

Minutes of the Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

held on Thursday 19th May 2022, 8.15pm, Rushock Village Hall

Present:

Cllr. T. Green (TG) (Chairman)
Cllr. S. Davies (SD)
Cllr. R. Hampshire (RH)
Cllr. T. Jennings (TJ)
Cllr. J. Nicholls (JN)

Also Present were:

The clerk Mrs. B J Drew (BD), Parish Lengthsman Mr. Bill Waldron (BW). Two Parishioners.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr M Hart (County / District Councillor), Cllr Mrs. L Jones (District Councillor) Cllr D Cutler (Prior Engagement) and West Mercia Police.
2. **Declarations of Councillors Interests:**
None declared.
3. **Public Question Time:**
No Public Questions.
4. **Minutes:**
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 20th January, 2022 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*
Rushock Issues

Further to my January report, I am also pleased to report that after persevering WCC to consult on a speed limit reduction for the A448 from national speed limit to 50 mph as you enter Wyre Forest, this has been approved and we are just awaiting the new 50 mph signage which I am advised by WCC highways is imminent.

The verge cutting issues in the parish just don't end. I had thought I had resolved the Lunnon Lane issues as the Asst. Director for Highways Paul Smith on 29th April confirmed to me as follows:-

"We now confirm that Ringway have been instructed not to cut specific stretches of verges on Lunnon Lane and Tan House Lane with the usual tractor / mower. These will be treated separately to ensure any damage to the verges is avoided. This maybe with a smaller piece of equipment brought in specifically for these locations or by strimming if this proves most cost effective. If we become aware of any other areas that require a similar treatment, we can add them to the list."

Sadly, I have been made aware of the verges being cut this week to the dissatisfaction of some residents in the Parish and I know that a representative of WCC highways met up with a resident to discuss the issues recently.

We have a new Cabinet Member for Highways and a new Cabinet Member for the Environment and when they have settled in, I will be raising verge cutting with them.

I was advised of hay on fire on land off Clattercut Lane and Lunnon Lane that has recently been the subject of a planning application and I did liaise with local residents in respect of this and liaise to contact the landowner.

Wyre Forest Issues

The planning application for the proposed Quarry at Lea Castle, Wolverley, will be considered by the planning committee at WCC on 24th May. I am scheduled to speak and will be speaking against this application.

A planning application for a proposed 89 space car park has now been submitted to the WCC planning committee and is due to be determined between July and September. I am opposed to the size and scale of the car park.

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.)

Full Council met on 17th February and approved the budget.

Council tax increased by just .094% but the social care precept increased by 3%, 1% for this year and 2% which WCC chose not to levy last year, so in simple terms overall council tax increased 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 increased 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 was an increase in the Parish Council's lengthsman's scheme by 15% per parish which is great news as it hasn't increased for about 12 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.

Here2Help is now also co-ordinating our Ukrainian Refugee programme working with the 6 District Councils. We now have several hundred refugees in the County and a number of families have now come to the Wyre Forest and young people are taking up places in local schools.

Full Council meets on Thursday for our AGM and Cllr. Chris Rogers is proposed as Chairman of the Council.

The Leader of the Council has made some cabinet changes and as of 16th May I am now Deputy Leader of the Council. I am relinquishing the Education portfolio after 5 years and am taking on the Communities portfolio, which includes libraries, crossing patrol officers (more affectionately known as

lollipop ladies), the countryside service, museums, arts, Gypsy and Traveller services, trading standards, archeology and Parish Councils to name but a few areas of responsibility!

7. District Councillor's Report: Report previously circulated
Local Issues

We have been reporting litter and fly tipping on the main A roads and along the country lanes.

District Issues

Members approved the Council tax for 2022-2023. This includes the 2.23% increase £5 on a Band D property at £229.34 in the District Council's element of Council Tax, as recommended by Cabinet on 8 February 2022, the precepts and council tax increases in the elements of Council Tax set by the following bodies :-

Worcestershire County Council 3.94% (of which 3% is being ringfenced to fund adult social care) £52.95.

West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner 3.94% - £9.47.

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority 1.96% - £1.72

With the rising energy bills the Government has announced support with a one-off payment of £150 rebate for Council Taxpayers in bands A-D. The Council is urging residents to sign up to the scheme and pay their bill by Direct Debit.

The Councils Budget for 2022-2025 was approved and Capital Strategy for 2022-2032. The Progressive Alliance Budget includes the closing of the Small Business Grant scheme, to end the support of sport and leisure facilities from April 2023 phasing out involvement in Bewdley Leisure Centre and Stourport Sports Club. This was approved by 17 votes to 16!

Members Community funding will be reduced from £1,000 per annum to £500 in the financial year 2022-2023 and Nil thereafter.

The District Council owned units that were being constructed in Unity Park, off Silverwoods Way in Kidderminster are now complete, there are nine units in total and four are under offer, the remaining five are being viewed by perspective companies. The District Council will benefit from the rental income from the units.

Visa applications from Ukrainians who will be living with sponsors in Wyre Forest have been approved by the District Council, this number is increasing daily as further sponsor applications are being approved.

In respect of the WFDC's draft Local Plan, there was a special meeting of Cabinet which approved this on 26th April and then a special meeting of Full Council that same evening to approve or not approve the Local Plan.

The Plan was approved by 14 votes to 13, with 4 abstentions and 2 members declaring interests and not voting. We did not support the plan as whilst we accepted that green belt land would have to be released and the 2 major development sites at Lea Castle and land at Offmore are sensible, we felt that the Progressive Alliance were using a higher number of dwellings per annum than needed and if they had reduced this and the percentage of oversupply, we could have had circa 500-800 less houses over the 20 year period of the plan. This would have seen a lot of the other sites removed. Plan period runs from 2016-2036.

The Gainsborough House Hotel has been commissioned by the Home Office for Syrian refugees.

JN commented that the 70% of WCC funding spent on vulnerable adults and vulnerable children (adult and child social care) seems disproportionate.

8. Police Report:

Police Ref 353_I_31032022 Burglary - Cakebole Lane.

Sometime between the morning of 28/03/2022 and late afternoon of 31/03/2022 A property has been broken into and a window has been smashed. It is unknown at this time if anything has been taken.

Police Ref 320_I_02052022 Suspicious circumstances – Clattercut lane.

Male seen acting suspiciously walking up driveway of an empty property and then seen running away.

And in nearby Chaddersley,

At approximately 22:45hrs on 1st May a brand new Ifor Williams trailer has been stolen from a unit on Tanwood Lane. The trailer has since been found.

We have also received a report that 2 sheep have been stolen from the Broome/ Chaddesley area.

TG advised that only half of the smartwater signs have been replaced, Clerk to chase.

9. Finance:

The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated and it was in accordance with the bank statements. The bank balance as at 31st March 2022 was £7695.12 and as at 29th April 2022 was £8,980.70.

The following were unanimously approved for payment:-

Already Paid

Mr P Haskell £25.00
(Tree Planting Lunnon Lane)

Gifts 2 Impress £159.84
(Jubilee Coins)

Mrs B J Drew £70.60
(Clerks Expenses)

Print- Serve Ltd £25.00
(End of Year Payroll)

Mr W Waldron £270.00
(Lengthsman March 22)

Mrs B J Drew £54.98
(Cherry Tree – Churchyard)

To be Paid

Worcestershire CALC £99.34
(Annual Subs 22/23)

DM Payroll Services Ltd £60.00
(Internal Audit Review)

Mr P Haskell £35.00
(Tree Planting)

10. To discuss Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Including to discuss and agree style and location of bench for the Parish:

SD advised that she has received the commemorative Platinum Jubilee coins for all the children in the Parish. SD/TG to meet to identify children and agree delivery.

Jubilee Celebrations – Beacon lighting Thursday evening, all in hand, SD will put on Beacon website, Street Party Saturday. It was agreed the Parish Council will pay £250.00 towards costs.

Queens Jubilee Bench by Orchard, SD has met with local woodcarver who lives in Dodford to discuss requirements. It is proposed to have a chunky Oak Top and Cast-Iron legs. Mike Forbes, woodcarver can carve the lettering. Total cost will be approx £500. It was unanimously agreed SD proceed with this.

SD also commented that following a lot of deaths in the Parish over the last few years, residents had expressed they would like some form of memorial, for example a memorial post outside village hall. They could then buy a plaque, have it engraved and have it put on post. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

11. To discuss Biodiversity Project:

Works are ongoing – an extra tree and bulbs have been planted and more may be done in the Autumn. The Parish poll has been undertaken, the orchard area and triangle will be managed, a small patch will need to be mowed for the new bench.

12. Light pollution from one of the industrial estates:

TJ reported Light pollution at Rushock trading estate getting increasingly worse. TJ to get photos and give to Clerk to write to Potter Group (Giles Palmer) Potter Group Site.

13. Planning:

TG reported on Planning since the last meeting;

21/1083/FUL Building 326, Droitwich Road, Rushock Trading Estate: External alterations and internal reconfiguration of the existing building (alternative scheme to 21/1085/FUL)

PC Recommend Approval

Approved 22/04/2022

21/1084/ADV Building 326, Droitwich Road, Rushock Trading Estate: Entrance totem signage is to comprise of an overall size of 3.6m in height by 1.2m in width

PC Recommend Approval

Pending Consideration

21/1085/FUL Building 326, Droitwich Road, Rushock Trading Estate: External alterations and internal reconfiguration of the existing building (alternative scheme to 21/1083/FUL)

PC Recommend Approval

Approved 22/04/2022

22/0067/HOU & 22/0068/LBC The Old Oak Barn, Clattercut Lane, Rushock: Extension to kitchen, new window and internal alterations

PC Recommend Approval

Refused 31/03/2022, 07/04/2022

22/0113/HOU Lunnon Cottage, Lunnon Lane, Rushock: Proposed alterations and extensions to side and rear of dwelling

PC Recommend Approval
Pending Consideration

Planning – previously reviewed by TG/DC/JN. In future Chair will circulate to all Cllrs. with response requested by a specified date after which the PC response will be circulated prior to sending to WFDC.

14. Highways and Verges:

Potholes – there are a number in Rushock at the moment, Lunnon Lane, Clattercut Lane, Well Lane, TG advised they are very easy to report on the WCC website.

JN commented on the poor performance of Ringway. There were two vehicles on Clattercut Lane, four men and a wheelbarrow and they didn't fill the hole properly. TG advised to try and take photos and we can refer to MH, County Councillor.

Lengthsman Budget – Increased allowance this year to £2,229.36, IH will enquire whether the Parish Council can spend some of the money and get Bill or contractor to do some of the jobs he is not currently allowed to do. The current work schedule is very restrictive. It was unanimously agreed to increase the Lengthsman hourly rate to £16.00.

Verges – after much discussion it was agreed to let new Highways Cabinet member, Mike Rouse, settle into their role and await further communication from MH.

15. Footpaths:

Nothing to report.

16. Rushock Village Hall:

TJ reported on upcoming pub night 7th June, also there have been a few issues with new front door which are being resolved.

17. 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.

18. Agenda items for future meetings:

Please advise Clerk. Memorial Post, Separate Cllr e mail addresses.

19. To note the date of the next meetings.

Thursday 8th September
Thursday 24th November

Clerk/Chairman to agree dates for 2023 meetings.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....