

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 24th JANUARY 2023 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 Ian Wilson, Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden), Ann Smith (Advisor to PC) and the Clerk.

In attendance: County Councillor Martin Allen.

1) APOLOGIES

District Councillor Owenson

2) PUBLIC

Malcolm raised that the planning agenda item listed as Surman Farm was actually Ryall Court Farm, farmed by Mr Surman.

Malcolm asked that the litter pick be more widely advertised. It was discussed advertising it on facebook & in The Bridge.

3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Tom re W/22/01692/CU Application for change of use to dog walking field. Tom re SWDPR.

4) MEMBER VACANCY

Mark advised that sadly Katie had resigned due to family commitments. Members expressed their thanks and disappointment as Katie was a really active Councillor and would be missed. The Clerk advised that the vacancy was widely advertised. Margaret had some ideas of people who could be interested. The clerk advised that she could send a brief of the role to interested candidates.

5) MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

6) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

County Council Report

Martin advised that he was awaiting a discussion with his Highways liaison officer about the passing bay work at Quay Lane, that had taken place at the wrong side of the road for a second time.

Martin advised that the new VAS poles were now in situ and a VAS had been made available for Earls Croome. Members thanked Martin for his input.

The clerk was asked to ensure the VAS was fully insured and padlocks were acquired prior to being put on the Highway.

Martin advised that the Community Bus had approx. 10 regular users. It was a 15 seater and could accommodate disabled passengers. Martin has secured funding until the end of March. Martin encouraged wide advertisement and increased usage.

Mark asked Martin when the planting of trees and hedges would take place now the roundabout was completed. Martin suggested the clerk contact Nick Churchill for a timescale as planting of trees should take place before spring and advised that it was a condition of planning the tree/hedge planting.

Martin advised that there had been a policy review regarding artwork on roundabouts. Charlotte would update members under agenda item 7.

District Council Report – District Councillor Owenson report had been circulated to members. No additional questions were raised.

7) HIGHWAYS MATTERS – VAS PURCHASE

The Clerk was asked to contact Jeremy to request that his grant for the VAS could be used towards the ash die back costs.

Charlotte advised that the art work planned for the roundabout would be positioned on the soft ground where the old road was, as safety rules did not allow for the art work on the middle of the roundabout. The working party from the 3 local parish councils were working with school children, various businesses and a local blacksmith to produce a metal freeze with images representing each parish.

Members noted that some of the new verge masters near Emblem Villa had already been damaged.

8) PARISH PATHS

Malcolm advised that there was nothing to report.

9) TREES – Ash die back

Members discussed the ash die back at Marsh Common. There had been x2 quotes acquired from local tree surgeons however it was not clear if both the quotes were for the same number of trees to be removed. It was also still unclear as to what was necessary to keep the highway safe. The clerk was asked to approach WCC Highways to get some clarification on what was required and if WCC Highways could assess and even address the work. The cost involved is potentially 50% of the precept and members were concerned with that type of cost ongoing as there were 100 trees in the area with potential for them all to become diseased.

It was discussed that the best time of year for assessing the trees was in full foliage. (July)

10) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

Members discussed the current economic situation and the addition of the VAS to Andy's duties and it was suggested that his lengthsman hourly rate be increased to £13 per hour for the 23/24 contract. This was proposed by Penny and seconded by Margaret and agreed by all. The Clerk was asked to inform Andy and check he was happy to continue as the EC lengthsman for the 23/24 contract.

There was a discussion about the VAS duties and requirements re battery charging, securing the VAS and positioning. The clerk was asked to liaise with Andy to ensure he had all the information he required regarding the VAS.

11) COMMONS

Members discussed Steve Coole comments on the Natural England report and recommendations for the commons. Many of the suggestions were just not cost effective for Steve to implement and some could leave the commons looking unkept and potentially cause more work in years to come. Tom agreed with all Steve's comments.

Maragret would now advise the writer of the original report and investigate further the benefits of joining the scheme or not, Margaret thought there may be better schemes that would come about later in the year.

Smithmoor Common had not been fully assessed in the report and Margaret would follow that up at the same time.

The clerk had noted two trees down opposite the Willows but still on the 'common' land and had asked Steve to review and remove.

12) COMMUNITY LITTER PICK

Members decided the date of the litter pick would be Sunday 5th March and asked the clerk to advertise on Facebook and The Bridge as discussed earlier. Members would also leaflet to those houses they know to be interested.

Tom noted that Kempsey PC had a banner advertising their litter pick and suggested Earls Croome could purchase one, Tom was asked to get a price and think about generic wording so the banner could be used every year. It was suggested to get a price for two as one could be on A38 and one in the centre of the village.

The clerk was asked to order more litter picking equipment and arrange the rubbish collection.

13) PLANNING

22/01878/AGR Ryall Court Farm. Prior approval, internal access track on agricultural land. Members discussed this application and the Chairman asked for a vote to object or support as not all members agreed. It was a majority to object and Mark and Ian agreed to write a comment for the clerk to submit as ECPC objection.

22/01692/CU – Land at (Os 8730 4267) Quay Lane – change of use to dog walking field – objection submitted.

22/01865/FUL The Yorkshire Grey – Provision of external staircase – no objection.

20/01827/FUL Baughton Stud, Smithmoor Common. Enforcement notices served. It was noted that dazzling floodlights are on late into the night causing issues for residents nearby and the clerk was asked to raise this with enforcement.

22/01748/HP Stonehall Cottage, Quay Lane. Replacement of existing conservatory with oak orangery. – no objection.

14) FINANCE

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

Members discussed the precept requirement and the figures Penny and the clerk had circulated. Penny advised it was not an exact science as future costs could not be fully known at this stage the suggestion was an Approx 8% increase. The clerk advised that she would clarify MHDC bad debt retention figure and ascertain what % increase our requirement would show on householders Council Tax bills. It was proposed by Penny to submit a request for £4,500. This was seconded by Charlotte and agreed by all.

Payments made since the last meeting were noted as follows:

Mr A Milward – Lengthsman payment – November	£150.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- November (S/O)	£213.36
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance November (S/O)	£20.00
Mr A Milward – Lengthsman Pymt – December	£48.00
Mrs N Nicholson – grant towards laptop	£150.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – December	£233.77
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance December	£20.00

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

a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – January (S/O)	£233.77
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance January (S/O)	£20.00
c) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk 6 months OPE	£46.25
d) Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – January	£TBC
e) Mr A Malward – Lengthsman payment – February	£TBC

Remittance:

WCC Lengthsman reimburse September £120.00

WCC Lengthsman reimburse July £156.00

WCC Lengthsman reimburse November £150.00

WCC Lengthsman reimburse August & October Plus P3 reimburse £732.10

MHDC Divisional fund grant from Jeremy towards the VAS £500.00

18. CORRESPONDANCE

Margaret noted that the 'cuppa with a copper' should be advertised on Facebook and the noticeboard.
WCC green infrastructure consultation – it was noted that this was a huge document to review and the Clerk was asked to ask Jeremy & Martin for some steerage on how to respond.

19. INFORMATION AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

21st March 7.30pm at Earls Croome Village Hall

The Meeting closed at 9.10pm.