

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR THE PARISH OF WOLVERLEY AND COOKLEY
HELD AT COOKLEY FIRST SCHOOL, COOKLEY
ON TUESDAY 2nd APRIL 2019 AT 7.30PM

1. **Welcome**

Councillor Mr Robin Drew, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed all present and presided over an attendance of 50 Local Government Electors plus Councillors together with the Clerk to the Parish Council and District/County Councillor Ian Hardiman.

Also present;

Helen Selkirk - National Trust

Ewan Chapman - National Trust

Peter Carty - Countryside Manager for South Shropshire and Kinver Edge.

2. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from West Mercia Police.

3. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 3rd April 2018**

The minutes of this meeting were read, and it was RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a correct record of that meeting and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. **Chairman's Annual Report**

The Chairman, Councillor Drew gave his report;

Good evening, It is only at the end of my term as Chairman on reflection I realise how much we as a Parish Council have achieved this year, We have completed the Gateway & Planters scheme, the final one's being in Blakeshall. We now have 13 Gateways & 10 Planters at the entrances to our villages that greatly enhance the appearance and approaches to our villages and encourages drivers to slow down.

Then we had GDPR... a full review of our procedures was conducted to ensure as a Parish Council we fully adhere and comply to the new data protection laws.

We continue as a Parish Council to support Cookley & Caunsall in their development of a Neighbourhood Plan.

We've had a Local Advisory Poll which looked at separating our current council into two separate bodies, the vote was very close, but the outcome was to remain as we are now.

Then we have had several large-scale planning applications in our Parish...

Stourbridge Rd / Hurcott... Sion Hill School site... and by way of Wyre Forest Local Plan the development on Lea Castle site. The latter causing much debate and concern and will be an ongoing issue for this Parish Council.

We also have the potential proposed development on the Strong's estate of a Quarry, we still await a formal application but already in these early stages we have had a pre consultation meeting with the agents and action groups have formed ready to fight this proposal.

The Parish Council have supported the Cookley In Bloom project and were absolutely delighted with their success with judging in their first year. I would like to say a big thank you and well done to all the councillors and volunteers who helped to really transform Cookley and I am sure this will continue to grow and grow each year!!!

There have been ongoing issues with the Cookley Bus service and both Parish / District and County Councillors have actively followed up on parishioners' comments and concerns. There was another excellent turnout of Councillors for both Wolverley & Cookley Remembrance Day parades, thank-you.

We are continuing to participate in the Lengthsman scheme, our Lengthsman Tim Dale continues to do an excellent job. We are also continuing with the litter bin contract we took over from WFDC and again I feel we now provide a better service to residents.

From this month we have taken on the contact for grass cutting from WFDC, we will be using a local contractor Keith Basketfield and I feel very positive that the service we will provide in the Parish will be much improved.

We have extended the lease on the Wolverley Memorial Hall to allow the New Memorial Hall Group to apply for grants and funds.

Then we worked with WFDC to conduct a housing needs survey.

W&CPC have given grants to Wolverley Memorial Hall, Cookley Playing Fields and both churches.

And I could go on...

Finally, I want to thank every councillor for their support this last year, you all work extremely hard to look after our Parish, thank you so much... and my last words go to our Clerk... never off duty, answers calls / emails from councillors, parishioners and many other bodies 24/7, always there to offer advice and guidance, we really do appreciate all you do, thank you.

Elections are on 2nd May, again many thanks to those who are stepping down and good luck to those who are standing again, and I look forward to welcoming a new chairman in May along with any new parish councillors.

5. **Reports**

Annual Report for Wolverley and Cookley Annual Parish Meeting from the Wyre Forest Rural Ward Councillors: Cllr. Ian Hardiman, Cllr. Marcus Hart and Cllr. Stephen Williams

Annual Report for Wolverley and Cookley Annual Parish Meeting from County Councillor Ian Hardiman:

Reports were read and are appended to minutes.

6. **To receive Charity Accounts and Accounts of the Parish Council for the year ended 31st March 2018**

Audited accounts were presented for inspection;

Sebright Educational Foundation
Anne A Mitchell Fund
The Wolverley Charity
Wolverley Memorial Hall

Parish Council Accounts

The audited Parish Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2018 were received, examined and approved.

7. **Blakeshall Common**

Helen Selkirk / Ewan Chapman - National Trust

Helen presented an overview of the proposals for Blakeshall Common. The National Trust want to do a heathland restoration. It is really important habitat conservation and an amazing project for wildlife, they also want people to access the land and are consulting with the public. More public meetings are being held and organised walks, nothing has been finalised and they are open to suggestions and willing to listen. Maps were passed round showing proposals.

Ewan spoke on the timescales of project, in the next year 2020 there would be fencing off 30 hectares, introduction of cattle into that area and a phased removal of some of the trees. Ecology is very much in line with national trust policy in recent years - set up in 1895 to provide open space for urban poor - open access, nature and landscape at core of policy, the National Trust know it is very popular, there are challenges ahead but they will try and address these, let specialist plants and animals increase, look after archaeology. Habitat will look like heathland habitat, young healthier, beech trees, very varied, diverse landscape, taking less than half of conifers out leaving a lot in, They want to encourage access, dog walkers, families, cyclists, maintain horse access as well.

8. **Any issues residents would like to discuss;**

Parishioners Comments/Questions;

The National Trust don't know the history of the estate, grown up with it, they are taking out 75 acres of woodland, in 1957 Blakeshall estate bought this land, in 1971 council decided they wanted to buy it, 194 acres in the estate, bought by compulsory order, if you have healthy woodland why change it? we need to keep conifers there, why do you want to destroy the area - very against the proposals.

Parishioner keeps horses at Sladd farm livery stables in gypsy lane, people of all ages ride, as things stand there is very free access on that edge, tracks for walkers, bridle paths for horses and dedicated cyclist jumps and pathways, what are plans for these people?, shouldn't be put together, putting cattle on is wrong, you say they are docile creatures but horses don't know this and can be cow phobic, these shouldn't put these in a central area, very dangerous to put that many cattle in an area of livery stables, also tall trunked red conifers are exceptionally beautiful, please do not destroy this,

Helen Selkirk responded - horse access is as described on map, they are inheriting same routes, not taking any of this away, cows are not on any of these routes around the edges, cows will be in the middle, there will be a route in middle but you don't need to use if you don't want to.

There were concerns expressed over fences close to paths, they do not want barbed wire. Also, over the number of trees proposed to be removed, loss of species such as crossbills, white admirals, goldcrests. Abandoning gates on bridleways to encourage certain species, concern over adders which are a danger to dogs being walked. Concerns over the transfer of the land to the National Trust.

There are similar proposals going on in Clent and Hartlebury Common - it appears that the National Trust is taking over, Country parks are designed to provide amenity areas for public and you are now limiting access people have had for generations.

There was continued heated debate on these proposals for Blakeshall Common. Helen advised that there is a guided walk planned for Thursday 5th April, also drop-in sessions at Kinver Library. They are happy to be sent any comments by e mail and will look at all points raised.

The Chairman thanked all for the very lively discussion and advised that the Parish Council will put this on the agenda for discussion at the May meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.45 pm.