**Minutes of Meeting of Earls Croome Parish Council held on Tuesday 21st January, 2020 at Earls Croome Village Hall**

**Apologies** An apology was received from Tom Goodwin

**Those Present** Jonathan, Mark, Margaret, Penny, Robin, Charlotte, Malcolm, Paul Middlebrough our C.C., Jeremy Owenson our District Councillor, Mike Brooks, Steve Comer and Jo Morgan.

**Public Participation** Malcolm mentioned that in previous years we have had a Litter Pick and asked if a date could be selected for this year. The date of Sunday 15th March was agreed.

**Minutes of the last Meeting** With one small alteration these were unanimously agreed and signed by the chairman.

**Flooding** The chairman said that Regulatory Services had visited the area around Emblem Villa on 11th January and a report and maps had been produced by Bob Hughes and sent to the parish council following their visit. This has been forwarded to everyone who attended including the residents. It detailed that notices had been served on land owners between Earls Croome and Baughton to clean out their ditches to ease the flood situation in Quay Lane. We are uncertain of what further action can be taken and the clerk will make enquiries. The clerk will also write to Ripple Parish Council and highlight this situation and ask if they can encourage land owners to keep their ditches clean as this has a knock on effect right down to where it flows into the river seven. Penny also mentioned that near Emblem Villa there are various man-holes which are obviously for different services and the clerk was asked to try and find our if maps are available which might show which services these serve.

**SWDP – Preferred Options Consultation** A large number of residents attended the last meeting and the chairman encouraged them to submit their own responses. The Parish Council sought some professional help to prepare our response and this was submitted by the deadline on 16th December. We have not as yet received an account for this from the consultant. The next stage will be the publishing of a further review in October/November this year.

**Highway Matters** 1. We have been told that the warning sign by the motorway bridge will be moved to a more appropriate place. 2. We have received communication from Hannah Davis to say that she is pushing engineers to come up with a date for the footpath by the crucifix to be dealt with. **Paul** reported that 1. A three or four pronged roundabout at the A38/A4104 was being discussed and that the budget had doubled, but it was hoped that work would start this October. 2. Astons are now running the local bus services and we now get 5 buses a day through the village. Not enough people are using the buses and this amounts to an average of ten people per day. This is being funded by Kempsey’s 106 agreement money and will be reviewed again in August. 3. Cemex is undergoing a change of management. It is merging with Breedon Agregates. Next Liaison meeting is 28th January. There is also a further call for sites. 4. The C C Budget will increase by 3.99%. Adult Social Care is responsible for 2% and the rest of the increase is just under 2%. 5. Open Door information has been forwarded by Paul, the clerk will locate this. 6. Paul has forwarded £500 to the Parish Council for future use for tree planting over the next year or two. Jonathan thanked him and said we were very grateful. **Hedge** Tom cut the overhanging hedge on the motorway bridge following the last meeting. The clerk will write and thank him and ask for his account. **Popholes** Penny reported that there is a large pothole at the top of Quay Lane on the left where everyone pulls over when on coming traffic is turning in off the A38. This will reported. Also down the lane again where people pull over on the left-hand side is a large hole and it is very muddy. The clerk will ask if this can be filled with some hardcore.

**Parish Paths** We have spent £306.35 this year from a possible amount of £400 maintaining the footpaths in the village and we are very grateful to Malcolm for undertaking this work.

**Trees** The chairman also thanked Malcolm for the tree planting he has started this year. Malcolm said he had not quite managed to complete all that was planned due to the ground being waterlogged by the castle. He also thanked Bob and Trina for their donations and help with the planting. Again thanks go to Paul for his donation for future planting. Malcolm had brought a branch from an ash tree and pointed out to everyone the symptoms of ash dieback.

**Lengthsman Scheme** So far £1,479.00 has been spent leaving £379 for the rest of the year with an amount for administration. Due to the wet winter Malcolm has done a lot of work clearing grips and gullies and it may be that he needs to use extra hours. The chairman asked Paul if the lengthsman amount was likely to increase, it has been £1,858.00 for a number of years, but he was doubtful.

**Commons**

**Smithmoor Common** Steve has been asked to undertake the work on the common but has been unable to so far due to the wet weather. The clerk will ask Tom whether he has been able to find anyone who might want to graze it. We will visit the common later in the year.

**Dunstall Common** The chairman said that a deed of easement had been put in place following the alteration to the electricity supply to Red Deer Farm. Margaret said that Roger Allard has taken over the paddock at the top of the Common own by Croome Estate. The hedge is very neglected and Pip Webster will be looking at it over the next week or two. It may be necessary for them to gain access to the common. Margaret also thanked Malcolm for tidying the area of trees along the right hand side of the drive to Red Deer Farm.

**Planning**

**19/01852/FUL Access Road to Solar Farm on Defford Aerodrome** Several members together with the clerk and members of Severn Stoke P C visited the site today and talked with the company representative and an environmentalist. It will take 6 months to construct the site and it may be that ten lorries per day will be making deliveries during that period. Care seems to have been taken from an environmental point of view to consider visual impact and wildlife. In view of other traffic using the access road like coaches and fuel lorries to two other companies, and a possible further business it was decided to base our comments on asking for a traffic management plan restricting number of vehicles and hours of working, and also ask for a turning left policy out of the site, which they are prepared to agree to anyway. It would appear that the grid connection point is along the A4104 just past Turnpike Cottage and this will be quite a large building and a car park. The cabling will then run along the edge of the A4101 and down Strensham Lane. Comments have also been made that this is prime agricultural land being used, and also that permission has recently been given for a similar site in Strensham Lane only two kilometres away. All these comments will be listed in our response.

**19/000041/CM Croome Composting Ltd. Expansion of existing site to include waste wood, soil and stone, and expand existing compost facility** Similar concerns were expressed regarding this application, the number of vehicle using the access road and the type of vehicles. Concern was expressed by the members about the adequacy of warning signs both from Dustall and from the A4104 entrance. Paul suggested that the clerk write to both John Hobbs who is head of Environment Services and Adrian Hardman who is C C for the Bredon Division with copy to him expressing our concern about the lack of signage and asking them to look at the situation.

**Village Hall & Playing Field Deeds** Whilst trying to put in place a lease between the parish council and the village hall committee, deeds have been located at Whatley Weston and Recordon, but neither the Village Hall or the Playing Field have been registered with the Land Registry. After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that we would ask the solicitors to register both of these with the Land Registry. This is likely to cost about £400, plus land registry fees which are based on the value of the property. Penny proposed this and Margaret seconded and all were in favour. A copy of the documentation held by the solicitors is listed in the front of the minute file and will also be put up in the hall. Margaret did flag up the question of the commons which are owned by the parish council but not registered with the Land Registry and the clerk will make enquiries about this matter.

**Precept** A lengthy discussion took place regarding extra expenditure for the coming year. Items mentioned were cost of work on the common, solicitors fees, cost of a planning consultant and extra cost which we will incur in appointing a new clerk. Jeremy said that many councils this year have found that they need to make significant increases to their precept. It was proposed by Penny that the precept should be increased by 12 ½ %. This was seconded by Mark and all were in favour. The increased amount will be £3,384.00.

**Cheques** Three cheques were written at the meeting:-

1. Malcolm Tomkins. 7 ½ hours Lengthsman work December £90
2. Viking. Ink Cartridges. £30.85
3. Malcolm Tomkins January work 12 ¼ hours £147.00

**Clerk’s Resignation** Jonathan reported that he had received the clerk’s resignation which will take effect sometime after the end of this financial year. Ann has done the job for more than 30 years and Jonathan paid tribute to all she has done during that time and said she will be greatly missed. It had been hoped that as Severn Stoke have just appointed a new clerk we might have been able to consider one of their applicants but this is not now the case. The job will be advertised on the CALC website in the near future and Ann and Jonathan will produce a job specification. We will also need to appoint a staffing committee. Depending on the experience of any new clerk it may be necessary to have a transition period of a few months. Penny mentioned that CALC have announced that a new Code of Conduct has been produced and this will need to be considered.

**Date of the Next Meeting** This will take place on Tuesday 24th March, 2020 at 7.30.p.m. Margaret gave her apologies, she will be away on holiday.