

MUCH BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Much Birch Parish Council held at Much Birch Community Hall on Thursday 9th January 2014

Present:

Cllr. Alison Cook (Chair)
Cllr. Andrew Crum
Cllr. Stephen Turner
Cllr. Keith James
Cllr. Jon Norris (also Ward Councillor)

In attendance:

Parish Clerk, Alison Wright, 5 Members of the public (including Kat Le Tzar from Herefordshire Housing)

Public Participation Time –

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished them a Happy New Year. The Sanctuary Application had been deferred and the Larkrise Application was still in committee. A letter had been sent to the Ward Councillor, and then forwarded to the Parish Council, from the applicants of the Larkrise Development for Tump Lane in regards to a meeting to discuss the provision of a footpath. There was a wish, on behalf of the applicant, to gather all parties together, Parish Council, Planning Authority, Developer and Applicant to seek a way forward in regard to the provision of a footpath for the entire length of Tump Lane. There were still the ongoing concerns in regards to vehicles in terms of size and speed on the road and these matters were the subject of requests for reduction in both vehicular weights and the speed limit on Tump Lane. The Parish Council would seek advice on whether it would be appropriate for them to engage in a meeting to discuss any collaborative approach to footpath provision.

The Open Session then closed at 7.50pm

The Parish Council meeting was formally opened by the Chairman

1.0 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies. A letter of resignation, as Parish Councillor, had been received from Councillor Terry Cook. A vote of thanks was given for Terry's contribution to the Parish Council and thanks were also extended for his continued offer to assist the Parish as Web Master.

2.0 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Turner declared an interest in the planning application for the Pump House as he had been a trustee of the body responsible for drawing up developmental conditions over the property at the time it was sold.

3.0 Minutes

3.1 The Minutes of 5th December 2013 were signed as a true and correct record of the meeting.

4.0 Reports

P.C.S.O. from West Mercia Police not present

Ward Councillor Cllr Norris gave his report.

He started by saying that he was not entirely sure what we would like to hear from him by way of a general report or summary. He used to hear Russell's (Councillor Hamilton's) very lengthy and full report on all issues that he was involved in (ESG shopping centre, core strategy, etc.) at our Parish Council, and had asked him if he could limit his report to that which was actually relevant to our Parish or Ward.

He intends his reports to be like this. Other issues outside of the Ward have their own posts. This is the gist of the report he gave to the various Parish Councils this month.

He was not sure what we expect of a report, so do please ask so he can tailor it correctly.

He said that his first job is to be sure that Parish Councils are prepared, trained and willing to do what is expected of them. It's been difficult to find standards that parish councils should work to.

Observations have been that some communicate well with their parishioners and have full and informative minutes. Others, advised by HALC, have minimum information in their minutes. Some are proactive, have a regularly updated Parish Plan (every two years) but few talk to other PCs, train through HALC or have met Anthony Bush (Parish Liaison Officer).

Parish councils often work in a vacuum, it seems. They don't seem to meet or talk to each other, find out what each other are doing that maybe useful or innovative.

In the Council, with committees for all sorts of things there is none, at present, for Rural Affairs and Cllr Norris intends to start one. He sees the need to be clear why this is needed and what specific issues would be discussed that aren't already discussed in the Committees that exist. One hope he has is that by bringing the rural issues under one group some joined up thinking may occur.

The main thing he has learned so far and which he needs to pass on to us is:

We have no idea what is expected of us in the years to come.

He had asked Balfour Beatty at a recent meeting, where they introduced themselves, if using their own figures they could say when the roads would be back to normal. After all, they tendered for the job and would have a precise idea of the state of the roads etc. and the concomitant costs. They had no idea. The answer Cllr Norris gave them, after they told him how much they estimated needed doing and what funds they had available, was **100 years- assuming no more potholes arrive.**

But there is still no indication if or when we will be able to deal with minor issues under the lengthsman scheme.

Cllr Norris asked at another Committee meeting if we could be told what level of care would be offered and to whom it would be available by the year 2020. They have no idea. Although he understands the initial response because things are changing he asked how we were to be expected to set precepts and plan, as they suggest in their budget plans constantly to Parish Councils if absolutely no guidance is available. They have been cutting costs now for over ten years. Other parishes have increased precepts by up to 125% for specific projects, so he believes we may need to be brave.

One new item, to Cllr Norris, anyway. Planners no longer send out letters to neighbours of applicants. Somehow we are going to have to get everybody to check the Parish web sites more often – it is going to be, perhaps, essential, not only for each house to do this for their own benefits, but for them to be able to help neighbours too.

Cllr Norris writes a blog which can be found at jonnorris.co.uk

After the report, there was a conversation regarding the concerns about Amey and the hand over to Balfour Beatty in regards to a less than seamless transfer. This had resulted in communication problems and an apparent, alleged, lack of control over the works by representatives from Herefordshire Council. The Clerk would write to Richard Ball to see if matters concerning redress for the situation were progressing.

5.0 Clerk's Update on Action Items

Actions were noted as per sheet including information on Parish land conditions and details of issues logged with Balfour Beatty.

6.0 Financial Report

6.1 The following bank balances were noted:

@ 13 th November HSBC Community Account	£9286.21
@ 13 th November HSBC Community Projects Account	£14,408.00

6.2 The following payments were approved:

Clerk's salary	£254.40
Expenses (mileage £24.57)	£24.57
Tax due on salary	£63.00
Much Birch Community Hall (Room Hire)	£52.50

Resolved :- That the payments above were approved, and passed for payment

6.3 To approve Precept figure for 2014

Further to the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee and budget needs analysis, including the requirement to maintain the lengthsman's works, allow for the expense of a possible contested election and to consider the fact that more responsibility to meet local need was likely to fall to the Parish Council in the future, the recommendation was for an increase of the precept from £6000.00 per annum to £6390.00. This represented a rise of 6.5%. This was believed to be a judicious increase based on the responsibility requirement going forward.

6.4 Parish Land and Access - to update

The Parish Land at Rosebank tenancy conditions had been clarified as follows:-

- To erect within one month of the date hereof and forever thereafter maintain in good condition a stock proof fence between the Property and the Retained land consisting of post and rail with pig netting stapled to treated posts not more than 3 yards apart and having a diameter of not less than 5 inches at the top with straining posts both at either end
- To create within two weeks of completion a new pedestrian access to the Retained land at the point marked A on the plan to include two posts and a tantalised wooden swinging gate
- Not to use the Property nor any parts or parts of it other than as garden land or a workshop, store or garage without the consent in writing of the transferor

It was resolved that the Clerk would write to the tenant advising the rental increase and reiterating the stated agreement conditions.

7.0 School Governor's Report

Cllr Turner stated that there were no new minutes, or details to present, as he was not yet in receipt of the last meeting minutes from the Clerk to Governors.

8.0 Planning Matters and to include Tump Lane developments update

There were no further details regarding either application in Tump Lane, at present.

There were two new planning applications to consider:-

1) Site: Wingfield Lodge, Much Birch, Herefordshire, HR2 8HJ

Description: Replacement hedgerow, new gabion wall and sliding gate

Applicants: Mr Ken Davies

Application No: P13338/FH

Grid Ref: OS 349739, 231110

Application Type: Full Householder

The Parish Council resolved to support the application and believe that it may enhance road safety in that area.

2) Site: The Pump House, Much Birch, Herefordshire, HR2 8HL

Description: Double garage

Applicants: Mr G. Perkins

Application No: P133362/FH

Grid Ref: OS 350247, 230800

Application Type: Full Householder

The Parish Council resolved not to support the application.

9.0 Parish Roads and Footpaths

9.1) Balfour Beatty: -

- The pot hole outside the surgery and Community Hall was, again, commented due to the size it had reached. Cllr Cook would confirm the status and, if still considered dangerous, the Clerk would write to Balfour Beatty again and copy in the Ward Councillor.
- Road C1263 as it exits the village by the 30mph sign and the car park and opposite the property "Highview", massive and generalised pot holes observed. N.B. This is not technically in MB Parish.

9.2) The Lengthsman: -

- At the bottom of Tump Lane near to the portion of raised pathway there is a blocked gully and water has been flowing across the road. Clerk to ask the Lengthsman to clear the gully if possible.

9.3) Footpaths: -

- Wooden bye-way sign had fallen down at the bottom of Parish Lane MB29 at the junction with Little Birch Road U71603. Clerk to advise Jonathan Roger.
- MB4 Gatepost on the footpath has rotted off. Jonathan Roger had previously said he would supply new post. Clerk to find out what was happening and remind him.

10.0 Self Help Gritting Scheme including grit supplies and grit bins

The grit bin at the top of The Thorn Reference U71609 requires refilling. Clerk to request this. Mr Morley would speak to Bob Mason in regards to interim gritting requirements and report back to Cllr Turner regarding the way forward.

11.0 Correspondence

Noted as per sheet and including resignation letter from Cllr T. Cook, Information from Herefordshire Council in regard to precept grant monies and an offer of assistance with blocked gullies and flooding issues from a company called Trench Tech, whose details were explained and will be kept on file for reference. There would be a Neighbourhood Plan Meeting on 25th January and Cllr James said he would most likely attend to keep up to date with developments.

12.0 Parishes' Newsletter and Much Birch Website

12.1 Clerk to supply précis for the next edition of the newsletter and to include details of precept decision and how money is spent. This would be circulated to all councillors before publication.

13.0 Items for Next Agenda

Update on interim gritting discussion. Review of Parish Plan published in 2004 (Cllr Cook to circulate 2004 version)

14.0 Confirmation of the date of the next Meeting

Next meeting – Thursday 6th February 2014 at 7.30pm in The Much Birch Community Hall

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Signed:

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Chairman

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Date