

MUCH BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Much Birch Parish Council held at Much Birch Community Hall on Thursday 7th November 2019 from 7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Alison Cook (Chair)
Cllr Steve Turner (Vice Chair)
Cllr Roisin Burge
Cllr Andy Crum
Cllr Veronica Thomas

In attendance:

Parish Clerk; Alison Wright, Lengthsman; Paul Wright and 3 members of the public. Also present, for the first part of the meeting, was Estelle Stock of West Mercia Police.

Open Session:-

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Estelle Stock of West Mercia Police gave a presentation on We Don't Buy Crime / Smart Water Protected Towns & Villages. She explained how the forensic property marking system could be used to help deter crime and also reunite stolen property with the rightful owner. The system was for kits to be purchased and registered to properties. Percentage take up would then generate the provision of signage to deter would be thieves. Research with convicted offenders had shown that smart water marking of property was considered the biggest deterrent by them as the presence of smart water on stolen property guaranteed a 100% conviction rate if found in the offender's possession. It was agreed that Estelle would send all of the details of the scheme and subsidies from the Police Commissioner to the Clerk for circulation. There was also information about the development of larger Smart Water kits suitable for farms and other businesses.

The topic of reporting suspicious activity, vehicles and persons, was also discussed and the advice was to ring in anything of concern on the police non-emergency number 101. All emergency situations should still be notified via 999. This information would be included in the précis for the next Birches Newsletter.

A matter was raised by residents, who were present, regarding the disappointment they felt that the Parish Council had not sent in an objection, or comments, regarding the recent Larkrise Reserved Matters Application. The Chair and Clerk explained that there were criteria for objecting to planning applications and that the outline permission to build had been granted on appeal. The objections that were made in the first instance, to the outline application, were not now applicable to the reserved matters application. The Parish Council had not been able to find reasons to object, based on the planning comment indicators, in relation to the reserved matters as specified.

The Open Session closed at 8.00 pm.

1.0 Apologies for Absence

There were apologies received from Cllr David Baldwin and Ward Cllr Toni Fagan plus Footpath Officer Steve Owen.

2.0 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

3.0 Minutes of previous meeting

3.1) The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held on the 3rd October 2019 were signed as a true and correct record of the Meeting.

4.0 Reports

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

The Bulletins with updates had been received and circulated.

4.2) Ward Councillor Ward Cllr Fagan had sent her apologies.

4.3) Locality Steward James Howells, the Locality Steward, had sent his bulletins.

5.0 Clerk's Update on Action Items and Correspondence

The updates were noted and included from Herefordshire Council:

- Parish Summit workshop notes and h.Trees Week information
- Invitations to councillors - The Great Collaboration – Climate Emergency
- Hereford Transport Package and South Wye Transport Package decision
- Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations
- Core Strategy and Neighbourhood Planning review Workshop evening
- Herefordshire Council Fostering Project

Also:

HALC

- Notification of HALC Conference & AGM 09-30 - 15-00 on Saturday 23/11/19

6.0 Financial Report

6.1) The following bank balances were noted:

@ 13 th Oct 2019 HSBC Community Account	£13,603.18
@ 13 th Oct 2019 HSBC Community Projects Account	£12,889.84

6.2) To approve list of payments (circulated separately) and to consider any request for church clock and churchyard maintenance

The Parish Council had supported the maintenance of the church clock with a donation made in October. Due to the existence of legislation from 1894, concerning the legality of payments made to churches for fabric and grounds, the Parish Council resolved not to make a donation towards the churchyard upkeep. No further information had been received from the Rector to alter the position on this.

The following payments were approved:

Payments to be made from main account

Mrs A Wright (Salary paid in accordance with contract)	
HM Revenue & Customs (tax)	£64.40
Much Birch Community Hall (PC room hire)	£50.00

Payments to be made from Community account

Much Birch Community Hall (NDP room hire)	£32.00
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Resolved: that the payments were passed for payment: (proposed by Cllr Turner and seconded by Cllr Crum) Unanimous.

6.3) To consider any amendment to policy for interim planning comments

After consideration of the suggested amendments it was resolved to remove point 4 altogether which referred to showing application details to neighbours. The amended plan was then adopted and would be formally resubmitted for the website.

6.4) To confirm budget and precept request for 2020 – 2021

Following a meeting of the Finance Working Party and discussion of the budget and reserves it was resolved that the precept request would remain at £6750.00 for 2020 – 2021. The Clerk would advise the Herefordshire Council Finance Team accordingly.

7.0 Village issues update

7.1) To receive any update regarding lighting at the crossing on the A49

Cllr Cook advised that since the lighting levels had been adjusted by 50% a considerable difference had been noted.

Cllr Turner updated the meeting regarding Highways England would be re-evaluating the lack of signage on the approach to the crossing from the south side, with a visit planned for November 19th.

7.2) Grit bins – The Chair had looked at the bins. A couple had not been labelled but were definitely Herefordshire Council property. The Locality Steward would be advised about this. Grit bins would be considered (possibly moving from another location) for Hollybush Lane at the far end and also for the top entrance to the estate off Tump Lane. Both proposed placements would be reviewed by the Lengthsman and subject to there being a grass or suitable area for locating the bin safely to avoid obstruction to pedestrians or vehicles.

7.3) Self Help Gritting Scheme - this was going to be continued with gritting of the “Milk run” route being carried out. The scheme was a voluntary one and there were no expectations or contractual agreements relating to this. Bus and main routes would be gritted by Balfour Beatty. No responsibility lay with the Parish Council for any accident that may occur on a non gritted highway. The grit bins were an aid only and the grit should only be used on the highway and not for private drives etc. This would be reiterated in the précis for the Birches Newsletter.

8.0 Planning Matters

8.1) To consider any planning applications

There were no new applications for consideration.

9.0 Parish Roads and Footpaths

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

A request was put forward for consideration of a bus shelter for the Axe and Cleaver side of the A49 (close to the public house). Highways England would be asked the question.

The drop in the road by Lower Wrigglebrook would be referred as a possible safety issue.

A list of identified defects would be notified to Balfour Beatty/Lengthsman as follows:

Blocked drains.

- Page’s Pitch – lower end just above grit bin.
- Barrack Hill between Page’s Pitch and Wrigglebrook Lane junctions
- Lower end of Wrigglebrook Lane just on the junction
- From that junction towards the A49 two drains just past Cress Cottage
- Beyond the school (away from the A49) by the 30 mph road marking
- Drains on the junction of the A49 up to the school (Highways England)

Hedge

On Barrack Hill (U71609) almost opposite The Old Hall a small tree has collapsed and is very close to the road (Cllr Crum would speak to the property owner).

9.2) To put forward work for the Lengthsman

Gamber footpath MB24 plus various issues as identified previously plus blocked drains as notified above under Balfour Beatty advisory.

9.3) Footpath Officer – to receive any update or action points

Footpath Officer Steve Owen had attended the Public rights of way meeting in October and had reported back. He had found the meeting useful. He had sought the authority to report defects directly to Balfour Beatty as was the practice with other Footpath Officers. It was agreed that matters relating to hardware defects such as gates, stiles and fingerposts would be reported directly. Items regarding clearance, strimming etc. would be copied into the Clerk for possible action by the Lengthsman.

A report had come in that footpath MB24 near Gamber Cottages was overgrown. The culvert and drains nearby were silted up also. The Lengthsman would look at these issues.

10.0 Neighbourhood Plan- update/approval of circulated papers for progression

The draft Neighbourhood Plan was with Herefordshire Council for review. The consultation would commence on 16th December 2019 and run to 11th February 2020. Copies would be available to view at various locations and on the website.

11.0 Parishes’ Newsletter and Much Birch Website

11.1) To consider items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter and on the website. Clerk to send a précis to the Newsletter. The précis would include information regarding reporting suspicious activity to the Police on phone number 101 and also grit bin usage.

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

All the usual items would be included plus grit bins, self help gritting scheme, smart water and Pilgrim property presentation. Also to give consideration to a new notice board for the bus stop area near the A49 (“Conker Corner”).

13.0 Confirmation of the date of the next Meeting

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Thursday 5th December 2019, from 7.30pm, in The Much Birch Community Hall. Meetings for 2020 would be as follows: 9 Jan, 6 Feb, 5 March, 9 April, 8 May (Friday), 11 June, 9 July, 3 Sept, 8 Oct, 5 Nov, 3 Dec 2020. No meeting in August.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Signed:

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Chairman

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Date