

Draft Minutes of the “Virtual” Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

held on Thursday, 26th November, 2020 via ZOOM at 7:30pm

Present:

Cllr. T. Green (TG) (Chairman)
Cllr. D Cutler (DC) (Vice Chairman)
Cllr. S Davis (SD)
Cllr. R. Hampshire (RH)
Cllr. T. Jennings (TJ)
Cllr. J. Nicholls (JN)

Also Present were:

The clerk Mrs. B J Drew (BD) and County/District Cllr. Mr. M Hart (MH).

- 1. Apologies for Absence:** District Cllrs. Mr. Ian Hardiman (IH), Mrs. Lisa Jones (LJ) and Rebecca Ruston, West Mercia Police.
- 2. Declarations of Councillors Interests:** None declared.
- 3. Public Question Time:** No public present.
- 4. Minutes:**
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 10th September, 2020 were duly approved and will be signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record when “lockdown” measures have been lifted.
- 5. Progress Reports:**
TG reported that following the last meeting letters had been sent to local cycling clubs. Other than a couple of unhelpful e mails the response was positive. There are still issues over cyclists shouting and littering energy drinks, but these may not be from members of a cycling club. All were encouraged to be observant and report where appropriate.
- 6. County Councillor’s Report:**
MH reported;

Rushock Issues

The main issue since the last meeting report is the ongoing issue of flooding and land drainage issues on Clattercut Lane. You will recall that I hosted a site meeting, together with Bill Waldron the Lengthsman, Paul Green our local highways engineer, Dee and Terry on 17th December last year!!! Regrettably, first flooding then Coronavirus have somewhat affected the pace of action but has now advised me that the drainage team have been out and inspected this location and the problem is that it is the ditch that is causing the flooding by backing the system up. This ditch is privately owned and Paul says that WCC say this should have been referred to the Land Drainage Team at WFDC for them to consider enforcement action through the Land Drainage Act 1991. I have asked Paul if this has been done and await a response! I will also go directly to Kirsten Huizer at WFDC as she is always prompt in coming back to me.

There was considerable discussion on this matter of flooding and drainage issues on Clattercut Lane. MH advised of a site meeting arranged with Fiona McIntosh, Senior Water Management Officer at North Worcestershire Water Management on Tuesday 1st December at 9.00am to try and find a resolution to this ongoing issue. MH suggested DC/TG attend. JN also happy to attend.

Regarding the gap between the road and the verge again in Park Lane as I am pleased that a warning sign has been installed at either end of Park Lane.

I am pleased that the long-awaited planting licence for the wildflowers has at last, arrived after significant chasing!

Wyre Forest Issues

WCC highways work on the Churchfields site continues with the creation of the spur road off the island which will take traffic out of town. This coming week there will be disruption as one of the lanes is closed to facilitate the work. Work has stopped as a result of Coronavirus but I understand contractors will be starting with safe distancing measures being put in place.

As reported previously, the additional funding for the Hoobrook island has now been agreed as part of the budget and we should see this scheme commence this year to tackle this major congestion hotspot in Kidderminster. I have now seen a design scheme at an officer briefing and have a further one at the end of September and it is anticipated that work could commence before Christmas this year. Indeed an update report confirming this went to the County Council's Cabinet meeting of 22nd October. As previously stated, this will be great news for thousands of motorists coming in and out of Kidderminster.

WFDC has received circa £1.8 million of Government support to deal with Covid 19 in terms of additional cost pressures and major loss of income.

Strategic Issues County Wide

Since I wrote my last few reports it is fair to say that things are ever changing and after a period of 'unlocking' things have now tightened up again with the 4-week national lockdown but of course with a difference as schools remain.

As stated, schools remain open and attendance is circa 90% but 'bubbles' are collapsing and as I write this we have circa 5,000 students at home self-isolating out of a school population of 84,500.

In Wyre Forest cases continue to rise and as I write this there are 277 cases per 100,000.

The County Council has been heavily involved in the response to the Coronavirus pandemic working with our other statutory partners.

Our Hospitals are still coping very well with capacity on all 3 sites and despite our increases, as you would expect given the more nature of Worcestershire we still have been less affected by infections than many other authorities in the West Midlands region but there are now deaths again on the acute site and we should not be complacent given our rise in cases.

Worcestershire has a fantastic website Here2Help which is a community action response to Coronavirus. There is also a dedicated phone number 01905 768053 for those without access to the internet. There is now a Here2Helpbusiness scheme as well. (simply google Here 2 Help Worcestershire and it comes straight up.)

Free School Meals has been a very topical issue nationally as you will have seen as the Government have ceased the voucher scheme for the recent half term. We agreed as a County Council to step in with the Districts in Worcestershire to fund the costs 50:50 to ensure that no child went hungry and that they had access to food but unlike other local authority areas we did not produce vouchers but asked anyone who needed food to wither phone the Here 2 Help dedicated hotline number or go on the website and a food package would be sent out to them.

Clearly the Government indicating that the scheme will be funded up to Christmas 2021 is welcome news.

Our household waste sites are both remaining open.

Libraries are to remain open but with reduced services.

Council meetings are still taking place virtually and I suspect the first time that Full Council may be able to meet in person is next May as these measures are going to be with us for some months yet!

We are starting to plan for next year's budget. We still have significant pressures in adult's and children's social care and SEND.

We have had substantial Government grant to tackle the Coronavirus response in Worcestershire.

I, together with my District colleagues Ian and Lisa continue to visit the Parish and deal with issues and I have been meeting with Paul Green out on the patch as normal as the rules permit.

7. District Councillor's Report:

MH reported;

Local Issues

We have been dealing with the usual routine casework, fly tipping and litter picking on the main A roads and along the country lanes, albeit it has actually been pretty quiet since our May report on this front, unlike in some of our other parishes, long may this continue!

Wyre Forest District Issues

In respect of the WFDC's draft Local Plan, the Public Hearings by the Planning Inspector will begin being held from Monday 11th January on selected days into early February 2021. Information can be found on the Wyre Forest District Council website.

Please respond to the Government's Planning White Paper consultation, we believe this paper is ill-conceived and feel that actually it will be amended and we understand many MP's have concerns and feel that this is at least a consultation and that there is a lot of water to go under the bridge before it receives Royal Assent! Please have your say and feel free to give your views on this to our MP Mark Garnier. WFDC's overview and scrutiny panel also looked at this matter.

The Progressive Alliance who presently run the Administration of the District Council are to hold a Public Consultation on their intention to make the activity that the District Council undertakes smaller, inevitably entailing redundancies and the transferring of services to Town and Parish Councils. This consultation is currently running. We are very concerned at the scale of some of the reductions.

The Progressive Alliance want to make home working the norm post Covid and we have some concerns regarding this. This matter was looked at by the cross party overview and scrutiny panel recently and overwhelmingly voted for the Cabinet to look again at this matter and recommend to Council that this process is paused and looked at further in April 2021 when hopefully we will have a clearer picture on Covid.

The Progressive Alliance want to look at a commissioning a business case to look at options to sell all or part of Wyre Forest House!

Local residents and businesses are being urged to share their views about Kidderminster as part of a major consultation to shape the future of the town centre. Town centres throughout the UK have and continue to experience the challenges of a societal shift in changing shopping habits as well as the influence of Covid-19. The online survey launched on Thursday 5 November at 9am at www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/towncentresurvey is an opportunity for anyone who lives, visits, works in or has a view about Kidderminster to have their say on how they think the town centre could be made into a better place over the next twenty years. It is designed to establish current views on the town and includes questions about shopping habits before and during the Coronavirus pandemic, reasons to visit the town and more.

Wyre Forest House is still closed to the public as is the Green Street Hub save for dealing with housing and homelessness applications.

WFDC has implemented a further Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) which is District wide and now prohibits the walking of 3 or more dogs. There is also an expansion to certain areas in Stourport and Bewdley where the consumption of alcohol in a public is prohibited.

WFDC has also launched a lottery for good causes.

Shoppers can take advantage of free parking at all Wyre Forest District Council car parks after 3pm during the festive period. The Christmas parking offer is running from Friday 20 November to Sunday 3 January 2021. It does not include Weavers Wharf.

There will be no Christmas light switch-on ceremonies in Kidderminster, Stourport or Bewdley this year due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

8. Police Report:

Written report circulated – no issues at present.

DC has forwarded a poster, received from the local police regarding Scams for inclusion in the next edition of the magazine. Clerk to chase new Smart water signage which has not yet been received.

9. To discuss Biodiversity Project:

DC reported that the project has moved forward. Bulb planting was undertaken during half term and posts at the bottom of Lunnon Lane will be installed shortly. Apple Trees will be ready for collection in December, DC/RH to liaise. SD will e mail Councillors with the proposed wording for the sign. BW has cut back the hedges. TG advised that the Parish Council are in budget on the project but do still have some expenditure outstanding.

10. Consultation Responses: WFDC Cabinet's Budget Proposals

TG reported on the document circulated by the Clerk on budget proposals put forward by Wyre Forest District Council Cabinet. These include disposing of all or some of Wyre Forest House headquarters and moving local assets and services to town councils. Proposals also include ending the community leadership fund, increasing its part of the Council Tax bill by the maximum and reviewing the number of Councillors with a view to reducing the amount from 2027.

There is an on-line survey which closes on 10th December to give feedback on the proposals. TG encouraged Councillors to look at this and complete.

11. Planning:

TG reported on Planning since the last meeting;

20/0277/Full – Retrospective planning permission for the change of use of the existing buildings on site to part B1 and part B8 at Hyde Cottage, Rushock.

Recommend Approval subject to the Public Footpath being clearly marked and access being maintained.

20/0856/Full – Change of use of land for the storage of agricultural machinery, use of agricultural buildings for storage and retention of commercial buildings for offices at land at Callimore Farm, Droitwich Road, Rushock.

TG reported major concerns over this application which would visually impact greatly on the landscape. The Parish Council have made comments on the Planning portal to recommend refusal. The vast outdoor storage areas proposed will be very obtrusive in the rural environment and will be permanent conversion of agricultural land to commercial use. There is also a potential risk of flooding. The A442 is a busy road and the creation of a new access to it will be potentially hazardous. It is also very narrow to the north and any increase in traffic, especially large agricultural vehicles, is not desirable. Any security lighting installed must be carefully designed to prevent light pollution in the surrounding area.

Elmley Lovett Parish Council also have concerns and are submitting these on the portal. TG encouraged all Councillors to also make individual representations.

MH suggested the Clerk request this application is determined by the Planning Committee and not the Case Officer. Clerk to contact Paul Round and copy MH. TG will speak at Planning committee.

12. Highways:

JN reported that he is in regular contact with the Lengthsman who has been undertaking hedge cutting in the Parish. BW will check all "hot spots" prior to any severe winter weather. JN expressed concern over the drains which still need attention. MH advised that WCC will still not authorise the Parish

Council to use Lengthsman funds to engage a contractor to do this work. JN to provide a list and MH will chase Worcestershire County Council to do the work.

13. Footpaths:

TG reported that footpaths remain clear, TG repaired stile in Elmbridge Lane and RH stile in Lunnon Lane. DC reported collapsed bridge in Griffins field. TG will report.

14. Finance:

The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated and it was in accordance with the bank statements. The current bank balance was £7938.62.

Accounts for Payment;

Already Paid;

Wild Flower Shop (Bulbs)	£225.95
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For Approval:

Mr T Green (Viburnum Opulus)	£12.99
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Mrs B J Drew (Salary April 2020 – March 2021)	£1250.12
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HMRC (Tax)	£312.40
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Mrs B J Drew (Clerks Expenses)	£44.80
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Print Serve (Payroll)	£20.00
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15. Budget:

TG requested Councillors consider any items to be included in the budget for 2021/2022 and advise the Clerk.

16. Rushock Village Hall:

The AGM was held via ZOOM. Claire Jennings has taken over as Chair. Several improvements to the hall have been undertaken and more are still ongoing. The pub nights have proved to be profitable. Finances are healthy as the hall received a £10k government grant from the co-vid scheme for income lost. MH has given £500 towards the purchase of a Defibrillator.

17. Correspondence:

The Clerk had circulated the schedule of correspondence and presented the correspondence to the meeting. The schedule was duly noted.

18. Agenda items for future meetings:

Please advise Clerk.

19. To note the date of the next meeting.

Thursday 21st January 2021.

Clerk advised we have not yet received confirmation from the Village Hall for the 2021 dates.

20th May 2021,
9th September 2021,
25th November 2021.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....