

Minutes of Meeting of Whitbourne Parish Council held on 2nd November 2022

Attendance:

Present: R. James (Chairman); P. Davis (PD); G. Cupper (GC); C. Wier (CW); J. Bromley (JB); T. Hunt (TH); S. Knowles (SK)

P. Wood (PDW) attended via Zoom and did not vote on any decisions made.

In Attendance: N. Shaw (NS) Ward Councillor, K. Phillips (Clerk). One member of the public present, one via Zoom

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from M. Clark (MC)

2. To receive declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. To approve the minutes of the meetings held on: 19th October 2022

Proposed GC, seconded SK. All in favour. Approved.

4. Matters arising from the above minutes

There were no matters arising on these minutes but RJ noted from the previous minutes that a draft village welcome pack had now been produced and circulated to Councillors. It had been suggested that the booklet be printed for the whole parish. This item should be added the next Parish Council agenda.

5. To receive report from Ward Councillor

The Ward Councillor had provided Parish Councillors with a written report. This is as attached to these minutes. NS also went on to describe an additional initiative, namely the Rural Prosperity Fund. This was a sum of £1.7M to be spent on capital projects throughout rural Herefordshire, which does not include Hereford or the market towns. The programme starts in April 2023 and closes in March 2025. Question to NS included the operation of the 423 bus service (very unlikely to be part funded by Herefordshire Council) and the on-going issue with the dilapidated condition of the Wheatsheaf pub. On this latter point, Herefordshire Council have decided that no further improvement works need to be undertaken, other than to clear overgrown vegetation. It was agreed to add this matter as an agenda item for the next Parish Council meeting.

6. To receive the Clerk's report

- The Clerk had provided text describing the operation of the Parish Council to an author of an article for the Parish Magazine and the editor of the village welcome pack. The Parish Magazine article has now been published and, as above, a draft of the village welcome pack is available.
- Arranged for the signing of the Lengthsman contracts and passed same to Herefordshire Council. The Herefordshire Council signed copies have yet to be received.
- The draft budget/precept spreadsheet had been prepared for consideration by Parish Councillors.

7. Financial matters

- a) To approve accounts for payment.
Clerk Salary & HMRC PAYE Oct/Nov 22. Clerk Expenses Sep/Oct 22. Grass cutting. Proposed CW, seconded TH. All in favour. Approved. A recent invoice had come in for the Lengthsman Scheme. The Clerk sought to pay this invoice through a Clerk Decision, which was agreed. This will be approved at the next Parish Council meeting. Details of expenditure are contained in a table at the end of these minutes.
- b) To approve bank reconciliation to 31st October 2022. Proposed GC and seconded PD. All in favour. Approved.
- c) To approve Income and Expenditure reconciliation to 31st October 2022. Proposed CW and seconded JB. All in favour. Approved.
- d) To review current 2022/2023 budget versus spend. No issues raised.
- e) To approve budget/precept for 2023/2024. RJ went through each proposed budget item. It was agreed to postpone the decision on the Lengthsman scheme budget until the January 2023

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Parish Council meeting. The Clerk had already agreed with Herefordshire Council that a later precept submission beyond the deadline would be acceptable. It was also noted that a line item should be made for replacement consumables in the defibrillator (£100.00). A reduction in the budget for elections was agreed.

8. Planning

a) Planning Re-consultation - 212887 - Horners Mill, Whitbourne

It was proposed (GC) and seconded (SK) to submit a response that reflected the concerns of the drainage engineer expert. All in favour. Decided.

9. S106 Projects

There had been little movement of late. The issue of the poor condition of a section of road by the Ardley Meadows junction was raised. An estimate had been sought from a local contractor to resurface that stretch. The Clerk agreed to raise the matter with BBLP once again, noting that last time BBLP considered that the condition of the road surface was not bad enough to warrant remedial action.

10. To receive report regarding the Lengthsman Scheme

PDW had provided a written report to Councillors earlier. This report is as attached to these minutes. MC and PDW had made a tour of the parish with the Lengthsman noting the various items (grips, gullies etc) to be maintained. Work had now been undertaken to a high standard. Other items for Lengthsman maintenance were suggested.

11. To receive report from NDP Steering Group

There had been no progress since last time. It was probably premature to undertake meaningful changes until the Herefordshire Council Local Plan was nearer completion. NS stated that now Herefordshire Council had a five year housing supply the Whitbourne NDP was back up to full weight.

12. To receive reports from the Village Hall, Playing Fields, Manorial Court and Community First

- **Village Hall.** A new charging structure had been defined for the village hall hire. This was now more parish centric. Weddings would now attract a deposit prior to the event. Fire extinguishers and lighting were recently checked and found to be satisfactory. The CCTV system recordings had recently been used by the police to assist in an investigation. Bookings of the village hall remained healthy.
- **Playing Fields.** A bangers and mash quiz night was held raising £681.27. As this was successful with 65 attendees, it was reported that more such events would be held. Wooden equipment was to be examined and repaired as necessary. Some of the recently installed matting had moved. The gate post by the five bar gate had broken. The committee were considering resurrecting the 200 club initiative. This time tickets could be available from the village shop. The Playing Fields Chair will be applying for a grant for more equipment. This could include a picnic bench for use on the village green.
- **Manorial Court.** There had been a meeting on the 15th September 2022. The AGM will be held on the 24th November 2022. NS had arranged for a specialist on wild fires to speak at a forthcoming Manorial Court meeting. The Parish Council were once again thanked for its donation to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee event on Bringsty Common. A total of £828 was donated to humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees.
- **Community First.** CW reported the initiative was subdivided into four areas. These were Keeping in touch, Keeping safe, Pride in our village and Events and social gatherings. A web site hub was being developed to provide information and links to each of the ongoing events and access to facilities.

13. To receive report regarding the Glebe/woodlands

PD reported that little progress had been made. The Forestry Commission had issued a felling licence, which lasts for five years. Ash dieback was not considered a priority matter for immediate felling action.

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14. To receive report on progress with the tree inspection action plan

Herefordshire Council had agreed that the identified trees in the hedgerow was a defect and would be dealt with in alignment with related priorities. The Clerk was requested to get a quote for the remedial works for the remaining identified trees.

15. To report village issues regarding road maintenance, clearance etc.

- It was considered that despite Herefordshire Council's decision on the Wheatsheaf pub, it should remain on the next Parish Council agenda.
- The Live Inn pub was also now in difficulty. Again, it was agreed to put this on the next Parish Council meeting agenda.
- A give way sign on Norton road had become obscured by overgrown vegetation, RJ would speak with the owner.
- RJ would ask a local farmer to trim church bank before the primroses appear next Spring.
- CW reported that the displaced salt box had now been return to its rightful place opposite the upper churchyard entrance on Church bank.

16. Public participation

- It was suggested that the publication costs for the welcome pack booklet might be met by a shop grant. Alternatively, those clubs/facilities mentioned in the booklet might like to contribute.
- The Clerk was thanked for his draft article for the parish magazine where it was noted that it was important for parishioners to appreciate that the Parish Council is run by hard working volunteers.
- During the course of the meeting some councillors noted that they would not be standing for election in May 2023. This was seen as a shame because the Parish Council had a considerable scope of skills being used for Parish Council affairs.
- It was opined that since Herefordshire Council owned the village green, they should deal with the tree maintenance issue. NS replied that Herefordshire Council do not own the village green but it has been registered with them.
- It was also opined that the gate post by the five bar gate entrance to the playing fields was a right of way. As such, this should be maintained by the footpaths officer. RJ agreed to speak with the footpaths officer.
- As noted above a £10,000 grant was being sought for additional play fields equipment. Part of this was to be a picnic bench/table to be placed on the village green to stop people with dogs picnicking on the playing field. Permission was being sought to put the picnic table on the village green. This would be added to a future Parish Council agenda.
- There will be a food bank at the church. More details will be published in the parish magazine.
- The 423 bus service is causing a parking problem at Knightwick surgery.

17. Items for future consideration

- The Wheatsheaf Inn
- The Live Inn
- Whitbourne Village Welcome Pack
- Permission to put a picnic table/bench on the village green

The meeting closed at 21:29.

Cheque No	Expenditure	Payment
300528	Clerk Salary Oct/Nov 22	545.75
300529	Clerk HMRC Oct/Nov 22	363.20
300530	Clerk Expenses Sep/Oct 22	40.00
300531	B Eddy (Grass Cutting)	£350.00
300532	MAS Bromyard (Lengthsman)	£408.00
Total		£1706.95

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Chairman – 2nd November 2022

Annex A - Ward Councillor's Report

I've not got a lot of news specific to Whitbourne parish so I'm writing to give you a little flavour of what is going on at Council. Out of necessity it is a little slanted to what I am familiar with. I contributed to the discussion of how the second tranche (£1.3m) of the government's Household Support Fund should be distributed in Herefordshire over the next five months. Meals during the school holidays for children on free school meals, funding for food banks, funding for emergency heating repairs and fuel for those who are struggling to meet unexpected bills and funding through third party organisations who have the local resources to identify and meet the need of such people. I'm please to say that the administrative cost of distributing this grant has been kept at around 4%. All enquiries via Nina Bridges, Talk Community Development Manager.

I attended the meeting of "Common Bond" in Hereford last week, one of the seventeen Herefordshire councillors that did so, to hear directly from parents how they had been affected by their interaction with the authority's Children's services department, now rated Inadequate by Ofsted. Their comments were raw, emotional and shocking. I spoke to Eleanor Brazil, the SoS appointed Children's Commissioner and will be considering any action that I can take in my role as Chair of Audit and Governance to help ensure transparency. Eleanor is working in Herefordshire two days a week will report back to the SoS in December to make recommendations as to whether Herefordshire Council will keep control of it's Children and Young people's department. I have since met with our internal audit team and asked them to consider what additional assurance can be given on our whistleblowing and complaints procedures. The problems facing children's services will not be easily solved and are exacerbated by the nationwide shortage of social workers. There is concern that its fiscal pressure on the current year's budget will be repeated in future years. The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), as reported in the press, presents a challenging position; with early forecasts identifying a gap between resources and pressures of £21.6m in 2023/24, rising in subsequent years to around £57m by 2026/27 if no mitigating actions are implemented. This will be exacerbated by any real terms reduction in the settlement grant.

The mood music coming from government in respect of the settlement grant is not good. The CNN announcement (attached) reflects the real pressure on Council budgets and the administration will be forced to make some unwelcome choices to deliver a balanced budget. Unless social care received adequate government funding then there will be problems in funding much outside the statutory responsibilities. It is to be anticipated that the current administration will be somewhat conflicted over the differing priorities of the Independents and the Greens.

The spending of reserves (capital reserves on the Maylord centre and the Museum, accruing from the farm sales), especially revenue reserves (£1.2m) from public health on the imposition of the 20mph limits and reserves of £1m to bring forward a business case for the eastern crossing are all in the power of the administration. In addition there is spending of £0.66m on reducing the backlog of Traffic Regulation Orders. We are conscious that a big expenditure of the £20m public housing budget to provide homes owned by the Council (rather than by housing associations) is unlikely to be contracted for before the election.

In terms of the Ukrainian refugee response, there are, as at 3rd October 2022; 222 unique sponsors from Herefordshire on the Governments Foundry (Case management) System;678 unique guests seeking to come to Herefordshire and 499 guests have arrived to-date, coming to 185 sponsors located across the county.

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I have chaired two Audit and Governance meetings in October and asked questions during the Leader's report at the full Council meeting last Friday week, and also contributed to the meeting by challenging the legality of the second motion (which I lost) but winning a subsequent deferral motion. It is frustrating to have the whole Council, and senior officers having to be present whilst such Motions (to request that HM government reconsider the system of voting) are considered. I think that only motions that specifically affect Herefordshire should be the subject of our consideration. The cost to the council ratepayers for other pontification is significant, and unnecessary.

The Hereford Transport Hub came before cabinet last Thursday with a recommendation that the Council earmark a further £6.3m of capital to deliver the remainder of the project. Cost overruns due to poor estimates in CPOs and subsequent compensation payments; delays in the construction and poor reporting of cost pressures by officers (during the last administration tenure) have resulted in a lamentable situation. I raised the issue of the DIRO (drive in reverse out) option being preferred in spite of the safety case not being considered. I was attending Cabinet on behalf of our group leader.

I have expressed concern to the Licensing and Travellers Support Manager, and the Police in respect of renewed anti-social and criminal activity affecting occupants at the Linton trading estate in Bromyard. I regret that it may be necessary to renew the MATAG (Multi-Agency Task And finish Group) work which was stood down three years ago. I wrote to John Campion, the PCC and he has agreed to come and talk to the Bromyard Town Council about the current lack of a warranted officer in the town, and the increase in low level crime. I have also held conversations with the Rural Crime Officer, PC John Meek.

Talk Community is collating and listing "Warm Spaces" in the county that will provide a warm haven for those wanting to go and warm up, see a friendly face and get support. It will help everyone to be aware if such spaces can be registered through the form available at <https://www.talkcommunitydirectory.org/warmspace>

Just as a reminder, the current political mix on the Council is

Independents for Herefordshire 19	Conservatives 14
Greens 7	Lib Dem 6
	True Independents 6
	Unaligned 1

Nigel Nigel.shaw@herefordshire.gov.uk

Annex B - Report by PDW concerning the Lengthsman activities

1. The Contract with Simon Muirhead of MAS was signed (with thanks to Kevin for his assistance) on 5th October.
2. An article about the Scheme has just been published in the November Edition of the Parish Magazine.
3. Simon and his colleagues have undertaken a very significant amount of work to clear vegetation from footpaths and gutters, unblock and clear drains, gulleys and grips in the following areas
 - Adjacent to the Shop, the Allotments (on the C1066) and Ardley Meadows lower footpath,
 - Acreage Junction to the Old School,
 - Church Bank,
 - Bottom Lane,
 - Tedney (Ford) Bridge.

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Top Lane was also inspected and checked. The work was undertaken in preparation of the wetter/winter weather and it was pleasing to see that the usual standing water was not in evidence following the recent squalls.

Additionally, the grass bank opposite Bannercroft was strimmed and cleared and overhanging vegetation on the footpath to Old forge Junction removed.. The drop kerbs leading out from Bannercroft have been cleared and overgrown vegetation either side of gateways strimmed and cleared. The gulleys at the Bus stop have also been cleared.

4. Myself and Mark have had a tour of the Parish with Simon and inspected the works and identified some further work that could be undertaken, when time allows - e.g. the grips on Red Hill, removing detritus and vegetation on the bridge by the Wheatsheaf, removing vegetation obscuring the signage for Whitbourne on the A44 and one or two small potholes that could easily be cold filled.

5. Mark has introduced Simon to the BB Locality Steward, Mike Brookes so that they can contact each other direct and build up a good working relationship. We have encouraged Simon to contact Mike direct in relation to any works that should really be the responsibility of BB.

Simon obviously intends to monitor the gulleys and grips but hopefully they will not be so clogged the next time they need clearing. As we know, Simon is a very professional, sensible, hardworking and cooperative contractor and is very well versed with the roads and potential problem areas in the Parish.