

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.**

**PRESENT:** Cllr Mark Smith (Chairman), Cllr Penny Green, Cllr Katie Etherington, Mrs Ann Smith (Advisor to PC) and the Clerk.

**1) APOLOGIES**

County Councillor Allen, District Councillor Owenson, Cllr Tom Goodwin, Cllr Margaret Herbert, Cllr Robin Tomkins and Cllr Charlotte Bloomfield

Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) & Andrew Milward (Lengthsman)

**2) PUBLIC:** None

**3) MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 were proposed by Mark, seconded by Penny, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

**4) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS**

**County Council Report**

There hadn't been a County Council report this month but there were updates from Martin Allen regarding Highways issues.

**District Council Report**

The Members discussed the written report from Jeremy that had been circulated prior to the meeting. The resident's satisfaction survey results were discussed, and Members asked when this took place as none of them had been surveyed.

**5) BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW**

Katie & Penny reported that they had reviewed the suggested Boundary Review and whilst geographically Queenhill & Holdfast were the opposite side of the river and not natural neighbours, they were comparable rural villages that would likely face similar issues to Earls Croome, the original comment - to remain linked with rural communities rather than Upton Town - appeared to have been listed too

Mark asked the Clerk to contact Jeremy and check he had no major concerns, if not, then there were no further comments to submit from ECPC.

It was again commented that the District Councillor would be spread across a larger number of wards which was not seen to be in the public interest.

**6) SWDP**

Mark advised there was no further update.

**7) HIGHWAYS MATTERS**

Penny reported that the footpath resurfacing work at Orchard Close was planned for 28<sup>th</sup> April and did now include the footway outside no. 9 & 10.

Mark advised that correspondence had been received from Margaret regarding an operator's licence for a company taking over the lease of 'Chemical Store' on the Dunstall industrial site. The company was a septic tank clearance operation and Members were concerned regarding the size of the tankers and a risk of them travelling across Dunstall Common and through the villages. There is an agreement with current operators that the vehicles coming from the site do not cross the common, but Members were not sure if this was an informal agreement or a condition from planning. Mark suggested a traffic survey be requested. A discussion about road safety, visibility and the junction being on the brow of the hill was had.

Penny asked the Clerk to ask WCC Highways to resurface the passing bays on Quay Lane, they had been further broken up by the recent road closures and badly signed diversions.

It was noted that despite assurances and agreements from WCC Highways of a better signage for the diversion that Quay Lane had again been used as a cut through and the promised signage had not been correctly laid out. Mark would raise this again at the next liaison meeting.

Margaret had requested additional verge masters north of Emblem Villa – Mark asked the Clerk to contact Tom & Robin to review the situation and report back at May's meeting.

Ripple PC had invited a member to represent ECPC in discussions regarding a monument to be placed on the new roundabout – a discussion was had about this being within EC parish, and possible ongoing maintenance costs, however Penny noted that since the roundabout had moved from its original planned position the centre and monument would not fall into EC Parish boundary.

The Hedges overhanging the pavement on Church Lane still required cutting back.

Margaret had raised her concerns regarding the Coppice at Dunstall Common with dead trees at risk of falling into the Highway – the Clerk would once again contact Severn Stoke PC as this was within their parish.

#### **8) PARISH PATHS**

Malcolm had reported some fallen trees he had cleared to the west end of RP 595 'Donkey Lane' one tree remained which he would report to WCC in May if the landowner had not cleared by then.

#### **9) TREES**

No further update.

#### **10) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME**

Mark advised that the final claim for 2021/2022 had been submitted including a claim for the Clerk administration.

Mark advised that WCC had increased the grant for 2022/2023. A discussion was had regarding best use of the additional funds and the Clerk was asked to review and liaise with the lengthsmen to make the best use of the money available.

#### **11) COMMONS**

##### **a) Smithmoor –**

##### **LEGAL MATTERS:**

The Chairman advised that the Land Registry had been asked to fast track the application which had been granted. The statement of truth had been re-submitted to the Land Registry as there had been a misunderstanding regarding the registration being for the Common. It therefore remained a case of waiting for the outcome and or a request for further information.

The Chairman advised that the working group had met to discuss the ongoing activities and breaches of enforcement at Baughton Stud, there would be a further meeting once the Land Registry had come back to ECPC. There was a general discussion regarding further activities and the proprietor making no attempts, as yet, to comply with the WDC enforcement notices.

**MAINTAINANCE:** The Chairman advised that Steve Coole had made contact with the Clerk to agree needed maintenance services in return for the hay – Steve had suggested some ditch clearance maybe required. Steve had also offered to attend the May PC Meeting so that Members could talk to him directly about the maintenance of all the Commons. The Chair suggested that Tom, Margaret, and Robin visit Smithmoor Common and undertake a review of suggested maintenance work that could be requested in return for the hay.

Margaret had offered to do some further investigations with Natural England to see what grants might be available and what use the Common could be put to. The Chairman suggested this needed to be seen as a longer-term approach with the maintenance and hay removal being short to medium approach as we are now commencing the grass growing season.

The Clerk advised that the reciprocal agreement with Steve Coole was long standing, and the Commons were well managed and maintained and thus far remained cost neutral.

**Dunstall** – Margaret had reported some fallen trees which have been removed by Malcolm.

**Marsh** – Mark advised that the fallen trees had been cleared and all Members agreed to allow Malcolm to have the wood in return for the clearance.

## 12) PLANNING

20/01827/FUL Baughton Stud, Smithmoor Common. Enforcement notices served, the first of which was dated until 31<sup>st</sup> March to comply. MHDC Enforcement have visited the site and advised the proprietor that the additional works that have been done, are at his own risk.

21/01970/FUL Elgar Inn, Worcester Road. Creation of new agricultural access – There had still been no outcome notified.

21/02093/HP & Associated ref 21/02094/LB The Old Rectory, Church Lane. Modification of site entrance, new gates and replacement boundary fence - Approved

## 13) PHONE BOX

The Chairman advised that the repaint was scheduled with the contractor for late April/ Early May dependant on weather conditions. Members asked the Clerk to ensure this was done prior to the Jubilee celebrations planned for June.

## 14) LITTER PICK

The Chairman reported a successful litter pick was held on 26<sup>th</sup> February, he thanked Penny & Ann for organising and a vote of thanks was given to Robin & Malcolm for gathering the bin sacks for collection.

## 15) FINANCE

The monthly reconciliation of cash and other monies was undertaken for January & February by Charlotte & Penny.

The Chairman advised that the unions have reached an agreement regarding the SCP rates which the Clerk salary was subject to, it had been agreed an increase of 1.75% to be backdated until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. It was agreed to spread the back payment over the coming 12 months and the Chairman asked the Clerk to adjust the bank mandate accordingly. The new payment amount would be £213.38

The Chairman also suggested increasing the Clerks working from home allowance due to increased energy costs. Members agreed to increase this to £20pcm.

Payments made since the last meeting were noted as follows:

Mr A Milward – Lengthsman payment – January	£174.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- February (S/O)	£204.30
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance February (S/O)	£15.00

It was proposed by Katie and seconded by Penny and agreed by all to authorize the following payments:

- a) Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – February £84.00
- b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – March (S/O) £204.30
- c) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance March (S/O) £15.00
- d) SME – Legal fee’s Land Registration Smithmoor Common access track £N/A

It was noted that no invoice payable at this stage, however the increased solicitor’s rate of £230 was discussed and Members asked the Clerk to keep a close eye on the costs.

Remittance:	
WCC Lengthsman re-imburse October	£96.00
WCC Lengthsman re-imburse November	£123.00

## 22. CORRESPONDANCE

It was noted that a resident had written to the Clerk regarding the mud on the road towards Emblem Villa – the resident had reported this to WCC Highways as well.

Katie informed Members that she had created a ECPC Facebook page which can be used to write and share posts on both the existing 'Earl's Croome Village Noticeboard' and 'Noticeboard: Severn Stoke, Kinnersley & Earls Croome' community pages. Mark thanked Katie for setting this up and managing these communications. Katie would look into how she could enable the Clerk and others to be able to use the communication tool as well.

## 21 INFORMATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Annual Parish Council Meeting will be held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30 pm at Earls Croome Village Hall. The Meeting will be preceded by the **Parish Meeting** at 7:00pm

The Meeting closed at 9:30pm.