

MUCH BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Much Birch Parish Council held at Much Birch Community Hall on Thursday 4th June 2015

Present:

Cllr. Alison Cook (Chair)
Cllr. Tim Jones
Cllr. Steve Turner (Vice Chair)
Cllr. Ben Roberts (co-opted)

In attendance:

Parish Clerk: Alison Wright, the Locality Steward: Dave Atkinson, Ward Councillor: David Harlow and 1 member of the public

Open Session:-

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Open Session commenced.
There were no contributions during the Open Session.
The Open Session then closed

1.0 Apologies for Absence and co-option of councillor(s) plus signing of forms

There were apologies received Cllr. Andy Crum and from the PCSO. A new Councillor, Ben Roberts, was co-opted and welcomed to Much Birch Parish Council.

2.0 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations made.

3.0 Minutes of previous meetings and matters arising

3.1) The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Statutory Meeting held on the 14th May were signed as true and correct records of the meetings.
There were no matters arising.

4.0 To receive any update regarding the Much Birch Old Charities concerning the Poor Acre

There had been an update received from Trustee Mr Dick Brimacombe. The Pre-Application for 3 houses had just been submitted to the Herefordshire Council by Berrys and Mr Brimacombe had sent the Council a cheque for £306 to pay for the Pre-Application advice from the Much Birch Old Charities Account. The Parish Council gave an overview of the Charities and the Poor Acre for the benefit of the new councillor in terms of the Poor Acre's location, history and purpose plus current thinking on the wish to develop it. The Parish Council is not a Trustee of the Much Birch Charities but their opinion is sought regarding decisions that may be made that affect the Poor Acre etc.

5.0 Reports

5.1) P.C.S.O. from West Mercia Police

The PCSO was not present. Bulletins with updates had been received and circulated. The Clerk and her husband had been burgled and had had items stolen from a locked workshop, including chain saws, a generator and other power tools.

5.2) **Ward Councillor** Ward Cllr Harlow would feed back comments made to Balfour Beatty. The relationship between the Council and Balfour Beatty is a major one and there is emphasis on getting it right. There is however "not a lot of money swishing around in the coffers". The priority targets for the Herefordshire Council budget are predominantly social welfare for the elderly and for children. The objective of the

Council is to build more houses, attract more businesses. There is a finite budget and the objective is to work as best as possible to solve issues. If there is a pressing problem then talk to the Cabinet Member. The “caravans” application had been given permission and the Wrigglebrook Lane Planning Application No. 150717, for a house, was going to Committee. The Ward Cllr reported that there was a 92% take-up rate for the Neighbourhood Plan initiative in the County. The Much Birch Parish Council had taken the decision not to progress a Plan at the current time. Outcomes of the Neighbourhood Plan once in place have yet to be really tested in terms of case law but a slight issue is that where development is for the “greater good” Herefordshire Council can overrule the specifications of a Neighbourhood Plan. There will be a wish to see how it works. The application for Tump Lane has had the appeal rejected but there will be permitted development “somewhere”. There will be a requirement for a 14% growth in housing stock for the area between now and 2031. Settlements have been split into categories with some categories likely to see a greater number of the allocated percentage growth than others. Sustainability and factors such as the presence of facilities such as a school, surgery, pub or shop all have a bearing on the growth factor too. The Ward Cllr said that there could be pressure to bring an increasing number of development sites to the area and the Parish Council may want to seriously consider the decision not to progress a Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Plan would be back on the Agenda with a targeting of the planning aspect of the Parish Plan in regard to the Localism Act etc. Ward Cllr Harlow offered assistance with making the right choice. A conversation had been held with Planning Officer Matt Tompkins in regard to the network of footpaths etc. and they were not adequate in certain areas. The footpaths issues of Tump Lane which as a spread area is recognised as the biggest housing site in Much Birch but does not have safe access to bus-stop, shop or school. There is a dilemma as things expand regarding the need for footpaths. The Tump Lane footpath is a land availability issue. The Core Strategy is still not ratified but is moving towards this. There was a comment about the possibility of a joint Neighbourhood Plan with Little Birch.

5.3) Locality Steward Dave Atkinson had been on a Parish Walk with the Ward Cllr. He reported that the cone had been removed from the Thorn. There was no discharge visible at present and there had been no response so far to enquiries made to the Environment Agency concerning the issues previously experienced at the site. The previously proposed re-surfacing of Little Birch Road had been superseded in the list of projects by other matters. The remedial actions were graded on a points system regarding the order in which they would be done and Little Birch Road had slipped down the list. All roads are visited at least annually in the County and the points system is used to determine what actions are taken. The Parish Council expressed dismay at this decision as the resurfacing of Little Birch Lane had been on the wish list to be done as it had deteriorated considerably. There had been a commitment by the PC to try to get things done. The road was now on the reserve list for attention so if funds become available or a cancellation comes along it will be considered. The PC were not pleased that the resurfacing had been deferred and asked how bad a road had to be to obtain increased points and qualify for repairs. The points system is based on quantity of vehicular use, the homes on the road, services and facilities on it. It is difficult to relay the lack of action on situations back to parishioners who are looking for the faults to be fixed and especially in this case as they had been told it would be resurfaced last year. There was a discussion on the various methods of repairing roads. The case of the road from Holme Lacy to Barrack Hill which had been resurfaced was sited as making “no sense”. The road had been tar and chipped and the difference between this and resurfacing was explained. The Locality Steward would communicate the concern over Little Birch Road and would work with Craig Doyle from Balfour Beatty and the Ward Cllr on the situation. Dave explained that he had been in the role of Locality Steward for 12 months and was one of 13 people doing the job who were all pushing management for information to be conveyed from other parts of the company. The Locality Steward

was a conduit to feedback concerns to the Management Team. A question was asked about drains and the situation is one of reactive response not routine maintenance. There would be notifications required when drains need attention.

Dave went on to describe the current thinking on grass verge cutting with two cuts planned for this year and with the first in progress currently across the County. There are approximately 2000 miles of roads and 4000 miles of verges in the County and three principle contractors are tasked with getting them all cut. It should take about 3 weeks to cut them all. There had been an overrun and they were out later than normal this year.

5.4) The "Tump Lane Toppers" (including any update on the Play Space)

No actual update from the Tump Lane Toppers. The Play Space had seen a Wild Play event the previous week which had been well attended. Suggestions had been coming in regarding the play space and the Questionnaire had seen a good response.

6.0 Clerk's Update on Action Items

The updates were noted including items as advised on the Communications Sheet the School had been written to concerning the yellow line parking and the "drop off" initiative. There was some discussion over land at the nunnery and possible car parking although this had been explored previously. A budget to achieve something had been looked at a number of years ago (2009 -10) but it had not been progressed. The School could approach the Nunnery direct, possibly, going forward.

The Clerk explained about Pensions regulations and changes to pension provision which were coming in on a staged start date basis. The Much Birch PC was registered to receive the relevant paperwork and updates.

7.0 Financial Report

7.1) The following bank balances were noted:

@ 13 th May 2015 Community Account	£12,027.30
@ 13 th Mar 2015 HSBC Community Projects Account	£14,408.00

7.2) The following payments were approved:

Clerks salary	£346.50
Expenses (mileage £15.30, stationery £8.00)	£23.30

Resolved: that the payments were passed for payment (prop. Cllr Jones sec. Cllr Turner)

7.3) To consider revision of documents timetable

The Communication Policy would be the first Policy for revision.

8.0 School Parking and related issues update

8.1) To receive related correspondence and any updates.

A letter had been sent to the School as per the Actions item.

8.2) To consider the traffic regulation order (TRO) outside the Much Birch School

The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) implemented outside the Much Birch School and Fairview had solved some problems but had caused others. The time delay to amend of around five years was noted and the pending meeting with the Highways Agency was waiting to be confirmed. The original process had been guided by Andrew Lee-Jones who had since retired and there was a wish to get things right this time around. It was acknowledged that the double yellow lines had pushed problems further up the hill. The new initiative to amend the TRO would need to go through the Ward Councillor. There was a need to get the area in front of Fairview amended so that the resident could legitimately receive deliveries etc. A decision would be required as to all out change or one amendment to release the property "Fairview" from the prohibition. There was a discussion on whether the TRO could be amended to make parents use a car park

provision. Fairview was acknowledged to be the most pressing issue as an affected party. There could be a total amendment or tweaking the existing. Clerk to email the details to the Ward Cllr and copy in Graham Hornsby.

9.0 Planning Matters

9.1) To consider any planning applications as circulated.

One application had been received:

APPLICATION NO & SITE ADDRESS: 151427 - Athelstone, Much Birch, Hereford, Herefordshire HR28HY

DESCRIPTION: Detached garage/store room (retrospective).

APPLICANT(S): Ms Diane Elaine James

GRID REF: OS 351436, 229894

APPLICATION TYPE: Full Householder

The Parish Council reviewed the application and that resolved that there were no objections to the application, from their perspective.

9.2) To consider any update regarding fencing requirements on parish land

Cllr Cook to view the site and confirm regarding pedestrian gate.

9.3) To discuss any outcome of the Ward Councillor's request for longer lead time for all planning applications

The request for a longer lead time for comments had brought the following response from Matt Tompkins, Senior Planning Officer, at Herefordshire Council.

"The length of comment periods is one written in legislation and the statutory period of 21 days must be given to Parish Council's countrywide in the first instance. However, I'm more than happy to extend the comment deadline on a case by case basis. Indeed, most other PCs request such extensions when the comment deadline falls before their next meeting. It's rare that a request is turned down".

9.4) Duplication item re parish land fence. Disregard.

10.0 Parish Roads and Footpaths

10.1) To note any defects to be reported to Balfour Beatty

It was acknowledged that communications were better since the role of Locality Steward had been in place. The damaged A49 road signs had been chased up.

10.2) To put forward work for the Lengthsman including possible additional work Seasonal strimming work and clearance once the main verges had been cleared.

"Visibility splays" will be cleared, as priority requests, when required by Balfour Beatty.

10.3) To receive Report from Footpath Officer

Clearing path near school and contact e mail. Cllr Jones had replied and said "okay to clear" but at own risk. Nothing has been cleared to date.

P3 Footpath Initiative to be developed. £50 funding per km of footpaths in parish available for footpath maintenance and projects. Labour paid from P3 grant and materials made available and funded through Balfour Beatty. Focus any items through the Locality Steward when required.

11.0 Parish Plan- to consider review of 2004 Parish Plan

To consider revision of elements and consider impact of Core Strategy as applicable The Core Strategy had 83 pages of summary updates. 16,500 homes were to be built in Herefordshire. 5,300 of these would be in the rural settlements. The question was asked "if targets are not met then what will happen?" No answer given at the Meeting. The Southern Link Road will be in-filled with housing. The issues of water , sewerage etc. will

all apply. The Ward Cllr said that “windfall” build totals since 2011 would be counted towards required 20 year Plan targets.

12.0 Correspondence

12.1) Items were noted as per the information and correspondence sheet and included A request for a speed camera/ traffic count down the Thorne due to speeding vehicles. This to be requested from Roger Sell, via the Locality Steward. A survey going from the end of the road by the bus shelter, and in term time, with flows and speeds data required.

An e mail had been received concerning some developmental decisions to be made concerning the bus shelter at the top of the Thorne. The Clerk to respond to say that Much Birch PC would wish to be represented in any discussions over the future of the shelter.

13.0 Parishes’ Newsletter and Much Birch Website

13.1) Clerk to supply a précis for the next edition of the newsletter. Cllr Roberts to advise regarding the deadline date for the return of the Questionnaire re Play Space in Tump Lane.

14.0 Matters to be raised on the Agenda for the next meeting

- Consideration of request for donation towards Village Hall improvements
- Finance approval for end of year audit
- 106 monies from developments

15.0 Confirmation of the date of the next Meeting(s)

Next meeting – Thursday 9th July 2015 at 7.30pm in The Much Birch Community Hall

Due to the confidential nature of the business of this agenda item, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (3) it is proposed to put forward a motion to exclude members of the public during discussion of this agenda item

16.0 Clerk’s Annual Review

The Clerk and public left the room for the discussion of the Clerk’s Annual Review. The Clerk was recalled and advised of a successful review and a further incremental progression on the pay scale from 1st June 2015.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed:

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Chairman

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Date