

DODFORD WITH GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Dodford with Grafton Parish Council held on Monday 20 May 2024 in Dodford Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs Scott Fuller, Lynne Griffin, Rachel Jennings, Rory Lydon, Scottie Sanderson, and Jenni Schuett

In attendance: Clerk Kay Stone, County Cllr Shirley Webb, District Cllr Kit Taylor, PCSO Simon Cadwallader, PCSO Jane Brothers, and six members of the public

1. Apologies

Cllr Shapiro, Judy Grove, and Susan Goode

2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 24 April 2023 for agreement

Cllr Griffin proposed, Cllr Lydon seconded, and all approved the minutes for the meeting held on 24 April 2023. The minutes were signed by the Chair as being a true record.

3. Parish Council Chair's Report

Cllr Jennings reported the Annual Report has been sent to all households in the parish and would not comment further. She explained how there are times when the Parish Council hit a brick wall with things happening in the village and the Parish Council has been open minded and fair. Cllr Jennings spoke about a breast cancer awareness charity called CoppaFeel!. Cllr Jennings explained how the Parish Council has been trying to move forward with the Memorial Garden on the corner of Priory Road and Warbage Lane but has been thwarted by the County Council over various issues. The Parish Council are now considering an information lectern to celebrate the history of the village. Photos of two styles were produced and the residents attending voted three for the wooden style and three for the stainless steel style. Questions were raised about the developments on Whitford and Perryfields Road, and with more and more cars parking on the sides of the roads, the traffic is being disrupted even further. One of the pinch points being by Princess of Wales Hospital. Cllr Webb will bring this issue up with the District Councillor whose area this comes under. PCSO Simon Cadwallader explained that if there is an actual obstruction on the pavement for wheelchairs etc. then the Police can take action, but they would advise people not to park on the pavements at all. Cllr Jennings concluded her report by thanking her fellow Parish Councillors for continuing to serve the village for another year.

4. Financial Report

The Clerk read out the financial report from the Annual Report which is attached. No questions were asked.

5. Alison Maddocks, Dean of Smaller churches, Diocese of Worcester

Alison talked about her unique role in the Church of England and said it was a sign of commitment of the Diocese of Worcester to support small churches in rural areas. There are 120 smaller churches on her list. 95% of 120 churches are rural with 15% of active church members in this diocese who look after 45% of church buildings. Alison said that numbers attending churches have gone up in the last year. The Churches face a crisis in that many givers to the Church are dying. Parishes pay for the Churches, but this is not working any more as the Churches are asking too much of too few. Alison continued saying that no-one owns Churches, they are held in trust by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) but not owned by them. The word needs to be spread that the Church belongs to the parishioners and the Diocese is keen to see Churches used in any way, shape or form which feels good to the community. It is vital that Churches remain open as a Community space / shop / post office / coffee gathering. A

point was made by a resident about removing some of the pews to enable this to happen in Dodford. Alison responded that if they need the space then the Diocese would consider it.

6. PCSO Simon Cadwallader, West Mercia Police

Simon circulated posters showing the Neighbourhood Team and contact details. He talked about his role over the last 15 years, and how he is part of the Rural Crime team looking after Bromsgrove North. His colleague PCS Jane Brothers looks after Bromsgrove South. There is low level crime in Dodford, and he recognised that Dodford and Grafton are SmartWater areas. Simon talked about the Police are now patrolling the villages on cycles rather than cars as they can spot problems easier this way. A resident asked Simon about Alvechurch coming under the remit of Rubery Police Station. Community Speedwatch was discussed but as the village speed limit is 60mph, this is not viable for Dodford. If a resident sees dangerous driving, then they were advised to get the registration number and report it, but not to put themselves at risk. A resident pointed out that if there was a burglary there is no point in reporting it except to get a crime number. Simon assured the resident that West Mercia Police have to respond within 24 hours and then the Neighbourhood Team visit the next day. Garage and sheds are classed as non-burglary, it is the residential property, when someone breaks into a house, that is considered a burglary. Cllr Jennings asked Simon about how long SmartWater lasts and should another promotion be possible with Police funding. Simon will put the person responsible for this in touch with the Clerk.

There was a short break for light refreshments before continuing the meeting as follows:

7. County Councillor Shirley Webb's Annual Report

Cllr Shirley Webb spoke about the challenging times Worcestershire County Council (WCC) are facing particularly in adult and child social care. She warned of the dangers of muscle deterioration if exercise is not kept up and how WCC has been organising strength and balance classes, such as Move It May. When questioned about a vehicle testing hydrants which has resulted in water coming out of the hydrant in Priory Road, Cllr Webb said she will chase Highways.

8. District Councillor Kit Taylor's Annual Report

Cllr Kit Taylor spoke about the problems around planning at the moment. The District Plan will go through Cabinet over the next couple of months before going out to the public. A resident asked if Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) are still trying to find capacity for Redditch. Cllr Taylor explained that BDC have a duty to co-operate with other areas. Birmingham Council is looking at Solihull as well as Bromsgrove. The ongoing Fire Service review will not affect Bromsgrove as the service will remain the same. He told the meeting that next month (June) would see each District Councillors having a divisional fund of £2k and if there are projects needing funding then to contact him. The work on the A38 is to get the A38 moving faster and to help the environment by not stopping and starting and enable Bromsgrove to flow. From 1 June enforcement will be undertaken by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) who are taking on extra staff. The idea is to allow the planners to work on applications and WRS to work on enforcement. Cllr Taylor explained that if a property owner had asked for permission and they would have got approval from BDC, then it's not expedient to pursue. If it would have been refused, then enforcement get involved. Cllr Taylor says the planning department's workload is now more than he has ever known since 2004. Cllr Jennings explained that the Parish Council also feels overwhelmed, particularly as there have been several large planning issues of late.

9. Questions / Matters of interest from residents

None were forthcoming and so in closing the meeting, Cllr Jennings wanted her thanks recorded to the Clerk for all the hard work she puts in and closed the meeting at 9.23pm.

Signed Chair

DODFORD WITH GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REPORT 2023/2024

INCOME

The Council's income for 2023/2024 was £21,895.78 against the previous year of £14,497.80.

Bromsgrove District Council transferred the first Precept payment for 2024/2025 on 28 March 2024 instead of 1 April 2024 which has distorted the true income for 2023/2024 of £15,568.48.

The £500 grant received this year was an in and out transaction as County Cllr Shirley Webb offered to use part of her divisional fund to go towards the Church Fete, but Worcestershire County Council could only pay it through the parish council account.

No VAT was claimed during the previous year and as the new Lengthsman charges VAT, the Parish Council can claim this back from HMRC – hence the figure of £654.00 for this year against nil for last year.

Through Worcestershire County Council Lengthsman Scheme, the Parish Council receive a grant and can claim back the amount they spend for the Lengthsman.

Interest is higher than last year £227.35 against £42.30 in line with national interest rates.

EXPENDITURE

The Council's expenditure was £16,490.18 against the previous year of £12,224.49.

Staff costs of £9,353.50 against last year's figure of £8,833.77 reflect the Clerk's salary increase as per the National Association of Local Council Clerks.

Admin costs of £961.82 against last year's figure of £685.35 was due to three things:

- Firstly, the Clerk purchased 300 2nd class stamps costing £225.00 online for the Annual Report mailshot last year. The Clerk no longer has a post office in the village, and it is easier and at no extra cost to order them direct from Royal Mail. This cost has shown up in communications previously.
- Secondly there has been an increase in the use and cost of printer ink, mainly due to extra planning committee meetings held last year.
- And finally, the Parish Council agreed to pay the Clerk additional telephone charges to include phone use, internet use and security and the cost of saving documents to The Cloud which was the first increase for 14 years.

The Parish Council entered into a 3-year fixed sum for Insurance which remained at £330.56.

Subscriptions show a small increase in the last year from £750.26 to £779.06 and this is due to an increase in Worcestershire County Association of Local Council's membership fee. Known as CALC, the Parish Council turn to this organisation for advice.

Hire of the meeting room has increased to £650.00 for this year against £170.00 for the previous year. This is due to an increase in hire charges and more planning committee meetings were held.

The Parish Council awarded grants totaling £1,896.67 for this year against £600.00 for the previous year. This year the grants were awarded to:

- Dodford Village Hall £446.67 to go towards the cost of the sound system
- Dodford Holiday Farm £250.00 for a new vacuum

- Church Fete £500
- Kings Coronation Street Party £200
- Then there's the straight in and out grant of £500 for the Church Fete from County Cllr Shirley Webb as mentioned in the income section.

The Phil Richards Community Award is only awarded every other year and so there were no costs this year as opposed to the £62.36 spent last year.

No costs for training for two years now.

A slight decrease in communications from £83.54 last year to £71.48 this year. The Parish Council made the decision not to issue a Christmas newsletter last year.

The increase in contingencies from £15.65 the previous year to £307.25 last year was due to the cost of a new battery for the defibrillator costing £267.60, which had not been allowed for in the budget. Although the battery for the defibrillator could be bought cheaper as it is the same as a laptop battery, the Parish Council agreed to buy the correct battery from the manufacturer for such a vital piece of equipment.

Last year the Parish Council were without a Lengthsman for 9 months which explains the increase for last year from £693.00 to £1,978.96. As mentioned earlier in income, the amount paid out to the Lengthsman is claimed back from Worcestershire County Council through their Lengthsman Scheme.

Local elections take place every four years and the increase of £160.88 on the previous year is the amount Bromsgrove District Council charge the Parish Council for an uncontested election.

That ends my financial report and I am happy to take questions if anyone has any. Thank you.