

## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held Thursday 9th May 2024 at 7pm at Lower Moor Village Hall**

Present: (Chair), Cllr. T Betteridge (Chair) , Cllr. Mr P. Jeanes, Cllr. Mrs A. Jeanes, Cllr. A Heath and Cllr. D. Nuttall

Also present: C Hirst - Clerk; District Cllr L. Tucker; 3 residents.

**1. Apologies:** Cllr. Stone, Cllr. Boatright (WCC) (at Pershore meeting)

**2. Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023:** The minutes of the meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were agreed as a true record. Cllr. Betteridge Proposed and Cllr. P Jeanes Seconded that the Minutes be approved. All in favour.

**3. Chairman's Annual Report:** Cllr Betteridge

Welcome everyone to the Annual Parish meeting. As Chair I have the job of presenting the Parish Council's Annual Report to the meeting.

Planning applications for new houses within the village have continued with approval being given by Wychavon for a few small developments. An application for 56 affordable homes off Salters Lane was withdrawn by the applicant and we are still waiting for a decision on another for a mixed development of 31 homes adjacent to the Hill and Moor Meadows Gypsy Site.

A further planning matter is the proposal to build a new town of up to 6,000 houses at Throckmorton together with associated infrastructure. As you know the Parish Council are strongly against this and a formal objection was submitted. The plan is currently being assessed by the Planning Inspector and we understand that a number of queries have been raised by him. The next stage will be a public hearing and as soon as we hear anything further, we will let you know.

We continue to receive many compliments from residents about the excellent condition of the playing field, which has become a real asset to the community. In particular here I would like to thank Rupert Hampson, our volunteer mower, who keep the field in such excellent condition.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their support in the last 12 months and issue a reminder that we still have a vacancy for a Parish Councillor should anyone be interested. My thanks also to Liz Tucker, our District Councillor, and Dan Boatright our, County Councillor, for all the work they have undertaken for the Parish and last but not least to Carole Hirst, our Parish Clerk, for all the support she gives us.

**4. District and County Councillor's Annual Report:**

District Cllr Tucker report

The year went by fast! It always takes a month or two for a newly elected council to settle in, but it has been a busy year especially in regard to Planning.

A quick run through planning applications over the last year.

Our new head of planning, Ian Macleod from Birmingham City Council, is now in place. He is

experienced in major planning projects which will help with the SWDPR.

Wychavon continues to have difficulty in retaining and recruiting planning officers – gaps are filled in with contracted planners but this is costly.

SWDPR This Review was started end of 2017 and covered Wychavon, Worcester City and Malvern Hills. Covid didn't help nor did the blanket of secrecy. Eventually the proposed plan was passed by councils and the final Regulation 19 consultation for the Bristol Inspectorate in the run up to Christmas 2022. Wychavon officers then had the task of organising submissions prior to sending everything on to the Inspectorate in September 2023. They were predicting that the Examination in Public could start as early as February this year but the appointed Inspectors have asked for further evidence and updated work which won't be complete to send off before August. If the Inspectors are happy then the Examination could take place January 2025 or at a pinch December 2024 – at least 7 years after the work began. These reviews are supposed to take place every 5 years, now shortened to every 4 years! I asked a formal question to Council on how they plan to learn from this experience but was told they wanted to look forward not back.

Obviously the biggest issue for this area is the proposal for a new town of 2,000 dwellings by 2040, increasing to 5,000 dwellings in the next Review roughly based on Throckmorton airfield. There are a host of serious flaws in this proposal including hugely costly archaeology, polluted land, and lack of local road capacity and the local parish councils are working together to make sure that these are recognised. My fear is that we could end up with urban sprawl from Pershore through the villages up to Bishampton, town or no town, because of the failure of the planners to ensure protected “significant gaps” between the settlements. There are current planning application for 185 and 44 dwellings in Pinvin, and 111 at the top end of Wyre Road opposite the KeyTec7 roundabout, as well as many smaller applications that all add up.

Because the Review has been going on so long and housing sites in Wychavon have been built out quickly because the area is attractive to buyers, we no longer have a Five Year land supply and therefore planners are required to give more weight to the “benefits” of extra housing versus implementing our normal planning policies, and so approve applications they would otherwise have refused.

Back to Wychavon, there has been a change of Leader of the Council. Bradley Thomas stood down to take up the role of parliamentary candidate for Bromsgrove and the role had been filled by Chris Day of Ombersley. The local government settlement was tight for all councils this year but Wychavon has a good record of income generation. Nevertheless they increased their council tax by 2 % this year after 6 years of nil increase.

Wychavon has a shared Senior Management Team of 6 with Malvern Hills which has saved a lot of money although I feel it has lost the individual focus and originality that Wychavon had before.

The weekend Emergency out of hours contact number has changed to 01527 912966 but it is only for real emergencies such as traveller encampments on council owned land, emergency homelessness or dangerous faults on council play equipment.

Wychavon has been working on reducing its own carbon emissions, replacing the windows at the civic centre. It has recently been awarded £2m+ to provide air heat pumps for Pershore Leisure Centre (and Evesham) reducing its electricity costs by 80-90% as we already benefit from the hydropower unit on the Avon installed by Charles Hudson of Wick.

50 years ago Wychavon was created on 1<sup>st</sup> April in 1974. During the Chairman's 50th Anniversary Tour, Cllr Raphael vowed to visit every parish in the District Council, highlighting the work of local organisations, meeting with volunteers, catching up on projects Wychavon has funded over the years and checking out some of the district's natural and historic sites. In Hill and Moor parish council he visited the Landfill Site where we had a long and muddy walk through the nature restoration areas.

The anniversary tour ended with the Chairman's Civic Ceremony at Pershore Abbey on 21 April 2024, which was a celebration of Wychavon's role in the district, following its formation.

County Cllr D. Boatright

**Highways and drainage:** It is still wet! The past 18 months have just been wet. Every report I have written in the past year has referred to records being broken. Just this week we had rainfall that resulted in water back on the roads from fields. Life continues to centre around drains, ditches and flooding. The county council are reviewing the response to the recent floods and this is going to a committee this week. There is a lot of issues around communication that need ironing out. This is always a complex process as several agencies have to work together, including the Environment Agency. The current plan is to work through the issues and work with the Environment Agency and the different council departments to ensure we can get to trouble spots more quickly and ease pressures where we can. This is very much an ongoing process.

The easiest thing we can do is keep the drains clear. There is a dedicated team who are out clearing the drains and gullies. If you know of any drains that need clearing please report on:

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/travel-and-highways/report-road-or-path-issue/drainage-and-flooding-highway>

And let me know so I can chase it up. If you have already reported an area that isn't draining and there hasn't been any action, please email me.

**Roads and potholes:** Back in November 2023 Rishi Sunak announced £8 billion for improving potholes in the country. In December 2023 local MPs informed us we would get £139 million for Worcestershire over 8 years. We have currently received £2.6 million and I will pursue for every penny! There has also been an announcement of £209 million of redirected HS2 money for the county but no rules on how it can be spent are yet available. Some people are getting excited about raising roads to limit damage caused by flooding. Others have suggested dualling the railway. We shall see what comes to pass.

**Fire service:** The fire service has completed its spending review and the proposals included changing some of the on call fire service. The document can be read here:

[Consultation | Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service](#)

The review has already changed, with Malvern's vehicle being kept on. This has caused some arguments about the validity of the consultation. This is likely to be discussed at length in the coming months.

**Council Tax 2024-25:** The county council will be increasing the council tax for next year by 4.99%. Much of the pressure is on adult social care and children's services. The council is currently undergoing a restructuring of the management structure of the council, which will result in some savings for the coming year.

**Education:** New school in Worcester and new school in Malvern for those with Autism are taking hold. Still a long way to go and there is still a shortage of SEND places so a lot of work to do. There is recognition that the lack of places is having an impact but there is yet to be a full explanation by the council on how this will be resolved. National problem or not, this is our problem- it needs fixing.

The change from three tier to two tier in Pershore remains stalled- meetings being held with various stakeholders. Timetable should be seen in the summer. There was a consultation by Pinvin Federation about remaining Middle School age range so the situation is fluid.

New head of children's services from June as current one moves to Herefordshire. Children's services being brought in house and WCF disbanded.

**County Hall:** RAAC at county hall... the saga continues! Still no sign of what is happening and awaiting report on what needs to be done. I ask every time I am in the building.

**Landfill liaison committee:** we have requested further information on fly tipping as it seems to have doubled in tonnage in the last 12 months.

**Highways contributions to planning meetings:** I have concerns after previous planning meetings when the Highways contribution was poor. I have spoken to Wychavon planning about the issue and solutions are being looked at as this has been flagged repeatedly.

I have sent a request an update on the progress of scheduling Throckmorton as a monument.

## **5. Reports from Village Organisations**

### **St Thomas' Church**

Last year the church only had one service and it looks like it could be the same this year.

The church is open every day for people to come in and sit and reflect, enjoying the peace. To enable for this to continue if anyone could spare just one hour per month to help with the upkeep by either helping keep the garden tidy, cleaning the church or to put some flowers inside it would be most welcome.

If you can help in any way, please contact Carol Martin, Church Warden.

### **Village Hall and Events Group**

Cllr Pat Stone

Following the death of our Treasurer in April we had an uncertain start to the 2023/24 year. It became apparent that our finances had not been as well accounted for as we had thought.

By June we had appointed a new Treasurer (Diana Ward) and were confident that we would now be able to function properly within the terms of the Village Hall Trust and Charities Commission.

During the course of the year we have lost our regular hall bookings with the exception of the Post Office which is now paying a more appropriate, regular payment. Hirings for parties etc were also down.

We continued with organising Village events with a Coronation tea party on 7<sup>th</sup> May which was attended by over 50 residents. This was mainly funded by a Wychavon grant.

Our annual fete on 15 July raised £571 towards the hall funds in spite of having to hold the event in the hall due to severe weather conditions.

From September we have sold tea, coffee & snacks to the football supporters on Saturday mornings. This has been greatly appreciated by Crowle FC and the visiting teams. It has raised over £1000 towards the hall running costs.

We had a free Halloween event for the children with 'trick or treat', tea and entertainment which attracted approximately 30 children.

The bonfire and firework night was a great success. The event is now solely the responsibility of the hall with the funds held by the PC being transferred to the hall account. We now have £2000+ in the bank for the 2024 event and £400+ went towards the hall running costs.

The Carols on the Green was very well attended, raising a substantial amount for the Salvation Army. The drinks & nibbles in the hall afterwards was enjoyed by over 40 people.

We agreed that we need to organise fundraisers to keep the hall viable and our first was a Bingo Evening in February. Attended by nearly 50 people it raised £232. Everyone who attended agreed we should do a quiz evening which was duly held in April.

In April we installed a sound and film system which we plan to use for further fund raisers.

Our new website is not yet fully installed and our facebook page needs work, which we plan to tackle soon.

Our AGM was held on Tuesday 30 April 2024.

### **Allotments**

#### **Lower Moor Allotments Association Report**

Currently there are 4 allotment plots available. Two available to use straight away and the other 2 needing some considerable work to get into a state to use.

The Lower Moor Allotment Trust are looking for an additional trustee to join them with meeting once a year.

Please contact me if you are interested in becoming a trustee or renting a plot.

Plots are £15 per year with an initial £5 registration fee.

### **6. Parishioners Open Forum**

Ended 19.18pm