

## Minutes of the Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022, 7.30pm, Rushock Village Hall

### Present:

Cllr. T. Green (TG) (Chairman)  
Cllr. D. Cutler (DC) (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr. S. Davies (SD)  
Cllr. R. Hampshire (RH)  
Cllr. T. Jennings (TJ)

### Also Present were:

The clerk Mrs. B J Drew (BD), County/District Cllr. M Hart (MH), Parish Lengthsman Mr. Bill Waldron (BW), West Mercia Police PCSO Nicky Thomas and Alice Owen-Jones.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr I Hardiman (District Councillor), Cllr L Jones (District Councillor) and Cllr J Nicholls due to co-vid.
2. **Declarations of Councillors Interests:**  
None declared.
3. **Public Question Time:**  
No Public Questions.
4. **Minutes:**  
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 were duly approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.
5. **Progress Reports:**  
Nothing to report – all covered elsewhere on agenda.
6. **County Councillor's Report:** *Report previously circulated*

TG thanked Wyre Forest District Council for prompt collection of flytipping.

TJ enquired whether there were any further developments with the Adam Hewitt application. MH will check with Paul Round but he reported that he is being pressed on decommissioning the site at Harvington.

MH advised he has spoken to Elliot Pritchard at WCC today regarding the verge issue as the Clerk had been advised by Robert Deri at WCC that they have an 11-year contract for verge cutting in Rushock twice a year so would not be prepared to consider transferring this to the PC as they would still have to pay the contractor and would be thus paying twice! MH said that Ringway have the contract and sub-contract. If it was just Lunnon Lane it should be ok but if it's all verges there could be an issue. MH stated that it would be much easier if those contracted just did a proper job. Elliot will speak with someone senior at Ringway to see if they can get the correct equipment to do a proper job as Lunnon Lane is very narrow and needs the appropriate machinery and they need to care that they do not damage the verges. TG also commented that they need to look at timings of cuts so they do not damage the bulbs and flowers. MH will go back to County requesting they do a proper job at the right time with correct equipment.

## Rushock Issues

Further to my November report, I am also pleased to report that after persevering WCC to consult on a speed limit reduction for the A448 between the 50mph zone to the 30-mph zone which is currently national speed limit as you go past the top end of Clattercut Lane as you come into Chaddesley, this consultation has now taken place without objections and therefore this scheme will be implemented on 3rd March.

The verge cutting issues in Lunnon Lane and the poor quality of the cutting is still an ongoing saga I am afraid and embarrassed to say. Having agreed in principle with Paul Smith, Asst. Director that Rushock PC could be responsible for all verge cutting in the Parish and appoint their own contractor subject to WCC approval and receive a commuted sum accordingly I am now very disappointed to hear from your clerk that WCC have told her this is not possible as there is an 11 year contract in place. I have spoken to Paul Smith today and he is looking into this as this and he is looking to resolve this matter. I hope to be able to provide an oral update on Thursday at the meeting.

I am pleased to award you £1,000 from my divisional funding to support Platinum Jubilee celebrations within the parish.

## Wyre Forest Issues

The planning application for the proposed Quarry at Lea Castle, Wolverley, has still not been determined yet but it may be getting closer as it likely to go to either the February or March planning committee at WCC.

A planning application for a proposed 87 space car park should be submitted to the WCC planning committee in March and is due to be determined between July and September.

## Strategic Issues County Wide

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.)

WCC received £1.6 million from central government to support free school meals and fund holiday activities over the summer, October and Christmas holidays.

We are approaching that time of year when it is time to set the budget and council tax levy.

The Cabinet met on 6th January and approved the draft budget for consultation. Full Council will debate and formally set the final budget at its meeting on 17th February.

It is proposed to increase general council tax by just .094% but to precept 3% for the social care levy, 1% for this year and 2% which WCC chose not to levy last year so this can be levied this year, so in simple terms overall council tax is proposed to increase by 3.94%. The maximum it could be increased by under Government rules is 5%. In money terms, 3.94% is £52.95 per annum on a Band D property which will mean the County Councils portion of the bill will be £1,396.78 compared to £1,343.83 last year. Remember that WCC make up 70% of your overall council tax bill, with WFDC being about 12%, your PC's share 1% and Police and Fire making up the rest.

The net revenue budget is proposed to increase from circa £355 million in 2021-2022 to £373 million in 2022-2023. The gross budget is over £1 billion.

We have had additional monies from central government this year to tackle pressures in adults and social care, a further £6 million in social care grant and a one off what is called a 'services grant' of £4.4 million, of which £1.4 million is to fund the new national insurance levy but this is still £3 million net.

We are also predicting an increase in council tax income of circa £11.3 million from the increase, 1% is worth about £2.8 million and circa £2.7 million from council tax buoyancy (new properties being built and occupied) and circa £1 million from the collection fund (ie more people coming back into paying council tax). Therefore adding everything together WCC is circa £30 million better off than in 2021-2022. That said there still are final pressures in social care and frankly unless the grant continues to go up substantially from government they will remain but the additional funding this year is very welcome and will go some way to alleviating the immediate pressure. Overall those pressures amount to £44.2 million so there is a gap of £14.2 million to be plugged by use of some reserves, £2.7 million, £8.1 million of income and efficiencies and use of some adult social care external funding of £3.4 million.

We have also had substantial grants to use for our Covid -19 response.

We have a large capital programme and through the period 2020 to 2024 it is proposed to spend £439 million.

So what are we spending your money on, well £155 million in our People Directorate (Adult Social Care, Public Health, Communities, Libraries, Countryside Side Service, Registration Service etc...), £109 million in Worcestershire Children First, (Children's Services, Social Care Placements, Education, SEND etc...), £57 million in Economy and Infrastructure (Highways, Waste Contract, Trading Standards, Public Rights of Way, Major Projects, Passenger Transport) and £55 million on Corporate services, (Finance, Legal and Democratic Services, Administration, Buildings and Property Management, Interest on Debt ie paying for the borrowing on capital schemes and many other things.

In broad terms we spend circa £260 million of the £373 million net revenue budget on vulnerable adults and vulnerable children, this is circa 70% of our budget.

We are proposing spending an additional £12 million in both 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 on road resurfacing and a further £4 million in both 2022-2023 and 2024 on pavement resurfacing.

We have also created a pot of money, £500,000 in both 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 to fund small scale schemes such as creating new pelican and zebra crossings.

There will be an uplift in the budget for Parish Lengths man. I am awaiting the specific details of this ie whether is a straight percentage uplift for each Parish across the board or not. I am aware the level of funding that each Parish receive has been frozen now for about 10 years.

There will be an additional £1 million for drainage including small schemes to support flood alleviation.

Each county councillor will be allocated £22,500 in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 to spend on capital local highways schemes. I have spent all of mine on resurfacing pavements and this additional money will allow me to get even more done.

We are also allocating an additional £1.1 million to extend for a further 2 years the Councillors Divisional Fund allocating each County Councillor £10,000 per annum to spend on projects and community organisations within their electoral division

In terms of school funding whilst we still are one of the more poorly funded areas and the Government has not yet changed how the formula works nationally, the quantum of cash is at least going up

nationally which translates into more money for Worcestershire pupils. Under the parameters of the National Funding Formula which Worcestershire uses, there will be a minimum increase per pupil of 2%.

The dedicated school grant has increased from £371 million in 2021-2022 to £383 million in 2022-2023 (this is for mainstream schools) and the Higher Needs Block (this is for special school funding and SEND) has increased from £68.5 million to £75.5 million which is a step in the right direction but there is still a substantial overspend in special needs which needs addressing.

There is much more I could say but these are the highlights.

The CQC and Ofsted have published their report following their reinspection in the latter part of 2021, further to their 2018 inspection that found serious weaknesses in 12 areas relating to SEND. The reinspection has confirmed that an appropriate level of improvement has been made in 8 out of 12 of the areas. The areas still of concern, which WCC and Health are already addressing relate largely to integration in mainstream schools, the appropriateness of an individual's placement and the quality of their ECHP and the interface and liaison with parents and carers.

## **7. District Councillor's Report: *Report previously circulated*** 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. We have been in liaison with WFDC regarding the repeated fly tipping recently along Park Lane in the parish and thank you to all residents for letting us know and reporting this to WFDC. We know that several local residents have been providing helpful information to our environmental protection team to try and ensure that we catch the culprits.

There has also been evidence of human excrement again within the Parish and we have made officers aware of the location accordingly.

### Wyre Forest District Issues

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 have increased car parking charges throughout the district. Season tickets are going to be increased by a staggering 50% from £400 to £600 for an annual pass and an OAP's pass from £175 to £200, an increase of nearly 15%. Pay and display charges are going up by 10%.

We feel that there should be a greater element of free car parking within our three towns, sadly the Progressive Alliance removed all of this some time ago. This is an executive function ie taken by the Leader or the Cabinet and this decision cannot be reversed by elected members at the Full Council Meeting.

The District Council has launched a consultation on proposals to introduce new policies in relation to their hackney carriage (taxi) and private hire functions. There are a number of recommendations to help keep children and vulnerable adults safe. Full details of the consultation, including the link to enable residents to provide their views online, can be found by visiting (consultations and e-petitions – Wyre Forest District Council). This consultation will remain open for responses until 14 February 2022.

The District Council are still proposing that Parish Councils take on litter picking and bin emptying but with no grant from WFDC. We totally oppose this. For those areas outside the 3 towns, WFDC have given notice to WCC that as of 31st March 2022 they won't cut the grass and this will affect those Parishes in Wyre Forest where WCC has granted the

money to WFDC and then WFDC has had localism agreements with the Parish Council to cut the grass.

Council tax is proposed to increase by the maximum which is £5 per annum on a Band D property, which is the maximum it can. This is about 2.3%. (It is 2% or £5 whichever is the higher). This will mean £229.34 as WFDC's 12% portion of the overall bill. The overall council tax base has grown by 440, in essence this will largely be down to new houses being built or empty properties being brought back into circulation.

The net revenue budget will be circa £12m, which requires a contribution from reserves of circa £130,000 to balance the budget. There are of course efficiency savings, Wyre Forest Forward savings and localism savings in order to balance the budget too.

Full Council will set the budget at the meeting of Full Council on Wednesday, 23rd February, 2022 at 6pm at Wyre Forest House.

**8. Police Report:**

Alice introduced herself, she joined the team last January.

Nothing to report for Rushock. Across Wyre Forest they are seeing a rise in op Prospero cases which is a scam where a fraudster phone claiming to be a police officer or bank official and ask for bank details. The Police or Bank would never ask for such details. Leaflets were handed out and Clerk will put details on WhatsApp group.

TG advised of a Badger Set that had been interfered with which he had reported 2 weeks ago but had not heard anything. Alice advised this was being dealt with by the Droitwich team, she will check and get back to TG with an incident number.

**9. To agree a Scheme of Delegation:**

Clerk advised of Worcestershire CALC Model Scheme of Delegation where Urgent Decisions required between scheduled meetings of the Council can be delegated to the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman. Decisions made under this delegation will be reported to and minuted at the next Council meeting. It was unanimously agreed to adopt this. Planning Delegation will remain as Chairman, Vice Chairman and one other member of the Council.

**10. Finance:**

Clerk had circulated Budget & Precept spreadsheet 2022/2023 and TG explained the figures therein. It was unanimously agreed to approve the budget and not to increase the Precept which will therefore remain at £43.78 per Band D equivalent.

The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated and it was in accordance with the bank statements. The bank balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> December was £6936.12.

The following were unanimously approved for payment:-

Already Paid;

Mr W Waldron (Parish Paths Strimming Part 2)	£36.00
Print Serve (Payroll)	£20.00
D Cutler (Crib Service Chocolates )	£26.70

- 11. To discuss Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Including to discuss and agree style and location of bench for the Parish:**  
MH has given the Parish Council £1,000 from his divisional County funding for events to commemorate the Queens Platinum Jubilee. Several ideas are being considered - tree planting, bench, street party, tree for churchyard. SD will take the lead and liaise on this and keep the Parish Councillors informed. BD to write to PCC with offer of tree for churchyard.
- 12. To discuss further progress with Biodiversity Project and consider Biodiversity Questionnaire:**  
The three pear trees are hopefully being collected tomorrow and planted on Saturday.  
  
DC/SD will liaise to produce a draft Questionnaire, for approval at next meeting, to be delivered to all households regarding biodiversity projects in the Parish.
- 13. Planning:**  
TG reported on Planning since the last meeting;  
  
21/1157/Ful Building 331, Droitwich Road, Rushock Trading Estate, Rushock:  
Proposed lean to extra vehicle workshop - Recommend Approval  
  
21/1161/FUL Beech Elm Farm, Clattercut Lane, Rushock:  
Replacement agricultural storage barn - Recommend Approval subject to;  
It only be used for the activities listed in the Planning Statement,  
It is not eligible for conversion to residential use in the future.
- 14. Highways and Verges:**  
TG advised that WW will check around March time. Verges have already been discussed.
- 15. Footpaths:**  
TJ has cleared path from Church to fields at Chaddesley. TG reminded that paths should be 1m width.
- 16. Rushock Village Hall:**  
TJ reported pub evening in February, street party for Jubilee and new front door being fitted shortly. TG advised that Clerk had chased Thursfields Solicitors regarding Village Hall registration with Land Registry, they will advise once the process has been completed.
- 17. Training:**  
TG attended Planning training, Clerk to send link to slides.
- 18. GDPR Review:**  
Clerk had circulated draft Privacy Policy and Data Retention Policy which were agreed. Clerk to put on website.
- 19. Correspondence:**  
The clerk had circulated the schedule of correspondence and presented the correspondence to the meeting. Several items had already been discussed and the schedule was noted.  
DC advised the link to the WCC Budget proposals was not working, MH will report.
- 20. Agenda items for future meetings:**  
Please advise Clerk.
- 21. To note the date of the next meetings.**  
Thursday 19th May  
Thursday 8th September  
Thursday 24th November

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.25pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....