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2024/1

Little Comberton Parish Council Parish Council Meeting - Minutes Tuesday 23rd January 2024, 7.00pm Village Hall

Parish Councillors Present: L Haycock, N Jamieson, C Rabbette, A Dermont, District Cllr Hardman, County Cllr Hardman.

Clerk/RFO: Nicola Harding

In attendance: No parishioners

1. Apologies

Received from Cllr Smithson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

3. Parishioner's Comments

- Wick Road: An overhanging tree had been reported along Wick Road at the corner of Merry Brook, just outside the village boundary. As fallen branches are now lying on the nearby hand rail, it was agreed to make contact with the landowner and request if this could be included in their next round of boundary maintenance works. *Action: Clerk.*
- Old Rectory verge: It was agreed to request an update regarding likely completion of the ongoing schedule of works. *Action: Cllr Jamieson.*
- Tree sponsorship, Wick Road: A request had been received to sponsor a tree, in commemoration of a gentleman who had been assigned to the village during the war. Cllrs welcomed this request and agreed to refer this to the Parish tree warden. *Action: Clerk to forward details to Parish tree warden.*
- A concern had been received regarding a recent road traffic collision at the junction to Wick and Little Comberton on Evesham Road. It was noted that Cllr Jamieson had reported this incident online and visibility at the junction had been assessed, with no further action considered necessary by Worcestershire County Council. The junction will continue to be maintained accordingly by Highways. *Action: Clerk to relay this information to parishioner by means of an update.*

4. Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 7th November 2023

Proposed Cllr Dermont, seconded Cllr Rabbette, all in favour, to approve the minutes as a true record.

5. Progress reports from Parish Activities: brief updates:

a. Lengthsman: Work has resumed in the Parish and a fallen sapling has been reported across the verge, opposite Orchard Drive. It was agreed to approach the landowner to establish if this could be included in future maintenance works or if the lengthsman may be able to assist, should this be agreeable with the landowner. *Action: Clerk to make contact with landowner/lengthsman.*

It was noted that the District Council's road sweeping team had attended in the Parish and successfully cleared the gutters in all sections of the village.

b. Queen's Memorial planters: Two wooden planters have been organised and purchased by the sports & social committee, however given current priorities, this item will be revisited again by the village hall committee in the Summer.

c. Highways: (i) Drainage – following a site meeting with WCC Highway's Drainage & Liaison Managers in December, it was confirmed that a team will be directed to pressure jet a number of drains from the crossroads as soon as one becomes available. Cllr Jamieson had also updated WCC about the whereabouts of a drain under Pershore Road, which extends towards the water treatment works.

Action: WCC Drainage team to attend when convenient.

WCC's Highways Liaison Manager has also confirmed that following one pot hole repair on a lay-by along Wick Road, a team will return to complete repairs to the remaining pot holes in the near future, using surplus tarmac available.

(ii) Road safety: Cllr Dermont provided a summary of the Parish Council's proposals to address speeding through the village, as discussed and actioned at the November meeting. Following a site meeting with the County Council's Highways Liaison Officer to explore all options and any traffic calming recommendations which are available to the Parish Council, County Cllr Hardman confirmed his full support of all proposals, including confirmation of a 50% contribution towards additional VAS signage, hopefully within the next financial year. Cllrs agreed to make a personal approach to parishioners directly affected by the suggested proposals in the first instance, ahead of sharing with the wider village. Cllrs Dermont & Jamieson also summarised a site meeting they had with representatives from the Safer Neighbourhood Team and their request for an occasional police presence in the village to address speed monitoring and prevention. An application had also been prepared by Cllrs Dermont & Jamieson for submission to West Mercia Police's Safer Roads Fund, with the intention of securing match funding towards the VAS and other measures such as a second pair of village gates and roundels. As an application is now pending, Cllr Hardman confirmed that there was no further action required from the Parish Council at this stage.

Action: Final submission of Safer Roads application to be submitted to West Mercia PCC & personal approach to parishioners to share proposals supported by WCC (Cllrs Dermont & Jamieson); Cllr Hardman to liaise with BB, WCC Highways.

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(iii) Pershore road lay-by: It was noted that following earlier discussions in September 2023 regarding the use of the service lay-by, and subsequent confirmation from WCC Highways that this matter is now concluded, no signage is in place to date.

The Chairman moved the meeting to item 6, County Cllr reports, as Cllr A. Hardman was due to attend another meeting in a neighbouring parish.

d. Airband poles: Latest updates received from WCC's Broadband & Connectivity manager confirmed that a contract has been re-issued with Airband's sub-contractors and the poles should be removed in February. It was suggested that further contact could now be made to Airband's CEO to relay this protracted issue.

Action: Cllr Jamieson to request monthly updates until completion/Cllr Dermont to forward CEO contact details available.

Cllr Haycock also drew attention to internet connection issues experienced during periods of wet weather, leading to speculation that ducting may be flooded. It was agreed to circulate a village notice online to establish if a pattern is emerging with other residents in the vicinity.

Action: Cllrs Haycock/Jamieson.

e. Fitness & mobility class: Three classes have now been delivered by a fitness and mobility instructor at the village hall. Interest has been positive and Cllrs extended their thanks to Cllr Rabbette for introducing and enabling this initiative as a supportive health and social opportunity for villagers.

f. Rooftop Housing Group: Further updates will be requested from the local housing officer in May/June, following regular information provided in 2023 regarding progress at a village property. *Action: Clerk.*

6. District and County Councillor's reports:

County Cllr A. Hardman – in summary:

- Budget 2024/25: Worcestershire County Council's budget is due for publication on 24th January 2024. There has been a slight reduction in the structural deficit, however significant overspends have been incurred in children's services due to rising costs of children in care, in addition to adult social care increases and home to school transport inflationary rises.
- Flooding: Positively, there had been no significant flooding episodes in the village to report during the recent periods of heavy rainfall. The meeting noted that a parishioner had reported water reaching their driveway near to the crossroads, however as stated in item 5c (i), it is hoped that the pipe will be cleared where the drains converge at the crossroads, as and when a team attends from WCC.
- A Highways plan has been prepared regarding footway works scheduled for replacement of the path adjacent to the village hall. It was noted that these works would extend further than originally planned, starting at the road junction and will retain the existing width. Cllr Hardman confirmed he would share the plan with the Council, for information.
- Fire Service: Eight fire engines used by retained personnel have been removed from operation in the County, due to a reduction in recruitment and manning of retained staff, which has resulted in some vehicles being unused for 20% of the time. This will generate £80,000 in savings; however more whole time firefighters will be employed as a result.

District Cllr B. Hardman – in summary:

- Wychavon's 'What's on' guide: Preparations for the new guide for the period April-October 2024 are currently underway to advertise local events in the District. Cllr Hardman requested if the Street Market would be advertised and it was confirmed that a parishioner submits an advert annually on behalf of the village. Cllr Hardman also requested a stall at the market as a representative of the District Council and Cllr Rabbette agreed to forward this to the relevant contact on the committee to request a booking form.
- Design Code: The District Council is currently consulting on their draft design codes, which have been created with the support of a design consultancy and will play 'a critical role in ensuring beautiful new homes and places are created in the district to support the economic success of Wychavon and sustainable and neighbourly living.' Four separate codes have been produced, covering different regions within the district, and it was noted by Cllr Hardman that Little Comberton was included in the Pershore code, not the Cotswold Edge code. Cllrs were happy to remain in this version, given the few architectural differences and agreed that there are some useful pointers to assist in responses to future planning applications received. Feedback is important, therefore views are encouraged via www.wychavon.gov.uk/design-codes ahead of the close of consultation at 11.59pm on 5 February 2024.

7. Councillor recruitment

A discussion ensued regarding Cllr numbers and the need to recruit more representatives on the Council. Future meeting days most convenient for the majority of existing Cllrs was also raised for consideration and it was agreed to consider changing Parish Council meetings to the first Wednesday of the month, pending confirmation from Cllr Smithson.

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Given that this was also Cllrs Haycock's final meeting as Cllr, it was agreed that this was an opportunity to circulate a message to the village in an attempt to recruit further volunteers.

Action: Cllr Jamieson to complete a first draft, to be edited by Cllr Rabbette.

8. Planning

W/22/01053: The Manor House - Conversion of existing barns to single residential dwelling – following a considerable delay in determination of this application, Cllr B Hardman confirmed that last updates received had indicated that a decision was pending soon. *Action: Cllr Hardman to continue to liaise with planning officer.*

W/23/00375/00376/LB: The Old Thatch – Rebuild and extend kitchen, add new obscured glass window to upstairs bathroom, rebuild and extend garage/workshop, replace existing windows – this application was withdrawn by the applicant on 10 January & a new application had been received:

W/24/00031/HP Associated Ref: W/24/00032/LB Location: The Old Thatch, Pershore Road - addition of new obscured glass window to the upstairs bathroom. Rebuild and extend the garage/workshop. Replace all existing windows. Timber rose arch between house and detached garage to form covered pedestrian link.

Plans of the existing and proposed elevations were circulated in advance of the meeting. Cllrs agreed that the designs are sensitive, retaining original aesthetic features which are in keeping with existing village designs.

Action: Clerk to submit supporting statement on behalf of the Council by 1 February.

W/23/01420/FUL: Belle's Cottage - Change of use for a small piece of land from domestic use to agriculture and agriculture to domestic. Demolition of concrete garage and provision of new driveway: confirmation had been received that this application has been approved.

W/23/01876/FUL: Construction of a general purpose agricultural building – Comments were forwarded to the District Council on 5th October 2023 and a decision remains pending.

W/23/02200/HP: Ringsmere Orchard - Erection of garden shed (retrospective) – confirmation had been received that this application has been approved.

Farm land sale: Wick Road: Following this recent land sale, the seller has forwarded details of the particulars, along with a map of land boundaries to the Clerk, which had been circulated to Cllrs. It was agreed to make contact with the land agent to request the buyer's contact details in order to build a positive future relationship with the new owner, in addition to clarifying the possibility of permissive access and signage for the footpath historically used by villagers.

Action: Cllr Jamieson to contact land agent & new owner.

9. Finance

a) Current Balances at 15th January 2024

Treasurer's Account:	TOTAL	£14,198.23
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b) Payments to report since November meeting:

Salary: November 2023	£362.70
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Expenses: village volunteers Christmas gifts	£72.93
VHC: November hall hire	£13.00

*New payments for approval:

* Clerk's expenses: Nov & Dec 2023 + postage	£29.00
*Back-pay 1/4/22-1/1/23: LGA salary award 2023	£234.00
*K. Lloyd: Bi-annual grass-cut (ii)	£125.00
*PCC: Bi-annual grass-cut (ii)	£125.00
*Expenses: village volunteer Christmas gifts	£19.45

TOTAL	£1,343.78
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c) Bank reconciliation (iii): 11 December 2023 – documents had been circulated for checks and verification.

Proposed Cllr Rabbette, seconded Cllr Jamieson, all in favour, to approve the payments presented and the third quarterly bank reconciliation.

d) Local Government staff pay scales award increase – details of the National Salary Award 2022/23, agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services in November, had been circulated for information and were noted by Cllrs. It was therefore agreed to amend the monthly salary standing order accordingly.

Action: Clerk to set up on Lloyds online & signatory to check and authorise.

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e) Proposal to approve 2024/25 budget & resultant precept request:

Prior to the meeting, the Clerk had reviewed current and predicted balances for the year ending 2023/24 and completed potential budget headings and five precept options for 2024/25 for consideration by Cllrs. A summary of expenditure to date and implications for future reserves and spending in the next financial year, was also provided. In summary, the Council has so far underspent on their 2023/24 budget, resulting in a predicted increase in maintenance reserve for the next financial year, for potential road safety measures and any unforeseen expenditure, whilst retaining legal, general maintenance, lengthsman and elections reserves at £10,000.

Five precept options were discussed, along with their resultant effects upon % increases/decreases from 2023/24 and Band D levy charges. It was noted that inflation is now generally coming under control, however there will be likely increases seen next financial year in insurance, subscriptions and District Council charges. The following was therefore proposed:
Proposed Cllr Jamieson, seconded Cllr Haycock, all in favour, to approve a precept @ £7,100 (total budget request @ £7,423) which results in a 4.3% increase from 2023/24 and a £2.09 Band D increase overall.

Action: Clerk to complete and submit request form to Wychavon District Council by 25th January 2024.

10. Correspondence

WDC	The latest Parish Matters newsletter was circulated in December 2023.
WDC	Wychavon Rural Fund – grants of between £2,500 and £25,000 are available, although organisations will need to fund at least 30% of the total project cost from other sources. The deadline to submit an expression of interest was 5 January 2024. <i>(emailed)</i>
Police SNT	New contact details have been received for the local Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) which have been circulated.
Local Government Boundary Commission	A consultation on draft recommendations for new divisions, division boundaries and division names in Worcestershire has begun. Comments on these recommendations are invited – close of consultation is 18 March 2024: <i>emailed 15/1/24.</i>

11. Councillor’s reports and items for future agenda:

There were no future items to report, however the Chairman extended his thanks on behalf of the meeting to Cllr Haycock for her invaluable support, service and commitment to the work of the Parish Council during her time as Cllr. Cllr Haycock confirmed that she would prepare words of thanks and encouragement to the village following the meeting.

12. Date of Next Meeting: *Wednesday 7th February 2024 at 7.30pm.*

Signed

Date.....

Chairman