

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 13th JULY 2021 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.

PRESENT: Mark Smith (Chairman), Penny Green, Margaret Herbert, Robin Tomkins, Charlotte Bloomfield and Tom Goodwin, Katie Etherington (Members), Martin Allen (County Councillor) and the Clerk.

Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) Andy Millward (Lengthsman).

1) CHAIRMAN – Declaration of Office

It was noted that Mark had signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form, specified under Section 51 of the local Government Act 2000, with the Clerk as witness on 18th June 2021.

2) CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBER

Katie Etherington was co-opted onto the Council. The co-option declaration was signed and witnessed by the Clerk. Katie was welcomed to the meeting.

3) ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Margaret was proposed by Penny as Vice Chair, this was seconded by Robin and agreed by all.

4) APOLOGIES

District Councillor Owenson.

5) PUBLIC: One member of the public was in attendance.

6) REPRESENTATIVES TO BE APPOINTED

Mark led a discussion regarding more delegation of responsibilities, following on from discussions at the May meeting and recognising that more than one Member was required for each role. Penny and Charlotte were already responsible for the monthly bank reconciliation, the phone box and the defibrillator, they both agreed to continue with those responsibilities. Tom volunteered himself and Robin to take responsibility for Open Spaces and Highways issues. Margaret agreed to join them when needed for the Commons. Mark, Margaret and Katie agreed to take responsibility for planning. Members discussed the PC's need for a social media presence and the website criteria, and it was agreed that the Clerk would use the existing village Facebook page as and when appropriate and Penny agreed to keep an eye on the contents on the website with the Clerk having overall responsibility for uploading what was required by legislation.

7) MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2021 were proposed by Penny, seconded by Margaret, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

8) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Worcestershire County Councillor Martin Allen

Martin updated Members on the Boundary Commission review. The Commission has decided that the number of District Councillors in Malvern Hills District will reduce from 38 to 31 and because of this the district boundaries are being reviewed. Martin recommended the PC review the proposals and make comments, as saying nothing could lead to decisions being imposed upon them.

Martin advised that the Covid-19 cases were increasing across Worcestershire. Martin advised the PC to think about how they would hold future meetings should the cases rise further.

Martin advised that the gravel extraction application was due to go to planning committee in September and he was against it.

Martin advised that he had strongly objected to the Digaway Clearaway application and that it was currently deferred pending the planning officers getting a consultant to confirm the dust and noise being created by the removal of the doors.

Martin thanked Penny for meeting him at the site of the ongoing lying water on Quay Lane. WCC Highways would take a staged approach to finding the cause and the first stage would be to clear the silt.

Martin explained that no lorry movement restrictions had been imposed on the Croome Composting extension just an annual tonnage limit that would be reviewed by the enforcement officer once a year. Margaret thought there was some restriction to movements at weekends and Bank Holidays and would email Martin directly to investigate this further.

Martin reported that the A38 roundabout development still hadn't been given clearance to start by Natural England. Martin advised that he will call the Community Liaison Group (CLG) meeting as soon as there was a start date, he asked that the main queries regarding the development be sent in via email prior to the meeting so that the officers attending the meeting had time to gather the information required to answer the queries raised. Penny asked regarding the road closure, Martin said that with no start date there was no road closure date as far as he was aware. Mark raised his concerns regarding decisions yet to be advised on lighting and speed reductions on the approach to the roundabout. Martin thought these were the type of queries for the CLG meeting. Margaret advised she had recently been approached by a resident living near the development asking for these details.

Martin advised that the first live County Council meeting was to be held next week. He advised there were three motions going before the Council, one on Climate change, one to reopen the rape crisis centre and the other being a motion regarding speeding - a cross party motion to raise this with the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Martin advised that he had noticed the poor repair of the pavements in Orchard Close and had raised a Member led report to get these repaired. A discussion arose regarding vegetation overhanging and encroaching the pavement. Andy volunteered to take a look.

Martin advised that there was some government money available for householder and or businesses affected by flooding.

Martin advised Members of how expensive many of the highways infrastructures cost.

Margaret asked if there was potential for WCC to purchase a VAS for Earls Croome, there was a general discussion regarding VAS locations and prices. Martin explained that Upton Town PC had already requested one and he wouldn't have the funds for more this year.

9) SWDPR

Martin confirmed that all the dates had been put back but that the SWDPR was still due to be ratified by middle of 2022.

Penny raised the idea of having a Neighbourhood Plan developed to protect the Village from unwanted development. Mark agreed and suggested a sub committee should be gathered potentially residents as well as Councillors as there would be a fair amount of work involved. Martin suggested looking at Hanley's Neighbourhood Plan as it was an excellent example.

10) HIGHWAYS MATTERS – incl. New Roundabout

As discussed under representative reports.

The Roundabout is on hold awaiting go-ahead from Natural England.

11) TRAVELLER AND TRAVELLING SHOW PEOPLE SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD REVISED PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

Mark confirmed a response had been submitted as had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. Penny commented that it was a good response.

12) PARISH PATHS

Malcolm requested a contract rate review as he was now using his own equipment having retired from the lengthsman role. The Clerk asked Malcolm to email her his suggested rate and she would gain agreement from the Members and incorporate it into the contract she was in the process of drawing up for Malcolm.

Malcolm confirmed that the broken stile from Earls Croome Court had now been completely removed and the footpath was passable.

13) TREES

Malcolm reported that the trees planted last year were doing well with only one failing.

Malcolm thanked Members for their comments on his tree article, he would submit this to the Bridge magazine for publishing in the September issue. Members asked the Clerk to put on the Parish Notice Board, Website and the Village Facebook page.

Malcolm confirmed he was monitoring the ash die back and in his opinion there was no danger to the Highway at this time, Malcolm asked that a Member maybe review this with him and Tom agreed to review the tree's with him, Margret suggested that perhaps a formal risk assessment should be put in place. Malcolm advised that a tree surgeon had reviewed the trees but that was over 3 years ago and perhaps this should be done periodically.

The request for TPO's on the two Oak trees near the proposed new roundabout that was previously rejected was discussed and Mark raised his concern as the wording from WCC Highways had been 'no plan to remove these trees within this scheme.' The Clerk confirmed she had raised the TPO rejection with Jeremy as requested last month.

Mark asked the Clerk to email WCC Nick Churchill and ask specifically regarding the whole roundabout development affecting the trees. Martin suggested asking the questions regarding lighting and speed reductions within the same email and asked to be cc'd in.

Malcolm suggested that more trees were planted this autumn. Members agreed, Mark suggested a tree fund should be development that residents could donate to or even have memorial trees for loved ones. Penny suggested launching this at the family fun day on 21st August. Mark asked Malcolm to develop a flyer for this.

There was a discussion regarding the plaque for the Jubilee tree.

14) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

Andy confirmed he was liaising with the Clerk and had been working through the tasks requested. The main area of concern was the overgrowth surrounding the verge masters near Emblem Villa. Andy and Malcom discussed the junction cut back near the BT box opposite the Memorial. Andy confirmed that the broken grip by the Church had been repaired to a fashion, WCC Highways had just filled it with tarmac. A discussion arose and it was decided to monitor over the winter/wetter months and see if there were any detrimental effects seen.

The Clerk confirmed that all tasks for the lengthsman should be requested via her and she would liaise with Andy.

15) COMMONS

- a) **Smithmoor** -LEGAL ISSUES: The Clerk advised that legal dispute regarding Mr Teasdales continued, commercial use of the track was being assessed by the solicitor and there would be a response in the next 10 days. Mark asked Tom to get a letter from Mr Gilder confirming that the presence of Mr Teasadales dogs would mean they could not return to graze the Common this autumn. This could then be put on file as a direct loss of revenue to the PC and raised with the litigation solicitor.

The Clerk confirmed that SME Solicitors had been engaged to register the access track with the Land Registry and that she had asked if Ann Smith, the retired Clerk, could make the statement of truth. The Clerk expected further correspondence once the payment on account had been received by the solicitor. They had advised there was a considerable back log at the Land Registry.

Penny asked if Mr Teasdale had connected to the water supply – Mark confirmed he had laid the pipes but does not appear to be connected to mains water.

MAINTAINENCE: The Clerk advised she had had a very positive meeting with Steve Coole and Paul Jakeman regarding them having the hay off the common in return for mending the gate, replacing the gate post, pollarding the willow tree and topping the top right corner. Tom proposed this offer was taken and it was seconded by Robin and agreed by all. Charlotte asked if the entrance gate was necessary if it was potentially causing more maintenance costs, Mark thought this could be reviewed over the coming year. The Clerk asked Members if they would consider allowing Steve to spray the top right-hand side. Members decided not to, as it was near a water course and to keep the organic nature of the Common for the future.

FUTURE: Mark led a discussion on how to get more from the Commons as assets and with various subsidies available for ecology and sustainable farming, were there any grants that the PC could apply for. Margaret raised it was the only saline common in the county and the unique flora found on all the PC owned commons.

Margaret would make contact with Natural England to facilitate an initial discussion. The Clerk suggested liaising with Kempsey Commons committee chair, and that in a previous discussion he had suggested a number of bodies the Council could consider joining. Mark suggested a working party should be formed to review this over the coming winter.

Dunstall - Malcolm reported that due to the long grass there were less visitors and therefore less dog fouling. The three additional signs from MHDC would be delivered next week and Malcolm would put them up in appropriate locations. Margret reported ragwort that she had cleared but there was more, Robin volunteered to clear some more.

Marsh – Malcolm volunteered to check Marsh Common for ragwort. Mark suggested that Malcolm show Andy the ash die back signs so that Andy could monitor whilst on his lengthsman duties.

Margaret suggested that the letter that had historically been sent to various householders whose properties border the smaller areas of Common land throughout the parish, be re-issued as there were some new residents, the letter serves as a thank you to the residents for maintaining and keeping these areas neat but also as a reminder that they are PC owned Common land. The Clerk would find the template and Mark asked that the list of properties to be written to be compiled and sent to the Clerk.

16) REGISTRATION OF VILLAGE HALL & PLAYING FIELD DEEDS

The Clerk advised the HM Land Registry documents had now been received. Penny noted that there was a substantial bill for this and proposed that the PC asked the VHC to contribute half towards these legal costs. Margret seconded this motion, and the Members asked the Clerk to write to Vince, the Chair of the Village Hall Committee.

17) PLANNING

- a) 21/00835/HP Cherry Blossom Cottage, Worcester Road, erection of a car port – NO OBJECTION, Approved.
- b) 20/01827/FUL Boughton Stud, Smithmoor Common. The Clerk advised that the result of the appeal against the enforcement notices, had upheld the enforcement criteria but had extended the time Mr Teasdale had to comply.

18) PHONE BOX

The Clerk advised that she had received two quotes for painting of the phone box. The cost of painting the outside was approx. £600. She advised that painting the inside would be an additional cost as would replacing the Perspex panels with glass should Members wish to do so. The Members discussed the options and decided that the inside required a good clean only and that the Perspex panels were good enough. They asked the Clerk to use the cheaper quote and get the outside repainted. Mark asked Martin if he could contribute from his divisional fund and he agreed to grant half the cost – Martin asked the Clerk write a formal request to him.

19) FINANCE

- a) The monthly reconciliation of cash and other monies was undertaken for May & June by Charlotte & Penny.
- b) The Clerk confirmed the internal audit had been completed and was displayed on the Parish website as required.

Payments made since last meeting were noted as follows:

Mr A Milward – Lengthsman payment – May	£167.98
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- June (S/O)	£204.30
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance June (S/O)	£15.00

It was proposed by Tom and seconded by Margaret and agreed by all to authorize the following payments:

a) Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – June	£54.00
b) Mrs A Smith – reimburse playing grass cutting	£50.00
c) SME – Payment on account for legal services	£50.00
d) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – July (S/O)	£204.30
e) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance July (S/O)	£15.00
f) WhatleyRecordon Solicitors – Legal fee for registering VH and Playing Field	£832.40
g) Mr M J Clemas – Internal Audit	£50.00
h) Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – July	£TBC

Remittance:

WCC Lengthsman reimburse March	£403.10
WCC Lengthsman reimburse April	£78.00
WCC Lengthsman reimburse May	£132.00

22. CORRESPONDANCE

Mark advised that the Parish Council had been cc'd into a letter to Surmans Farm regarding knotweed. Members asked the Clerk to write and confirm the PC are aware of the request.

Mark drew members attention to the West Mercia Police Charter and that the requested three top crime priorities. Mark asked each Member to email their choices to the Clerk by Friday so a submission could be made.

21 INFORMATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Tuesday 21st September 2021 at 7.30 pm at Earls Croome Village Hall

Meeting Closed 9:55pm