk shared details of a quotation provided by WCC Highways and the resulting shortfall @ £994.00 of the overall speed initiative costs, taking into consideration the funding received from the Safer Roads Fund & Cllr Hardman's local divisional members fund towards this expenditure.

Proposed Cllr Jamieson, seconded Cllr N Smithson, all in favour to approve this expenditure.

Action: Clerk to confirm with WCC Highways and request conformation date once agreed, in order to update villagers.

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Crown reduction costs: The Clerk also presented a quotation from a local tree surgeon @ £475.00 for the crown reduction and mistletoe removal of the lime tree at the memorial garden. It was confirmed that there is currently £275.00 available in the tree budget, leaving a remaining £200.00 for the parish council to fund. The Clerk shared a spreadsheet of current expenditure and budgets for consideration, regarding how the shortfall in post costs and tree work may potentially be funded. A discussion ensued and County Cllr Hardman offered to fund the cost of the tree works using his local member's fund to enhance and preserve this green space. Sincere thanks were expressed to Cllr Hardman for this generous contribution and it was requested that the Clerk outline and submit a summary of the environmental benefits of the works approved to WCC.
Action: Clerk.

11. Correspondence

- West Mercia Police:
Rural & Business Crime An offer has been received to hold a future Crime Prevention Awareness day in the parish. It was suggested that the Street Market could be an ideal opportunity to benefit from a captive audience in raising further awareness.
Action: Clerk to make enquiries with the Rural & Business Crime officer.
- West Midlands
Ambulance Service An offer has been received from a volunteer for West Midlands Ambulance Service to run a CPR awareness session free of charge. This request is to get the fee to hire the parish hall waived - not for payment from the Parish Council. In the session, a donation pot for the CFR charity would be available but this is essentially a free session. It was agreed to note the details of the training provider for future reference.
- WDC Details have been received regarding the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation (emailed 20/8/24.) Ward members have been briefed about the proposed changes & implications following the recent change in government, as reported under item 9, planning.
- PKF Littlejohn The external auditors have notified the Clerk of the receipt & log of the Parish Council's notification of exempt status submitted for the accounts for year ending 31st March 2024. There is therefore no review to be performed and consequently no auditor certificate and report, or any other closure documentation to be issued for this reporting year.

12. Councillor's reports and items for future agenda:

- As agreed at the last meeting of the Parish Council, Cllr D Smithson had drafted an information leaflet to communicate with villagers about the 'Neighbourhood Matters' police messaging initiative. Cllrs noted the benefits of this information sharing service highlighting crime and general awareness in the local community, however it was also noted that there can on occasions be several emails received in one day where communications overlap. Cllr Smithson agreed to circulate the draft document to Cllrs for their consideration ahead of circulating via the village email system.
Action: Cllr Smithson & Jamieson.
Following some suspicious activity noted at the village hall car park over the Summer, it was confirmed that the village hall committee will be exploring deterrent measures.
- Following the delegated decision to approve the construction of the agricultural barn on land off Wick Road, it had been commented by a parishioner that the bench currently overlooking the site may need to be re-sited in future.
- Work to enhance the existing village benches has been successfully completed by a villager as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Another young villager is seeking opportunities to complete volunteering in the parish over the next 3-6 months, therefore it was requested to forward any suggestions to Cllr Jamieson regarding this enquiry.
Action: Cllrs.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 9th October 2024 at 7.30 pm

Cllr Jamieson offered his apologies in advance of the meeting & potentially Cllr Rabbette will chair this. Should Cllr Rabbette not be free to attend, Cllr D Smithson agreed to chair the meeting.

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Signed

Date.....

Chairman