

SUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

21st MAY 2018 at 7.30 pm in Suckley Village Hall

Present: 34 people attended the meeting including six Parish Councillors.

In Attendance: Mrs Diana Taylor, Clerk

The Chairman, Cllr Peter Whatley, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from: Cllr A Lewis, Cllr P Griffiths, Cllr L Devenish & Mrs Sheila Marshall, Head of Suckley School

Suckley Primary School - As the Head Teacher and pupils were unable to attend the meeting, a School Report prepared by Mrs Sheila Marshall was distributed. Mrs Marshall stated that the school continued to thrive, with numbers expected to reach 97 in the Autumn. However, priority was always given to children in the local community. Unfortunately the school had been unsuccessful in obtaining a grant to increase the size of the smallest classroom. All children were making good progress, particularly in reading. The Forest School had become the first in Worcestershire to be accredited and be a model to others. The original School Bell (which apparently had blown down in a gale) had been returned to the school by the family of a Mr Partridge (an ex-head teacher) after he passed away. A wide range of visits and trips had taken place during the year, including sporting events, Singing Festivals, Bell boating, residential trips and singing to the Alfrick Thursday Club and at St Peters Church, Bromyard. The school had taken advantage of the Church Space for use as an assembly hall, drama and performances and a bikeathon. The school also had a large art piece entitled The Giving Tree on display in Worcester Cathedral.

Police/Crime Report/Speeding – Cllr Darren Findlater who analyses the Police crime and the VAS speeding statistics for the Council reported that crime figures had dropped over the last couple of years, with Suckley having one of the lowest crime rates in the area. However, his analysis of the VAS speeding statistics revealed a small group of drivers travelling over 50-60 miles per hour on a regular basis. He suggested that if enough parishioners were interested, a community speed group could be trained by West Mercia Police to use speed devices. Offenders registration numbers could then be sent to the Police for them to take action. The minimum requirement was a group of six people.

County Councillor – County Councillor Paul Tuthill reported on the progress of widening the Southern Link Road, particularly in relation to the positioning of the new railway bridge which was an outstanding piece of engineering. £55M would be added to the budget to enable the final piece of the link to take place, with over 200,000 tons of

material having to be moved. A flyover for pedestrians and cyclists would be constructed at Powick. A judicial review was taking place over the potential amalgamation of the Worcs & Herefordshire Fire & Rescue Service and the West Mercia Police. Worcester Royal Hospital continued to face many challenges, but £30M had been made available by the Government for improvements, including linking the Aconbury unit to the main hospital building. £20M had been put into the new Cancer facility. The West Midlands Ambulance Service had been rated as one of the top teams in the country.

District Councillors – Dist Cllrs Anthony Warburton and Sarah Rouse reported to the meeting. The Hub was now going back in-house, with a new reception area. The former Council building in Portland Road was now up for sale or lease. With the introduction of the new wheelie bin fortnightly collection, the general waste at Newlands Recycling site had increased by a quarter of a ton per day.

Chairman's Report - this printed report, covering the work of the Council over the previous 12 months, was circulated to all present. Cllr Peter Whatley gave a short resume of the Council's activities. The Council had supported two very successful "Womble" Litterpicks very ably organised by Catherine Armstrong, Community activities had been recognised by an award to Mrs Armstrong for Community Action in MHDC's Community Awards Scheme. In addition, the Unity Beerhouse (now known as the Hop Shed) had received an award in the business section. The annual Remembrance Service at the Old Quarry had been well attended, and he thanked the Revd Anne Potter for conducting the service, Peter Hibbert (who played the last post) and Mike Baldwin for keeping the site in such excellent order. Thanks were also due to Helen Philpotts who had kept a close eye on all matters relating to the Footpaths in the Parish. She had taken immediate action when a group of runners had inadvertently left a trail of contaminated sawdust through the parish. The Council continued to press for action from WCC Highways on all matters relating to potholes and road maintenance in the Parish. As a result, Highways had agreed to resurface Church Lane down to the Playing Fields and work would be starting shortly to improve the quantity and quality of the Knightwick Road's passing places. However, junction safety at White House crossroads remained a serious concern. Despite our best efforts, WCC Highways still held the view that the junction's sightlines were adequate. Another issue taken up by Cllr Whatley was that of totally confusing and in some cases incorrect diversion/road closed signage in the area – unfortunately this was still ongoing. As previously mentioned by Cllr Darran Findlater, startling data regarding speeding patterns had been emerging, with traffic and speeding along the Knightwick Road being a major concern. Suckley Playing Fields new play equipment was in regular use, and he thanked Cllr Carol Luton for managing and Cllr John Green for reviewing the facilities on a weekly basis. Broadband and mobile phone availability still remained poor, but the Council would keep pressing for improvements. The Council would continue to try and keep increases to no more than the rate of inflation, but the cost of new legislation and overheads tended to increase every year at a rate greater than general inflation. Cllr Peter Whatley thanked the District Councillors and County Councillor for their help in the past 12 months, with special thanks to his Parish Councillor colleagues and the Clerk – Diana Taylor

COMMUNITY

Good Neighbour Scheme - Mr Alan Woodroff reported that over the last 12 months the GNS had been relatively busy. He outlined some of the help that had been given to parishioners from dog walking to retuning a television set. The GNS also worked very closely with CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) as community volunteers, and with Unite which assisted people to get on line. As always, new volunteers were always welcome.

REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS & TRUSTS

Suckley Church & P.C.C. - Revd Anne Potter reported that new plans had been drawn up for the kitchen and toilet in the North transept of the church. The PCC was awaiting the judgement of the Chancellor on these amended plans. The church was currently closed as the underfloor heating system and new oak floor was being laid. Funding was still needed for the installation of the boiler and for gas connections. Since the pews had been taken out Suckley School had been using the space as an extension to their buildings. Good attendances at Christmas and Easter were encouraging, together with the success of the BFG festival on the fourth Saturday in September.

Suckley Playing Fields - Cllr Carol Luton reported a drop in revenue in 2017/18 compared to previous years. A rethink was in place for the cost of mowing the playing fields. However, it was important that the Playing Fields remained a space we could all be proud of. The new junior football team had repaired the mower and were using it to keep the pitch in good shape. Unfortunately fly tipping was still a problem. She thanked the Parish Council for the increase of the annual grant to £1,000.

The Hill Trust - Mr Steve Boughton reported on behalf of the Hill Trust/Village Hall Committee. The Trust had a better year in 2017 and financially had just about broken even. Two new people had been recruited onto the Hall committee, and more activities for younger people had been arranged, such as the Easter Egg Hunt which had been a huge success. Other events included a plant sale (which was a sell-out); quiz evenings; a Pilates group, and a dog massage service

Public Questions - Concerns regarding speeding along the Knightwick Road and the dangerous situation at WhiteHouse Cross Roads had been highlighted during the meeting. A query was raised about the timing of verge cutting by WCC Highways: it was stated that there was a danger of losing wildflowers due to the verges being cut too soon. The Chairman agreed to take this matter up with WCC Highways/Co Cllr P Tuthill.

The Chairman then closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. All were invited to stay and have a drink and nibbles provided by the Parish Councillors.

The Parish Council minutes book, its internally audited accounts for 2017/18 and annual accounts & reports for local charities and trusts were available for inspection.