

WHITBOURNE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

MINUTES of the Whitbourne Annual Parish Meeting

Held on Wednesday 8th May 2024 at 7.00pm

Present:

Present: R James (Chair); P Wood (PDW); T Hunt (TH); S. Knowles (SK); P Davis (PD); N Shaw (NS)

In Attendance: P Stoddart (PS) and K Phillips (Clerk). M. Clark (MC) and L Kershaw (LK) attended via Zoom. No members of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

J. Bromley (JB)

2. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

See attached report given by Cllr James

3. Public Discussion of any matters relating to Whitbourne

No members of the public present

Meeting Closed at 19:12

Signed Cllr James (Chairman)

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Annual Report from the Chairman of Whitbourne Parish Council.

Due to the fact that we only had eight candidates come forward for the nine parish councillor vacancies at the local council elections last May our first task as a council was to begin the procedure for co-opting another councillor. This resulted in only one applicant coming forward, and so it was agreed that Nigel Shaw should be co-opted on to the PC. This means that after many years we now have a representative from the Bringsty area of our parish and also Nigel having previously been our ward councillor has a comprehensive knowledge of how Herefordshire Council works .

One of the undoubted successes of the PC during the last twelve months must be the adoption of a village Lengthsman. During the past year our Lengthsman, (Simon Muirhead) has undertaken a vast variety of different tasks such as clearing grips and drains, repairing broken footpath bridges, trimming verges to improve visibility and tidying the area around the village green, to mention just a few. But probably the most noticeable success has been to have kept the flash flooding we have seen by the Wheatsheaf to a minimum this year, and he has now constructed a new type of letter box drain, that hopefully will not get blocked so easily by debris. To encourage PCs to employ a Lengthsman Herefordshire Council have set up a fund to allocate grants to help finance this scheme. We have received a grant of £4102 for the past year which has helped considerably in funding the larger projects, without us having to go over our precept budget. Mark Clark, Peter Wood and our clerk Kevin Phillips meet regularly with Simon to identify areas that can benefit from Simon's services.

After several months of delay the 420 bus service from Hereford to Worcester via Bromyard is about to be reinstated. Funding has come through and a decision on which firm will run it will be announced shortly. It will be a subsidised service for the first 3 years and then it is hoped that it can continue as a commercial service.

On planning matters one of our main concerns has been the ongoing deterioration of the building that was once the Wheatsheaf Inn. This dilapidated property is one of the first buildings that anyone sees as they enter the county and the village, and does not give a good impression for visitors. Although the property has been given planning approval to be converted into a residential house, no work has yet commenced and the deterioration continues. With the support of the PC Hereford planning authority has now issued a section 215 notice, this means that they require the owner of the property, within the next 90 days to carry out various work to make the property secure, structurally safe and to improve the visual appearance.

After many months of discussion we have eventually got started with the SmartWater scheme. This is a scheme that in partnership with West Mercia Police we have purchased a pack of SmartWater kits for every property in the parish at a vastly reduced price. These kits contain a liquid that can be applied to all valuables and although invisible contains a unique DNA that can be traced back to the owner. West Mercia Police have also agreed that when 80% of the kits have been registered they will position large signs around the parish warning any potential thieves that any items stolen and recovered can be traced, therefore having a deterrent effect. Unfortunately although members of the PC spent three mornings in the village hall handing out and registering these free kits the take up has been disappointingly poor, with only 96 kits registered out of a total of 280. So during our next PC meeting we will be discussing how we aim to distribute the remaining kits. Some of our neighbouring PCs have posted their kits to every household but we have been reluctant to do that because it would be an extra expense to come out of our precept.

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Because we had less candidates than vacancies for the roll of parish councillors it meant that last May we didn't need an election, therefore we didn't need to spend the money budgeted for this purpose. So we decided not to increase our precept for this year, which will help in a very small way to offset the county council increases. Just a quick list of a few of the things the PC spends the precept on apart from admin costs are grass cutting and hedge trimming on the playing fields, Lengthsman projects, defibrillator servicing and we also give grants to help with the costs of servicing the church clock, trimming the grass in the upper churchyard and grass cutting on Bringsty Common's tracks and football field.

Several parish councillors have also been very busy on the playing fields and village hall committees. Both these facilities seem to be going from strength to strength with the playing field putting in exciting new play equipment and the village hall continuing to increase its bookings, with a wider range of activities.

We have still to decide what to do with the small patch of land at the rear of the village green, that used to be the school garden, it is getting very overgrown now. We are looking for ideas. I am also looking for someone to take over the care of the war memorial rose garden. I have tried to keep it looking tidy for several years, but now I am finding it increasingly difficult to find the time.

The PC meets on the first Wednesday of alternate months, for our ordinary parish council meetings and extraordinary meetings when needed, and we allocate 10 minutes at the end of every meeting for public questions, so if you have any requests or suggestions please come along and let us know.

Ron James

Chairman Whitbourne Parish Council