**MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 13th December 2021**

**Present**

Councillor Mr M Huskinson Chairman

Councillor Mr D Fellows

Councillor Mr A Medcalf

Councillor Mrs B Hill

Mrs G Hollick Clerk

1. **Apologies**

Cllr Simpson (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Hughes

Cllr Hadley-Roberts

District and County Councillor Mr T Wells

District Councillor Mrs K Wells

Mrs J Cameron Chairman Guarlford Village Hall

1. **Public Question and Answer**

There were no members of the public present.

1. **Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest**
   1. Parish Councillors were reminded that, as required by the Parish Council Code of Conduct Order 2001, revised 2020, they should notify the MHDC Monitoring Officer of any changes to their Register of Interests or the receipt of any unrecorded gifts or hospitality. They should also declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any of the items of this meeting.
   2. There were no declarations of personal or prejudicial interest.
2. **The Race Relations and Crime and Disorder Acts**

Parish Councillors were reminded that all the business carried out and decisions made at this meeting must observe the requirements of the above Acts.

1. **Acceptance of the Previous Minutes**

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 13th September 2021 had been circulated and read. There were no matters arising not already on the Agenda of this meeting and it was agreed unanimously that the minutes should be signed by the Chairman.

1. **Report on local crime statistics**

The Clerk informed the meeting that she had discovered that Martin Butcher, Community Police Officer, had retired last March which explained why she had not received any response to her emails to him. The new Community Officer, PC Jon Hand, had informed the Clerk that after checking back through police records there had been nothing of note to report for Guarlford since March 2021; the main concerns relating to Guarlford during that time had been traffic issues.

1. **Report by Cllrs Tom Wells, District County Councillor, and Kathy Wells, District Councillor**

Both Cllr T Wells and Cllr K Wells had submitted apologies prior to the meeting. Neither councillor had submitted a report.

1. **Report on local footpath issues.** 
   1. Cllr Fellows drew the Council’s attention to the steps in the footpath at Clevelode which had been discussed at previous meetings. Although these steps may not be in frequent use as reported at the last meeting of the Parish Council, they still posed a health and safety risk to anyone wishing to use this public right of way. It was agreed unanimously that the Clerk should write again to WCC requesting attention to these steps.
   2. The Clerk confirmed that following the last meeting of GPC she had contacted the footpaths officer at WCC requesting a footpath gate to be installed next to the farm gate at New House Farm.
   3. Cllr Medcalf informed the meeting that the recent storm had brought down a tree outside his property resulting in the temporary closure of the B4211. In an attempt to turn around, a heavy goods vehicle had breached the soft verge and damaged the footpath. Cllr Medcalf reported this to Highways and the matter was attended to within a few days.
2. **Report by Tree Warden**

Cllr Hughes was not present at the meeting and had not provided a report.

1. **Report on Village Hall**

The Chairman of Guarlford village hall, Mrs Cameron, had provided a report which had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. Mrs Cameron reported that a group of local residents had expressed their commitment to supporting improvements to the village hall, specifically to meet the demands of the climate emergency and to ensure that the hall continues as a community venue into the future. She outlined the grant applications which had been submitted to date and confirmed that the recent Christmas Fayre had been well supported and raised £1,447. A new stair lift had been installed at the start of November to ensure that the hall complied with necessary legislation. Mrs Cameron expressed her thanks to Parish Councillors for their continued support of the Village Hall.

1. **Malvern Hills Trust Report**

Cllr Fellows reported that the grass triangle in Rectory Lane was still suffering damage from vehicles parking and driving over it, which would be likely to be made worse by the expected wet winter conditions. He suggested requesting MHT plant shrubs to protect the soil which would also improve the aesthetics and provide additional wildlife habitats. This would be preferable to a deep-rooted tree, which could damage underground drains, and be more suitable than boulders from an environmental perspective. This suggestion was seconded by Cllr Medcalf and agreed unanimously. The Clerk was asked to write to MHT to request this planting.

Cllr Fellows reported that there had been no further progress with the application for easement over land next to the proposed Mill Lane development.

The Clerk confirmed that following the last meeting of GPC she had contacted MHT to request a weight limit restriction sign for the end of Rectory Lane. Cheryl Gentry from MHT had responded to confirm that this has been placed on order.

1. **Local Traffic Management Sub group update**
   1. **Referrals and actions**.

The Clerk reported that other than a request for a gate at New House Farm, there had been no other referrals since the last meeting.

* 1. **The Rhydd.**

The Clerk reported to Councillors that she had not received a response to the letter sent to Sarah Gilmour on 11th November. Following discussion, Councillors agreed to wait until the new year and then ask the Clerk to write again.

* 1. **Blakes Lane**

Cllr Fellows informed the meeting that the verge-masters installed at the junction of Blakes Lane with the B4211 appeared to be effective. However, traffic travelling along the B4211 frequently missed the turning for the car park to The Plough and Harrow. This resulted in vehicles regularly turning in private driveways causing annoyance to residents and potential damage to the verge at their gate-ways. The Chairman agreed to discuss this with Cllr Hughes before approaching the manager of The Plough and Harrow to discuss signage.

* 1. **Alpacca Meadows**

This has now become a planning matter.

1. **Parish Environment**
   1. **Lengthsman**

The Clerk confirmed that the lengthsman scheme continued to work well with re-imbursement payments from WCC being received regularly. Jeremy Moore, Lengthsman, had informed her that he intended to increase his hourly rate at the start of next year’s contract in March 2022. Depending upon budget allocation from WCC the Clerk confirmed that she would ensure the Lengthsman hours remained within the reclaimable allowance. Cllr Fellows informed the meeting that he wished to commend Jeremy Moore for his efforts as he had greatly improved issues around the parish and in particular the footpath along the B4211. Councillors requested the Clerk to pass on their gratitude and good wishes to Mr. Moore.

* 1. **Annual Litter Pick**

The Clerk confirmed that this took place in September and was well attended. Some residents pledged to continue litter picking after the organised event and had borrowed the litter picking trolley, which had been donated to GPC, to continue over the Christmas break.

* 1. **Defibrillator training**.

The Clerk confirmed that this is still on hold due to the pandemic.

* 1. **Telephone kiosk**

The Clerk reported that the telephone kiosk, which had been set up by Cllr Hill, is well used by residents as a centre for book exchange. Cllr Hughes had agreed to fit out the kiosk with appropriate wooden shelving. The Chairman will contact Cllr Hughes to discuss this with him.

* 1. **Severn Trent’s initial proposal to build a wetland in Guarlford**

Following discussion on this proposal, the Clerk was asked to write to Severn Trent to ask for the location of the proposed site.

* 1. **Planting of daffodils**

The Chairman informed the meeting that Mr David Masters had contacted him suggesting that he would like to plant some daffodils around the parish. The Clerk reported that following a recent communication with another resident, she had contacted MHT who had said that they would not be in favour of planting daffodils as these were not a native wildflower species. Cllr Fellows agreed to contact MHT to discuss this in more detail after which the Chairman will respond to Mr Masters.

1. **Planning**
   1. It was noted that the planning application in respect of Whitehouse Farm had been approved.
   2. It was noted that the planning application in respect of Grange Farm was no longer visible on the planning portal.
   3. It was noted that the remaining planning application in respect of Guarlford Court:- 21/00883/CU had been approved.
   4. It was noted that the planning application in respect of Dripshill House (21/01600/HP) had been approved.
   5. It was noted that the application in respect of the incinerator at Hangman’s Lane had been issued with an advisory note. This application lies in the neighbouring parish of Hanley Swan.
   6. It was noted that the retrospective application in respect of Alpacca Meadows was still ‘pending’.
2. **Liaison with other bodies**
   1. **Anti-bullying statement**

The Clerk had received information from NALC who were supporting the Civility and Respect Working Group which had been founded following growing concerns about the impact of bullying, harassment and intimidation on councillors and staff. As a first step in the promotion of civility and respect, the working group suggest that parish councils may wish to add the following policy statement to their website. “*Guarlford Parish Council treat everyone with* *courtesy and respect and ask for the same in return. We ask that you treat your Councillors and council staff courteously without violence, abuse or harassment. Councillors and council staff have the right to carry out their duties without fear of attack or abuse. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes Councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is totally unacceptable. This zero-tolerance policy includes abuse, aggression or threats made in person, over the telephone or in written* *communication, including on social media. The Council considers threatening behaviour to be: Attempted or actual aggressive or physical actions made towards any Councillor or member of staff. This policy applies throughout all Council meetings but it also applies to any Councillor or council staff away from Council meetings*.

Councillors agreed unanimously that this statement should be added to the Parish Council web page.

* 1. **MHDC’s consultation on possible changes to Wards and Ward boundaries**

The Chairman confirmed that he had submitted a response on behalf of the Parish Council which had been acknowledged. Cllr Fellows also informed the meeting that he had submitted a personal response which had also been acknowledged.

* 1. **Correspondence from NALC and CALC relating to the pandemic**

The Clerk informed the meeting that she had received correspondence from both NALC and CALC relating to the future planning of Parish Council meetings. There is currently no legislation which allows Councils to meet virtually; however, due to increasing infection rates from the Omicron variant of Covid 19 the Government has recommended that meetings should only take place when strictly necessary. NALC’s advice to parish councils is to meet briefly in December to agree the precept for the coming year and then delegate authority to the Clerk so that the business of the Council could continue in the absence of full Council meetings. On-line meetings could still be held to advise The Clerk of the wishes of Councillors and advisory notes could be retained. However, the notes from these meetings would not be considered as Minutes but would assist the Clerk in acting in accordance with the wishes of Parish Councillors. The Chairman proposed to delegate regular Council actions to the Clerk until regular meetings resume, or until the Council meet to fulfil the requirement to attend a meeting within 6 months, or the Annual Council meeting, whichever occurs first. This was seconded by Cllr Fellows and agreed unanimously. The Clerk was asked to send a copy of the relevant information she had received on this matter to absent Cllrs Simpson, Hughes and Hadley-Roberts.

* 1. **Correspondence from Planning Enforcement Team**

The Clerk reported that she had received a letter from MHDC Planning Enforcement stating that now travel restrictions have been lifted holiday caravans should no longer be occupied all year round. If Councillors were made aware of any breaches of these regulations, they are requested to forward information to the planning enforcement team.

1. **Finance**
   1. **Account Balances as of statement date 15th November 2021**

Deposit account £ 677.70

Charity account £ 108.64

Current account £6730.05

**Total £7516.39**

The following cheques were still to be drawn from this amount

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Chq no | Payee | Amount |
| 3/11/21 | 540 | Atkinson payroll July, August, Sept | 54.00 |
| 1/12/21 | 541 | Lengthsman for November | 236.00 |
| 1/12/21 | 542 | Clerk’s salary November | 239.04 |
| 1/12/21 | 543 | HMRC tax on clerk’s salary November | 22.00 |
| 7/12/21 | 544 | Clerk’s salary December | 238.84 |
| 7/12/21 | 545 | HMRC tax on clerk’s salary December | 22.20 |
| 13/12/21 | 546 | Guarlford Village Hall Committee | 500.00 |
| 13/12/21 | 547 | Guarlford, Madresfield and Newland PCC | 500.00 |
| 13/12/21 | 548 | The Grapevine | 50.00 |
| 13/12/21 | 549 | C A B | 50.00 |
|  |  | **TOTAL** | **1912.08** |

Money had been claimed from WCC for reimbursement of the lengthsman scheme for two months to the total of £472.00 which had not yet been credited to the account.

The meeting approved the payment of the amounts listed in the table above.

* 1. **Approval of the budget and precept for the financial year 1/4/22 – 31/3/23**

The Clerk had prepared a draft budget for approval. Cllr Fellows proposed that the donation to the Village Hall should be increased to £600 and the amount allocated for Parish Council repairs be reduced to £100 for the coming year. This was seconded by Cllr Medcalf and agreed unanimously. The Clerk had suggested that in order to reach ‘break-even’ and maintain financial stability the precept should be increased to £6,000 for the coming year. This was proposed by Cllr Fellows, seconded by Cllr Medcalf and agreed unanimously. The budget was then proposed for acceptance by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Medcalf and agreed unanimously.

* 1. **Gift for auditor**

The Clerk reminded Councillors that Mr Peter Hughes of Madresfield had carried out the annual audit for the parish council earlier in the year for no charge. The Chairman proposed that the clerk should purchase two bottles of wine and deliver to Mr Hughes with season’s greetings and a message of thanks. This was seconded by Cllr Fellows and agreed unanimously.

1. **Items for next meeting (Any other business)**

Retention of documents

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

(Government restrictions and pandemic dependant)

Monday 14th March 2022

**Signed ………………………………………….**

**Cllr Michael Simpson**

**Vice Chairman**