

WOLVERLEY & COOKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 5th March 2024, 7.00pm,
Cookley School**

Present:

Mr D Cox (Chairman)
Mr R Drew
Mrs V Bordewich
Mr B Brookes
Mr J Hart
Mr M Hart
Mrs J Hicks
Mr D Jones
Mr C Nicholls
Mr C Sherrey
Mr W Southam
Mr A Webber
Mr J Wood

West Mercia Police: PCSO Kate Easthope
County Councillor: Councillor I Hardiman
District Councillors: Councillor R M Drew, M J Hart, I Hardiman.

173. **Apologies**

Cllr B MacFarland due to illness.

174. **Declarations of Councillors Interests**

- a) Register of Interests: Councillors are reminded to complete and need to regularly update their register of interests.
- b) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature.
- c) To declare any Other Registerable Interests or Non-Registerable Interests in items on the agenda and their nature.

Public Question Time:

The Chairman welcomed members of the public and asked for any speakers.

Representatives from The Wolverley Tennis Charitable Incorporated Organisation were present. They advised that The Wolverley Memorial Charitable Trust will not enter any further discussions with the tennis club. They also advised they are trying to contact Caroline Newlands, Solicitor, WFDC regarding the lease.

The Chairman advised this is not on the agenda for discussion at meeting tonight but requested it be put on next month's agenda.

The meeting was reconvened.

175. **To consider the adoption of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 6th February 2024 at 7.00pm**

These having previously been circulated it was resolved unanimously to receive and adopt the minutes as a true record of the meeting and these were signed by the Chairman.

Matters for Discussion / Decision;

176. **Police Report.**

Written Report circulated;

We are appealing to the community for information following a burglary at a home on Drakelow Lane, Wolverley. The burglary happened at approximately 2000hrs on Sunday 4th February 2024. The offenders forced entry to the home via a rear door and have stolen valuable items including cash and jewellery from the address. Anyone with any information about the incident is asked to contact us online, quoting incident number 00445_I_04022024.

Between 17.00 and 22.30hrs on Saturday 3rd February, a pregnant ewe has been stolen from a field along the A451 just up from the 5 ways crossroads near to Stakenbridge Lane. The ewe was dragged across the field and loaded into a waiting vehicle. Anyone with any information about the incident is asked to contact us online, quoting incident number 00197_I_04022024

00226_I_15022024 - We are appealing for information after a Grey Range Rover Discovery was stolen from the national trust car park on the junction of Blakeshall Lane and Gypsy Lane, Wolverley. The theft occurred on the 15th February between 11.40am - 13.10pm.

Police Ref 00211_I_17022024 - We are investigating a report of an attempted car key burglary on Albrighton Drive, Kidderminster. At approx 01.40hrs this morning, a BMW was seen outside a property in this location. Two people got out of the vehicle and went into the rear garden of the property, believed with a view to stealing the keys to vehicles on the drive, that were a BMW and a Mercedes. They were disturbed by neighbours returning home. The males ran and got into the waiting BMW.

00013_I_16022024 - We are appealing for information after a White '15 plate Transit Van was stolen from Orchard Grove, Caunsall, the van has distinctive red and orange markings on the back doors. The theft occurred in the early hours of the 16th February at 01:20am.

It has been reported that a vehicle was seen driving back and forth past the property moments before the theft occurred, it is believed an angle grinder or similar was used during the theft. The van contained a large number of tools.

00169_I_26022024 - We are investigating the theft of two lambs from a field off Sugar Loaf Lane, Ismere. The lambs are 3 weeks old. One has a number 16 in blue on its left shoulder. The theft occurred between 18.00hrs and midnight on Friday 23rd February.

We have also had reports of rogue traders operating in the Kidderminster area, targeting residents claiming their properties need roofing work. Rogue traders and doorstep callers may do unnecessary work, or to a poor standard, or the price may rapidly increase.

Tips to remember:

- do not buy goods or services from doorstep traders
- do not open the door if you do not know the caller
- do not let a stranger into your home
- do display a warning card that you do not buy goods or services at the door
- do use a door chain on both the front and back door
- do check ID cards
- do make a note of any vehicle details (the registration number, any business name, etc.)
- do report suspicious callers to Trading Standards (the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline number is 0808 223 1133) or the Police on 101.

Be suspicious if you are told:

- the work is urgent, and you need to act quickly
- there are broken roof tiles, or a leaking gutter, etc. Take your time to get informed and seek the opinion of a reputable trader before making any decisions
- Police are advising residents not to open their doors to anyone cold calling offering repair work on their home. They can call police on 101 for advice. Anyone who feels threatened should call 999.

Cllr Cox enquired if there is a campaign or any leaflets regarding leaving cars engines running, Kate advised that they use Neighbourhood Matters for this type of warning now.

PCSO Easthope advised that the recent bike marking event in Wolverley & Cookley had been the poorest turnout to date.

Cllr Drew requested that as school parking is the top priority could there be some police presence around the schools at drop off and pick up. PCSO Easthope said they can go and advise but WFDC must enforce.

177. **County / District Councillor Reports.**

District Councillor Report;

Local Issues

We have been dealing with the usual routine casework, reporting litter and fly tipping on the main A roads and along the country lanes. Indeed, we arranged for the removal of a sofa in Caunsall which was removed by WFDC the day after being reported.

There was an abandoned car on Franche Road (4 weeks outside a resident's drive) and this was reported to the police and then passed to WFDC who recovered it and impounded it.

We have liaised with Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) following concerns of rubbish and potential pollution issues in the Honey Brook on a field at Highlow Bank/Franche Road. This has now been cleared.

There are a number of planning enforcement issues still ongoing in the parish.

The wall at Cedars, Axborough Lane is still on our radar. WFDC are in liaison with WCC in respect of this as in fact the wall, not only is too high but is built on WCC land and hence why it is proposed WCC take enforcement action.

The dog training activity along Drakelow Lane has been very proactively monitored over the last few weeks again and the land owner has confirmed that the site should now have been cleared as of last weekend just gone and our officers are to inspect this week and we have been told all activity will now cease, the end of December deadline in respect of the enforcement decision now well and truly been passed.

In respect of the post office in Cookley, we continue to push on this too.

Wyre Forest Issues

Work is well under way with the Connectivity project in Worcester Street, Kidderminster where 4 large redundant retail units are being demolished to open up this area of town. There will be much more gradual steps to what are currently there now called the 'Step Entry' and also a gradual path down, with benches and a park/public open space. We need to make this area of town attractive to urban living and link up the former Glades site which we want to see developed for residential with the wider town centre. Planning consent has now been granted for this project and this should be completed by the end of the year.

Work is also well under way at the former Magistrates' Court, which is being branded as the 'Creative Hub'. This will be office spaces that can be permanently let and there will be flexible lets and venue space too. Again this should be completed by the end of the year.

WFDC have just purchased the Piano Building and bus station in Weavers Wharf, using Levelling Up Fund monies granted by the Government. We plan to tidy up the bus station and make it more attractive in due course and work will be underway to rent out the ground floor of the building for a food and beverage offer and the first and second floors will be rented out for office accommodation. This is another piece in the jig saw for regenerating Kidderminster.

We are currently considering options for the former Crown House site and Lionfields site in Kidderminster and will be bringing forward proposals in due course.

We have also agreed a contract with a private sector ECV company to deliver circa 200 spaces across all of our WFDC pay and display car parks and nature reserve sites over the next 12 months, bringing in an income for WFDC with all of the capital costs being met by the private sector company.

WFDC full council met on 21st February and approved its budget. Council tax was increased by the maximum 2.997% under the 3% allowed which is circa an additional £7 per year for a Band D property!

We are investing in services that are important to the public unlike the previous administration. For example, two full time litter pickers across the District to act as a litter blitz squad responding to non-routine work have been agreed. Money for an additional Civil Enforcement Officer to tackle parking on double yellow lines has been approved. Funding the webcasting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting was also agreed as we believe being open and transparent is really important. 1 hours free carparking Monday - Friday in one car park in each of the District's 3 towns has also been agreed. We will also be investing £50k in accessible play equipment at Brinton Park and Stourport Riverside. Each District Councillor will also have £1,000 for the community leadership fund to spend on projects or organisations in their ward.

We are proposing additional commercial income from a wide variety of areas to fund our investments. We will still have circa £3million of unallocated reserves in 2024-2025 and indeed will still have reserves at the end of the 3-year medium term financial strategy. We are also taking a totally different approach to localism and not simply transferring services to town and parish councils unless they want to.

We were also pleased to receive additional funding from the Government of circa £125k over and above the initial settlement in December.

Our net revenue budget is circa £13.5 million, employing circa 330 staff.

The average council tax bill (Band D) will go up by 4.88%, circa £100 per annum.

WFDC supported the LGBCE proposals for the County Council divisions for Wyre Forest and also supported making the case against the proposals for Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council for a ward of 10 and 4 for Wolverley and Cookley and Lea Castle respectively, agreeing with the Parish Council's view.

WFDC also acknowledged and supported the Parish Council's request for a Community Governance Review for the Parish of Wolverley and Cookley and a report will be taken to May's full council meeting.

Finally, there has been some political movement in that Cllr. Leigh Whitehouse has resigned from the Labour Party and so no longer sits with the Labour Group on WFDC so they have gone down from 4 to 3 and Cllr. Whitehouse has joined the Independent and Green Group so they have moved up from 7 to 8. Cllr. Liam Carroll is the new Labour Group leader.

Cllr Cox reported of recent activities at the former Post Office, door changed and a new sign.

County Councillor Report;

Local Issues:

Caunsall Canal Bridge Railings Damage:

Highways are aware of the collision damage and will carry out repairs as soon as possible.

Wolverley Recurring Highway Flooding by Hardwicks:

Thankfully, Severn Trent, the Environment Agency and County Highways have carried out necessary improvements to the pumping and pipework infrastructure to hopefully address the flooding of the highway here following heavy rainfall.

Safer Routes to School:

Disappointingly, I am still awaiting clarification on whether any further improvements are to be made within the parish.

Brown Westhead Sunday Football Parking:

Councillors Marcus Hart, Robin Drew and I attended a further meeting with District Council officers who regrettably informed us that there are no options for increasing parking capacity within the football curtilage. Whilst we proposed that the Worcestershire Football Association should perhaps consider converting one of their marked pitches to car parking provision, this was rejected because to do so would be opposed by Sport England who will not tolerate reduction in pitch provision for local communities.

The outcome of this meeting was that the District Council officers will install blue signage along the left side of the lane asking drivers to kindly park on that left side only and refrain from double - parking! Also residents will be provided with cones which they will be asked to place on the highway at critical parts of the lane on Sundays.

Wolverley, Church Bank Poor Surface:

County Highways have dealt with the many potholes here and resurfaced a good portion of the lane and installed fresh lines appropriately.

Cllr Cox queried the total number of houses at the Lea Castle development, Cllr M Hart confirmed the second phase is another 800 houses.

Cllr Webber raised concerns about the significant amount of mud on the footpath adjacent Highlow Bank, which is a well walked path by many including a significant number of schoolchildren. Cllr Hardiman advised this is an ongoing problem and WFDC are regularly requested to sweep the path. Cllr M Hart commented that it was regrettable the police had left as mud on the highway is a criminal offence and it was agreed that the Parish Council contact the police to request if they can take any action on this matter as;

s.148 of the Highways Act 1980 makes it an offence to deposit mud on the highway.

s.161 of the Highways Act 1980, states, "If a person, without lawful authority or excuse, deposits anything whatsoever on the highway in consequence of which a user of the highway is injured or endangered, that person is guilty of an offence."

Cllr Wood enquired whether there is any further update on Lea Lane and Cllr Hardiman advised that it is now up to WCC, legal dept to contact owner of land to come forward, if they will not, compulsory purchase order will be used.

Cllr Wood also commented on the state of Axborough Lane, which is being made worse by the closure of Common Barn Lane / Beechwood lane.

Cllr Jones commented on the temporary repair by the bridge on Lea Lane which looks unsightly and has been there a considerable amount of time.

178. Contract Negotiations:

a) Grass Cutting

Cllr Sherrey and Cllr J Hart had met with Mr Basketfield. It was agreed to renew the contract for the year to 31st March 2025. A 5% increase was agreed, therefore the figure per cut is £794.64 giving an annual price of £3973.20 for five cuts.

b) Lengthsman

Cllr Sherrey and Cllr J Hart had met with Mr Hull. It was agreed to renew the contract for the year to 31st March 2025. A 5% increase in pay rate was agreed, giving an hourly rate of £17.00 per hour with up to 17.5 hours work per month. It was reaffirmed that invoices need to be submitted to the

Clerk by the Wednesday prior to the Parish Council meeting. Clerk to provide list of meeting dates. Mr Hull requested that forms of communication are kept to email or text. It was agreed to hold an interim meeting in June/July. Clerk to provide email addresses for Cllr Sherrey and Cllr J Hart to Mr Hull in case of any issues he wishes to discuss.

c) Bin Emptying

Cllr Sherrey, Cllr J Hart and Cllr Jones had met with Mr Dale. It was agreed to renew the contract for the year to 31st March 2025. A 5% increase in pay rate was agreed giving a monthly total of £554.74 per month plus VAT. Mr Dale raised a few areas of concern - litter bins on the canal and litter bin by the former Cookley Post Office. These need to be discussed by Full Council, also the possibility of installing a concrete base for the two 1100 litre bins.

The above contracts were unanimously approved.

d) Planters in Wolverley

The Clerk now has three contacts and will email to ascertain if they are interested in quoting to supply plants/compost and attend on site twice a year to the 19 troughs/baskets in various locations in Wolverley.

179. **Financial Matters.**

The following accounts were agreed to be paid;

81	B J Drew - Salary February 24	£1248.46
82	B J Drew - Ink/Paper	£10.00
83	Westcotec (Battery)	£483.60
84	Earth Anchors Ltd (3 x Bins)	£824.40
85	Jason Hull - Lengthsman February 24	£206.55
86	WCC - 3 Street Lighting Column Conversions	£3,898.94

Cllr Drew confirmed the VAS battery would no longer take charge. Cllr Southam suggested this would need to be budgeted for in future. All agreed.

Cllr Sherrey re-iterated that the finance group under the scheme of delegation will approve payments which need to be made before 31st March. These will be reported to the meeting 2nd April.

All payments were unanimously approved.

180. **Community Governance Review (CGR) for the parish of Wolverley and Cookley.**

Cllr M Hart reported that this was discussed by WFDC Full Council at their February meeting and they agreed to the request from the Parish Council for a CGR which will commence 1st August 2024 with a local advisory poll held on 1st May 2025. WFDC are taking a report to their May meeting with terms of reference and to agree the question to be asked. Clerk to put this on next agenda as there are many options to consider.

181. **Wolverley Memorial Project.**

Clerk had circulated letter received from Chair of the Wolverley Memorial Project asking for support for a new combined facility and asking to nominate a representative from the Parish Council to be a member of the project committee.

After much discussion on the letter, it was proposed Cllr Webber and agreed with two abstentions that the Parish Council are supportive of the Wolverley Memorial Project Group and will await being consulted on any plans put forward but as consultees do not wish to predetermine their views.

Cllr J Hart volunteered to be the representative and this was unanimously agreed.

182. **Wyre Forest District Revised Statement of Community Involvement.**

Noted.

183. **Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation.**

It was agreed to reply supporting the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

184. Planning Applications for Consideration: -

PC No

WFDC No/Details

3709

24/0030/HOU: Demolition and replacement of extensions and associated works at Hope Cottage, New Road, Caunsall.
Recommend Approval.

3710

24/0073/HOU: Construction of a single storey side extension and front porch, alterations to fenestration and associated works at 65 Caunsall Road, Caunsall.
Recommend Approval.

3711

24/0077/HOU: Construction of a first-floor side extension at 17 Westhead Road North, Cookley.
Recommend Refusal - overdevelopment and adverse effect on street scene.

3712

24/0083/CLP: FOR INFORMATION ONLY - Lawful development certificate for the proposed demolition of a boot room and replacement with a single storey extension at Baxter House, Gipsy Lane, Blakeshall, Wolverley.

3713

24/0110/HOU: Construction of a single storey front extension and associated works at 26 Hayes Road, Wolverley.
Recommend Approval.

Decision Notices:

23/0713/HOU

The Old Telephone Exchange, Lea Lane, Cookley

Permit

23/0734/HOU

2 Beechcote House, Mill Lane, Wolverley

Refuse

23/0892/HOU

16 Westhead Road, Cookley

Permit

23/0874/HOU

Church View, Lea Lane, Cookley

Refuse

Parish Matters for Update Only - no decisions required.

185. Clerks Report. (Clerk) WCC Green Infrastructure Publication, WCC Monitoring Report, Road Closure Notices, PCC Newsletter, Travelling Music Box Bus, We Can Funding, Community Orchards and Mini Forests.

186. Lengthsman. (RD/WS) RD/WS content with work undertaken.

187. New Issues / Items for Next Meeting. (All) Caunsall Bridge Iron works / Caunsall & Cookley Neighbourhood Plan,

188. Date of Next Meeting - to confirm the date of the next meeting which is scheduled for Tuesday 2nd April 2024. Also, Annual Parish Meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.04pm

Signed by Chairman - 2nd April 2024