

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Earls Croome Village Hall on Tuesday 10th May, 2022.

Apologies: Katie Etherington, Charlotte Bloomfield (Parish Councillors) Jeremy Owenson (District Council) & Diane Tomkins.

Those Present: Mark Smith (Chairman of Parish Council), Penny Green (Member of Parish Council), Margaret Herbert (Member of Parish Council), Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden), Andy Milward (Parish Lengthsman), Ann Smith (special advisor to the Parish Council), County Councillor Martin Allen, Bill Ball, Dave Bevan and the Clerk.

Welcome by Earls Croome Parish Council Chairman: Mark opened the meeting and welcomed Members of the Public. Mark gave a brief overview of the Parish Councils achievements over the past 12 months including the recent Repainting of the phone box in Earls Croome, thanks to a grant from County Councillor Allen.

Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2021 were reviewed, unanimously agreed and signed by the Chairman. There were no outstanding matters arising.

Report from District Councillor Jeremy Owenson:

The Clerk read the Annual District Council report as follows:

Boundary Review

Plans are underway to reduce the number of Councillors from 38 to 31, as part of a boundary review for the District. The new wards will consist of 1, 2 and 3 member wards, with Upton for example reducing to a single member ward, alongside Ripple and Longdon.

The final decision on ward boundaries is due to be published this summer, with elections taking place next May, (2023).

South Worcestershire Development Plan

There looks likely that there will be a further delay to the South Worcestershire Development Plan. Malvern Hills is particularly exposed here as Malvern are having challenges showing a five year housing land supply. This means that any developer will try to have developments agreed under the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF), rather than the local plan. The NPPF has a presumption in favour of development, and leaves rural locations exposed.

We asked 12 months ago for a “plan B” for Malvern, where we could look at what steps we take locally to ensure planning remains in our control, but unfortunately, this was not actioned. Additional requirements on developers for Ecological and Green initiatives have seriously undermined the viability of local schemes, making it more likely that developments now go ahead without these enhanced green initiatives, putting further pressure on the environment.

Malvern College

After 12 months of inactivity, MHDC finally voted to respect the covenant on the Malvern Hills College building. Although the building is owned by Warwickshire College Group, the building has a covenant which means that any sale must be for educational purposes, blocking the sale of the building for something like housing. Conservative Leader Jeremy Owenson forced the council to vote to respect the covenant, and all but one Councillor voted in favour of the college. A single Democratic Alliance Councillor voted against the motion to save the college.

MHDC is now considering providing funding to the educational trust that is looking to buy the building, to make sure that education can continue at the college.

Malvern Theatres

MHDC had previously agree to part fund the Theatre Extension. The Conservative Group asked that the work be started during lockdown, since the theatre was already shut. The Theatre stated it could not risk spending the money, and MHDC were asked, but were not prepared to underwrite the additional cost. MHDC could have put an additional £1m on the table, which would be repaid when it could be afforded by the Theatre. This offer was not made.

In a post-covid world, building costs have increased since the end of lockdown, and the theatre costs have increased by £1m, which **now MHDC have** been forced to pay. Going forward, we should be looking to government funding to complete this type of work, under it's "Build Back Better" fund.

Commented [PG1]: MHDC have now

Town Planning

Nearly four years after announcing the review of the Town Centre's, MHDC has just published the review of the town centres. This covered Malvern, Malvern Link, Barnards Green, Tenbury and Upton Upon Severn.

Unfortunately, budget is limited on what can be achieved, as MHDC was unsuccessful in getting any money from the initial "Build Back Better" funding from the government. Kidderminster and Bromsgrove were both successful in securing millions of pounds on new investment. In addition, we were unable to exploit local developments like the building of the new Morrisons in Upton, where the Council failed look at redeveloping the Hanley Road Car Park at the same time, with the opportunity to build a new road connecting Hanley Road to New Street.

Going forward, MHDC needs to develop a series of "shovel ready" plans to tap into government money to enable us to develop our town centres, play areas and tourist attractions.

Gravel Extraction

Companies still keep applying for more and more gravel extraction in the area. It won't be long before we are all covered in dust, looking like we live on the moon. Gravel extraction is a county matter, with District only being asked for their views as a consultee. My view is that enough is enough, and it is time to start winding extraction down, rather than winding

it up. The key for me is to ensure that the land after use is returned to full public ownership, with Town and Parish Councils being enabled to take on the land, and to be given the funding to look after the land in the long term.

Report from County Councillor Martin Allen:

During the last 12 months WCC has continued investing in roads and infrastructure.

HIGH SCHOOL

There is going to be a new high school near Worcester Royal Hospital to accommodate the increase in school children that is expected with all the new housing being constructed.

KETCH ROUNDABOUT

The Ketch Roundabout is still expected to be completed this summer. I and other Councillors have express concern about the difficulties of travelling safely North/South and South/North. I fear there will be a serious accident there sooner than later.

My concerns appear to have mainly fallen upon deaf ears within the Council.

UPTON A38/A4104 ROUNDABOUT

Until recently, this has been progressing in relatively good order, and is due to finish later this year. Prior to the festivals and Malvern Show, there had been some delays.

As predicted there will be some road closures as the arms of the new roundabout link up with the existing roads and I fully understand the frustrations as people become delayed.

What I cannot understand is the apparent lack of planning by Worcestershire County Council of what to do when parts of the carriage way on the A38 and A4104 are removed while the festivals are running.

I have had to personally call for Alan Amos who is the Conservative Cabinet Member for Highways at Worcestershire County Council to look into the perceived traffic congestion that will occur when events are held.

I will continue to badger and push for sensible action, although I accept that they cannot just reinstate the road in the next few days. I would feel that Stop/Go boards should be used from 0700 to 1900 over festival period this weekend. I did get them finally to put out spotters.

MONUMENT/ARTWORK ON THE NEW ROUNDABOUT

I have formally asked Cllr Alan Amos if he would consider a Monument or Work of Art be installed upon the new roundabout. I have had an answer, the answer is yes depending on what is proposed must pass road safety standards, and if Ripple P.C and Upton are prepared to pay for it.

A38 OUTSIDE GARDEN CENTRE SPEEDING RESULTS

In 2018 WCC monitored the speed on the A38 near the Garden Centre, normally they are not willing to monitor again for 5 years.

After some gentle persuasion in March 2022 the again monitored the speed.

The results are below.

A38 Near the Garden Centre speeds were measured from 05/03 to 10/03

From 05/03/2022 TO 10/03/2022	Daily Vol.	Mean Ave.*	85th %ile*
Northbound	3,084	44	51
Southbound	2,480	44	50
Combined	5,565		

There is to be a review of speeds from the M50 to the Ketch Roundabout and Baughton Hill to Tunnel Hill. Alan Amos has agreed that once the roundabout is completed, there will be a review of speed limits. Mark noted that ECPC were not happy about the location of the survey on the A38 being so close to the entrance to the busy Garden Centre and do not believe the results are a true reflection of the situation.

COMMUNITY BUS

This service has been provided by me through Community Action who are based in Malvern. A minibus will go to Tewkesbury each Wednesday morning, which is Market Day. Residents who wish to use this service should phone Community Action on 01684 892381 to book. Booking needs to be at least 24 hours in advance. This will now run until mid-July 2022.

BUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Worcestershire County Council applied for £86m from central government for bus improvements. The current ruling administrations' application was said to lack foresight and was completely rejected. I am very concerned as to what First Worcester Bus will do. They did announce cuts, however I understand these have been delayed for 3 months.

LEVELLING UP FUND

Last year, the County Council Administration applied for part of the Governments Levelling Up Fund. Again, there application was rejected. I do feel that the present administration should consider using a consultant in future applications. As much as I dislike consultants, it is clear the administration is not up to producing a winning application on their own.

BOW FARM

Again, this been delayed in going to the Planning and Regulatory Committee we still do not yet have a date when it will appear. WCC planning department will only vote on the parts of the development which fall under WCC. The access onto the A38 and associated Weigh Bridge will come under Gloucestershire County Council.

I understand the current delay is a legal matter to do with a new extraction application "RIPPLE EAST" which very close to the Bow Farm site. Also, a barrister is now reviewing the draft report.

CEMEX

This is again delay, WCC are about to send this back out to Public Consultation later this year. WCC will be only consider the mineral extraction and landform. Any planning conditions for the rowing lake and possible club house or hotel will solely come under MHDC.

RIPPLE EAST

This is a new extraction application which has gone out to consultation, which I believe has a few more days to run until 20th of May 2022.

The new site proposed is north of Bow Farm, near Cemex, and immediately next to the east of Ripple. The extraction proposed is for sand and gravel, this is to be transported by barge and the site if passed it is expected to be in use for two years.

RED PHONE BOX DEFIBRILLATOR

I understand the repainting was completed in Spring 2022.

ORCHARD CLOSE

This footway work has been delayed due to the gang who were to complete the work all going down with Covid. Work is now expected to be done in June 2022.

LENGHSMAN SCHEME WCC

WCC have Increase to Parish Councils by 15% for the financial year 2022/2023 funds for the Lenghsmen.

Collate Queries for West Mercia Police: There was a request for a police speed camera van to be located on the A38.

Martin advised that a police representative had attended the Hill Croome Parish meeting.

St. Nicholas Church: Margret Herbert representing the Church:

Covid has had a critical effect on the Church as it has on all the local community. The church re-opened for regular services with social distancing and face masks.

During the year all the windows have been repaired and the frost damaged corner stone has been replaced, work has also been done in the bell chamber, this has allowed better access for the bell ringers and to the bells themselves which will be assessed later this month to see if any work is required on them.

The Lichgate still requires attention.

The Churchyard is now being mown by Jack Marklaw on a regular basis, Sue Milward maintained it for the last 16 years with help from Andy and Malcolm and others, Malcolm has also helped clearing the elder, brambles etc, which has highlighted that the ash at the bottom of the Churchyard has dead roots on one side and work is being done to prevent it falling into the Churchyard, several people have expressed concern and its removal will be discussed at the next PCC meeting along with vital enquirers about extending the very over crowded Church yard. An area specifically for cremated remains is required. The PCC would like to thank ECPC for its continued support and grant towards the maintenance of the Church yard.

Residents Forum:

Malcolm asked what was the vacancy process of the Parish Council, the Clerk explained the process starting with a member resignation that is reported to MHDC monitoring officer and a 14 day notice is displayed during which period 10 members of the public can, should they wish, approach the monitoring officer and request election, if that does not happen and once the 14 days have passed the Parish Council can then widely advertise the vacancy with a view to co-opting a new member at their next meeting.

Malcolm suggested that Hill Croome Parish have two VAS's and could a sharing opportunity be negotiated to save the purchase expense to ECPC.

Penny asked that more be done by WCC to stop road users using Quay Lane as a cut through during the roundabout works.

Bill Ball advised that a full 24-hour closure was planned for 13th June – Martin Allen hadn't been informed and did not think there would be a closure for 24hours, Martin would investigate and report back to the Parish Council.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7.45p.m. The next Annual Parish Meeting will be at a similar time next year to coincide with the A.G.M Parish Council.