

Minutes of the “Virtual” Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

held on Thursday, 21st January, 2021 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:** Cllr. JN Chairman of Parochial Church Council.
- 3. Public Question Time:** No public present.
- 4. Minutes:**
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 26th November, 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:**
Nothing additional to report, all matters covered on agenda.
- 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. I met with Terry, Dee, John, Nigel Picken from Greyholme and Fiona McIntosh from NWWM on 1st December, 2020 to progress this matter further to the site visit with WCC highways on 17th December, 2019 as frankly progress was just not good enough.

NWWM had written to the owner of Greyholme regarding the ditches but on the site visit it was clear that they had been dug out and there were no issues with the ditches. There was the ongoing issue of the lane flooding and the land flooding in the field at the rear of Dee.

Fiona sent me a follow up note as follows:-

“Further to our site meeting yesterday I just wanted to send a brief synopsis and update.

The ditch along the verge we were stood on (falling to Greyholme as riparian owners) is in a good condition with the pipes at either end visible; as such no further work is recommended. I appreciate that during heavy rainfall the channel may become overwhelmed, however the Land Drainage Act does not give us powers to request an increase in capacity, only that the normal flow is maintained which appears to be the case.

Regarding the pipe under the road, I can see that when Highways’ contractor visited in August they marked this on the plan (attached) – it appears this takes water from the piped ditch opposite. There is no mention of any other drain connected to this (i.e from Park Lane or the farm we discussed), however I have asked Highways to check and confirm this. I believe the pipe will have been installed by WCC

Highways but again have asked them to confirm; if there are any other connections into the drain it will need to go through WCC's legal team. Highways do have a right, under the Highways Act, to discharge into adjacent waterbodies (as is being done here) but I do not believe land owners are able to discharge into a highway drain. If Paul does not get back to you directly on this I will forward any information I receive over.

In terms of the opposite land owner draining onto the highway; Paul would need to confirm but I believe that because there is no pavement there is technically no breach in the Highways Act, but it could constitute a "nuisance" if the water is being knowingly discharged to a particular point (rather than natural runoff from the land surface to lower ground). Because the highway is the receptor of flood water here I think it would fall to WCC to consider if they would take action here.

While checking the other ditches and drains after our meeting, I noted the bed level of the ditch on the opposite side is higher than the inlet to the piped section – having ran this past the Parish Council members (apologies I didn't take down their names) they do not believe this ditch to be causing a problem so I will not follow this up. Of course I can re-visit this in the future if necessary. I have also asked that someone at WCC Highways get in touch with the Parish Council regarding the lengthsman scheme, as the gentlemen mentioned they are keen to do more but aren't permitted.

As agreed next time it is raining heavily I will do my best to attend site to see for myself the issues that were discussed, however I believe it is most likely an issue that will remain with Highways as all land drainage features are working properly and there is no (to my knowledge) property flooding? I've dropped Paul Green & Chris Kinne at Highways an email with a summary of our meeting so they are aware of the issues and what needs further investigation.

I hope this helps for now, and hopefully highways will be able to advise further."

I have heard nothing from Paul or WCC highways and indeed Paul is off sick at present and am chasing the person covering his work and will advise you on WCC highway's position ASAP. Fiona is chasing too as she has heard nothing either.

Wyre Forest Issues

WCC highways work on the Churchfields is virtually completed and the new network is flowing well.

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. This work which is a £3.6 million project is starting now and will see the 3 A road arms be signalised.

Strategic Issues County Wide

Primary Schools and Secondary schools are all teaching remotely save for key worker's children and vulnerable children. The latter definition has recently been enlarged to anyone who cannot learn at home due to no lap top or no work space. There is a lot of variation on how many pupils are in schools but it is broadly ranging between 20%-50%.

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

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.)

Our household waste sites both remain open and the Worcester Road is still operating a booking system.

Libraries are remaining open, but largely for essential IT and digital services to residents who cannot get on line at home.

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

The County Council will set its budget on 18th February. Council tax will go up by 1.5% and there will be an Adult Social Care levy of 1%, effectively giving a 2.5% Council tax increase. The maximum increase allowed without a referendum is 5%. On a Band D, the increase will be £32.78 per annum, 63pence per week. The County Council makes up 70% of the overall bill.

There will be an allocation of £500k towards flood defences at Beales Corner in Bewdley. We will be investing a further

We continue to apply the National Funding Formula for mainstream schools and since 2018 schools funding for Worcestershire has increased from £314.6m to £368.2m so very much going in the right direction but still more to do to ensure fair funding across other Local Authority areas as we are still near the bottom. Higher Needs funding still remains a pressure, despite an additional £8m from Government taking our allocation to £68.4m.

The overall budget is proposed to be a net revenue budget of £355.5m. In addition, there will be a capital programme of £382.3m, local to Wyre Forest are Kidderminster Train Station, Hoobrook and Churchfields.

As it presently stands, County Council elections are scheduled for 6th May, but I think they will be delayed by at least a couple of months. We await a government announcement, watch this space!

The Clattercut Lane flooding and drainage issues were again discussed. MH confirmed that WCC have now agreed to survey the whole of Clattercut Lane, past Park Lane to Lowbridge Farm. DC enquired whether Fiona McIntosh could revisit now there is a lot of water about, MH advised she is visiting Chaddesley next Tuesday and he will ask if she could also visit Rushock, he will advise.

JN had provided MH with a list of all drains that need attention, this has been given to WCC. The Parish Council are not allowed to undertake this work.

7. District Councillor's Report:

MH reported;

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.

Wyre Forest Issues

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

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!

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

The Progressive Alliance are proposing scrapping the Localism fund and Community Leadership fund, the later allocating all district councillors £1,000 to spend in their ward on community groups.

The Progressive Alliance are deleting a number of officer posts and they are not being replaced. They are proposing funding only statutory services moving forward and they continue to seek to transfer largescale assets and services to Town and Parish Councils.

It is proposed that Council tax is increased by £5 which is the maximum it can be (2% or £5 increase, whichever is the higher) otherwise the local referendum principles apply.

Budget Council will be held on 24th February.

We have a suite of alternative proposals, including a pay freeze, senior management review, more shared services and further investment in environmental protection allocating resource for a further officer post to tackle fly tipping, littering and dog fouling and more investment in infrared CCTV and also fundng for community projects and the councillors' £1000 per member community leadership fund which is spent in our local communities which we feel is very important.

WFDC has been successful in securing £20.5 million from the Future High Streets fund something we are delighted about as this will transform and regenerate Worcester Street in Kidderminster town centre and was a bid that Marcus signed off in 2018 when he was Leader of the Council.

8. Police Report:

Written report circulated – no issues at present.

Clerk to chase again new Smart water signage which has still not yet been received.

JN advised of various items that had recently been taken from the church, not items of value but nevertheless worrying and this has resulted in the church temporarily being closed. TG urged for this to be reported to the Police.

9. To discuss Biodiversity Project:

DC reported that the bulbs, trees, and posts are all in situ which is extremely exciting! Unfortunately, there have been some issues with joy driving creating two tracks either side of the postbox on the triangle, also a Quad Bike on the area by the apple trees. Extra posts, some with reflectors need to be put in, RH/JN will do this. SD advised that the sign has been sourced. The PC can choose colour and background. The wording explains about the project. SD will proceed with order and advised RH has confirmed County will sponsor the sign. TG advised that there are still funds remaining for the project and it was agreed to purchase more plants/trees as deemed appropriate.

10. Planning:

TG reported on Planning since the last meeting;

20/0856/Full: Land at Callimore Farm. TG advised that he is registered to speak when this application goes before the WFDC Planning Committee. MH reported that if it is recommended for refusal by the officer then it will not need to go before committee. He will advise in due course.

20/1069/AG: Proposed agricultural storage building at land at Clattercut Lane. TG advised that this has been approved however TG/JN met the applicant on an informal basis and advised of the need for Planning and Highway approval for a driveway to the building.

11. Highways:

JN reported that despite heavy rain, no water has been held on highways and thanks to Lengthsman BW work the drains are working well. They will however need further jetting to remain clear.

12. Footpaths:

TG reported that the Parish Council have now received the Parish Paths Grant and thanks to TJ and BW for their work. Footpaths remain clear but very muddy. The issues with Electric Fences have been resolved.

13. Finance:

The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated and it was in accordance with the bank statements. The current bank balance was £6202.12.

Accounts for Payment;

Already Paid:

Mr Chris Oliver (Post Installing)	£350.00
Mr W Waldron (Parish Paths)	£72.00
Chemquad Weed Control & Landscaping (Parish Paths)	£108.00
Walcot Organic Nursery Ltd (Apple Trees)	£116.38
Mr P R Haskell (Tree & Bulb Planting)	£80.00
Mr W Waldron (Lengthsman Work)	£315.00

The Parish Council considered the draft budget and precept proposal. Our precept in 2020/21 was £3327.50 and £43.78 per Band D property. A 0% increase in the Parish Precept in 2021/22 would increase it from £3327.50 to £3502.40, this is because the Tax Base for 2021/2022 has increased from 76 to 80 properties. This would appear on the Council Tax Bill as a 0% increase and would stay at £43.78 per Band D property. The Chairman felt that due to the challenging year everyone has faced through co-vid it would be a good gesture to the parishioners to keep the Precept the same.

After a short discussion it was unanimously resolved therefore not to increase the precept this financial year.

TG advised that the £300.00 for Church Sponsorship remained unspent. JN reported that it is unlikely that this will be spent as there have been no events, nor are any planned due to co-vid.

14. Rushock Village Hall:

MH updated on the final outstanding legal matters relating to the registration of the Village Hall. The small parcel of land already registered needs to be transferred to the Parish Council. This should be straightforward by completion of HM Land Registry Transfer Form TR1. This will need the signatures of the three parties from the original document together with a certified death certificate for Grenville Wilson who unfortunately passed away. MH is awaiting receipt of this from Thursfields. It has been chased on numerous occasions over the last 12 months. MH will liaise with the Clerk when received.

JN advised that the new kitchen was completed before Christmas and looks great. The old back kitchen has been renovated and a new door going out to the paddock. The only outstanding item is a new front door. The committee have the funds for this but are still discussing design and materials.

15. Correspondence:

The Clerk had circulated the schedule of correspondence and presented the correspondence to the meeting. The schedule was noted. TG advised that we receive and share agenda's and minutes with neighboring Parish Councils.

16. Agenda items for future meetings:

Please advise Clerk.

17. To note the date of the next meeting.

Thursday 20th May 2021.

Clerk advised we have still not yet received confirmation from the Village Hall for the 2021 dates, however at present the Parish Council will continue to ZOOM.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....