

SUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

16th MAY 2022 at 7.30 pm in Suckley Village Hall

- Present: 27 people attended the meeting including six Parish Councillors.
- In Attendance: Mrs Diana Taylor, Clerk
- The Chairman: Cllr Robin Hill welcomed everyone to the first face to face Annual Parish Meeting in the hall since May 2019.
- Apologies: Cllr L Devenish, Co Cllr K Hanks, Dist Cllr Sarah Rouse, Revd Anne Potter

Suckley Primary School - Presentation by pupils - three pupils from Suckley School – Winston, Robin and Florence - gave a brilliant presentation to the meeting, covering a year in the life of the school. Topics and projects covered during the year included the October Harvest Festival, with food donations being given to the Food Bank; Cross Country running (a pupil from the school qualified for the county run); a Western Power workshop; a Hockey tournament; the Ukranian Appeal with boxes being sent to the Ukraine and a child from Ukraine being welcomed into the school; Forest School and craft activities; Outdoor Learning, with an early years playground; swimming, poetry and speech training. A Rainbow Room had been created for pupils to use if they were feeling angry or distressed and needed to calm down. An “Eagles” extension was being planned with the school looking for funding. The school was in the middle of upgrading all its computers and was using interactive whiteboards.

Police/Crime Report/Speeding – Unfortunately despite being sent an invitation to the meeting, no one from West Mercia Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team was available.

County Councillor – County Councillor Karen Hanks had sent a report to the meeting which had been circulated to all those present. As speeding was one of the most important concerns for the Parish Council and the residents of Suckley, Co Cllr K Hanks had funded the purchase of a new VAS unit for Suckley. She had also donated £750 to Suckley SPACE to be used as required. A visit from WCC Highways with the new WCC Highways Liaison Engineer, herself, Dist Cllr P Whatley and Parish Council Chairman Cllr Robin Hill had taken place to visit the areas of most concern within the Parish. Improvements had been recognised and ordered and will be paid for from the Highways Capital Fund. On 19th May the new Corporate Plan for Worcestershire would be unveiled, with priorities being “Open for business” – “Children & Families” – “the environment” and “Health & Wellbeing”

District Councillors – Dist Cllr Peter Whatley reported to the meeting. This had been an extraordinary year, with the main focus being on economic initiatives to aid recovery from Covid across the District from local businesses to village halls. In 2019 the District Council received 330 applications from people who were being made homeless. This figure had now more than doubled to 690 and was a major concern. The MHDC Council Tax remained in one of the lower bands. Speeding issues were a perennial problem. A speed programme together with 30 mph “speedcrows” in Leigh & Bransford had proved highly successful. Other schemes included painting white lines on each side of the road to “narrow” the road width which had been proven to slow down vehicles. Every 20 years or so the Boundary Commission visited each electoral zone and made sure people were being represented fairly. A report was due out in July for all the wards in the MHDC area. The District Cllrs had been pushing to keep Suckley, Alfrick and Leigh together, and the Parish Council had also made representations. Both he and Dist Cllr Sarah Rouse continued to work hard for the Ward and its residents whenever they need help, with his personal favourite task being digging out blocked drains!

Chairman’s Report - this printed report, covering the work of the Council over the previous 12 months, was circulated to all present. During the past year the Council had lost two of its most loyal and long-serving Councillors. In September 2021 Walter Huband resigned from the Council after an extraordinary 63 years of service to the village – including 48 as Chairman. His retirement was marked appropriately with a collection and gift from his fellow members. In March 2022 John Green passed away. John came to the village in the mid 1960’s and served as a Parish Councillor for most the years since. For many years he took the role as Vice-Chairman and his knowledge of the village and wise practical advice would be greatly missed. However, in April the Council welcomed Cllr Howard Ormerod to his first meeting. During the year the Council pursued and acted upon a wide range of issues. Speeding traffic continued to be a concern and with the help of Co Cllr K Hanks the Council purchased a new VAS Detector. The condition of our roads and drains also takes up a substantial amount of the Council’s time, and a recent co-ordination meeting with the Highways authority was called to bring defects to their attention for remedial action. The Council also assisted in the purchase of a second defibrillator at the Bruff Business Centre (available for all to use); commissioned a new Parish Information Pack which was delivered to all households, and worked with a generous donor to replace the wooden kerb at the war memorial with a purpose-made one in stone. Cllr R Hill thanked all the Councillors for the time they gave to the community and to the hard working Parish Clerk – Diana Taylor.

COMMUNITY

Good Neighbour Scheme - A printed report had been circulated to all those present. Cllr A Lewis reported that the Good Neighbour Scheme had produced another updated village information folder. Six members of the Scheme take it in turns to receive incoming calls and new volunteers were always welcome. The GNS worked with Citizens Advice Bureau and six volunteers had been trained as Community Liaison Volunteers, taking turns at manning the CAB drop in advice facility at Alfrick

Community Shop. Several volunteers had also trained as Digital Champions – a user friendly DIY training. The daffodils planted by the Parish Council to celebrate the Millennium were a welcome sight round the village and the GNS wanted to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Year by planting more daffodils in the Autumn. A sponsor was happy to provide the bulbs, so please inform her of any suitable sites in the village for planting. Thanks were also due to Suckley Parish Council and Malvern Hills District Council for developing a communication network between the GNS schemes around the villages. Suckley learned a lot from Pembridge GNS 10 years ago, and others were learning from Suckley GNS now.

Community ideas - Cllr R Hill asked for any new project ideas for the parish. The Council had some limited funding but would be open to any suggestions for improving the quality of life in the parish.

REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS & TRUSTS

Suckley Church & P.C.C. - Cllr A Lewis gave a report on behalf of the PCC and the Revd Anne Potter. This had been circulated to all those present. All around the country there were fewer clergy looking after our nation's churches. Suckley Church was still partnered with Alfrick & Leigh churches and Bransford Chapel, but the present "Benefice" of the Worcester West rural team of churches had grown to extend from Suckley in the West to Crown East and Rushwick in the East, and from Leigh Sinton in the South to the Shelsleys and Sapeys in the North. The Revd David Sherwin had just retired after 20 years based in Martley, and a new successor hopefully would soon be appointed. Meanwhile, the Revd Anne Potter was now the Vicar to 14 churches in 10 parishes. Each month Suckley Church had 2 Sunday services and 1 midweek service. The Revd Anne was supported in this work by a handful of retired and unpaid clergy, as well as several lay ministers. 10 years ago Suckley Church began to re-think its role in the village and how to make itself sustainable by becoming useful to the whole community 7 days of the week – hence the SPACE charity. The PCC secretary had retired so another minute taker was needed. The History Society had started creating a complete log of the Memorials in 2005 and local volunteers had added photographs and drone location records. Cllr A Lewis thanked all those who looked after the church, by cutting the grass, winding the church clock, arranging the flowers, tidying and cleaning. All key tasks in making Suckley church so vital to the community.

Suckley Playing Fields - Cllr Carol Luton stated that due to covid there was very little to report re the Playing Fields. Due to a break-in a steel grate had been installed across the door to the Pavilion. Damage had also been caused to the padlock on the all weather pitch, but this had now been fixed. The cover of the septic tank had been removed, but this had now been replaced with a concrete slab over it to make sure it could not be removed again. She asked all those who used the Playing Field to take their rubbish home and not to overload the existing bins which she emptied herself. Duncan Reynolds mowed the Playing Fields on a regular basis, and Paul Nightingale looked after the Play area.

The Hill Trust - Mr John Sutton the new Treasurer of the Hill Trust had prepared a written report which was circulated to all those present. Since the last Annual Parish Meeting, there had been a complete change in the Trustee membership of the Hill Trust. Seven Trustees were now in place, which included the Revd Anne Potter as Chair, along with himself and five other residents of the parish. He thanked Steven and Carol Boughton for all their hard work over the last few years to keep events going at the hall. The Accounts for 2020 had been submitted and published by the Charity Commission. Like all village halls throughout the country, the income during the first year of lockdown was boosted by a grant from our District Council. Total income received was £11,376 against expenditure of £2,521. The Accounts for 2021 were not due until October. Suckley village hall had been enrolled in the Community First Network of village halls throughout Herefordshire and Worcestershire. This gives the Trustees access to an array of resources and advice. Some maintenance issues had been identified which needed sorting quickly – a complete overhaul of the emergency lighting system and a review of the PAT testing arrangements. Additional maintenance work was required to bring the hall back up to a reasonable level of repair and décor. This work would not be cheap and would require additional funding or grants, which were currently being explored.

Public Questions - A question was raised about other Jubilee events in the parish, other than the Hammonds pig roast (which was a private event). The Chairman spoke about the Jubilee Tea Party at the School on 27th May, when the Parish Council was giving out bone china Jubilee Mugs to all the children and to those parishioners who were pupils in the school back in 1952. Cllr A Lewis reminded the meeting of a Jubilee service at the church, and the planting of daffodils later in the year.

The Chairman then closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. To help minimise Covid risk, the Council was not providing the usual wine/nibbles at the end of the meeting, but very much hoped to do so next year – 2023.

The Parish Council Minute Book & internally audited Accounts for 2021/22; the Annual Accounts & Reports for local Charities and Trusts were available for inspection.

DWT/20/05/22

