

KEMERTON PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of Kemerton Annual Parish meeting held at the Victoria Hall on Tuesday 15th March 2016 at 7.00pm.

Present

Cllr's C Kulukundis, Mr R Davies, Mr A Darby OBE (Chaired the Meeting) Parish and District, Mr J Van den Broek, Mrs L Hemsted, Mrs J Way, Mr N Coleman, Mr G Long, Dr and Mrs Phillip, Mr P Truscott, Mr M Walker and Ms J Shields (Parish Clerk).

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Cllr's Mr S Papacostantinou, Sir D Logan and Mr A Hardman (County), Mrs D Attwell, Mrs C Ford, Mr B Ford and the Local Policing team

2. Minutes Of Annual Parish Meeting Held 17th March 2015.

The minutes, having been circulated, were signed as a true record.

3. Report from West Mercia Police.

The last 12 months has continued to be busy throughout our policing area which extends from Whittington, Upton Snodsbury and Dormston in the north to Bredon and Beckford in the south. We have carried out active engagement within our policing area in the form of monthly police surgeries and local parish events. The whole team remain committed to tackling all levels of crime throughout the area including rural crime and poaching and providing security advice and support to victims and vulnerable residents.

This report is based using the recorded crime figures between 13/03/15 and 13/03/16 the comparison is relating to the corresponding dates in 2014/15.

Overall the police recorded 39 incidents that were reported by members of the public this is compared to 39 incidents reported the previous year.

Of the 39 incidents the Parish had 8 recordable crimes (incidents where a specific offence has occurred) this was in comparison to 12 recordable crimes the previous year.

The breakdown of offences is as follows:

	2015/16	2014/15
Burglary Dwellings	2	8
Theft	3	2
Criminal Damage	0	2
Other Offences	3	0

(Includes mostly domestic related incidents)

Overall the figures show a steady but low crime rate for the past few years however the surrounding area has seen an increase in burglaries and we urge residents to remain vigilant and address their security. We have continued with increased patrols in the area and have issued security advice.

The figures clearly present the picture that Kemerton and the surrounding area is still a safe place to both live and work, however we all have a responsibility to ensure we maintain this.

On behalf of the team and myself I should like to offer my thanks to the Parish Council for all its help over the last 12 months. I would also like to say thank you to the Parish as a whole for its continued support of the local policing team and for the numerous calls we have received relating to suspicious activity, all we ask is that you continue to do this.

Pershore Rural North and South Local Policing Team

Non-emergency phone number: 101

*Q Parking in Main Street is a problem with cars blocking the pavements.
Clerk to inform the team.*

KEMERTON PARISH COUNCIL

4. County Councillor's Report.

I am sorry not be with you tonight, but this is a very busy night with annual meetings at two other Parishes, and another Parish Council meeting, and I have decided to go the Parish which has the most issues at the moment which is Strensham with yet another 800,000 ton waste disposal application in the parish.

The County has been worrying about four issues at the front of its planning, the rise in the numbers of children in our care, the rising numbers of elderly who need our care, the reductions in support from Central government, and the question of devolution of powers from Whitehall to local democracy.

The rise in numbers of children we are taking into our care has slowed but is still not yet reversing and this is shown by the £5.1 m overspend in this year in the budget, to which 2% of the 3.9% Council Tax rise is being aimed at, and we are working at improving our early intervention strategy to deal with the numbers of children who have no contact with this service before we or the courts intervene. The County's demographic profile continues to worsen with a rise of over 50% of our residents living beyond 85 over the next 10 years. While this is great news: it does lead to an increase in the very frail and elderly who need our and the NHS help. This is very resource intensive for us both, but we remain determined that Social care does not squeeze out all the other services, like a good library service & sound road maintenance.

This is set against a backdrop of dramatic government reductions in grant with the County having to reduce its spending by some £25 M in the current year, and some £30 M in the next financial year, which is a very large ask indeed when one considers that spend has declined by the County from £439M at its peak to some £330M today. There are times when a breath of relief is felt by me that I no longer have the responsibility. The Government continues to cloud the horizon with devolution promises to which at the moment for Counties has amounted to nothing. The Birmingham devo deal sounds a lot of cash and responsibility till one saw that the yearly figure was being multiplied by 30 years. How any deal is going to last for 6 parliaments is a question for others, and the Treasury is taking a stronger hand and reconfiguring some Devo deals; so Suffolk is now going in with Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, and Peterborough to form another level of Government in a combined authority. This makes Whitehall's life easier I suppose, but it is a long way from bottom up driven, and feels like an attempt to recreate a regional structure of Government.

But local issues are what a Parish Council meeting should be about. I am delighted that we have made some progress over the flooding issues in the village and I would like to thank a prominent local landowner for his help and support. There is still a lot to do. The issue that has made little progress is the Kemerton traffic management plan, since the County comes back to the issue of budgets all the time since we don't have a line to support this sort of work, but I intend next year to fund the County's work from my local members budget, so at least we get a County view, and can work out what they can do or can't. There are footway works in plan for outside the shop, and the connection footway between the Village Hall and war memorial, which are funded. In the near future resurfacing work is planned for Back lane. I would urge of residents to consider using the 540 bus service, since I feel the County will have to look at the question of subsidy of buses again, and this service still receives a subsidy. The local school continues to be in excellent heart, which not all around the hill are alas. I continue to work closely with your local District Councillor as evidenced by our joint appearance at the Public inquiry into the 550 houses at Aston Fields to ensure that traffic and conservation issues were considered by the inspector.

Comments to pass on to Cllr Hardman.

The County Council continues to call Church Lane, Back Lane.

The main roads need re surfacing.

KEMERTON PARISH COUNCIL

5. District Councillor's Report.

For the last two years I have reported on two major issues. These themes recur once more.

Finance

Wychavon published its business plan Grow, Save, Charge. This was its proposal to cope with a reduction of £4m of central government funding between 2010/11 and 2017/18, which represents 59% of our budget.

Of this gap we aimed to save £2.1m in 2013-15 and a further £1m in 2015-18. We now expect to achieve £3.157m by the end of next financial year, and are reaching our target a year early.

The council tax was raised by £4.99 which was what the government assumed we would do.

Planning

The South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) was adopted on the 25 February. It is a great relief to have it in place at last. There is the possibility that some objector may seek to take it to judicial review in the High Court. They have six weeks from the adoption date to submit a legal challenge. However the grounds on which this can be done are very narrow and the three councils are fairly confident that there will be no challenge. Because of its need to take overspill from the other two authorities, Wychavon is now required to provide 10,600 dwellings, rather than its own objectively assessed need of 9950. However the sites approved in the plan plus those already given planning consent ensure that this number will be met.

So far as Kemerton is concerned the allocation of 9 houses at Park Farm, Job's Lane remains as it was in the original version of the plan, and any other residential development will only be allowed if it is in accordance with the plan policies, i.e. it is within the settlement boundary, or is a rural exception site on the edge of the development boundary to provide affordable housing, or is an addition to an existing dwelling, or conversion of an agricultural building. Because the plan has taken so long to produce and its successful adoption was not guaranteed last May, I stood again as a District Councillor. Having been so much involved in the gestation of this plan and I was determined to see it through.

The reason that it is so important to have a plan is that, without one, developers can claim that the council is obliged to pass any application for housing that is deemed to be sustainable.

I reported last year on various appeals, with which I had been involved in the uncertain world where we were trying to defend a local plan which was long past its intended end date. I am happy to say that the battle, to which I referred last year, to prevent 98 houses at Tewkesbury Road, Bredon was won. However Kemerton does not need only to pay attention to its own local plan, the SWDP, but also should watch carefully the situation in the adjoining county of Gloucestershire. Here the Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (GCT-JCS) is intending to allocate a very large area of housing land within a quarter of a mile of the parish boundary.

It has identified the Ashchurch MOD site and some green field land to the north west of it as a strategic allocation for 2725 dwellings and 20 ha of employment land.

I have been urging Wychavon to object to this unless various safeguards can be achieved. In particular we need control of traffic to prevent rat-running through the Bredon Hill villages when there are blockages on the A46, and adequate screening from Bredon Hill plus proper protection of the sensitive biodiversity of the Carrant Valley. To make this case I have been attending sessions of the Examination in Public of the JCS which is now nearing its end. I am still due to speak on 30 March at a session dealing with green infrastructure.

Robert Hitchins Ltd submitted a planning application for 550 houses on the part of this allocated site which is still farmland and lies to the east of the railway, south of Aston Fields Lane and north-west of the camp. They appealed against Tewkesbury Borough Council's failure to determine their application and the appeal was heard last week. Both Councillor Hardman and I attended the public inquiry to put forward the arguments cited in the previous paragraph. I concentrated on biodiversity and landscape issues and he on traffic.

KEMERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Concerns were raised at the congestion on the A46 at peak times and that more housing at Ashchurch will lead to Kemerton being part of a 'rat run'. Both the county and district councillors are pushing for 'No vehicular Access' onto Ashton Fields Lane.

Cllr Darby confirmed that the 3 acres site at Ashbury farm would be protected from development until 2030 by the SWDP.

6. Parish Council Report.

It has been agreed that I should present this report, although I am not the current Chairman.

For the parish council it has been an eventful year with the election in May.

Four of the previous councillors did not stand. They were Cathy Ford, Chris Renfrew, Kirsty Cartwright and Rich Withnall. I would like to record the council's thanks to them for their contributions.

Only five people offered themselves for election - the existing councillors, Sir David Logan, Savakis Papaconstantinou and myself and two others, Robert Davies and Christina Kulukundis. Since there are seven places, all these were automatically elected, leaving two vacancies to be filled by co-opting Jeff van den Broek and Clive Carver.

With such a small number of returning councillors it was difficult to find a chairman. Sir David Logan agreed to serve for the May and July meetings and I did for September, November and January. After this it was agreed that the chair should rotate each meeting and Robert Davies served in March.

Matters referred to in last year's report.

The traffic calming brochure referred to in last year's report was printed and sent to County Councillor Adrian Hardman.

The scheme to underground electricity cables in Hill Road and Bayliss Road proved to be too expensive without a larger contribution from Western Power and is therefore not being pursued.

War Memorial. The grant was received from the War Memorials Trust and the work was carried out with some additional work to the names being financed out of New Homes Bonus.

Flooding. The county council scheme at the top of Hill Road has been carried out with a view to restricting the rate of flow off Bredon Hill. It seems to have passed its first test this winter.

Grass cutting. Christina Kulukundis and Clive Carver have reviewed all the verges that have been mowed in the past and have proposed a new schedule which has been agreed with Tony Jones, This in part reflects the Cotswolds AONB prescriptions.

The new arrangements are explained in the new newsletter, also produced by Christina, which will be circulated to every house in the parish. She also explains householders' responsibility for streams on the edge of their property.

New Items

New Lengthsman. Mark Farey replaced Andy Hull. The council has recorded its thanks to Andy.

New Homes Bonus. Part of this bonus has been spent on the War Memorial (see above) and the purchase of three litter bins

Speed gun training has been carried out, and more is to follow.

Assets of Community Value. It is proposed to designate the following, The Victoria Hall, The Shop and Post Office, The Crown Inn, St Bennet's (RC) Church, St Nicholas (C of E) Church and the Acupuncture Clinic.

Unsocial behaviour in the bus shelter. The parish council is concerned about this and proposes to install a movement activated light to deter such behaviour.

Planning:

The parish council has commented on a number of planning applications. There were eight applications relating to existing dwellings, and one to the Crown Inn, all of which were passed by Wychavon, with comments by the parish council taken account of in the conditions where relevant. There was also an application to increase the size of the aerials on Parson's Folly (Bredon Hill Radio Tower!) which was refused by Wychavon officers under delegated powers.

KEMERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Up grading of broad band was explained.

7. Chairman of Victoria Hall Report.

The membership of the Trustees of Kemerton Victoria Hall (KVH) changed significantly during the year. Di Atwell, vice-chairman, Gordon Long, former chairman, Emma Stallard and Margaret Strange stepped down after contributing many years of devoted service to the hall. We were saddened to lose such wise, experienced and energetic colleagues but we thank them and wish them well. Cathy Ford resigned as the representative of the Parish Council. We welcomed in her stead Christina Darby. Kirk Ritchie accepted an invitation to join the Trustees.

The audited accounts show significant positive balances despite increases in the costs of general maintenance. Hall-hiring rates for general users will remain unchanged in 2016. However, the preferential rate for the Preschool will be increased by 25% from January 1st, 2016.

Having received from Wychavon Planning Authority endorsement in principle of our sketch plans, the Trustees sought the opinions of the people of Kemerton on the wisdom of extending and refurbishing the hall. Copies of a detailed brochure describing the project and its costs and an opinion survey were sent to every household in the village soliciting comments and advice. The Opinion Survey was returned by more than 80% of households. It revealed a substantial majority (64%) in favour of extension and refurbishment. A significant minority (30%) felt that extension and refurbishment were not justified because the cost/benefit ratio would be unfavourable, parking is inadequate, the school may close or site clearance and building would disrupt the school and traffic on the main road. Approximately 10 respondents (6%) felt that the only solution was a new site and a new hall.

Subsequent discussions revealed that none of the local landowners was willing to sell or gift land to us and therefore this option was not viable. The results of the survey were discussed at a village meeting. The Trustees subsequently decided to proceed with the project. Quotations were sought from three firms of architects. After evaluation it was decided that Clist & Chandler of Pershore would be most suitable and were retained as project architects. In the next three months we intend to submit final plans to the planning authority. In the event that they are accepted we will begin fundraising.

The Village Fete was an outstanding success. Almost £3800 was raised for KVH and St Nicholas' Church, an increase of 9% on the prior year. Mary Yerburch, Richard Bennett, Deb Manns, Roger Workman and Di Atwell were principally responsible for the excellent organisation of the event. In 2016 the fete will take place on August 27th in the paddock behind the hall.

The hall extension and refurbishment project has significantly increased the pressure on committee members. They have responded magnificently, fully aware that responsibility for managing and financing a project of this magnitude is unprecedented in recent times. I have no doubt that they will see it through to a successful conclusion.

Q Parking issues for the hall.

A. It will always be an issue and is has to be worked with.

8. Questions from the Floor.

As Above.

Q. The footpath between Kemerton and Westmancote near the old allotments, still pools with water, the pipe in the ditch needs clearing out of silt.

A Cllr Darby to investigate.

Mr G Long has the remainder of the paint purchased for the telephone kiosk, when it needs re doing. The black and white poll will be an agenda item for the May meeting.

Clerk to contact Cllr Hardman regarding the large vehicles that go up Hill Road and are unable to turn round, so they cut up the verge whilst reversing back down.