

MUCH BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on
Thursday 5th July 2007 in Much Birch
Community Hall

PRESENT:- Mr D Davies (DD) - Chairman, Mr J Jones (JJ) - Vice Chairman, Mr P Groom (PG), Ms V Short (VS), Mr G Sims (GS), Mrs M Swift (MS).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D B Wilcox (Acting Parish Clerk), Cllr. R Smith (Herefordshire Councillor), Mr B Griffin (Planning consultant) together with 20 members of the public.

1. To accept Acting Clerk for the July meeting;

RESOLVED: That Brian Wilcox should act a Clerk to the Parish Council for the evening, in the absence of Mrs Lynda Wilcox.

2. To accept apologies for absence

Mrs L P Wilcox (Parish Clerk).

3. Declarations of interest on agenda items

Mr D Davies & Ms V Short both declared a prejudicial interest on agenda item 11 and Mr G Sims declared a prejudicial interest on item 9.

4. To approve minutes of previous meeting - 7th June 2007

The minutes were agreed unanimously and signed by the Chairman.

5. To receive Clerk's update on agenda items

It was noted that the clerk would be contacting both the outgoing as well as the incoming signatories to arrange a meeting at the Halifax Building Society in order to effect the necessary changes.

At this point, the Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow contributions from the Herefordshire Councillor, the planning consultant [with respect to proposals for development at Court Farm] and members of the public. No police representatives were present.

The Chairman then re-opened the meeting.

6. Lengthsman - To receive update and identify new areas of work.

MS requested attention to tidying up the area around the bus stop, particularly identifying the broken rails which she now considered were dangerous.

RESOLVED; That DD, PG and GS would meet the Lengthsman and discuss the work programme.

7. Working Groups

7.1 To consider Vivienne Short's request to join the Planning Working Group.

RESOLVED: That Vivienne Short be admitted to the membership of the Planning Working Group.

7.2 To set up an Employment Working Group.

VS referred to the item supplied by the Clerk relating to disciplinary procedures. The Acting Clerk said that the introduction of such a document should not be considered in isolation, but be part of any employment contract, along with grievance procedures, appeals procedures, etc. The Clerk was asked to circulate draft standard documents to all councillors and for the issue to be considered at the next meeting.

8. 'SID' [Speed Indicator Device]

8.1 *To consider Police comments on proposed sites for 'SID'.*

It was regretted that the police comments had not yet been received. The Clerk was to be asked to chase the Police for comment.

8.2 *To receive feedback from Herefordshire Council presentation on new 'SID'.*

MS stated that she had been unable to attend the presentation and the issue was no further forward. Frustration was expressed by members at the time the project was taking and that some urgency was needed to resolve the matter with the Council. The Clerk was asked to pursue the matter with Herefordshire Council's Highways and Transportation Department. It was hoped the grant application could be progressed with NPower with the appropriate cost identified. The Acting Clerk gave a note of caution about purchasing their own equipment as the use of such devices was to be strictly controlled by the Highways Authority.

9. Parish Land - Rear of Rosebank - To discuss the sale of small portion of land.

Having declared a prejudicial interest, GS left the meeting for this item. During the ensuing debate, some members felt they would wish to discuss the District Valuer's Report in more detail. On advice from the Acting Clerk that this would need to be in closed session, it was agreed to defer consideration of the item until the end of the meeting.

10. Finance

10.1 *To adopt accounts for 2006/7 and appoint the Internal Auditor.*

All councillors confirmed that they had received a copy of the audited accounts. RESOLVED: That the accounts be adopted.

10.2 *To consider additions to insurance policy for 2007/8.*

The Acting Clerk read out the additional quotations from the letter received from Allianz Cornhill. It was decided to leave the item concerning the SID until one had been acquired.

RESOLVED: To accept the quotations from Alliance Cornhill to insure the litter bins and the notice board in the sums of £5.37 p.a. and £8.25 p.a. respectively.

10.3 *To receive the accounts from the Much Birch Old Charities.*

Following the circulation of the accounts to all Parish Councillors, it was RESOLVED: That the accounts be received.

10.4 *To consider payment and siting of new notice-board [£350 + HALC grant £300]*

The various respective merits of locating the notice board either on the bus shelter or on a post immediately alongside the shelter were discussed. RESOLVED: That the notice-board be purchased, with the siting of it to be determined by the Chairman after a site visit.

11. PARISH LANE

Having declared a prejudicial interest, both DD and VS left the meeting for this item. The Acting Clerk identified the options available with regard to Parish Lane. As it was a B.O.A.T. [byway open to all traffic], proper maintenance by the Highway Authority was not a requirement. The Council was prepared to fill some of the pot holes, with the possibility of a better scheme if financial help was forthcoming from residents. It was noted that the lane was partly within Little Birch. RESOLVED: That the Clerk put forward the options to Little Birch Parish Council and seek their co-operation in carrying out a joint survey of the wishes of residents.

12. To consider joining campaign against closure of Post Offices.

The Acting Clerk outlined the action being taken by Mr J Norman and others to stop the closure of post offices, particularly in rural areas. A request had been received for the Parish Council to support the campaign. After debate, a vote was taken and by a majority of 5-1 councillors it was RESOLVED: That the Parish Council declare their support for the campaign.

13. Housing

13.1 *To consider working with the rural housing enabler on housing needs survey.*
It was clarified that there was no obligation to co-operate with the rural housing enabler. Nevertheless, there were possibly good reasons to support the proposed housing needs survey, including having the information that the survey revealed. After discussion, it was agreed that a draft survey form would be sought from Mr Parry to elicit the types of questions being asked. The matter would then be discussed at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

13.2 *Parish Plan clarification sheet on housing development - to receive up-date.*

It was noted that an up-dated page on housing development was still needed to be put onto the web site. The Acting Clerk advised Members that they could seek registration to have their own web page included on "*myherefordshire.com*", a new communication web site just launched by Herefordshire Partnership.

14. To consider amendment/confirmation of current complaints procedure.

Noting that the procedure had already been adopted, it was felt that the parishioners should be made aware of the procedure. There was no request to further amend the procedure.

RESOLVED: That a copy of the complaints procedure be placed on the notice board.

15. To raise matters for the next agenda.

It was requested that "Correspondence and Information" be placed on the agenda for the next meeting in addition to the other specific issues identified above.

16. To note date of next Parish Council meeting -

This was noted as 6th September 2007.

At this point, The Chairman asked for the public to leave the room so that the Parish Council could resume discussion on item 9

RESOLVED: That pursuant to the provisions of section 1[2] of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960, the public and the press be excluded from the meeting by reason of the confidential nature of business proposed to be transacted in that it involved financial information relating to a possible contract with a third party.

Parish Land rear of Rosebank.

GS, after making a statement to the Parish Council and answering questions, then left the meeting having previously declared a prejudicial interest.

After discussion it was

RESOLVED: That the land in question be sold to Mr G Sims [subject to contract] in accordance with the recommendations of the District Valuer subject to:

1. The planning officer confirming that the proposal will not adversely affect the possible future development of the adjoining Parish Council land.
2. PG not raising a material objection with the Chairman within the succeeding 7 days.
3. The conveyance including a covenant preventing the use of the land from being used for a dwelling [unless there was the necessary financial up-lift and the proposal had the agreement of the Parish Council].

The public were re-admitted, the resolution outlined and the meeting closed.