

MUCH BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Much Birch Parish Council held at the Much Birch Community Hall on Thursday 8th February 2024 from 7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Alison Cook (Chair)
Cllr Roisin Burge
Cllr Michael Agyeman
Cllr Chris Pickering Grey
Cllr Andy Crum
Cllr Joseph Goldsmith

In attendance:

Parish Clerk; Alison Wright, Ward Cllr; Toni Fagan and Footpath Officer; David Irwin

Open Session:-

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no items raised in the Open Session.

The Open session closed at 7.31 pm.

1.0 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

2.0 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

3.0 Minutes of previous meeting

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held at the Much Birch Community Hall on the 11th January 2024, were approved as a true and correct record of the Meeting.

4.0 Reports

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

Golden Valley Briefing – Newsletter circulated when received.

Locality Steward

James Howells the Locality Steward had sent his bulletins. Also Members Monthly Update received and Street works updates received from Balfour Beatty.

Ward Councillor Ward Cllr Toni Fagan was present at the meeting. The Ward Cllr gave an update on the play area at Tump Lane. This would probably have to be resolved by Connexus as the housing authority. There may be some funding from the “Connected Communities Fund”. Ward Cllr advised that she would be away from duty for a period and someone else would be picking up her responsibilities.

The Ward Cllr advised that a key contact, Richard Timothy, had left National Highways, the council were trying to re-establish a new contact.

Free School Meals would be continuing through the half term holiday. Council tax was looking to be increased by 4.99% for 2024 – 2025.

There was an update on additional funding for lengthsman initiatives with emphasis on local, rural drainage priorities and use of local contractors to try to maximise productivity on this.

The children’s services budget was still overspent and it was hoped that staff could be transferred from high numbers of agency appointments to permanent staff to help reduce costs and improve service provision.

The Ward Cllr left the meeting at 7.47 pm.

4.2) Consideration of correspondence concerning parish land at Rosebank plus consideration of the future use of the recently surrendered parish land at Barrack Hill

The Chair had circulated some information. There was some historical detail including the outcome of a 2015 poll of the parish regarding possible sale or lease of the land parcels. This had come back with a majority vote in favour of the retention of the land parcels. After discussion, it was unanimously resolved that the land at Rosebank, Barrack Hill would **not** be partially sold in line with the request that had been received from the tenant. This decision not to sell would be relayed back to the tenant.

The other parcel of land adjacent to Valley View would be evaluated and steps taken to instigate restoration and to consider future use. The councillors would take a look at the current situation/condition and a discussion would take place as to how best to get the land back to a "fit state for rent". This land parcel, Valley View, would remain on the agenda. The parish land at Rosebank would be taken off the agenda.

5.0) Update on Correspondence

5.1) To receive any correspondence – noting the Information Sheet

Correspondence from Herefordshire Council

Talk Community bulletins

Talk Community Town and Parish Working Group consultation, the Chair would volunteer to be a contributor to this. It was commented that there were a relatively small number of spaces given the overall number of parishes (approx 8/130).

6.0 Financial Report

6.1) The following bank balance was noted:

@ 13 th January 2024 HSBC Community Account	£16239.83
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6.2) To approve list of payments (circulated separately)

The following payments were approved:

Payments to be made from bank account

Clerk paid in accordance with contract for February	
HM Revenue & Customs (tax)	£105.80
Much Birch Community Hall (hall rental)	£60.75

Resolved: that the payments were passed for payment: Unanimous.

6.3) To consider request for support from The Millennium Green Trust (via Rosemary Rigby MBE)

The Chair had circulated some information about the request. She had looked at the Charity accounts. Three parishes would be served by the charity objectives for the amenity land – the Millennium Green – these being Much Dewchurch, Much Birch and Llanwarne. The Chair and the Clerk would discuss potential contact to be made with the trustees/ Miss Rigby.

7.0 Planning Matters

7.1) To consider any planning applications and appeals as may be advised

There was one new application for consideration of comments:

APPLICATION NO & SITE ADDRESS: Planning Consultation - 240148 - The Pilgrim Hotel, Much Birch, Hereford, Herefordshire HR2 8HJ

DESCRIPTION: Proposed replacement of existing rear conservatory and terrace with a larger single storey extension and terrace.

GRID REF: OS 350005, 230835

APPLICATION TYPE: Planning Permission

The parish council discussed the proposals in planning consultation 240148 and resolved to comment in support of the application.

8.0 Parish Roads and Footpaths

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

The hedges at Barrack Hill had been cut but there was a lot of brash on the road. There were concerns about this being cleared up as the mess could potentially lead to blocked drains and ditches etc. It was commented that the roadside hedge on the parish land required cutting back.

8.2) To discuss recruitment of a new Lengthsman

The vacancy for a new Lengthsman was to be re-advertised.

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

Mr David Irwin, the Footpath Officer can be contacted on 01981 345109 or by e mail at MBfootpaths@btinternet.com

The Footpath Officer was in attendance at the meeting. His report of footpath matters had been circulated to the parish councillors.

The bi-monthly meeting of footpath officers was increasing in numbers attending. There should be four Local Access Forums held per year, only two had been held in 2023. David would attend when they were announced.

Stephen Organ was the new Public Rights of Way Officer - Footpath Co-ordinator for Herefordshire. E mail: Stephen.Organ@herefordshire.gov.uk

The fallen fence at path MB24 was causing concern. Clerk would write to the Public Rights of Way Team about the situation. There was also an enforcement outcome pending on redirection of the path MB24.

The path MB19 at Helen's Wood was closed due to a fallen tree. There was, apparently, no funding available for a tree surgeon to cut it up.

A successful parish walk had taken place with 20 walkers and 3 dogs. More walks were planned.

8.4) To receive any update on speeding in Tump Lane/Community Speed Watch (CSW)

It was advised that nine volunteers would be attending Community Speed Watch training, on 27th February, in the Much Birch Community Hall.

9.0 Parishes Newsletter and Much Birch Website

9.1) To consider items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter and on the website plus X (formerly known as Twitter). Clerk would send a précis to the Newsletter. This would include a summary of the responses to planning items, as applicable.

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

All the usual items would be included. Also the Lengthsman vacancy update, parish land, community speed watch and planning applications, as may be notified. Also - possible litter picking initiative.

11.0 Confirmation of the date of the next Meeting

The next Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Thursday 7th March 2024 from 7.30pm in the Much Birch Community Hall.

Future Meetings for 2024: April 4th, May 9th, June 6th, July 4th, No meeting in August, Sept 5th, Oct 3rd, Nov 7th and Dec 5th

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm

Signed:

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Chairman

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Date