

DODFORD WITH GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Dodford with Grafton Parish Council held on Monday 24 April 2023 in Dodford Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Scott Fuller, Lynne Griffin, Rachel Jennings (Chair), Rory Lydon (Vice Chairman), Scottie Sanderson, Jenni Schuett, and Jonathan Shapiro.

In attendance: County Cllr Shirley Webb, District Cllr Drew Beaumont, Clerk Kay Stone and 15 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

None.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Approval of the Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 10 May was proposed by Cllr Griffin, seconded by Cllr Fuller and approved by all, after which they were signed by the Chair as being a true record.

3. Parish Council Annual Report

Cllr Jennings started her report by saying she “became chair of Dodford with Grafton Parish Council by default, and I can categorically say I would not have agreed to do so if I didn’t have full confidence in each and every Parish Councillor. Whilst it sometimes feels like we don’t get very far – we don’t have a list of major achievements, we do try our very best. We volunteer our time for the good of our community. We listen to the residents. We try and improve and influence the quality of life and environment of the local area, and we work in partnership with both the District and County Councils, endeavouring to hold them accountable when we feel they have fallen short. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their hard work, and Drew and Shirley for their support and guidance. But most of all I would like to thank Kay, as without her we would not be able to function so effectively. But I do have one plea and that is to you the residents. Please remember we are not the rule makers. We do not decide outcomes and we do have, and are entitled to have, our own lives outside of this Parish Council, so I ask that this is respected.”

4. Financial Report

The Parish Council’s income for the year 2022/2023 was £12,052.00 against £11,478.00 last year. The Parish Council increased the Precept request to Bromsgrove District Council by 5% as there had not been an increase in the previous five years. County Councillor Shirley Webb gave a grant to the Parish Council of £1,500 from her Worcestershire County Council funding to be put towards the cost of the Memorial Garden. Last year the grant from Councillor Shirley Webb was towards the Queen’s Jubilee for the Village Fete. VAT was not claimed back and will be claimed back during this month. The Parish Council did not have a Lengthsman for eight months, which reflects in the reduction of income from Worcestershire County Council to pay for the Lengthsman. Interest rates have gone up this year which is why there has been an increase in the interest received by £40 from last year.

The Parish Council’s expenditure for the year 2022/2023 was £12,224.49 against £13,462.75 last year. This is mainly due to the fact that the Parish Council were without a Lengthsman for 8 months. Staff costs were increased by £1,100.00 due to an increase in the salary paid to the Clerk. Admin costs look to have gone up by around £400 but the postage for the Annual Report mailing was included in admin costs as opposed to communications, which accounts for the apparent reduced spend on communications towards the bottom of the page. The Parish Council has signed a three-year contract with the Insurance Company which is the reason why this has not gone up for 2022/2023. 2023 sees the end of the three-year contract and the figure may go up for next year. Subscriptions include membership of Worcestershire County

Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Council Clerks, and the Association of Local Council Clerks. The hire of the meeting room is self-explanatory. A grant was made to Dodford Children's Holiday Farm for a long reach hedge trimmer. The Phil Richardson Community Award is now made every other year and there was only one recipient in 2022/2023 who was Clemmie Kear for her commitment to reviving the Village Fete in the Queen's Jubilee year. No training was undertaken in 2022/2023. Not only does the postage for communication now appear in admin costs, but the Parish Council voted not to send out a Christmas newsletter in December to keep costs down and this is reflected in the figure of only £83.54 which was the cost of printing the Annual Report and the Phil Richardson Community Award nomination forms. The contingency figure was for refreshments for last year's Annual Parish Meeting. As already explained the Parish Council has only had the services of a Lengthsman since December which is the reason the expenditure figure for the Lengthsman looks so low.

5. Reverend David Ford, Rector with particular responsibility for All Saints and St Godwald's

David explained how Dodford and Catshill comes under his umbrella and then moved on to talk about the significant external repairs that are currently going on with stone work, rendering and rainwater goods. Then the repairs will move inside the Church where the plaster work needs repairing and spending £60k on repairing the organ which realistically needs £200k to £250k spending on it. The next stage will be to replace the heating with under pew heating. There also needs to be substantial rewiring. All this will be funded by legacy funds the Church has. David explained how they have persuaded the Diocese for a non-stipendiary and when granted Dodford will have its own vicar even if it means the person living outside the Parish. But that was for the future. He explained how he wishes to maintain the beauty of the Churchyard and so will be removing plastic from the Churchyard with the exception of a child's grave. David asked the Parish Council to support the Church in the way they want to see it. At this point Cllr Webb explained that Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) are looking at policies for their Cemeteries regarding plastic. In answer to questions, David explained that there will be room between the pews for worshipers to kneel and that the Stipendiary Vicar will be of working age who has a household income from other sources.

6. County Councillor Shirley Webb's Report

Cllr Webb read out part of the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Chairman's Annual Report as follows:

"The Government's provisional settlement for WCC was published on 19 December 2022. Overall, we saw an increase in our funding of £26.3 million, with a 12.3% increase in our Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA), and an extra £19.5 million specific grant investment in Adult and Children's social care. Since the January report was considered by Cabinet, the Government announced that the value of the increase in the core schools' budget is expected to be c£14 million, which is welcomed. It is however noted that at the time of writing this report, the Public Health Ring-Fenced Grant for Worcestershire has not yet been confirmed.

The WCC's Corporate Plan priorities remain.

- to champion Open for Business,
- support Children & Families,
- protect The Environment and
- promote Health & Wellbeing.

To that end, to ensure we can continue to maintain our current services and commitments WCC agreed a 2.94% uplift in Council Tax, plus a 2% uplift in our Adult Social Care levy. This will also mean that alongside investment in Children's & Adults social care to protect the most vulnerable, WCC can maintain its capital commitments to invest in the economy, environment, highways, and extra school places as well as enabling an extra £5.5 million to ensure that the recent cost of inflation does not affect the level of deliverability of the Capital programme.

WCC has agreed to invest £3.5 million from Earmarked Reserves in 2023/24 to support Public Transport as it recovers from the pandemic. This is on top of the £1.5 million commitment made

in 2022/23. Further work will be carried out over the next 15 months to explore how this can also be met with greater community transport options, such as in Bromsgrove with Demand Response Transport. The proposals also see a continuation of the capital programme set by WCC last February as well as new Government funded schemes, such as the A38 in Bromsgrove.”

7. District Councillor Drew Beaumont’s Report

Cllr Beaumont talked about planning and the changes that the Government is making to planning. It is difficult for BDC to provide sufficient greenfield sites for housing as suggested by the Government. BDC has received £13.5m levelling up fund from the Government to be spent on turning the old fire station site into housing and the Bird Box area to be a mix of business and pleasure. BDC has received a Section 24 warning from their auditors for not submitting their accounts in order and on time. Cllr Beaumont explained this was due to new accounting software being installed as the Pandemic started and key staff leaving. BDC are working on reaching net zero by 2040 and have formed a working group to look at how this can be achieved. There is also a Strategic Transport Assessment being carried out by WCC which is due to be published shortly and may be relevant for Dodford with the Perryfields and Whitford Vale developments. Cllr Beaumont has been unable to meet with the organiser of the Motocross at Grafton but has been in email contact with him and will give the Clerk his report in due course for circulation to the concerned residents who attended the March meeting. Cllr Beaumont will not be seeking re-election next month and introduced the Conservative candidate for Dodford. The Chair thanked Cllr Beaumont for all his hard work and wished him good luck with his new parish.

8. James Cartwright, Chairman, Dodford Village Hall Committee

James explained how the increase in energy costs is having an impact on funds for the Village Hall. The Committee are looking at different ways to supplement the biomass boiler as the cost of pellets is increasing with each delivery and costs around £12k annually. The boiler is thought to be around 12 or 13 years old and is good for another 10 years. The Village Hall Committee are looking at soundproofing between the two halls but to replace the current sliding doors will cost around £20k. The Committee are aware that if the hall is shared then the meetings need to be of the same nature, not leisure and a meeting. In answer to a question James said the total revenue from user groups is approximately £18k for the last financial year.

9. Penny Lydon, Dodford Gardening Club

Penny gave a very interesting talk on the history of Dodford Gardening Club which started in January 1974. The meeting in October 1979 saw Arthur Bennett of Clacks Farm as their guest speaker who used colour slides in his presentation and was attended by 100 people. They meet the second Monday in the month in the Village Hall between October and May with their AGM being in May. During the summer months they hold evening meetings in members’ gardens and also undertake visits to RHS gardens.

10. There were no questions or matters of interest to parishioners and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8.43pm for light refreshments.

On reconvening the meeting, the Chair declared an interest in item 11b and will leave the meeting at this point.

11. To discuss and approve grants for:

a. Coronation Street Party

Cllr Lydon proposed the Parish Grant gave an additional £200 grant to the organiser of the Coronation Street Party. This was seconded by Cllr Sanderson, but although it did not go to a vote, it was agreed to give the additional grant. The Chair thanked Lorraine for organising the Street Party.

At this point Cllr Jennings left the meeting and Cllr Lydon presided over the remaining part of the meeting in his capacity as Vice Chairman

b. Village Fete

Clemmie Kear had requested a grant of £500 for the cost of a marquee, around 3 pop up gazebos and a new tombola drum. Cllr Sanderson offered to lend three pop up gazebos. Cllr Lydon proposed, Cllr Shapiro seconded and it was agreed by vote, with one abstention, to give a Parish Council grant of £500 to Clemmie to purchase the items, on the proviso that the equipment purchased will become a community village asset.

The meeting closed at 9.17pm.

Signed.....Chair