**Strensham Parish Council**

**Minutes** of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on 19th May 2015 starting at 19:30 in Strensham Village Hall

## Present: Councillors: N P Guilding (Chairman) P Ellis L Gough G Sawyer

**In Attendance:** Rebecca Abunassar (Clerk) DClr R Davies Chris Cobain (Lengthsman) & 8 Parishioners

**19/15 Election of Chairman 2015/16** & signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office. As previous Chairman Cllr Guilding welcomed everyone to the annual meeting of Strensham Parish Council, the first meeting to be held since the elections on the 7th May 2015. He confirmed that the parish elections had been unopposed and all who stood had been elected. The Councillors who stood were himself, Lloyd Gough, Gordon Sawyer and Paul Ellis and they came into office on the 12th May. The Council had 3 vacant seats which it was hoped could be filled through Co-Option.

Cllr Guilding asked if there were any nominations for Chair, Malcolm Gribble proposed Cllr Guilding and Cllr Sawyer seconded the nomination all voted in favour of the proposal. Cllr Guilding thanked the Councillors and signed his declaration of Acceptance of Office.

**20/15 Welcome & Apologies** Cllr Guilding welcomed all present and accepted the apologies submitted to the Clerk.

**21/15 Co-Option of Vacancies –** Cllr Guilding explained that the Council had the power to co-opt into the vacancies and asked for nominations of any candidates. Cllr Gough proposed Malcolm Gribble who had intended to stand but due to personal circumstance was unable to submit his candidate papers to Wychavon within the given timeframe. Cllr Ellis seconded the proposal and all were in favour. Cllr Guilding proposed Chris White and all voted in favour. Cllr Guilding welcomed them both back and asked if there were any suggestions for the final vacant seat. The Clerk told the council that they had 35 working days to fill the vacancy but would contact CALC and Wychavon to confirm that they still had the powers to Co-opt at the July meeting. She asked that Councillors speak to interested parties and ask them to email her and she would send out further information to them. In the event of more than one candidate standing a vote would be required to be taken.

**Action: Clerk to confirm the process required to be followed and Councillors to speak to possible candidates.**

**22/15 Declarations of Interest & Dispensation Requests from Councillors –** Cllr Guilding asked if there were any declarations of Interest for items on the agenda. Cllr Sawyer declared an interest as a neighbour to the planning application [15/00541](http://www.e-wychavon.org.uk/scripts/plan2005/acolnetcgi.exe?ACTION=UNWRAP&TheSystemKey=%34%38%33%34%31&RIPNAME=Root%2EPages%2EPgeDC%2EPgePlanningRegister) Rectory House, Church Road. The interest was noted and it was agreed as it was not pecuniary Cllr Sawyer would be permitted to speak when the application was discussed but not take part in a vote if one was required.

**23/15 Election of Vice Chairman 2015/16** – Cllr Guilding asked if there were any nominations for the role of Vice Chairman. He proposed Cllr Gribble and Cllr Gough seconded the proposal and all were in favour. He thanked Cllr Gribble for agreeing to stand.

**24/15 Minutes:**  The minutes of the meeting held on the 26th March 2015 had been circulated. No amendments were requested and the minutes were signed off.

**25/15 Matters Arising and Progress Reports:**

New Homes Bonus: The welcome gates had been installed and were awaiting painting. The Clerk confirmed she would purchase the picnic bench and asked if the old picnic table and bench could be disposed of as they posed a safety risk. Cllr White offered to dispose of them. It was asked from the floor whether new play equipment would be bought with the remaining NHB money. Cllr Gough explained that all ideas were being discussed and that a new tranche of money would shortly be available to apply for and asked that all ideas be put forward for consideration. The Clerk suggested that a fresh consultation exercise was done as the previous one was over two years ago and the amounts had altered since then and the demonstration of Parishioner support for ideas were key to acceptance of grants being offered.

**ACTION: Ideas for future projects to be gathered and advertised to parishioners. All Councillors. Cllr White to depose of old play area seating**

Broadband:Cllr Gough advised that a survey of the cabinet in Upper Strensham was anticipated to take place sometime from April to September 15 and he would continue to keep an eye out for updates. It was thought that Lower Strensham had gone live however Cllr Sawyer had spoken to them and the update had ‘jumped the gun’ but it was hoped the work would be completed this year.

Reported Highway Issues: The Clerk was asked to chase for a response on the subsidence by the bridge that had been reported and passed on to Bridges & Structures.

**Action: The Clerk to contact the Worcestershire Hub and request an update.**

Village Hall Fees: No communication had been received regarding the future charge for the use of the hall for Council meetings.

Strensham Woods: The Clerk will continue to liaise with Open Spaces Society to find out where to direct the response to the deposit.

**Action: The Clerk to liaise with Open Spaces & Historical Societies**

Neighbourhood Watch – PACT were keen to assist with development of a NHW area especially in light of the recent thefts from vehicles and sheds in the village and surrounding areas. They apologised in the event that they did not make the meeting but would welcome the opportunity to attend the next.

**Action: The Clerk to liaise with PACT**

**26/15** **Planning:**

1. To consider any planning applications:

[**15/00541**](http://www.e-wychavon.org.uk/scripts/plan2005/acolnetcgi.exe?ACTION=UNWRAP&TheSystemKey=%34%38%33%34%31&RIPNAME=Root%2EPages%2EPgeDC%2EPgePlanningRegister) Rectory House, Church Road, Strensham, Worcester, WR8 9LW

Landscaping and Earth Remodelling of Garden Land

Plans and information had been printed from Wychavon’s website and were discussed, it was agreed that the information provided on the website was very limited. The applicant is proposing to fill a large area with soil in the attempt to prevent further slippage of his land down a steep bank towards the river but no reference to the volume of soil required and the source and route of the soil was made in the application.

Cllr Sawyer had met with the applicant to discuss the proposal and agreed to talk through the applicant’s proposal as explained to himself. He said there were 2 issues that were required to be addressed; the firstis whether the proposal will actually work and the second is in relation to the number of vehicle movements that would be a result of the proposal. He said he was concerned that it was not within the planners remit whether the proposal would work and put a stop to the land slippage.

There were two possible routes for the lorry movements, one via Church Road and the second from lower down Bourne Road by Hopyard Farm, the track that Mr Hill worked on. Dust from the vehicles is a concern for both routes but the track was the route that Mr Hills was suggesting would be used. Cllr Sawyer concluded that it was essential that something was done but queried if the current proposal was the right solution.

Cllr White said he felt that the ongoing problem was a result of removing trees from the property that were shoring up the bank and the current situation was a blot on the landscape that was clearly visible from the Eckington side of the river. Cllr Gribble said that more planning needs to be done to quantify what is required to be used as 100m from the river is a huge amount of soil, Cllr Gough agreed that confirmation of timescales and volume were required before the Council could consider the application.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would respond to the application by raising concerns of the lack of reference to the volume of soil and whether the plan would rectify the problem. The parish council could only object to the application in its current format, without knowledge of the quantity of lorries likely to come through the village.

**Action: The Clerk to send response to the planning department.**

b) Details of decisions:

**14/02866** Highways Agency Depot – Approved 2/04/15 with lighting condition attached

[**15/00797**](http://www.e-wychavon.org.uk/scripts/plan2005/acolnetcgi.exe?ACTION=UNWRAP&TheSystemKey=%34%38%35%39%37&RIPNAME=Root%2EPages%2EPgeDC%2EPgePlanningRegister) M5 Services (South Bound), Hill View Road, Strensham,

Alterations and extensions to the existing parking areas, provision of new caravan park, extension of internal roadway and associated works.

The application was approved on 18th May 2015 with the condition that no caravans were parked there over night.

Cllr Sawyer updated the Council on the latest changes at Roadchef which had been taken over by a company who are keen to update the site. Work has already started to improve the traffic flow between cars, HGVs and coaches.

It was agreed that it would be worthwhile inviting Steve Thomas to the next meeting to share the proposals.

**Action: The Clerk to invite Steve Thomas (Roadchef) to the July meeting.**

c) Details of enforcement action:

i) Harbour Wood – Cllr Guilding invited David Wallbank to speak and update the Council on the latest activity with Harbour Wood. Mr Wallbank said that a meeting had been held and he had circulated a summary of the meeting to the Councillors. It suggested that the work might continue to the end of the year as it was deemed still not complete. Cllr Gribble said that he did not understand why a member of the Parish Council had not been invited to attend even though they had requested an invitation and asked DCllr Davis for an explanation. DCllr Davis said he did ask if the PC could attend but was told no. He said at the meeting discussions were held about the quality which was deemed acceptable. He had seen the concerns raised about volumes possibly being required to be removed out of the site but said that the only amounts that might need to be taken out of the site was the hardcore that was put down on the track. There is a given volume proposed to go onto the site and the heights are not up to the markings at all levels.

Mr Wallbank commented that although the site had a permit no one appeared to be able to give a definitive answer to the volumes that had already been deposited at the site when asked. It was clear that accurate records of all deliveries to the site where not being kept.

DCllr Davis said that the Environment Agency were looking into changing their policy on issuing permits and that holders would need to apply every 6 months. He suggested writing to the EA to ask how the consultation was going and whether the Parish Council could have a copy.  
 Mr Wallbank confirmed that Mr Fieldings’ injunction hearing was still awaited and Cllr Gribble asked what Wychavon would do if the injunction was granted but the contractors still continued to dump at the lake. Cllr Davis said he was unable to answer for Wychavon but it would probably be deemed a Highways matter followed by a police matter if it continued to be broken.

It was agreed that the major dispute was the plan that was being worked towards, as the one approved in the 2009 was very different to the one that the authorities are in agreement that the applicant is working towards but no copies of the plan have been made available to the parish council. It was agreed that DCllr Davis would get a copy of the approved plan for the parish council to view as they cannot find copies on the website. It was also request that he ask Jack Hegarty to the next meeting.

**Action: DCllr Davis to get a copy of the plan. The Clerk to write to the EA.**

ii) **New build on Court Rd** – It was noted that no work had been undertaken for a while and the Clerk was asked to contact the enforcement officer regarding the condition to create a pavement as the verge was looking unkempt.

**Action: The Clerk to email Bill Gairns to remind him of the condition.**

**27/15 District & County Councillors Reports:** for information

1. **District Cllr Ron Davis** – Cllr Davis’ spoke of his pleasure and surprise at being re-elected and thought it was likely to be the last time that he stood but he wished to continue the fight against Harbour Wood. He said that Wychavon would meet on the 19th to elect a new leader which would be Linda Robinson, he would no longer be on the exec board but would have Chairmanship of several areas one of which was Audit.

He explained that the SWDP is moving towards completeion and it is hoped it will be signed by the end of the year, it has been tested by a few appeal cases and two large developments in Defford have been refused on the grounds of the SWDP.

1. **County Cllr Adrian Hardman** – Councillor Hardman was not present.

**28/15 Highways Matters**

a) Reported problems – Cllr Gribble asked for the drain by the access to the playing field to be reported as it is broken.

b) New Lengthsman Contract and recruitment for 2015-2016 – Cllr Guilding welcomed Chris Cobain as the new lengthsman. Mr Cobain confirmed that he had undertaken the WCC scheme training and had starting work within the parish boundary. A lawn mower had been purchased for use under the scheme in the hope to reduce the amount of strimming undertaken.

**Action: The Clerk will contact the hub to get an update on the work.**

**29/15 Finance:**

1. Payments of Accounts: The Council approved the following payments of accounts:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| R Williams | March Lengthsman | 548 | 126.00 |
| M Gribble | Gates Materials | 549 | 719.84 |
| Playsafety Limited | Rospa Annual Inspection | 550 | 78.00 |
| Worcestershire CALC | Annual Affiliation | 551 | 142.10 |
| Countrywide | Viking Lawnmower | 552 | 560.00 |
| L A Garden Services | March & April Cuts | 553 | *230.00* |
| Pershore Fencing | Welcome Gates | 554 | *190.00* |
| R Abunassar | April Clerk Duties | 555 | *101.00* |
| AON Insurance | Annual Insurance Policy | 556 | *360.81* |
|  | **Total** |  | **2507.8** |

1. Receipts:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| WCC | Grass Cutting 2014/15 payment | **50.67** |
| WCC | Lengthsman Scheme Reimbursement 2014-15 | **74.00** |
| Wychavon | Precept 1st installment | **2501.00** |
|  | **Total** | **2625.67** |

c) To agree the final accounts in preparation for auditing – Copies of the end of year accounts were circulated and agreed as a true reflect. Pat Butt has been appointed as the Internal Auditor and has been booked to go through the accounts W/C 10th June in time for the External Audit deadline of 29th June.

d) To agree signatories 2015/16 and Annual Governance statement– It was agreed to replace D Wallbank and A Truscott with L Gough and M Gribble and to continue with the current financial procedures and controls.

e) To agree renewal of annual insurance cover – The annual renewal was agreed with AON Insurance due to the small discount given for agreeing to an LTA it was agreed to renew for a year as the market is getting more competitive.

**30/15 Correspondence**

a) Councillor Training Sessions – The list of training courses run by CALC was circulated and councillors were asked to let the clerk know if they wished to attend any of the courses. Welland’s offer of organising a bespoke training course through CALC to reduce the cost was also mentioned.

**Action: The Clerk to emailed the list of training courses to councillors**

**31/15 AOB –** The issue of blocked/overgrown footpaths was raised by Cllr Gough. He said that one of the main designated footpath had become virtually impassable due to overgrown hedgerow and the narrowness of walkable footpath. It was agreed to report the issue to WCC. It was also noted that other parishes continue to have the role of Parish Paths officer and get funding from WCC to help with issues and maintenance. It was agreed that it would be worthwhile advertising to see if anyone is interested in the voluntary role.

**Action: The Clerk to put up a notice on the website and Councillors to speak to parishioners to see if anyone is interested.**

**32/15 Date of next meeting:** 23rd July 2015 was the date set for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm for refreshments ahead of the Annual Parish Meeting.

Signed: *Rebecca Abunassar*  Date: 28/05/2015