

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING OF RUSHWICK PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.30 PM
AT RUSHWICK VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr Jenkins (Chair), Cllr Hemsworth, Cllr Lowe, Cllr Williams and Cllr Haywood

In Attendance: Mrs Sharon Dunn (Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer) plus three members of the public
County Cllr Scott Richardson-Brown (arrived 7.50pm and left 8.00pm)

1. Apologies: District Cllr Whatley (Personal) - Received.
2. Declarations of Interest
 1. Register of Interests: Councillors were reminded of the need to update their register of interest.
 2. To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature - None.
 3. To declare any Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda and their nature - None
3. To Consider written requests from Councillors for the Council to Grant a Dispensation (S33 of The Localism Act 2011) written requests to be with the clerk prior to the meeting - None

Public Question Time

Notes from Public Question Time are appended to these minutes
County Councillor Report - The report was noted.

District Councillors Report - Devolution process letter from Westminster had been circulated.

4. Minutes: Having been previously circulated the minutes of The Parish Council meeting of 08.01.2025 were signed as a true and correct record.
5. Progress Reports: Matters arising from previous minutes: None
The Action Plan was reviewed and updated.
6. Parish Lengthsman Scheme: Tim continues to make good recovery following his re-scheduled surgery.
7. Finance
 1. Payment of accounts as per schedule were authorised.
 2. Monthly Bank Reconciliation Statement - For Information Only
 3. Agreed Final Budget for 2025/2026 and precept - For Information Only
 4. **RESOLVED:** The Risk Schedule and Model Scheme of Delegation were reviewed and adopted
 5. **RESOLVED:** The Asset Register for the financial year 2024/2025 was reviewed and adopted.
8. Reports from representatives: To receive an update
 1. Report from Village Hall Committee: Cllr Griffin-Blugher - No report available
 - a. Update on the transfer of ownership status
 2. Footpath Officers report: Cllr Williams
Cllr Williams had partially cleared fallen branches at the path from Rushwick junction towards Teme Bridge and Path 525 (b) from the Cricket ground to the pedestrian bridge.
 3. Report on Play Area: Cllr Hemsworth
Tim Hughes has agreed to assist with some extra work required around the play area.
ESP Play Ltd have inspected the damage to the play equipment and are checking if all is complaint should the windows be left out.
Cllr Hemsworth has some spare tiles and touch-up paint to carry out some remedial repairs.
The football pitch maintenance programme is scheduled to start at the end of March/early April.

4. School Representative report: Position Vacant
Minor concerns of a little dog mess on the pavement outside the school and some littering
Open to ideas to host events, either outdoors using the field or indoors after 5.30pm in the school week or at weekends, particularly as the weather improves. The weekly bulletin is regularly circulated.
Diary Date: **Summer Fair Friday 4 July 2025**
5. Speeding Issues & Crime Prevention Update: Vacant
Cllr Jenkins to progress matters with the police to organize training now that there are a sufficient number of volunteers required to progress with the radar gun to help combat speeding.
Inconsiderate parking is still a persistent problem with vehicles parked along the Bransford Road.
Construction vehicles are still using the Bransford Road to access Claphill Lane. This has been brought to the site foreman's attention.
9. Update on the Parish Neighbourhood Plan: Cllr Lowe - No progress to report
10. WCC Highway Issues - Progress Update: Cllr Jenkins
County Cllr has to help progress concerns
11. Planning: The following Planning Applications were considered for comment: -

Application No: M/25/00038/HP
Location: 1 Vivian Avenue Rushwick, WR2 5SS
Proposal: Rear single storey and side first floor extensions.
Comments: No Objections

Application No: M/25/00002/ADV
Location: Land at (Os 8205 5395), Claphill Lane, Rushwick
Proposal: Various Advertisement signs associated with the sales area for housing development
Comments: No Objections
12. SWDPR - Hearing Statement Submission - Deadline Tuesday 11 February 2025 at 5pm
Please see attached for the submission made.
13. Correspondence for Information: Circulated by the Clerk
 - Email from MHDC asking for the letter bin outside Rushwick Primary School to be reinstated. Arrangements are to be made for this bin to be reinstalled. Cllr Hemsworth to progress.
 - WCC Proposed Traffic Regulation Order - To place double yellow lines Bransford Road/Grange Lane – comments required by 3 March 2025. The Parish Council wishes to extend double-yellow lines Bransford Road/Grange Lane - rather than the proposed suggestion. **Cllr Jenkins to submit a response.**
 - Letter dated 30.01.2025 from South Worcestershire Citizens Advice - request for financial support. Please see minute 14.
14. **RESOLVED:** To make a financial donation of £100 to support the work of South Worcestershire Citizens Advice
Late correspondence circulated - Request for financial support from St Thomas Church
RESOLVED: To make a financial donation of £100 to help support St Thomas Church.
15. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas - None
The Clerk indicated there may be an issue with her lap top which no longer holds its charge. Some trouble-shooting to take place.

The meeting closed at 8.45 PM.

Signed Chairman..... Date.....

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A parishioner reported flooding behind the Whitehall pub where there is supposed to be a footpath (Footpath 670B). She is concerned it is becoming dangerous and at times impassable. It is a link to other very nice paths and walks and has only happened since the building work started behind the Whitehall pub. Cllr Jenkins to inspect and refer to Lioncourt Homes.

Another flooded area (Footpath 512C) is behind the pond where the Keir houses have been built. A bridge over the brook has flooding all around it. The pond is backing up. The water isn't draining away. Cllr Williams to liaise with the farmer.

County Councillor – Scott Richardson Brown

Referenced the plan to accelerate the Devolution process to become a Unitary Authority. The big budget deficit of £30 - £40 million pounds especially with children with special educational needs. This may involve selling off some assets and applying for extra funding to try and make the figures work.

- Cllr Jenkins would be grateful if he could pursue a meeting with Simon Gerraghty concerning the Claphill Lane Roundabout concerning its construction and impact on Claphill Lane.
- Consultation on parking WCC Proposed Traffic Regulation Order - The Parish Council wishes to extend double yellow lines Bransford Road/Grange Lane - rather than the proposed suggestion.

District Councillor Report – Peter Whatley

Official notification to MHDC and Worcs CC regarding next steps in the Devolution process of reorganising local government. Key points:-

1. Draft proposals due by March 21st with outline of proposals for our area; final, fully worked proposals with rationale due by November 28th.
2. There is no timescale for ministerial review of final proposals, nor final agreement from Westminster.
3. By implication, no draft legislation before 2026 and no implementation before April 1st 2027 (April 1st is the government's preferred date for changes....). So the current structure can be expected to survive until at least April 1st 2027.
4. The principles for reorganisation have been broadened. The "county level" 1st tier unitary structure may be a whole county, part of a county, or either of those plus areas outside the county. For example, Worcestershire, plus a district of Warwickshire, or Herefordshire plus MHDC and Wyre Forest. N.B. I am not suggesting either of those options is desirable: they're just examples of what Westminster is prepared to permit.
5. It's expected that new local government boundaries will - where possible - match the boundaries for other public services, such as the emergency services. That would suggest a West Mercia 2nd level authority, though Shropshire have already indicated that their preferred position would be with Cheshire and/or Stoke-on-Trent, not with Herefordshire & Worcestershire. So possibly ongoing reorganisational costs down the line for our emergency services.
6. The process for establishing the 2nd tier structure (Combined County Authority) may be decoupled from the county level review. It is suggested that both activities could happen in parallel. How that could possibly work, bearing in mind both have to be geographically consistent, I cannot fathom, but the option exists.

7. Workload has been pushed down to the counties/ districts. Doubtless as Westminster has realised there isn't enough time/ resources to do what's required "in house".
8. The process enables justification/ rationale for what emerges to be blamed on local authorities in 10 years' time, not Westminster!

As a final point, this is going to be very time consuming and costly for local councils, especially the counties.

RUSHWICK PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION TO EXAMINER

Please note that our initial submission regarding the SWDP consultation are still relevant & still stand & are attached.

EXAM 1 Q21 AND EXAM 1A CLAUSE 21.11 - 21:

This relates to SWDP53 and the provision of a new station at Rushwick. In response to Q21 in EXAM 1 the statements in Clause 21 EXAM 1A.

We uphold our opinion that the evidence justifying delivery of the railway station within the plan period is unsound.

The statements are aspirational but vague resulting in a policy that is not realistic or deliverable within the plan period. We also believe that a lack of a statement of common ground with Network Rail supports this conclusion.

Q.137 WAS THE LOCATION FOR THE PROPOSED NEW SETTLEMENT SELECTED ON A ROBUST BASIS?

We contend that the location for the proposed new settlement was not selected on a robust basis.

Rushwick is a Category 3 village with minimal facilities.

The SA18 (III) was carried out & scored the site on the predication that a train station would be delivered in advance of development as per the SWDP Preferred Options Consultation document (November 2019) Paragraph 17.3.

The most recent version of the plan now only requires the land for the future development of a train station to be secured yet the evidence does not align with the allocation being sustainable without the train station being delivered in advance:

- SWDP Preferred Options Consultation document (November 2019) Paragraph 17.3 “no development would take place until the rail station was open.”
- The SWDP R18(III) SA Report dated February 2021 Clause 3.6.9 “it is acknowledged that an expanded settlement at Rushwick may not function effectively without the railway station being secured in advance.”

- SWDPR REG19 SA V3 E.3.10.5: “Without railway station it is likely the personal car would remain the most convenient form of transport for new residents leading and result in increased emissions & congestion in the local area.”

Consequently, we believe that selection of the location for the proposed new development at Rushwick can only be considered a sustainable if the railway station and associated infrastructure is provided prior to any development commencing.

EXAM 36 Q143: WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE THAT THE PROPOSED ALLOCATION WOULD BE VIABLE?

The South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) and Strategic Sites Viability Assessment Financial Viability Assessment Appendices done by Aspinall Verdi states that of the 4 proposed allocations Rushwick is the most unviable of all the sites.

Quote – ‘Not viable’ with a deficit in excess of £32.9M

EXAM 36 Q144: WHAT IS THE ROBUST EVIDENCE THAT THE PROPOSED RAILWAY STATION SITE SHOULD BE SECURED AND SAFEGUARDED? IS THERE A REASONABLE PROSPECT THAT THE RAILWAY STATION WOULD BE DELIVERED IN THE PLAN PERIOD? IF SO, ARE THE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS AND COSTS KNOWN?

Securing the proposed railway station site is the first step in developing an operational railway station. It does not guarantee delivery of a station and as stated in EXAM 1A Clause 21 delivery of the station within the plan period is aspirational; There is no evidence to indicate it is realistic or definitive.

The Infrastructure Development Plan in Chapter 18 Table B indicates there is £12.6 million shortfall in funding the station.

There is no evidence that supports the delivery of a train station within the plan period.

EXAM 36 Q145: IF THE PROPOSED RAILWAY STATION WAS NOT DELIVERABLE, WHAT WOULD THE IMPLICATIONS BE FOR THE PROPOSED ALLOCATION?

As stated in the response to EXAM 36 Q137 the evidence to support the proposed development at Rushwick was based on delivery of the station and associated infrastructure prior to any development taking place.

There is no evidence within the SWDPR R18(III) SA Report and the Reg 19 Sustainability Appraisal that the site would be sustainable without delivery of a Train Station in advance or within the plan period.

Consequently, we believe SWDPR 53 should be amended to state the station should be operational and the supporting infrastructure completed before any development takes place in line with the original plan, which was based on evidence, & the following NPPF clauses:

- 8a: “by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;”
- 11a: “all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure;”