

Minutes of the Meeting of Rushock Parish Council

held on Thursday 23rd November, 2023, 7.00pm, Rushock Village Hall

Present:

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

Also Present were:

The clerk Mrs. B J Drew (BD), Parish Lengthsman Mr. Bill Waldron (BW), Cllr M J Hart (County/District Councillor), PCSO Kate Easthope.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr D Pugh, Cllr T Jennings, Cllr R Drew (District Councillor), Cllr I Hardiman (District Councillor).
2. **Declarations of Councillors Interests:**
None declared.
3. **Public Question Time:**
No Public Questions.
4. **Minutes:**
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th September 2023 were duly approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.
5. **Progress Reports:**
TG advised of CALC meeting 11th September which was attended by himself and the Clerk via Zoom. TG asked Helen Hawkes, Planning Manager if further information is received on a planning application could it please be shared with the Parish Council.
6. **County Councillor's Report:** *Report previously circulated*
County Councillor Hart went through his report, he advised that the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme is ceasing, and the Lengthsman Scheme will be used for this in the future. Only 7 parishes in the County use the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme. He was pleased to have met with the Chairman recently and to see the Orchard thriving and the new bench in situ.

Rushock Issues

I was pleased to meet Terry with Hayley from WCC highways on Tuesday 14th November in the Parish. It was good to see the coronation bench in situ and the new Rowan tree in the triangle.

I am aware that the issue of verge cutting is still an issue and we did discuss this and Hayley is going to see what she can do.

We did look at the verge issues in Park Lane and Hayley is going to put this forward for an edge of carriageway repair scheme for 2024-2025.

As confirmed with your clerk in email correspondence the white markings on the road in Rushock are for Severn Trent works.

Wyre Forest Issues

In respect of Lea Castle Quarry, despite the planning inspector dismissing the appeal on 5th May, the applicants have appealed to the Secretary of State by way of a Judicial Review and the hearing will be held on 28th September in Cardiff. I have heard that the Judicial Review may have been successful and that the inspector erred on a point of law and therefore the process may have to be run again.

Bewdley Bridge is now operating one way over the bridge into the town for approximately 18 months whilst the Environment Agency (EA) undertake the work for the construction of the flood defences. This is now circa a £9.3m scheme, of which £500k is from WCC and the rest from the EA. The Government increased the capital funding by an additional £1.5m from the original funding grant for additional work.

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.

WCC are embarking on a 'programme of libraries unlocked' following the success at Droitwich and Stourport. Libraries remain open for longer but are unstaffed. Access is by a secure swipe card. After the 12 month trials at Droitwich and Stourport the scheme is being extended, most locally to Rushock other than of course Droitwich already operating, at Hagley and Bromsgrove.

WCC is planning to invest up to £1m at Hartlebury Museum with a view to securing a £4m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The lease ends in February 2026 and so negotiations are under way for a new lease.

Lots of resurfacing and lining has taken place across the county.

Full Council met on 14th September and approved the Council's submission to the boundary commission.

The proposal for the Chaddesley Division is to retain the Spennells estate and the parishes of:-

Broome
Chaddesley Corbett
Churchill and Blakedown
Rushock
Stone

In addition, to add in the Lea Castle development, currently in the parish of Wolverley and Cookley.

The Boundary Commission will then further consult on the proposals and the final order with the new divisional boundaries is scheduled to be made in July 2024 with the elections on 1st May, 2025.

County Hall has RAAC in its roof. The building is still functional on the ground and lower ground floor. The whole of the first floor is currently out of bounds whilst surveyors undertake their work. Staff and councillors have relocated to the other two floors. The building is still very much open for business. Full Council on 14th September was held in the council chamber at WFDC's office at Wyre Forest House.

WCC has been embarking on a series of resident's roadshows over the last 3 months and in Wyre Forest held a roadshow at the Far Forest show on 12th August and in Kidderminster town centre on 23rd September. I was at both talking to local residents.

WCC, like all upper tier authorities are facing significant financial pressures on demand led services, childrens and adults social care and in particular on our placement budgets, together with Home to School Transport.

Our net revenue budget is £401m for 23/24 and at the end of Q1 (31st July) we are already forecasting a £18.2m cost pressure following the use of budgeted risk reserves without further action.

The forecast overspend is as follows:-

Childrens	£22.7m
Adults	£5.8m
Communities	£0.6m
Economy and Infrastructure	£0.7m
Commercial and Change	£1.0m
Total	£30.8m

Less forecast underspend/reserves/additional income as follows:-

Corporate underspend	£1.5m
Use of reserves agreed at budget setting	£7.0m
Business rates additional income	£4.1m
Total	£12.6m

Net overspend £18.2m

In adult social care, long term placement numbers have increased by 4% in Q1, equating to a net increase of 238 packages of care. Over the last 3 years – April 2020 to April 2023 there has been an overall increase from circa 6,400 to 6,900 packages of care. In terms of Older People services we have seen an increase in 171 packages (3%). There is an increase in service users going into residential care with an average 10% increase in unit costs which is an average £73 per week. Nursing care packages have increased by 15 with an average 9% increase in unit costs. Home care packages have increased by 64 with an average 7.6% increase in unit costs which is an average £23 per week.

In terms of Learning Disability services we have seen an increase of 62 and significant increases are being seen in the average unit cost of placements with residential placements increasing by 10% (£170) per person per week and supported living costs by 9% (£105) per person per week and home care by 11% (£43) per person per week.

In terms of Physical Disabilities services home care average weekly costs have increased by 15% (£43) per person per week and nursing care by 6% (£64) per person per week.

In Childrens Services placements for Looked after Children are currently forecast to overspend by 16.9m, which is 18% above budget. Current placements are 1,039, a 11% increase from 939 in June 2022. There has been a sharp increase between January and March 2023 alone.

For example, some packages of care are costing £10k per week, over £500k per year per child and some packages of care are now costing £20k per week, over £1m per year. The average weekly cost has gone from circa £1,000 per week to £1,500 per week over the last 3 years.

It is absolutely or statutory duty to keep young people safe but this is an example of the financial pressures WCC and all other authorities are currently facing.

Home to School Transport (HTST) is forecast to overspend by £6m this year due to inflationary pressures on providers. There is also an increase in demand with more parents seeking to use transport with a 12% increase in mainstream numbers over the last 12 months. The predicted overspend could also increase further if there are more children requiring transport as part of their (Education, Health and Care Plan) EHCP.

Clearly, the Council is cognisant of its budget framework and is working up plans to mitigate the end of year overspend by looking at ways it can make further savings, reschedule its large capital programme and if needs be the use of reserves.

TG commented that he supports the unlocking of libraries scheme.

7. District Councillor's Report: *Report previously circulated*

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.

We have liaised with Terry in respect of a noise complaint raised by a local resident.

Wyre Forest Issues

The Cabinet at its September meeting have approved a new environmental policy and utilised the powers that the Government has conferred on them from 31st July to increase fines for littering, dog fouling and fly tipping etc.... WFDC have increased the fines to the maximum.

The Cabinet has approved a further Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley preventing the anti-social consumption of alcohol in certain zones. There are no changes to the zones and this is a further extension of the PSPO approved in 2020. Likewise, a further PSPO has been granted in respect of dog control. The only change to the previous order is a new offence of failing to give your name and address when required.

Work is well under way with the Connectivity project in Worcester Street, Kidderminster where 4 large redundant retail units are being demolished to open up this area of town. There will be much more gradual steps to what are currently there now called the 'Step Entry' and also a gradual path down, with benches and a park/public open space. We need to make this area of town attractive to urban living and link up the former Glades site which we want to see developed for residential with the wider town centre. This will be the subject of a formal planning application, however and we would not want to pre-judge this.

Work is also well under way at the former Magistrates' Court, which is being branded as the 'Creative Hub'. This will be office spaces that can be permanently let and there will be flexible lets and venue space too.

There will be free parking for 1 hour Monday – Friday between 8am-6pm from 6th November 2023 to 31st March 2025 to encourage people still to visit Bewdley due to the unprecedented disruption of the bridge being only open one way whilst the flood defence work is undertaken by the EA. You will need to display a ticket for this.

There will also be free car parking this Christmas in all WFDC owner car parks (not Weavers Wharf) from 1st – 29th December inclusive between 3-6pm. No ticket needs to be displayed for this.

8. **Police Report:**

PCSO Kate Easthope reported that currently there is a spate of burglaries in the area and asked all to remind residents to remain vigilant and report any suspicious behaviour. Suggested tips to help keep homes secure were provided;

- A home that looks empty is far more likely to be targeted by a burglar, so it's worth making sure your home looks occupied.
- If you are installing new doors and windows get ones that are certified to the latest British Standard.
- Securely lock all doors and windows before leaving the house. It's easy to forget when you're in hurry, but it's the simplest way for a burglar to enter your home.
- Window locks will help stop people getting in.
- Never leave keys anywhere near the front door, including your letterbox; burglars know where to look.
- Use automatic timer-switches to turn on a light and perhaps a radio when it goes dark, even if you are just out for a couple of hours.
- Visibly and permanently marking your belongings helps you and the police identify them if they are stolen. It can also make it difficult for the thief to dispose of the property.
- Ask a neighbour or relative for help could they clear the post away from the door mat and open and close the curtains.
- Prevent easy access to the back and sides of your home by installing locked gates, two metre minimum fencing or walls. Trellis topping also makes climbing difficult.
- Security lighting can be used to make offenders feel vulnerable and observed. It is suggested that you use dusk to dawn lighting.
- Visible burglar alarms are a deterrent, there are many to choose from.
- Remove and secure items that may be used to break in or climb up such as ladders and garden tools.

The team will continue to patrol the area and give crime prevention advice to residents.

DC suggested putting an article in the Parish Magazine, it was also agreed TG make people aware on the WhatsApp Group.

Ryan and Alice enjoyed attending the coffee morning this month and engaging with residents.

The three Policing Priorities were agreed as Burglaries, Speeding and Wildlife Crime.

9. **Finance:**

a) The financial spreadsheet was duly circulated, and it was in accordance with the bank statements. The bank balance as at 31st October 2023 was £8551.23 with 3 unrepresented cheques making it £8,184.88. Then we have four new accounts to be paid, making the balance £6,064.28.

TG thanked MH for his generous contribution of £500 towards the birdbox project.

b) The following were unanimously approved for payment: -

Already Paid:

Rushock Village Hall	£120.00
Hire of hall for 2024 meetings	

Mrs B J Drew	£56.35
Expenses – 1st April 23 – 30th September 23	

Bannuttree Landscaping & Gardening Services Ltd	£190.00
Grass Strimming	

<u>To Be Paid:</u>	
Mrs B J Drew Salary 23/24	£1461.60
HMRC Tax and NI	£365.40
Print-Serve Limited Payroll Run	£20.00
Parish Council Websites Email hosting and support	£273.60

DC formally asked for funding for chocolate Santas for the Crib Service, 30 @1.25, unanimously agreed.

c) Clerks Salary.

TG reported that the new CALC PayScale's have been received and the Clerk's hourly rate has been increased by £1.00 to £15.75 per hour. (SCP 20)

10. Local Flood Risk Management Strategy Update:

Noted.

11. Wyre Forest District Council Housing Supplementary Planning Document:

Noted.

12. Update on Planning / Councillor Training:

TG reported on the recent planning training provided by Wyre Forest District Council and all agreed it was a very useful and informative session. BD reported that Cllr Pugh had undertaken his Councillor Training.

13. Update on memorial post:

The project is ongoing, SD/RH are working with DP to source suitable wood. The post will be 2 feet out of the ground and concreted in, plaques will be a standard size.

14. To discuss Biodiversity Project / Birdbox Project / Natural Networks Correspondence:

Further bulbs have been purchased and have all been planted, also a Rowan tree planted on the triangle.

The Bird Box Project is being organized by SD/DP and will go ahead in January or February using the funding provided by Councillor Hart. TG has offered to help, and DC will help and offered Neil to saw wood.

Natural Networks Correspondence – TG advised that Rushock has no green spaces in the Parish that could be enhanced.

15. Planning:

Planning Spreadsheet had been circulated.

TG reported on Planning since the last meeting.

23/0354/S73 – Removal of Agricultural Tie Condition, Foxhayes Farm – Supported Planning Officer decision to refuse this application.

23/0517/HOU – Removal of existing garage and erection of a storage building, Clattercut House – Approved.

23/0662/FUL – Change of use of agricultural land for the installation of 8 ground mounted photovoltaic panels and associated infrastructure, Leylands Farm, Clattercut Lane – Approved.

23/0693/CLE – Application for a lawful development certificate (existing use) to demonstrate the 10-year continuous occupation of the dwelling known as Foxhayes without complying with condition 2 (agricultural occupancy) on planning approval BR502/62 – Recommend Approval – no reason to doubt the applicant's claims.

Callimore Farm – still to finalise 106 agreement and conditions.

16. Highways and Verges:

TG met with Councillor Hart and Hayley Steele, Highways Liaison Engineer to look at Park Lane. A survey will be carried out for an edge of carriage way scheme. This is progress, although not guaranteed. A dangerous part of carriageway on Clattercut Lane which has sunk was also pointed out.

TG advised approval is need from Highways to use Lengthsman funding for scalping's Park Lane. MH will get his approval and RH/DP will liaise regarding these works.

Hayley Steele has advised she will look into the verge cutting.

Severn Trent works on Cakebole Lane are ongoing.

17. Parish Paths Partnership Scheme / Footpaths:

TG advised paths will need to be added to County list.

TJ to provide invoice for any works undertaken.

18. Worcestershire Tree Warden Scheme:

DC will approach Neil to see if he is willing to take on the role of Tree Warden for Rushock.

19. Rushock Village Hall:

TG attended AGM last week. Gemma is standing down due to work commitments and Ashley is returning to the committee. Reserves are down due to the new door and electric for the defibrillator. There are slight concerns about attendance at pub nights, DC suggested more advertising of these and also an advert could be put in the magazine that the hall is available for hire. MH advised that he has offered the village hall further funding but not received a reply. SD will chase this with Clare Jennings.

20. Correspondence:

Nothing to report.

21. Agenda items for future meetings:

Budget & Precept

22. To note the date of the next meetings.

18th January 24

9th May 24

5th September 24

21st November 24

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Dated.....