

## **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> MAY 2023 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.**

**PRESENT:** Mark Smith (Chairman), Penny Green, Margaret Herbert, Charlotte Bloomfield, Ian Wilson, Tom Goodwin (Members) and the Clerk. Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) Ann Smith (Advisor to the Council)

### **1) ELECTION OF CHAIR**

Margaret proposed Mark, Penny seconded the proposal, which was agreed by all. Mark signed the declaration of Acceptance of Office form, specified under Section 51 of the local Government Act 2000.

### **2) APOLOGIES**

District Councillor Jeremy Owenson

It was noted that District & County Councillor Martin Allen would join the meeting later.

### **3) REGISTRATION AND DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

- (i) The Clerk advised members that they ALL need to complete new Registration of Interest forms which are provided and kept by the monitoring officer of the Malvern Hills District Council Standards Committee.
- (ii) No declarations were declared.

### **4) TO NOTE THE CODE OF CONDUCT, STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Code of Conduct for Members, which had been adopted by the Council in May 2022, and the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which had also been adopted by the Council in 2018/2019 were noted.

### **5) PUBLIC:** 1 member of the public was in attendance, they were observing with a view to joining the Council.

### **6) DELEGATION OF PLANNING AND OTHER MATTERS**

- (a) It was agreed by all members that the function of responding to the Local Planning Authority be delegated to the Clerk.
- (b) It was agreed by all to re-adopt the terms of reference for the Staffing Committee, including delegated powers for recruitment, performance reviews and disciplinary & grievance procedures.

### **7) REPRESENTATIVES TO BE APPOINTED**

Mark asked Members if they were happy to stay with the current responsibilities and they were reviewed as follows:

Open Spaces (Including the Commons) - Tom & Margaret.

Playing Field – over seen by Ann Smith

Highways (including flooding and drainage) – Tom

Planning coordinators – Mark, Ian & Margaret

Staffing Committee – The Chair + Penny & Charlotte

SWDPR Monitoring – Mark & Ian

Website – The Clerk with Penny checking

Social media – It was discussed how to get the Parish Council a presence to post items, this was complicated due to Facebook rules, The Clerk and Tom would work on ensuring that relevant items were posted on the Village Facebook page of which there was two, one specific to Earls Croome and one joint with Severn Stoke & Kinnersley.

Defibrillator (Including phone box – Charlotte, members thanked Charlotte for her recent service of the Defib.

Finance (Including monthly bank reconciliations) Penny & Charlotte

## 8) LEGAL DOCUMENTS AND CONTRACTS

All legal documents regarding the ownership of the Village Hall and Playing Field are kept with Whatley Recordon, Solicitors in Malvern.

The contract with Worcestershire County Council to provide a Parish Lengthsman is effective until 31 March 2024, and the Parish Council's contract with Mr A Millward to provide the services of Parish Lengthsman is effective until 31 March 2024.

The contract with Worcestershire County Council to provide a Parish footpath clearing service via P3 scheme is effective until 31 December 2023, the members agreed to continue using the services of Mr M Tomkins for the P3 work. The Clerk confirmed that as a contractor Malcolm was covered by the PC insurance for this service.

The Chairman advised members that the insurance contract with Zurich is due for renewal on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 the renewal cost was £450.98. The Clerk had acquired a quote for like for like insurance via a CALC recommended broker, the insurance offered by ANSVAR was quoted at £314.22 Members had reviewed the cover and all agreed that the cost saving was worth moving to be covered by ANSVAR. It was noted that the clerk had approached Zurich for a discount but they had not responded.

## 9) MEMBER VACANCY

The Chairman advised that the vacancy remained unfilled despite being widely advertised. Giles Steiger who had recently moved to the village was in attendance with a interest in joining the PC. A discussion arose about the need to be on the electoral role for 12 months and that Giles may need to wait until February to join.

## 10) MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023 were proposed by Tom, seconded by Charlotte, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

The Chair advised that we would cover Highways Matters as the next item, whilst waiting for Martin Allen, who was attending an Upton Town Council meeting first.

## 11) HIGHWAYS MATTERS

The Chair advised that WCC Highways had inspected the ash die back at Marsh Common, they had advised of no safety concerns and they also advised that they inspect these roadside trees 4 monthly.

At the meeting in March members had asked for a review of the VAS pole locations. The WCC Highways liaison officer has suggested two further locations, these would cost ECPC £500 each. Members were surprised by the cost and after a discussion it was decided to leave things as they are for now. It was noted that the pole by the Village Hall was not the best as speeding was seen less right in the middle of the village.

The missing verge masters by the narrow ditch near Emblem Villa, had been reviewed by WCC Highways and the report back had been that they were all there, Margaret did not think that was correct. The Clerk would send the report to Margaret to review and asked that she respond with pictures of which ones are missing.

Martin Allen joined the meeting.

## 12) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

**Martin Allen gave his annual Worcestershire County Council report as follows:**

“Thank you for coming tonight, I appreciate your time. It’s been a very busy and interesting year, please see my report for County and now District below.”

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MATTERS**

### **VETERANS BUS PASS**

I am pleased to report that last November, I brought a Motion to the full County Council meeting that month. The motion was for all veterans who live in Worcestershire to receive a bus pass, similar to the pensioners bus pass. This was passed unanimously and will become live in April 2024. Did you know that 1 in 27 of the adults who live in Worcestershire are veterans? However, it is expected that only a few hundred at most will apply for this new bus pass. Most veterans are already receiving the pensioners bus pass.

### **SCHOOLS**

There is going to be a new High School built on the outskirts of Worcester near the Hospital. This is to accommodate the numbers of children from the new estates by the Ketch Roundabout and the developments behind the Bluebell pub.

Also, I am pleased to see that a new special school for children with autism has also been announced. This will provide 120 free full-time places for pupils aged 5 – 19. The school will be located in Malvern and is to be paid for by the Department of Education’s Free School Programme.

### **SENDS**

A number of families who have a child with Special Educational Needs now meet once a month on a Sunday afternoon. I have managed to find funding to get them going. I would be most grateful if you could let residents know of this group so that we can get the message out to all those who would benefit from going to a group.

### **SPEEDING**

Speeding has continued to be a real problem in all of my division. I cannot understand why the Police cannot carry out more enforcement with the Motorcycle Speed Unit.

My group are going to bring forward a motion for a mandatory speed limit of 20mph around all schools. Currently those that have the flashing lights indicating a temporary reduction to 20mph at school time are not enforceable and are only advisory.

Last year there was a motion to reduce the speed limit to 20mph in all Urban areas, everyone voted in favour of it except the ruling administration and it was lost. We can but try again.

### **VASS POLES & PRESENT FROM ME**

I was very pleased to provide you with a free VAS Unit earlier in the year. This flashes as driver approach to encourage them not to speed.

A VAS Pole was installed where you requested. I understand that you are now asking for additional poles. We need to have another site meeting to agree locations and to get a realistic cost. I might be able to help you with some of the funding. Let’s have a site meeting and go from there.

### **PASSING BAYS**

Quay Lane passing bays are in my opinion needed. However they are not formally classed as passing bays. I have requested that WCC look at the matter and I will continue to request some upgrade/repair.

### **COMMUNITY ACTION MINIBUS**

The Community Bus, CB2 to Tewkesbury still running well on a Wednesday morning. I have placed a leaflet on your seat, please if you can pass it to someone who would benefit from the service. There is normally 8 to 10 people who use it each week.

I have ensured that there is now funding in place to take it to the end of the year.

#### **BUSES AND LEVELLING UP FUNDING FAILURE £87m**

During the last 24 months the ruling administration at County Hall put in for two levelling up bids for infrastructure projects, such as the footpath/cycle way from Kempsey to Worcester and a bid for £87m to run the buses.

I am sorry to say the government rejected all of their proposals.

#### **UPTON A38/A4104 ROUNDABOUT**

The grassing is now being done and finally I think we can say that the roundabout is finished. I am still trying to get progress on the Art Work.

#### **A4104 HOLLY GREEN CROSSING**

This is now completed. The speed of the road was measured before the new roundabout was built; the average was in excess of 40mph. Once the roundabout was completed, the speed was again measured, and the average had fallen to 35.1mph. This strengthened the case for a Refuge Island. The layby has been resurfaced, also the northern footpath has been widened and a new path has been laid leading off the Ryall Road to the new Refuge Island.

With completion of the crossing point, it is now far safer to cross the A4104 and I have had a number of residents personally thank me. There is a final Safety Audit to come.

#### **ASH DIE BACK AND HIGHWAYS SAFETY – A4104 Upton to Pershore Road.**

Following your concerns I have had an email from my Highways Liaison Officer on 17.04.23

“The area has now been inspected and there were no safety issues found. Ash dieback is endemic in UK Ash stock and guidelines suggest that tree managers do not react to any ash die back tree by felling. Monitoring will be required. Felling trees with ash die back will not reduce its likelihood of spreading to other Ash trees in the locality.

The trees along this route are routinely inspected a minimum of 4 times each year. If there are any safety defects found on inspection, they will be identified and addressed appropriately”

#### **ORCHARD CLOSE PAVEMENT**

I was extremely pleased to push through the refurbishment of Orchard Close footway last year.

#### **QUAY NORTH ON QUAY LANE PAVEMENT**

I have requested that this footway goes on the list to be refurbished.

Currently it is hoped to complete the work in the financial year 2024/2025 subject to funds being available.

#### **DISTRICT COUNCIL**

As one of your newly elected District Cllrs, can I first congratulate Jeremy and to ensure you that I will be happy to work with Jeremy. .

#### **MALVERN THEATRE £20 MILLION**

This headline is a little misleading, the bid included work to be carried out improving Priory Park and building an Auditorium. Also, the fund is to be spent on producing a Youth Theatre area and to provide a rehearsal space. It is important that our young people have the opportunity to be involved in the arts. This investment will bring a benefit to our area, with increased visitors numbers.

There will be more funding opportunities coming along and I believe the MHDC needs to have more than one open ready projects ready to submit was calls for applications come in.

#### **£1.1M RECEIVED FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.**

MHDC also received in February 2023 £1.1m, because there is a district council election in May, the old council felt that it should not determine how that money is to be used.

### **5 YEAR LAND SUPPLY**

There has been some misunderstanding and confusion over the issue of MHDC having a 5-year land supply. An addendum to the South Worcestershire Five Year Housing Land Supply Report was published on Monday 24/04/23.

It clearly shows that Malvern does have a 5.24 year land supply. Worcester only has 3.26 years and Wychavon 3.81 years.

I have no doubt this will be challenged at the next planning application that comes before a Planning Inspector.

**Malvern Hills District Councillor Jeremy Owenson had thanked those who voted for him in the Annual Parish meeting and advised as it was beginning of a new term with the first full Council meeting next week there was currently nothing further to report. It was noted that due to the Boundary review ECPC was now represented by two District Councillors, Jeremy and Martin.**

### **13) PARISH PATHS**

The Clerk confirmed that the WCC P3 allocation of £450 had been confirmed.

Malcolm reported that he would begin the cutting and strimming over the coming weeks.

### **14) TREES**

Malcolm reported that the majority of the trees planted last year were thriving and growing well.

Malcolm would be looking at the undergrowth as it was growing up with recent weather conditions and he would work to make sure that the trees were swamped.

Mark asked Martin Allen why the tree planting at the new roundabout had not taken place as it was now complete and the hedges planted. Martin advised it was a condition and part of the scheme, he thought this would likely now occur in autumn as this is the best time for tree planting.

### **15) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME**

It was reported that Andy had agreed to continue as the lengthsman and that the relevant paperwork had been completed and signed.

Members wished to thank Andy for his sweeping up of the strimming/cut grass raised in March meeting – the village looked much tidier.

It was raised that some of the road signs were obscured by foliage, the clerk, would raise as a task to the lengthsman.

Penny asked if the elm suckers obscuring visibility to the left when exiting Quay Lane onto the A38 could be addressed.

### **16) COMMONS**

#### **a) Smithmoor**

The clerk informed members that the jump on Smithmoor raised at the March meeting had now been removed.

A discussion arose regarding what tasks were required from Steve Coole in return for the Hay this year. The Clerk advised that the fallen trees opposite the Willows had been tidied and removed already.

Mark thought that as it was likely that Baughton Stud no longer had dogs on site, the PC should approach Mr Gilder again regarding the grazing of the sheep in the autumn. The Clerk would check regarding the dogs and Tom would then approach Mr Gilder on behalf of the PC.

Tom advised on an incident of old diggers stuck in his field opposite Baughton Stud.

Tom asked the members to consider if he could run a drainage pipe from his field under the track at Smithmoor Common to access the central drainage ditch as this would be easier and more cost effective than clearing the old ditch which is pretty much filled and restoring it would be very difficult. Tom advised that Paul Jakeman had already cleared further downstream. The members requested all the details in writing so they could fully consider the proposal.

The Clerk advised that Steve had suggested he could help clear the ditches and cut the trees at the far end of the Common in return for the hay.

b) **Dunstall** – Margaret advised that the orchids were stunning their this year.

a) **Marsh** – N/A

## 17) PLANNING

a) Croome Estate Solar Farm

Margaret advised that she had heard nothing further.

b) Airband Pole Installation – There was a discussion about the exact location of the pole, it was actually near Donkey Lane, members noted that the notice was that the pole would be installed, planning consent had been given for this sometime ago.

c) 20/01827/FUL Baughton Stud, Smithmoor Common. The Clerk advised that the menage was complete without planning consent, but MHDC were expecting a retrospective planning application. It was noted that there were now x2 static homes on the field and this had been raised MHDC enforcement.

## 18) FINANCE

a) The monthly bank reconciliation for March & April was confirmed by Charlotte & Penny.

b) Following a review of the draft accounts, it was agreed by all that the draft accounts should be signed by the Chair and Clerk and adopted as the Council's annual accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023

c) It was agreed that the Parish Council would use the services of Mr Mike Clemas as the internal auditor.

d) Following a review of the AGAR exemption document, it was agreed by all to authorise the Chairman & The Clerk to sign the exemption certificate and return it to the external auditor.

e) Following a review of section 1 of the Council's annual return for year ending 31 March 2023, it was agreed by all to authorise the Chairman and Clerk to sign section 1 of the Council's annual return for the year ending 31 March 2023.

f) Following a review of Section 2 of the Council's Annual Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, it was agreed by all to authorise the Chairman and Clerk to sign Section 2 of the Council's Annual Return for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

g) It was agreed by members that 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 would be the commencement date for the exercise of Public Rights.

h) Insurance Quotes/renewal. As agreed earlier the PC would move the insurance to the more competitive quote with ANSVAR and the payment list was amended accordingly.

Payments made since last meeting were noted as follows:

Mr A Millward – Lengthsman payment – March	£182.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- April (S/O)	£233.77

Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance April (S/O)	£20.00
Mr A Millward – Lengthsman payment – April	£208.00

There was a discussion around paying a grant to the Churchyard, this had been done annually for many years. The general advice was that Parish Councils should be non-secular and it was noted that the grant is for the Church Yard to help with overall appearance in the Village. The majority of members agreed to make the grant again this year.

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

a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – May (S/O)	£233.77
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance May (S/O)	£20.00
c) Mrs N Nicholson OPE	£27.00
d) Church Yard Grant	£175.00
e) Village Hall Grant	£130.00
f) CALC – Membership Subscription	£162.26
g) Business Services at CAS Ltd – ANSVAR Annual Insurance premium	£314.
h) Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – May	£TBC
i) Mr A Milward – lengthsman payment – June	£TBC

Remittance:	
MHDC Precept payment	£2250.00

### 23. CORRESPONDANCE

N/A

### 24. INFORMATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 7.30 pm at Earls Croome Village Hall

**Minutes of last months and previous meetings and other relevant information can be found at:**

[My Parish \(worcestershire.gov.uk\)](http://My Parish (worcestershire.gov.uk))

Meeting Closed 8.45pm.