

# SUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

20<sup>th</sup> MAY 2019 at 7.30 pm in Suckley Village Hall

- Present: 40 people attended the meeting including seven Parish Councillors.
- In Attendance: Mrs Diana Taylor, Clerk
- The Chairman: Cllr Peter Whatley, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Apologies: Cllr L Devenish, Cllr R Hill, Co Cllr P Tuthill, Revd Anne Potter

**Suckley Primary School - Presentation by pupils** - four pupils from Suckley School gave a brilliant presentation to the meeting, covering a year in the life of the school. All classes in the school are named after birds. The school has a very wide curriculum for all ages. Topics and projects covered during the year included computer technology, writing and history, story telling, shadow puppets, Bizzy Bee projects, cooking pancakes, the Chinese New Year, a Race for Life and farm visits. Sporting activities included Netball (the school came second in the netball competition), football, cross country, on the river, dance and crystal maze. The children are particularly proud of their Forest School and take part in exchange visits with Kings Heath School in Birmingham to share in their Forest School adventures. Music also plays a huge part of the school life, with violin and guitar lessons and a choir. The choir performed in Alfrick and were a great success. The school has won prizes for its arts and crafts work which is on display at Worcester Cathedral. They also made poppies for Remembrance Day. The Head Teacher Mrs Sheila Marshall reported that the school had such a good reputation that pupil numbers now stood at 88. The school urgently needed to increase and extend the classrooms, but being able to use the Church Space was very helpful. Although the school was now independent it was still answerable to the Local Authority and had to deliver the national curriculum. Cllr A Lewis congratulated the Head Teacher and the pupils for maintaining such high standards.

**Police/Crime Report/Speeding** – Unfortunately despite being sent an invitation to the meeting, the local West Mercia PCSO was unavailable. Cllr Whatley noted that according to official police statistics Suckley was rated as a very low crime area.

**County Councillor** – County Councillor Paul Tuthill had sent a report to the meeting which was read out by the Clerk. As Chair of the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Worcester Royal Hospital much work needed to be done to get the hospital out of special measures - action to increase capacity at A & E; reduction of ambulance waiting times; work to increase bed numbers; the need to recruit permanent staff; and increased levels of funding. Good news is that the new bridge to connect the PFI part with existing Aconbury and subsequent upgrade of Aconbury and its wards is underway.

As Vice-Chairman of H&W FRS - this is an example of how the public sector can be well run – effective, efficient and responsive as well as investing in equipment and stations for the firefighters. The HQ is now at Hindlip at the West Mercia Police site. New joint stations are under construction at Kidderminster to serve that area. Most stations are manned by volunteers, but most activity is by full time fire fighters mainly union members. The proposed take-over by the PCC (Police & Crime Commissioner) will be subject to a judicial review in the summer. Worcestershire County Council - budget set, 70% of revenue is for Adults & Children’s Services, but the Council intend to continue making capital investments. The Parkway Station at Norton opening will take place at the end of the year. Work has started on the parallel widening of the Southern Link Road causeway. 10,000 lorry loads of stone will be delivered. Funds are earmarked to improve parking at stations across Worcestershire. More locally determined funds for roads will be delegated to County Councillors in conjunction with the WCC Liaison Engineer. Slow but steady progress is being made with broadband.

**District Councillors** – Dist Cllr Sarah Rouse reported to the meeting. Former Dist Cllr Anthony Warburton had not stood for re-election, but Parish Cllr Peter Whatley had been elected as second District Cllr for the Alfrick & Leigh Ward, standing, like her as an independent candidate. Following May’s elections, no group had overall control of MHDC, meaning all groups would have to work together in the future. The Democratic Group of independent and Green Party councillors was the largest by numbers and as a result Cllr Rouse had been appointed Leader of Malvern Hills District Council. A new reception area (with staff) had been created at MHDC in Grange Road which would greatly improve the service to members of the public. The additional housing numbers now required from Central Government up to 2030 would represent a big challenge to MHDC. She would be pushing for better designs and quality of housing to create communities. She was hoping to get some funding to operate a community transport scheme for the area on a one year trial basis. Both she and Dist Cllr Whatley would work hard to represent the Ward for the next four years.

**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 most memorable occasion for many would have been the Armistice commemoration at the war memorial in Longley Green’s Old Quarry on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Over 100 people attended the event, led by the Revd Jen Deniston. Due to generous donations from our County Councillor, District Councillors and two parishioners, two “Silent Soldier” figures had been purchased by the Council and installed in time for the service. These add a distinctive and fitting finishing touch to the War Memorial. Maintenance of assets and other areas of the parish have been carried out by Mike Baldwin at the Old Quarry, Cllr John Green undertaking weekly inspections throughout the parish, including the Playing Fields, and Rob Wilks our Lengthsman working on the verges and drains. Rob’s activities have been greatly constrained by Worcs County Council decreeing that material removed from drains and gullies is now “hazardous waste” and requires special handling by their Highways contractor. Dealings with WCC Highways remain problematic. It had been necessary for Parish Councillors, plus Dist Cllr Sarah Rouse and her partner, to take action themselves to cut back

overhanging tree branches from Woodland Road down to Church Lane. Concern about the safety of the White House Cross Roads remains an item on our Agenda. However, WCC Highways still hold the view that the junction is well signed and road speeds are appropriate. The Parish Council disagree and have persuaded Highways to put in extra road markings, though the Parish Council remains wholly dissatisfied with the situation. We also continue to suffer from incorrect or confusing signage when contractors are working in this parish and neighbouring ones. Highways are soon made aware of their shortcomings if this happens. Thanks to the many volunteers who help to sustain community life in the Parish, including Helen Philpotts and her team of footpath walkers, and Cllr Carol Luton who manages the Playing Fields. Our very successful litter picks in October and March were ably managed by Mrs Catherine Armstrong. These are now a regular fixture. Legislation and regulation affects Parish Councils whether appropriate in scale and intent or not. The GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) 2018 came into force in May 2018. Fortunately, at the time Cllr Darran Findlater was a knowledgeable practitioner in this area and was able to assist our Clerk to work through the huge amount of paperwork involved. Speeding traffic continues to be a concern to parishioners. As a result of data analysis from the VAS camera which is moved around the parish, the Council purchased a stock of 30 mph wheelie bin stickers which are free to all residents and available at Suckley Post Office. For the first time in many years elections were held in May for the nine positions on the Parish Council. We now have two new Councillors: Robin Hill (who has previous experience as a Suckley Parish Councillor); and Rosemary Hooper. They replace Victoria Bradley, who decided not to seek re-election and Darran Findlater who was not re-elected. We thank both for their service and contribution to the Council and Parish. Cllr Whatley acknowledged with gratitude the contributions of all eight Parish Council colleagues who serve voluntarily and in several cases for many years and also to the tenth member of the team, Parish Clerk Diana Taylor.

## **COMMUNITY**

**Footpaths Team** – Helen Philpotts, Footpaths Warden, asked for further volunteers to walk the paths in the parish and report any problems to her or the Clerk – Diana Taylor.

**Good Neighbour Scheme** - Cllr A Lewis reported that the Good Neighbour Scheme was now ten years old. This was a group of about a dozen volunteers who helped with filling in complex forms for benefits, taking people to their hospital and GP appointments, even locating lost dogs and recommending a local estate agent! The group liaise with Malvern CAB and several members have received training. New volunteers were always welcome – the contact number is 01886 884080. She stressed the importance of us all being good neighbours. The Parish Council was considering publishing an updated version of a welcome & information pack for newcomers to the parish. She asked for ideas as to what information should be included in the pack.

**Womble Litter Picks** - Mrs Catherine Armstrong reported that she had organised the Womble Litter Picks for the last two years – these are held about every six months. For the first litter pick about 38 volunteers turned up, with a slight reduction in numbers since

then to about 30. The next litter pick would be in October. As she was also Chairman of the BFG event in September at Suckley Church this year, she asked for more volunteers to help on the day with car parking, cake stall, teas & coffees etc.

**Community ideas** - Cllr P Whatley 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 from the Revd Anne Potter. Over the last year works to install the infrastructure for the underfloor heating underneath a newly laid beautiful wood floor were completed. Gas and water connections are the next item so that the boiler, kindly donated by Bosch, can be installed and commissioned. The other significant improvement has been the re-conditioning of the organ following its re-siting in the south aisle. An organ recital was held on Easter Saturday to celebrate the work on the organ. Despite the hard work of Anne and Richard Lewis we have not been fortunate in securing a large grant to start the next phase of putting in the toilet and the kitchen. We have though secured funding to improve the Audio Visual equipment. The PCC are currently focusing on purchasing new chairs which some local people have already offered to sponsor. As granted by the Chancellor there are 17 pews, apart from the choir pews, retained in the church and the rest were sold by auction over the East period. To celebrate and show off the new floor a Ceilidh was held in January which was a great social success. The church has also hosted a Community Choir concert followed by a supper. The BFG Festival in September was unfortunately affected by bad weather, but the versatility of the space in the church building came into its own and the show went on. St John the Baptist church continues to have three regular services a month. Our festival services have been graced with the mini-orchestra which has brought a great sense of community and joy to our Harvest and Christmas Tree of Light worship. Cllr A Lewis stressed that the church has to change if it is going to survive in this very different era to 1879 when it was first built. It needs to be used by everybody in the community. Suckley School was using the church building almost daily.

**Suckley Playing Fields** - Cllr Carol Luton reported a better year in revenue/expenditure terms for the Playing Fields. Unfortunately the junior football team who had contributed so much to the Playing Fields was moving back to Worcester. Some vandalism of the playing fields play equipment had taken place, but this was being repaired by the suppliers free of charge. The Pavilion was in need of some refurbishment, but this was something to look into this year hopefully with help from our County and District Cllrs budgets.

**Public Questions** - Concerns regarding speeding and the dangerous situation at White House Cross Roads had been highlighted during the meeting. The Chairman agreed to take this matter up again 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 glass of wine/fruit juice with nibbles provided by the Parish Councillors.

**The Parish Council Minute Book & internally audited Accounts for 2018/19; the Annual Accounts & Reports for local Charities and Trusts were available for inspection.**