

WALFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Walford Parish Council



Held on Wednesday 17th January 2024, 7:30pm
At Bishopswood Village Hall

Present: Councillors Akers (Chair), Evans, Petersen, Berry, Cole Simeon, Warburg, Corbett, Barnett, Terry, Vine and Watson.

In attendance: N Richmond (Clerk), and 8 members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies were received from Cllrs Sandra Cole and Llewellyn – reasons accepted.
2. **Declarations:** To receive declarations of interest and consider any written applications for dispensation. No written requests for dispensation received. Cllr Watson stated that she was a member of the HHMP Working Group as a resident.
3. **To consider minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 20th December 2023.**
Cllr Simeon Cole advised that the minute containing his comments about the Service Access Request was wrong and should only state that he had called for an extraordinary meeting. The clerk agreed to strike out the second sentence which Cllr Simeon Cole accepted. A vote was taken with 9 in approval of the minutes and 2 abstentions of councillors not present at the meeting. The Chairman of the meeting signed the minutes and both the Chairman and clerk signed the minute alteration described above.

4. **Subject Access Request.**

To discuss if the clerk or any councillor has received a request.

Cllr Akers advised that the clerk has stated that as far as he knows he has not received such a request, and, as such a request could have been made to any councillor, she asked if any councillor had received a request. No councillor confirmed the receipt of a request, which Cllr Terry said could be a request to know what personal information was being held or other forms of information, and that, upon receiving a request a response was required within 30 days. Cllr Akers called on Cllr Simeon Cole to elaborate on what he knew and where his information had come from but he chose not to comment more than to say that he had been informed that a Subject Access Request had been made. Cllr Simeon Cole was urged to go back to the source of his information and ask that any such request be sent again immediately to the clerk.

5. **Public participation session:**

5.1. **To receive an update from West Mercia Police.**

No representative of the police was in attendance.

5.2. **To receive a report from the Ward Councillor.**

The winter report from the Ward Councillor had been circulated. Cllr Berry thanked Cllr Simeon Cole for his informative and detailed report. Cllr Akers asked Cllr Simeon Cole what action Herefordshire Council were taking to recover the fraudulent £110k covid loans and £50k bounce back loans perpetrated on them.

5.3. **To receive a report from the Localities Steward.**

Reports from the Localities Steward had been circulated. No questions arose.

5.4. **Public participation session: three (3) minute limit per person (15 minutes maximum)**

Peter Dewhurst spoke first asking if the planning application to move the war memorial had been submitted to Herefordshire Council, and the clerk advised that it had been submitted. Mr Dewhurst then enquired why the traffic barriers had been removed from the HHMP site. The clerk advised that his understanding was that the barriers were on loan to the parish lengthsman from Balfour Beatty. The lengthsman had delivered them to the HHMP site as a favour, and after they had been there for around two months he took them back. The lengthsman had not advised the clerk he was taking them away which was regrettable, however as they did not belong to the lengthsman it could be understood if they were required elsewhere. Cllr Watson explained the barriers were required as part of the agreement with the contractor (commissioned to scrape the site) that HHMP would supply the barriers and this agreement saved the project £100. The clerk proposed that he ask the Balfour Beatty Locality Steward if he could find and deliver more barriers. It appears that the absence of the barriers had allowed a fuel tanker to park on the site.

Mr Grahame Morgan-Watson spoke in relation to a statement made at the Finance Committee meeting held on 10th January that there was a clause in the contractual agreement between Walford Parish

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Council and Riversea Holdings to the effect that 25% of the management fee paid to Walford Parish Council by Riversea Holdings could be spent on maintenance of the canoe launch, but in fact no such clause existed. Mr Morgan-Watson stated his view that a disproportionate amount of council funds were spent on KBCL, that the precept should not be increased and that the new accounts format should separate out the individual lines of income from Riversea Holdings as existed in the current budget reporting. Cllr Berry responded apologising for the error made in the statement at the finance committee. He advised that he believed that council had agreed to utilise the 25% for maintenance and that he would investigate council minutes to confirm this at the next meeting. Mr Morgan-Watson also requested that the new budget format include the breakdown of the income arising from the Canoe Launch, the Council agreed to provide this detail.

6. Finance:

6.1 To approve the payments on Appendix A.

The clerk advised that the only payment to approve was for lengthsmen work on the Hom Green road, and he advised that having driven along there he could confirm a significant amount of work carried out opening grips on the roadside to allow water to run off the road. Cllr Vine expressed her concerns over council visibility of instructions for works being carried out by the lengthsmen and the amounts being charged. Cllr Akers pointed out that a resident had drawn councils' attention to water pooling on sections of the road. Cllr Berry proposed that the payment be authorised. This was seconded by Cllr Barnett and a vote taken 10 in favour 1 abstention so was **PASSED**.

6.2 To ratify the payments on Appendix A.

Cllr Petersen proposed that the salary payments be ratified. This was seconded by Cllr Evans and all voted in favour.

6.4 To consider a proposal from the Finance Committee to increase the precept request for 2024-25 by £1,220.00 to £ 29,045.00, an increase of 4.38%.

Several councillors expressed reservations about the 2024-25 budget so it was decided to discuss the precept request first before considering the budget. Cllr Terry asked where the 4.38% figure had come from. Cllr Berry outlined various increases in operating costs including training, insurance, subscriptions and venue hire and that he had calculated that these represented an increase of £1220 ie 4.38 % of the current precept. While Cllr Warburg supported the increase as the minimum we should be looking for in order not to be faced with a much larger increase down the line, most Cllrs were opposed to the increase including Cllrs Simeon Cole, Vine and Akers while Cllr Terry thought the budget figures were not clear enough to support raising the precept. Cllr Berry proposed the increase which was seconded by Cllr Warburg. Cllr Simeon Cole then called for a named vote. Cllrs voting in favour of the increase were Cllrs Berry and Warburg. Cllrs voting against the increase were Cllrs Simeon Cole, Petersen, Terry, Barnett, Evans, Vine, Corbett, Watson and Akers so the proposal was rejected.

Cllr Akers proposed that the precept request be maintained at the current level of £ 27,825.00 This was seconded by Cllr Simeon Cole and all voted in favour.

6.3 To approve the budget for 2024-25 following the meeting of the Finance Committee.

A suggestion was made that council hold back on agreeing the budget for more detailed consideration. Cllr Berry advised however that agreeing the budget was a requirement in setting the precept level so Cllr Akers suggested that council go through all the expenditure lines individually, so councillors knew exactly how the budget had been drawn up. A discussion was held on each individual line and as a result two lines of expenditure were reduced and the balancing transfer from reserves reduced accordingly. A vote was then held with all councillors in favour, so the budget was **APPROVED**.

7. Kerne Bridge Canoe Launch: To receive reports and consider any actions:

7.1. KBCL Maintenance Co-ordinator report.

Cllr Petersen reported that in relation to the proposed work on the railway buttress a habitat regulation assessment had been sent to Natural England.

7.2. To receive an update on the improvements to access the permissive footpath (from Kerne Bridge to the Canoe Launch) directly from the Inn on the Wye.

Cllr Simeon Cole advised that the matter had now been passed from the HC properties dept. to PROW and so was still in process.

7.3. To receive an update on the conversion of the permissive footpath to a Public Right of Way.

Cllr Warburg advised that a site meeting will be arranged with HC PROW when they have the necessary GPS device available.

7.4. To approve one of two quotations to carry out tree works at KBCL for public safety.

The quotations covered two separate jobs (1 & 2) but there only appeared to be quotations available for Job 1. Cllr Petersen proposed that council approve the lower quotation for Job 1 From Adrian Hope

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Tree Services at £ 2,395. This was seconded by Cllr Terry and all voted in favour. Job 2 will be considered at the next meeting when both quotations can be located.

8. Projects: To receive written reports from the following projects and working groups and consider action:

8.1. Community Support Scheme Coordinator

Rebecca Perdells' report having been circulated Cllr Barnett outlined activities that had taken place including a lunch at BVH that day. The ongoing need for more volunteers was highlighted but all was going ok – he noted that the contract required booking The Hub as other rooms at the hall are.

8.2. Police Liaison.

Cllr Corbett reported that PC David Alexander is moving to working 3 days a week so will be less contactable. Apparently two calls were made to the police concerning the joyriders at KBCL car park but a missing person incident meant the police could not attend. It was also reported that Walford Primary School had been broken into causing considerable criminal damage. Cllr Akers reported that the resident who had had heating oil stolen from a tank had suffered a repeat of the incident.

8.3. Howle Hill Memorial Project

8.3.1. To receive an update on the progress of the project.

A report had been circulated no questions arose.

8.4. To receive an update on the Parish newsletter.

Cllr Akers is working on a newsletter which Cllr Evans said should include the advertising of the last load of timber from KBCL.

8.5. To receive an update on the installation of defibrillators on Howle Hill and Bulls Hill, and to consider if further defibrillators are required in light of an incident in Coughton.

Cllr Akers advised that the defibrillator would be installed at Howle Hill on Thursday 18th January, and subject to successful operation then a further solar panel would be purchased for the Bulls Hill installation. With defibrillators at Walford Village Hall, The Mill Race and Bishopswood Village Hall and the installations at Howle Hill and Bulls Hill council believes that the parish has good coverage.

9. Highways and public rights of way: To receive written reports and consider actions:

9.1. PROW officer

Cllr Evans had nothing to report.

9.2. Lengthsman Co-ordinator, to include consideration of recommendations for Parish Lengthsman ditch clearing works and receive an update on the expenditure of £4,046 available under the current 2023/24 Lengthsman Scheme.

Given time constraints it was agreed to hold this item over to the next meeting.

9.3. To approve an instruction to the lengthsman to clear any obstructions in the drainage system at The Dam.

Cllr Simeon Cole advised that he had received a quotation from the Lengthsman but as Council had not been circulated with it prior to the meeting and in sufficient time to be able to properly debate and agree, it was agreed that it must be held over until a future meeting in accordance with standing orders.

The time having reached 9.30pm Cllr Akers proposed a 15 minute extension. This was seconded by Cllr Watson and all voted in favour.

9.4. To consider a Lengthsman Parish Plan for 2024/25.

Cllr Simeon Cole advised that the parish council contract sent to the lengthsman had many errors within it and proposed a separate meeting with the lengthsman to address the issues. The proposal received no seconder. The clerk advised that he had received no communication from the lengthsman that there were issues with the contract, and in fact the lengthsman had been at a previous meeting at which he had only expressed a concern that the council budget may have been insufficient to cover the number of maintenance days in the contract. The clerk will speak to Terry Griffiths about this.

9.5. To receive an update on the Lengthsman contract.

See 9.4

9.6. To receive an update on the application for the Lengthsman scheme for 2024/25.

The clerk confirmed that he has submitted an expression of interest form for the scheme.

9.7. To receive an update on the repairs to the Coughton bus shelter.

The clerk has received only one quotation for the further repairs required and is chasing a second quotation.

9.8. Cockshot Wood Quarry.

To consider Walford Parish Council responsibility for boulders falling onto the B4234 from the land.

Cllr Warburg confirmed that the land was not owned by Walford Parish Council but is a registered common

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land with no known owner. There are no registered commoners. Herefordshire Council have powers to prevent undesirable or dangerous actions on the land. He proposed that council write to Herefordshire Council to clarify responsibilities which was agreed.

10. Planning:

- 10.1. To comment on applications for determination by Herefordshire Council - see Appendix B.**
No planning applications were received.

11. Leys Hill junction: To provide an update.

Cllr Akers advised that a meeting of the Safety and Environmental Working Group would be set up before the next parish council to discuss this matter.

The time having reached 21.47pm the meeting was closed with all other items from the agenda held over to the next meeting.

16. Items for next meeting agenda: (No discussion)

- 19.1. Leys Hill Junction
- 19.2. The Dam
- 19.3. Daycroft Lane drainage.
- 19.4. WPC policy review.
- 19.5. Conversion of the footpath from the Inn on the Wye to the canoe launch into a PROW.
- 19.6. Defibrillators
- 19.8. Coughton Bus Shelter
- 19.9. HALC
- 19.10. Lengthsman issues:
 - A) Parish Plan
 - B) Lengthsman Contract
 - C) Drainage work at The Dam
 - D) Lengthsman schemes 2023-24 and 2024-25

17. Next WPC meeting: Wednesday 21st February 2024 7.30pm Bishopswood Village Hall .

The meeting finished at 21.47 pm.

Signed by the Chairman.

DATE Joanne Akers 21/2/2024