

Minutes of the Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

held on Thursday 19th January 2023, 7.30pm, Rushock Village Hall

Present:

Cllr. T. Green (TG) (Chairman)
Cllr. D. Cutler (DC)
Cllr. S. Davies (SD)
Cllr. R. Hampshire (RH)
Cllr. J. Nicholls (JN)

Also Present were:

The clerk Mrs. B J Drew (BD), Parish Lengthsman Mr. Bill Waldron (BW), County / District Councillor Mr. Marcus. J. Hart (MJH).

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr T Jennings, Cllr I Hardiman (District Councillor) 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 24th November, 2022 were duly approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.
5. **Progress Reports:**
Nothing to report.
6. **County Councillor's Report:** *Report previously circulated*

Rushock Issues

I think all of the paintballing signs around the Parish have now been removed although I did spot one or two in neighbouring Parishes and hopefully these have gone too.

I have raised with senior officers at WCC your concerns re: hedge cutting, the use of the lengths man fund and also being able to put scalplings along Park Lane to bulk up the verges. I am just awaiting a response and happy to arrange a meeting with our highways liaison officer if that will assist.

Wyre Forest Issues

The planning application for the proposed Quarry at Lea Castle, Wolverley, which was refused is now the subject of an appeal to the planning inspector with a hearing date scheduled to commence on 28th February,

Strategic Issues County Wide

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.)

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.

The County Council has launched its draft budget for consultation. It is proposing a net revenue budget of circa £400.5million. We continue to face significant pressures in both children's and adult's social care. The Government has listened to lobbying from Upper Tier Councils and has funded an additional £26.3 million pounds to WCC, of which £19.5 million is specifically for children's and adult's social care. We are facing additional pressures of circa £67.9 million, largely down to:-

Pay Inflation (set nationally)	£11.6m
Inflation from 3rd Party Contracts	£17m
Rebase Budget for Energy from Waste Plant	£6.1m
Rebase Budget in respect of one-offs and reserves	£2.6m
Adult Social Care Demand Growth	£18.5m
Children's Social Care Demand Growth	£2.5m
Home to School Transport Demand Growth	£2.4m
Legal Services Demand Growth	£0.5m
Waste Services Demand Growth	£0.4m
Delivery of existing Capital Programme	£5.5m
Investment in Highways and Tree maintenance	£0.5m
Investment in other services	£0.3m

The additional £500k in the revenues budget for highways will greatly assist in getting minor tree works and other minor issues done.

Importantly, we are maintaining investment in the parish lengths man scheme and the local county councillor's fund for investment in local highways works and our £10,000 members divisional funding.

We are also investing £3.5m from earmarked reserves for public transport (buses) as it continues to recover from the pandemic.

The Government has capped council tax at 5% overall, 3% for general council tax and 2% for the adult social care precept.

We are proposing an increase as 4.94% overall made up of 2.94% council tax and 2% social care precept.

This will increase a Band D property's bill in 2023-2024 by £69 per annum or £1.33pence per week. I anticipate by the time the District Council, Parish Council, Police and Fire precepts are added in it will be an increase of circa £100 per year. The Government expects Councils to increase by the maximum. This will mean that WCC's bill was go from £1,396.78 to £1,465.78 for a Band D property. WCC will still be in the lowest quartile for council tax nationally.

We are plugging the £67.9m gap by:-

Government funding	£26.3m
Council Tax additional income	£14m
Earmarked Reserves	£5.2m
Savings, efficiencies and additional income	£22.4m

As at 31/03/24 we plan to have circa £70.4 m of reserves, £56.1 of earmarked reserves and £14.3 of unallocated reserves.

The dedicated schools grant will increase to £532,608.

The £400.5m overall budget is made up as follows:-

Adults and Communities	£160m
Children's and Schools	£111m
Environment and Infrastructure	£69m
Commercial and Change	£16.5m
Chief Executive Unit	£3.5m
Finance and Corporate	£40.5m

We will be spending circa 67% of the net revenue budget on vulnerable children and vulnerable adult. This will mean that the majority of our budget is spent on circa 5,000 residents out of a Worcestershire population of circa 600,000 residents.

We also have a capital programme of circa £413m, made up of a wide variety of infrastructure projects.

There will be a Parish Council consultation event on 31st January held virtually at 5pm.

MJH reported that he had contacted Paul Smith regarding the Parish Council concerns re: hedge cutting, the use of the lengthsman fund and also being able to put scalplings along Park Lane to bulk up the verges and is awaiting a response. He is happy to arrange a meeting with our highways liaison officer if that will assist and for TG to attend.

The Lengthsman funding will be increasing by 5% in 23/24.

JN re-iterated that the Parish Council should be able to use Lengthsman funds, as they have previously, especially on Park Lane. The current Lengthsman remit is very restrictive. He also commented on recent traffic lights on Clattercut remaining in place for several days after work had finished and also being stuck on red, also traffic lights on the A442 outside Rushock Trading Estate remained after work had finished. MJH advised if this happens in future to inform him and he will get an Inspector out.

MJH confirmed there are no planned boundary changes for Wyre Forest.

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.

Wyre Forest District Issues

The doors to Wyre Forest House are still locked to the public as is the Green Street Hub in normal office hours, save via appt. and requesting to see an officer.

There continue to be a number of planning applications coming in on parcels of land allocated in the adopted local plan.

The Labour/Independent/Green led Council are currently consulting on their draft budget. They are proposing increasing council tax by the maximum 3% which is £6.88 per annum or 13p per week. This

will mean an increase from £229.34 to £236.22 for a Band D property. WFDC is circa 12% of the overall bill.

As a Conservative Group we support the modest council tax income as it will help fund services and the Government expects us to increase by the maximum.

The Cabinet have frozen car park charges for 2023-2024, the first time they have done so in the lifetime of this 4 year council, as they have previously increased by at least 5% per year.

They are proposing reinstating the community leadership fund of £1,000 per councillor, which is used for the ward councillor to support good causes/projects in their ward. It was £500 for 2022-2023 and they were phasing it out but we and the Conservative Group opposed this and they have now changed their kind and are proposing reinstating it in full.

They are proposing increasing the cost of staffing to the base budget and creating policy officer posts to increase 'corporate capacity' to the sum of £199,000 pa. We oppose this and feel that this will not benefit the general public and they should not have lost such corporate capacity over the last 12-24 months with the loss of such experienced senior officers. We are proposing increasing front line officers that will benefit our residents, 2 further environmental protection officers, a further civil enforcement officer and further money for parish councils to support bin emptying and litter picking and further resources for litter picking amongst a number of other proposals.

The Council continues to try and divest its assets, trying to dispose of Stourports Sports Club and Bewdley Museum. It has just transferred 3 parks in Kidderminster to the Town Council, St Georges, Baxter Gardens and Broadwaters.

Work on the £2.4m HLF project for Brinton Park has still yet to begin.

Work on the £20m Future High Streets Fund for Worcester Street has still yet to begin on the ground in earnest but as I type this there is a planning application to demolish certain buildings in Worcester Street at Tuesday evenings WFDC Planning committee and by the time of this meeting this application will have been determined.

Work to redevelop the former Crown House site has still yet to begin.

We are pressing for this work to commence and for the redevelopment and regeneration of Kidderminster town centre to commence, including the former Glades site.

The levelling up fund work has commenced as the staff at Kidderminster Town Hall have now vacated as the work to refurbish this building takes place over the next 2 years thanks to the successful bid from the Government's levelling up fund.

Full Council will set the budget on 22nd February.

MJH reported that there is to be a further planning application for Callimore Farm.

DC queried whether there are any plans for the former Glades Leisure Centre site, MJH advised that there is nothing formal yet.

8. Police Report: *Report previously circulated*

Clattercut Lane - Burglary – Police ref 138_I_19122022

Between 1700hrs on 18th December and 0800 on 19th December, unknown persons have broken into a garage by breaking a window and stolen a green Yamaha Quad Bike along with tools from within.

TG advised that he has signed up to Neighbourhood Matters but it does not show up anything in Rushock, this may be due to Clattercut Lane being split between Kidderminster and Droitwich Policing teams. MJH will find a contact to try and resolve this..

Policing Priorities – Agreed to keep as Inappropriate speed, particularly in lanes / wildlife crime / burglaries.

9. Finance:

- a) To agree the Budget for the Financial Year 2023-2024,

TG went through the budget which had previously been circulated and it was unanimously agreed to approve figures therein.

- b) To agree the Precept for the Financial Year 2023 – 2024,

After a short discussion it was proposed by DC to increase the Band D Council Tax by 3%. This will increase the amount payable per house per year by £1.31 to £45.10 and will give the Parish Council a Precept of £3608.00. This was seconded by SD and unanimously agreed.

- c) The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated and it was in accordance with the bank statements. BD reported the bank balance in Lloyds Bank as at end of December 2022 was £7485.40 however there are several payments still to be drawn which will reduce the balance to £6714.49.

- d) To authorise any expenditure and cheques for signing.

Already Paid;

Mr W Waldron (Parish Paths)	£72.00
Print Serve (Payroll)	£20.00
Mrs B J Drew (Clerks Salary 01/04/22 – 31/03/23)	£1368.80
HMRC (Tax and NI 01/04/22 – 31/03/23)	£342.20
Mrs B J Drew (Microsoft Office – 1/3 shared cost)	£26.66
Mrs D Cutler (Crib Service)	£34.65
BWP Creative Limited (New E Mail Domain, Hosting & Support)	£417.60

To Be Paid;

Chemquad Weed Control & Landscaping (Parish Paths)	£108.00
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- e) To update on .gov.uk Parish Councillor e-mail addresses.

BD reported that all new e mails have been set up. DC advised of problems with downloading files onto ipad, SD advised of problems with setting up on phone, also receiving notifications of new e mails. BD to contact James Lungley to provide assistance with the queries raised.

10. Parish Council Elections 4th May 2023.

BD will contact Elections Office to request nomination packs. The deadline for applications is 4th April.

JN advised that he will not be standing for re-election.

BD advised that voters will need photographic id to be able to vote, eg passport, driving license, bus pass.

11. To update on Bench and Memorial post.

SD advised nothing to report, she will chase up.

12. To discuss King Charles III Coronation.

MJH advised that if the Parish Council is arranging or being involved with arranging any event in respect of the above please let him know so he can consider giving up to £500 Divisional Funding.

SD will liaise with the Village Hall committee and Church and advise.

13. To discuss Biodiversity Project.

DC advised that the Worcester Black Pear tree has died whilst the other pear trees are thriving. She will contact the supplier to ascertain if they will replace. If not we will get a replacement Worcester Black Pear tree from another supplier.

TG confirmed that management of the Biodiversity areas continue as agreed by residents in the Parish Poll with no cutting of grass until Late July. Bannuttree are doing a great job in the Parish and will continue to be used, all agreed.

14. Planning. To note the planning schedule and any applications since the last meeting.

DC advised that two fields off Elmbridge Lane have been put on the market, 17 acres all in Green Belt and expressed concern over possible development or use as a traveler site. MJH advised that the land should not be developed as it is Green Belt.

TG advised that a letter had been received advising consultations before the determination of a planning application are being reviewed with a consideration to extend period from 21 days to 28 days.

No planning applications had been received and the erection of agricultural building at Leylands, Clattercut Lane is still pending consideration.

15. Highways and Verges.

TG advised that the issues in Park Lane have been covered under the County Councillors report but it does need attention as even the passing places have large dips in them now. The Parish Council would like to have control of verge mowing to improve biodiversity in the parish

Drain by white gates has still not been done and BW advised of blocked pipe at the end of Well Lane.

TG expressed thanks to the volunteer litter pickers and suggested the Parish Council consider purchase of basic equipment, e.g. sack holders, sacks, hi-viz. This was agreed.

16. Footpaths. Progress Report (TG).

TG advised that the Parish Paths grant has been received and footbridge will be reported again.

17. Rushock Village Hall.

JN advised that new door has now been fitted and the old knocker is awaiting repair.

JN expressed concern over the maintenance of the perimeter of the village hall and the noticeboard not being kept up to date. TG will advise TJ as Village Hall representative.

18. Correspondence. Noted.

19. Agenda items for future meetings.

20. To note the date of the next meetings.

11th May 2023

7th September 2023

23rd November 2023

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....