

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 15th NOVEMBER 2022 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.

PRESENT: Cllr Mark Smith (Chairman), Cllr Penny Green, Cllr Tom Goodwin, Cllr Margaret Herbert and Cllr Charlotte Bloomfield, Cllr Katie Etherington, Cllr Ian Wilson, Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) and the Clerk.

In attendance: County Councillor Martin Allen.

1) APOLOGIES

District Councillor Owenson & Mrs Ann Smith (Advisor to PC),

2) PUBLIC

None

3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4) MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2022 were proposed by Penny, seconded by Margaret, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

5) CALC CIVILITY & RESPECT PLEDGE

The Members discussed the details of the pledge and again it was commented that the Council already acts with civility and respect. The Clerk read out the 8 statements that underpin the pledge. It was noted that these were also noted within HR law, standing orders and the expectation for those holding public office. The Clerk noted that a dignity at work policy was not something the council had specifically.

Katie thought it was a matter of best practice and that there was no reason not to sign up to it.

It was proposed by Penny and seconded by Katie and agreed by all to sign up to the pledge, demonstrating that ECPC is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their role.

6) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

District Council Report – District Councillor Owenson report had been circulated to members.

County Council Report

Martin advised putting hard core into the Quay Lane passing bays had been agreed but he still hadn't been notified of a specific date. Penny asked that it was impressed upon the team which side of the lane as there was a mistake last time. Martin confirmed that a site visit and photos/maps etc had taken place.

Martin advised that the road surface that dips and is crumbling at the edges in Quay Lane is not considered a safety risk but will be on the list for the next financial year.

Martin advised that the new roundabout was near completion. He expressed disappointment that new widened pavement was not improved very far and that it suddenly became very narrow.

Martin advised that the Community Bus 'the Upton shuttle' had commenced, he asked that members encourage residents to use it or lose it!

Martin advised as noted under planning that the Ryall North mineral extraction had been approved by the planning committee. Benefits included a larger land available for festivals, the loss of trees would be replaced by double the quantity in the replanting, the very poor-quality hedges would be replaced with high quality. The long term plan to create an international rowing lake would be a great boost to the area and local economy

really putting Upton on the map. Mark queried who would clean the lake when inevitably the river bust its banks, Martin advised that this would be down to the owners of the lake.

Martin advised that the other mineral extraction site at Bow Farm had also been passed despite his objections due to particles of that particular mineral being known to cause lung cancers, Martin was very disappointed by this.

Martin advised that he had brought a movement to the Council to offer free bus travel for all ex-service personnel from 2024. The movement was voted through unanimously, WCC would be the first Council to offer this but it is likely that other Councils will follow suit. All Members applauded this a congratulated Martin.

7) SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mark advised that the public consultation on the SWDPR was underway and runs until 13th December. Mark advised that he and Ian had attended the MHDC briefing, which had focused around infrastructure. Ian commented that there was a distinct lack of information and detail given by MHDC officers. Ian commented that the entire policy is built upon rail travel and rail connections which cannot be proven until the houses are occupied.

Mark suggested that the members with responsibility for planning meet to look at the details and review what included developments would affect Earls Croome. Mark asked Ian to join the planning group (composed of; Mark, Katie & Margaret) . Ian agreed. The group planned to meet on Friday 25th November to review what was proposed at Blue Bell Farm which although is referred to as Ryal is in fact in the parish of Earls Croome and Earls Croome is a category 5 village. Mark asked Ian to review the proposed sites prior to them meeting. Mark asked Katie to review the travelling and show people sites as the consultation regarding that was running alongside the SWDPR consultation.

Mark proposed that once these details are known a leaflet drop to the residents informing them of what is included for Earls Croome and how to submit a comment should they so wish would be required as well as deciding upon a Parish Council response for the Clerk to submit.

8) HIGHWAYS MATTERS – VAS PURCHASE

Martin asked that the VAS purchase was tabled for discussion at January's meeting.

9) PARISH PATHS

Malcolm advised that he had completed his P3 work for 2022 and submitted his invoice. Mark thanked Malcolm for the work he has done keeping the rights of way clear.

10) TREES – Ash die back

Malcolm and Penny advised that they had met Chris Arnold at Marsh common to review the Ash Die back. Malcolm had identified 16 trees and Chris identified 2-3 more diseased trees. Chris had noted that the diseased trees were crowding some nice specimen oak trees. Chris had submitted a quote to fell the diseased trees, £2700.00 inc VAT.

It was noted that the quote included traffic lights that would be required to work on that stretch of road.

Members expressed concern regarding the cost as a high % of the annual precept. Mark asked how many trees were in the location in total Malcolm thought there to be 50-60 trees. Members discussed if this would require budget for further work in years to come. Members discussed the safety need and Mark thought a report should be sought from a road safety perspective.

It was decided that a safety report be commissioned so the Council could understand what exactly was needed to be done to keep the road side safe.

Members discussed WCC support, but it had been investigated a number of years ago and WCC had insisted that the road side trees at Marsh Common were the landowners responsibility – Earls Croome PC.

The Clerk advised that at that price she would be required to get further quotes and that she thought a safety survey should be sought to advise ECPC of exactly what was required to be done. She had a contact she would approach. Martin Allen advised it may be worth approaching Chris Fairly Lewis the tree warden at MHDC. Ian suggested an arborist would be independent of generating their own work but could prove costly.

Mark asked the Clerk to get a price for a safety survey ASAP.

Malcolm advised that he had received the trees for the Queens Canopy he said he was a little disappointed as they were small, and a number were already dead. The Planting was planned for 26th November, he had group of volunteers organised. Mark thanked Malcolm.

11) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

Mark advised that additional tasked for the lengthsmen should be advised to the Clerk and that other highways matters can be reported directly to WCC Hub, he advised that this could be done anytime during the month and did not need to wait or be raised at the PC meeting unless it needed further escalation.

Margaret advised that Andy had tidied the Cenotaph and cut out the pavement on the approach for the remembrance service.

Tom advised that some months Andy was not getting his payment promptly, an additional cheque was drawn up that would address this going forward.

12) COMMONS

a) Smithmoor –

LEGAL MATTERS:

Mark advised that the PC had received the final bill from the solicitor of £582.25 incl VAT to be paid this evening. Overall this was paid by the County Councillor grant from Paul Middlebrough and concluded the matter.

MAINTAINANCE: The Clerk was asked to chase up Steve Coole to get a comment of the suggestions made by Natural England.

Mark reminded Margaret and Tom that a review of winter maintenance tasks was required. The Clerk advised that Steve would top the areas surrounding the track that was rough and not included in the hay making and this year he suggested tackling some of the trees at the far end of the common.

Dunstall – N/A

Marsh – Ash die back as discussed.

13) PLANNING

MHDC Update regarding housing supply – Mark advised that MHDC has now issued a statement that it can now demonstrate a 5.5 year land supply.

20/01827/FUL Baughton Stud, Smithmoor Common. Enforcement notices served. The Clerk advised that Hill Croome had advised her that the owner was due to submit a new application but had asked for a bit of leeway as he was due to be in prison for a month! Members discussed the absurdity of this.

21/01970/FUL Elgar Inn, Worcester Road. Creation of new agricultural access –Approved. Mark expressed his surprise that given the amount of road safety concerns that this had not been taken to planning committee, he had asked Jeremy would had confirmed that the consent was limited to an agricultural access only and that any extension of that would require a further planning application.

Ryall North Quarry : Planning Application made under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to not comply with conditions 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 49 and 53 of Planning Permission 15/000013/CM to facilitate an alternative working scheme and progressive restoration scheme to agriculture and a lake suitable for watersports -Approved.

14) FINANCE

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

Mark advised that the Clerk had received a pay award of £1 per hour back dated to April 2022. The Clerk and Members agreed to spread the back dated pay across the next 15 months starting January 2023. It was proposed by Penny, seconded by Charlotte and agreed by all that the Clerk salary would increase to £233.77 from 1st January 2023 until March 2024. The Clerk was asked to amend the Standing order accordingly.

Payments made since the last meeting were noted as follows:

Mr A Milward – Lengthsman payment – September	£120.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- October (S/O)	£213.36
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance October (S/O)	£20.00

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

a) Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – September	£168.00
b) Ms A Smith – reimburse for payment for grass cutting at playing field	£45.00
c) SME Solicitors – Invoice for legal advise at Smithmoor Common	£582.25
d) British Legion – Poppy wreath	£18.50
e) M Tomkins – P3 footpath clearance	£371.00
f) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – November (S/O)	£213.36
g) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance November (S/O)	£20.00
h) Mr A Milward – lengthsman services – November	£TBC
i) Mr A Milward – Lengthsman services – December	£TBC

Remittance:

National Grid – Wayleave payment	£86.78
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18. CORRESPONDANCE

- MHDC Precept request - The precept requirement needed to be requested from MHDC by 31st January. Mark asked Penny to work with the Clerk to circulate some budget options to be looked at so a final decision can be made at the meeting in January.

19. INFORMATION AND DATE OF NEXT YEARS MEETINGS

The dates for the 2023 meeting were discussed and agreed:

24th January

21st March

16th May

25th July

19th September

14th November

All to be held at Earls Croome Village Hall.

The Meeting closed at 9.15pm.