

## **DODFORD WITH GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL**

### **DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Dodford with Grafton Parish Council held on Tuesday 6 May 2025 in Dodford Village Hall at 7.30pm**

**Present:** Cllrs Scott Fuller, Lynne Griffin, Rachel Jennings, Scottie Sanderson, Jenni Schuett, and Jonathan Shapiro

**In attendance:** County Cllr Mark Dunkley, District Cllr Kit Taylor, Clerk Kay Stone and 16 members of the public

#### **1. Apologies**

Cllr Rory Lydon

#### **2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 20 May 2024 for agreement**

Cllr Sanderson proposed, Cllr Shapiro seconded, and all approved the minutes for the meeting held on 20 May 2024. The minutes were signed by the Chair as being a true record.

#### **3. Parish Council Chair's Report**

Cllr Jennings thanked the Clerk for writing the report and all the work she has put in to supporting the villages and the Parish Council. Going forward it is the Parish Council's aim to maintain the health of the streams to benefit wildlife and residents. Following Cllr Jennings' report, the Parish Councillors introduced themselves.

#### **4. Financial Report**

The Clerk read out the financial report from the Annual Report which is attached. Questions asked were:

- i. How is the precept set, and the Clerk explained how the Parish Council base their precept request on the budget that is set for the forthcoming year. Sometimes there is an increase in the precept and in the past, for a few years, the precept remained the same. The current precept costs residents £34.74 per annum per household, which is an increase of £3.27 on last year. The Council base figure of 402.10 for 2024/25 was based on the equivalent of a Band D household with figures received from Bromsgrove District Council (BDC). Summary totals at an England level of the number of dwellings, the number of dwellings that are exempt from Council Tax and the number liable for Council Tax.
- ii. Why was the grant of CAB paid, and the Parish Councillors replied that they feel the residents in the parish benefit from Citizens Advice Bureau.
- iii. Why doesn't the Lengthsman agree in and out and the Clerk explained that Worcestershire County Council (WCC) can pay up to two months later from when the Clerk submits the invoice. The Lengthsman scheme is funded by Worcestershire County Council and is at no cost to the Parish Council. The Clerk had explained this in the Annual Report and a resident suggested that the Parish Council may wish to use a Balance Sheet to show the differences between this particular income and expenditure.

#### **5. John Campion, Police and Crime Commissioner, West Mercia Police together with PC Harding and PC Hollingsworth, Bromsgrove Safer Neighbourhood Team**

John Campion explained the area West Mercia Police cover - Worcestershire, Shropshire, Herefordshire and the Wrekin. He acts as a governance for the Police with wider duties around crime and is the voice of the public within policing. He sets out a Police Crime Plan so the public can hold him to account. He is responsible for all the resources and spending, kit, vehicles and buildings. He went on to explain how the crime is down within the region although sexual assault has gone up 35% since 2019. The overall mission of policing is for all crime figures to come down. Nowadays crime happens virtually and so is hard to police. Also, too

many people are injured or die in road accidents usually down to humans behind the wheel. Roads can cause anti-social behaviour and WCC have to do more about the safety of roads. Rural crime is taken seriously, and more resources are invested in this particular crime. There followed a Q&A session where a resident commented on the lack of police presence at night and John explained how visibility is a difficult thing in rural areas when residents are in bed or with curtains drawn but he assured residents that the police are patrolling. If a car is stolen then the victim should register the call with the police quickly as there will be police on duty who will be looking using APR. Residents were concerned about the number of trailers that are stolen within the parish where they are still waiting for the police to interview them. John explained that agricultural thefts are not always prioritized as cars stolen have a higher priority. John and his accompanying police officers spoke about social behaviour around cycles and motorbikes and although couldn't comment on individual cases said there is a lot going on behind the scenes to stop this. The police offer free SmartWater marking to residents and encouraged residents to take up this offer. A resident brought up the subject of Bromsgrove having an unmanned police station when her elderly mother had been attacked. John explained that there is a bell system at the police station and felt that money spent on counter resources cannot be used elsewhere. He encouraged residents to dial 101 to speak to someone and then they can radio for someone to attend to the resident. Two parish councillors recounted their positive responses when calling out the police. A resident felt that the 50mph signs on the Kidderminster Road are in the wrong place and spoke about vehicles speeding more at night and asked for a police speed van to be in position once a week. Cllr Jennings thanked John and his accompanying police officers and said how as a village they are happy to work with the police in order to help themselves.

**There was a short break for light refreshments before continuing the meeting as follows:**

**6. Chris Roberts, Chief Executive, Citizen's Advice Bureau in Bromsgrove and Redditch**

Chris spoke of how Citizen's Advice Bureaus (CAB) were started in 1939 when the war government realized they had to communicate with everyone. Volunteers at CAB come from all walks of life and are far from being amateur. Calls to CAB before lockdown were around 24% but that figure is now 70%. CAB gives advice, not information and is free, confidential, impartial and independent and is always looking for volunteers. Leaflets were available at the meeting for anyone interested in volunteering. Chris spoke about the modern trend of CAB provided outreach pop ups and how people requesting help can walk in to the Food Bank between 10am and noon fortnightly on a Wednesday. Chris was thanked by Cllr Jennings for his time.

**7. Dodford Village Hall Committee Vice Chairman Edd Wilkes**

The Village Hall Committee put out a plea for committee members and volunteers in October 2024 and was pleased with the response. The improvements include the notice board being revamped and the car park has been jet-washed. The committee are seeking a grant to improve disabled access at the front of the Hall. Residents brought up the problem of there being two halls sharing one kitchen and Edd said the committee are hoping to improve the shared access. Financially the committee finances are in good shape although there is concern with general costs increasing. There are reduced rates for residents who wish to use the hall, and an electronic booking system has been discussed by the committee, but they lack the technical know how to set this up. Cllr Griffin proposed a vote of thanks to Edd with meeting applauding.

**8. County Councillor Mark Dunkley**

Cllr Dunkley has only been in his new role less than a week and introduced himself and spoke about his background. He will support residents going forward as best he can and acknowledged that Cllr Webb is a hard act to follow.

## **9. District Councillor Kit Taylor's Annual Report**

Cllr Taylor spoke generally about planning, enforcement and licensing and was not able to talk about individual issues. He also talked about the upcoming devolution although it is still unclear how this will operate going forward. There will be a unitary authority with WCC being abolished and possibly more work for Parish Councils. It is not clear whether Worcestershire will be split north and south and or combined with Herefordshire or even Birmingham. Cllr Taylor talked about how the Government has told BDC that there need to be an extra 9,000 houses in the area within 30 months. BDC councillors will be voting to decide whether the new District Plan to include the 9,000 houses should go out to the public for consultation or not. If it does go to consultation then Cllr Taylor encouraged residents to respond. Responding to a question about increased fly tipping Cllr Taylor recommended that residents should not touch the fly tipping but take a photo and report it to BDC. Should a resident see the fly tipping in process then they are encouraged to make a note of the number plate, if safe to do so, and report it.

## **10. Questions / Matters of interest from residents**

None were forthcoming and so in closing the meeting, Cllr Jennings thanked her fellow councillors, the Clerk and residents for attending.

The meeting closed at 9.58pm.

Signed ..... Chair

## **DODFORD WITH GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REPORT 2024/2025**

### **INCOME**

The Council's income for 2024/2025 was £8,917.16 against the previous year of £21,895.78.

The reason for the massive difference is due to Bromsgrove District Council transferring the first Precept payment for 2024/2025 on 28 March 2024 instead of 1 April 2024 distorting the true income for 2023/2024 which should read £15,568.48.

Like for like comparison for income for 2024/2025 is £15,244.46 against the previous year of £15,568.48.

VAT of £801.41 (against £654.40 last year) was claimed.

Through Worcestershire County Council Lengthsman Scheme, the Parish Council receive a grant and can claim back the amount they spend for the Lengthsman.

Interest is higher than last year £237.95 against £227.35.

### **EXPENDITURE**

The Council's expenditure was £17,200.23 against the previous year of £16,490.18.

Staff costs of £9,674.16 against last year's figure of £9,353.50 reflect the Clerk's salary increase as per the National Association of Local Council Clerks.

Admin costs of £1,832.58 against last year's figure of £961.82 were due to

- Firstly, the Clerk purchased 2nd class stamps costing £282.20 for the Annual Report mailing before the price increase on 1 April 2025, and
- Secondly last year the Internal Auditor requested the figures for storage, telephone, internet and heating be taken out of staff costs and added to admin costs. Consequently the 2024/2025 figure looks to have doubled since last year.

The Parish Council has entered into a new 3-year fixed sum for Insurance at £386.35.

Subscriptions show a small increase in last year from £779.06 to £815.50 and this is due to an increase in Worcestershire County Association of Local Council's membership fee. Known as CALC, the Parish Council turn to this organisation for advice.

Hire of the meeting room is less at £510 against £650 for the previous year. This is due to less planning committee meetings being held in 2024/2025.

The Parish Council awarded grants totalling £1,685 for this year against £1,896.67 for the previous year. This year the grants were awarded to:

- Lorraine Smith - £100 for the 2024 Chartist Day
- Dodford Holiday Farm - £285 for a pool cleaning robot
- Bromsgrove and Redditch Citizens Advice Bureau - £500
- Dodford Gardening Club - £200
- Dodford School - £600 for equipment for children in Reception Class. This was granted under Section 137 which allows councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes they don't have specific statutory powers for and is seen as benefiting local children with providing equipment.

The Phil Richards Community Award for £75 this year was awarded to Lorraine Smith for her contribution to the Community of Dodford through many channels.

No costs for training for three years now.

Slight increase in the communications budget which is used for the printing of the Annual Report from £71.48 to £78.05.

Lloyds Bank now deducts £4.25 per month for a service charge on the Current Account.

Contingencies of £113.38 were made up of £15.08 for refreshments at last year's Annual Parish Meeting, £19.08 for a new Defibrillator sign and £79.20 for new Defibrillator Pads.

The Lengthsman costs are virtually the same at £1,946.40 against £1,978.96 in the previous year. As mentioned earlier in income, the amount paid out to the Lengthsman is claimed back from Worcestershire County Council through their Lengthsman Scheme.

£79.58 was spent for the Memorial Garden, which is the cost of obtaining utilities search in preparation for the installation of the information board.

That ends my financial report, and I am happy to take questions if anyone has any.

Thank you.