

Minutes of the meeting of Earls Croome Parish Council held Virtually on Teams on Tuesday 26th January 2021

Apologies: Apologies were received from Jeremy Owenson (District Councillor).

Those Present: Jonathan Prior (Chairman), Mark Carlton-Smith (Vice Chairman), Penny Green, Margaret Herbert, Robin Tomkins, Tom Goodwin and Charlotte Bloomfield (Members), Paul Middlebrough (County Councillor) and the Clerk. Malcolm Tomkins (Lengthsman and Tree Warden).

Declarations of Interest: None were made.

Public Participation: One Member of the public was in attendance. The Chairman advised that he had received a late request to join the meeting from another parishioner that had enquired regarding the retirement gifts for Ann Smith – The Chairman asked the Clerk to forward the press statement to the individual and encouraged them to attend future meetings with sufficient prior notice

Minutes of the Last Meeting: These were proposed by Penny, seconded by Margaret, and agreed by all.

South Worcestershire Development Plan: The Chairman asked for two Members to attend the consultation presentation regarding travellers and travelling show people due to held Virtually on 1st March. Mark and Margaret agreed to attend as ECPC representatives.

Highways & Other County Council Matters: Paul advised that the proposed four arm roundabout application (20/000032/REG3 A38/A4104) would be going before the WCC planning committee February 2nd. Paul advised there was a 70-page accompanying report, but essentially it was recommending approval. Mark had registered to attend but had not received confirmation that he could represent ECPC. Paul would seek a response from the Chair of the planning committee.

Paul advised that all being well the roundabout would be completed by September 2021.

Paul advised Members that he had offered ECPC £1500.00 towards any legal expenses regarding the access at Smithmoor Common.

Parish Paths: Malcolm reported that a number of stiles and impassable paths that had been previously reported remained. The Clerk asked for a list to escalate these with The Countryside Centre. Members asked the Clerk to put the Worcestershire “report it” online address onto the notice board.

Tom asked who was responsible for maintaining the stiles. Paul confirmed that WCC via the Countryside Centre provide the stiles/gates but the ongoing maintenance then rests with the landowner. Paul advised that there was considerable additional money in the budget for public rights of way in recognition that many more people are walking because of pandemic restrictions. Paul advised there would be a 2.5% increase on the WCC budget, 1.5% towards basic running costs and an additional 1% towards adult social care in recognition of the growing elderly population. Paul advised that whilst there were still efficiency provisions to come, central government had been very supportive particularly in Worcestershire.

Penny raised that there was an issue with surface water not draining from the road sufficiently at Quay Lane towards Emblem Villa. A discussion arose around which parts of the ditch needed clearing and the volume of water. The Clerk would contact WCC Highways and Paul asked to be cc'd in.

Trees: Malcolm advised all but 2 trees had now been planted and thanked Penny, Trina and Bob Herbert for assisting.

Lengthsman Scheme: Malcolm reported that work continued within 20/21 budget. Malcolm advised he may have some consumables expenses and The Clerk asked him to liaise directly with her regarding these. Malcolm advised that the road salt would need replenishing in the autumn, he had refilled the roadside grit box at the top of Quay Lane using the last of the previous bulk purchase.

The Chairman advised that Andy Millward had volunteered to become the new lengthsman and that all other interested parties had declined. The Chairman proposed Andy for the position and Tom seconded this appointment. The Chairman commented how fortunate ECPC was once again to fill the position with a local resident. The Chairman proposed a handover period with both lengthsman working alongside each other to enable Malcolm to show Andy the full scope of his responsibilities. The Clerk would contact the Lengthsman Scheme regarding the training Andy would be required to attend and was hopeful that the handover could be achieved within our existing lengthsman scheme budget.

Commons:

Dunstall – Update re dog fouling - The Clerk advised that MHDC had featured Dunstall Common in its December Green Space newsletter; she also advised that MHDC officers regularly patrol the area and are looking into a leaflet that could be placed onto parked cars. The Clerk had received a few comments from locals that there was not a dog waste problem on Dunstall Common; Malcolm was surprised by this. The Chairman asked the Clerk to share the MHDC newsletter with the resident who made the original complaint and to put a copy on the notice board. The Members agreed to monitor the situation and discuss it again at the next meeting.

Margaret advised that there had been an electrical fault at Dunstall Crossroads which stemmed from an area on the Common. There was currently a hole in the common but WPD would ensure it was all put back as it was before.

Margaret reported that Severn Stoke PC had instigated some trim back of the woodland reported in September, but it had not addressed the dead wood that may still pose an issue by falling into the road. The Members asked the Clerk to follow this up with Severn Stoke PC.

Marsh –Nothing to report

Smithmoor – The ownership of the Common and the access track was discussed, and the Clerk advised that the next step would be to register the Common and the access track with the Land Registry. Margaret advised that Andrew Trouton of Carver Knowles might prove a good contact. Margaret and Penny proposed registering all the land owned by the Parish Council. Members discussed that this needed to be a staged approach due to the financial constraints of the PC budget. Paul advised seeing if there could be any cost sharing with Kempsey PC who also need to register their Commons with the Land Registry.

The Clerk advised that there had been a request received from the proprietor of Baughton Stud to lay pipes along the PC-owned access track to connect mains water to his site. The Members discussed the matter and agreed unanimously not to grant the request. The Chairman asked the Clerk to notify the applicant accordingly.

Planning: 20/01827/FUL Baughton Stud, Smithmoor Common. Change of use to commercial. Detailed objections had been submitted within the deadline. The Chairman advised that it was now

a case of awaiting outcome from MHDC; Jeremy had indicated that he thought the application would be declined.

Registration of Village Hall & Playing Field Deeds: The Clerk advised that the solicitor was awaiting response from the Land Registry as there continues to be a back log due to Covid-19.

Finance & Cheques:

Precept Setting – requirement to be submitted by 31st January. The Members discussed the proposed budget that the Clerk and Penny had worked on based on previous expenses and included some additional funds for legal expenses. The actual costs the PC were likely to incur unfortunately required an increase of over 10%. Penny proposed the Council request a precept of £3800, this was seconded by Robin and agreed by all.

Penny asked the Clerk for an explanation of the tax base sent out by MHDC. The Clerk would clarify the figure and what it appertained to.

Bank Reconciliation – Penny and Charlotte confirmed the bank reconciliation was correct for November and December; there are two incoming cheques being re-issued due to the originals being lost in the post.

Payments made since last meeting:

Mr M Tomkins – Lengthsman payment – November	£156.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- December (S/O)	£204.30
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance December (S/O)	£15.00
Mr M Tomkins – P3 Footpath clearance Aug – Dec 2020	£193.75
Mr M Tomkins – Lengthsman payment – December	£144.00

To review and authorise the following payments:

a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – January (S/O)	£204.30
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance January (S/O)	£15.00
c) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk OPE	£48.29
d) Mr M Tomkins – Lengthsman payment – January	£TBC

Remittance: WCC Lengthsman reimburse September and November - £273.00

Correspondence: The Chairman advised there had been an email update from our District Councillor Jeremy Owenson. He had offered a ward budget of £500 for improvements to community facilities and public access to commons and footpaths. He also mentioned that the SWDP is looking to fulfil housing quota shortfalls at local government level. However, MHDC is very rural and is struggling to fulfil its allocated quota for development let alone provide extra housing.

The Chairman reported correspondence received from a local resident regarding the poor standard of the broadband communications available throughout the parish, especially considering working from home and home schooling requirements. The resident suggested writing to Harriet Baldwin MP. The Members discussed historic offers and the varying broadband quality across the large geographical spread of the Parish, and it was decided that Members and the resident would encourage as many parishioners as possible to write to Mrs Baldwin individually and the Chairman asked the Clerk to write a letter on behalf of ECPC.

Penny asked the Clerk to ensure the 2018 Standing Orders were uploaded to the website.

Dates of Next Meetings: Tuesday 16th March, Tuesday 25th May, Tuesday 13th July, Tuesday 21st September & Tuesday 16th November 2021.

Meeting closed at 9:20pm