

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on
Tuesday 13th November 2012 @ 7.30pm
in the Green Room, Ashton under Hill**

Members and Officers present: Cllrs Barnett (chair), Cllr Fletcher, Cllr Sanger-Davies, Cllr Moor, Cllr Cope, Cllr Rees

In attendance: Clerk & 2 members of the public

1. **Apologies:** To receive apologies and to approve reasons for absence. Cllr Satchell & CC A Hardman.
2. **Declarations of Interest:**
 - a) Register of Interests: Councillors are reminded of the need to update their register of interests.
 - b) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature.
 - c) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda and their nature.
 - d) Written requests for the council to grant a dispensation (S33 of the Localism Act 2011) are to be with the clerk at least four clear days prior to a meeting.

Councillors who have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, or an Other Disclosable Interest which falls within the terms of paragraph 12(4) (b) of the code of conduct, must leave the room for the relevant items.

Failure to register or declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest may result in the commission of a criminal offence.

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2012 were approved.

The meeting opened @ 7.30 pm and closed to listen to Mr David Cotton speaking about the meeting he had with Parish Councillors and other affected residents regarding Beckford Road. Mr Brian Stephens who attended the meeting in order to prepare the next Newsletter. The Chair opened the meeting again at 7.40pm

4. Progress Reports

- a. Social Centre
Cllr Cope reported that the Harvest Supper went off well. There will be a Shindig on 1st December, tickets now available.
- b. Bredon Hill Conservation Group
Meeting to take place on Tuesday 20th November
- c. PACT
- d. Lengthsman
Leaves need clearing in Willow Close & Back Lane
- e. Verge outside Rookery Nook
Refer to report from CC Hardman
- f. Footway to Willow Close
It is no longer safe to walk on the footway, especially for children. Clerk to write a strong letter to CC Hardman advising him that the PC will hold the Council liable should any accident happen.
- g. Bus Stop sign opposite Cottons Lane
Completed
- h. Dog Warden
- i. Vehicle Activated Sign
Clerk to follow up with CC Hardman
- j. Overhanging hedges
This has been sorted out
- k. Allotments
Cllr Moor will follow up with the Garden Centre
- l. CFR
Waiting on reply from Ambulance Service
- m. Junction at the Cross
Highways have advised that this junction does not meet the criteria for a Stop sign.

3. **New Items**

- a) Request for a grant from St Barbara's Church
It was agreed to give St Barbaras a grant of £1326.00 to cover 50% of the costs towards Grass cutting & Hedge maintenance for the 2013/14 year.

- b) Winter maintenance
Letter attached, nothing further

- c) Request for a grant from the Recreation centre
It was agreed to give a grant of £2500,00 to the Social Centre for 2013/14

4. District and County Councillors' reports: for information. (Items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting.)

Dear All

I am sorry not to be with you tonight because I have had to attend the Malvern Hills District Council Extraordinary Meeting to make some points in regards to the SWDP which would affect the County Council and its delivery of vital infrastructure.

1. **School Funding** – The press have made considerable play over the supposed cuts to the Evesham and Pershore Pyramids in school funding. The Government has changed the criteria that we can use for our local system of school funding and one of the problems that this creates is that we used to have 46 factors some of which have evolved over time and were of a rather dubious nature, often to solve a particular local issue running back in some cases to the 1960's, down to only allowing us to use 12 factors. This has created, if you run the new formula in a pure way, a lot of turbulence in the school funding system where some schools gain quite considerably and other schools lose. The two categories that lose under the current system are very small primary schools and middle schools because the Government's formula doesn't acknowledge the existence of these two types of schools with special emphasis given to them which our old system used to. While the formula run in a pure way gave very luring headlines, we at County Hall are not as stupid as that and the bit the press chose not to report was that we have introduced a system of floors and ceilings so that no school loses more than 1.4% of its budget and on the other hand, much to the irritation of the winners, no schools gains more than 0.7% of its budget. Following lobbying from us the Government minister is coming to Worcestershire to see us, and promised a review in early 2013.

2. **Learning Disability Reform** – Again the Cabinet made a decision last week that we would implement a new system of funding learning disabilities which introduces a bench mark to be considered between residential care and continuing care at home. The aim of this has been misunderstood by the Worcester news and is not to drive people out of their homes and into residential care, but is a reflection of the budget position that we find ourselves in since as was misreported by the Worcester News, the cost of learning disabilities is not £11m but is £34m and it has risen by £11m over the past 4 years and we are currently investing in some very high care costs packages to support people at home. In one case in excess of £230,000 a year and the average costs of a care package is just over £80,000 and we think it is only right in view of the increasing demand and the restriction on our budget that we do reflect a degree of reality, which enables us to have a proper conversation with the 80 or so new users that we are getting onto our books every year now. This is a tremendous tribute in some ways to the NHS and its skill at preserving life, it does of course have a knock on effect further on down the line.

3. **The Verge Outside Rookery Nook** – Following an alert from one of your Parish Councillors that this had not been progressed I have chased up the Highways Department and am sorry to report that we, believe it or not, are waiting for some oak posts to be delivered and we will then come in and re-kerb it and install the oak posts. But thanks for the reseeding and reconstruction that has taken place and I will ask the Highways Department to press on with this as fast as we can. I am intending to visit the village with the Head of Highways in December if I can find a free afternoon just to run through exactly what needs doing on footpath reconstruction and to see if we can make some progress on Rabbit Lane, while the patching and restoration has been helpful, we do of course need to provide a longer lasting wear surface.

4. **Drainage** – I am aware that we still have a number of outstanding drainage issues along Rabbit Lane and I will endeavour to persuade the Head of Highways that the answer to these issues is for the County Council to reinstate the ditch line that has been filled up since private landowners seem to maintain now that there never was a ditch, whereas I am pretty convinced that there used to be a ditch and I would be interested if the Parish Council could email any views or evidence that there used to be a ditch line along this road.
5. **The Budget Position** – The County Council's budget position remains challenging since we have now reduced our spend by over £50m in the first two years and I continue to be very gloomy until I have seen the colour of the Government's money which the Chancellor is going to announce on the 5th December. This means that the Local Government settlement, I understand, will not be available until the 19th December which means that the Cabinet Meeting which was to agree the budget consultation has had to be moved into early January which shortens up the timescale for the budget consultation and budget approval process considerably. I have every confidence however that the County Council will be able to respond to whatever is thrown at it and while we have seen some unusual pressures emerging in neighbouring authorities, the position at the County Council is that bar one budget area, we are all pretty much on track and where I would wish us to be. The budget area which is causing the most concern is the question of Looked After Children where the budget is currently overspending to the tune of about £2m per year as we now have over 600 children in care as opposed to 8 years ago when the number was just over 400 and this is a considerable additional expenditure and not one that we can easily find a solution which means we will be having to reprioritise this area for additional finance in the forthcoming budget unless we decide to hold the position for the following year to see if we can manage the numbers down in some way. I fully expect the County Council to accept the Government's offer of a grant to freeze its Council Tax in the forthcoming year but of course this is a decision for the County Council and not for me but I think it is likely that we will go for a freeze of Council Tax in the 3rd year.
6. **Lastly** – If I can just reassure the Parish Council that we are well stocked with salt at the moment and however, a further order leaving Morocco on a boat at the end of December will replenish any supplies that we will need and so anticipate that our gritting programme will be as effective as it was last year.

I am sorry yet again to miss one of your meetings but I am sure that if you need me you know where to contact me by either ringing or sending me an email and I will hope to be able to make your January meeting.

Yours as ever.

Adrian Hardman

Your County Councillor

5. **Planning:**

W/12/01633/PP	White Hart Villa, formation of new access	-	Approved	
W/12/01273/PN	Belfield Nurseries, erection of glasshouse & open sided canopy	-		Approved
W/12/01821/PP	The Cottage, Replace 12 windows	-	Approved	

The council agreed (prior ME) that members would consider how best the Clerk should record comments to Planning Applications as the present method seems to give equal weight to one minority opinion as the combined opinions of the majority.

When the clerk summarises comments the majority view should carry more weight, otherwise there's almost no point employing a "**democratic majority voting system**".

6. **Finance:**

Budget meeting, it was agreed to set the Precept at £10500.00 which is a decrease of £3,500.00 from last year.

The current account opened with a balance of £82.85

Income to the value of £7,000 was received. Cheques to the value of £0.00 were written out £3,856.00 is still to be presented. This left a closing balance of £10,773.15 in the current account.

The savings account opened with £5,303.55 received £0. interest, giving a closing balance of £5,303.55

As at October 21st 2012 the cash assets for the PC stand at £12,220.70

To approve Cheques for payment

CH 692	M English	£649.50
CH 693	AJ Tree Surgeon	£642.00
CH 694	M Woodhouse	£ 24.00
CH 695	ASC	£680.00

To approve the clerks wages for Sep, Oct & November ££534.60 (£178.20 pm)

Computer allowance	£37.50	(12.50pm)
Phone allowance	£15.00	(£ 5.00pm)
Expenses	£15.99	
Mileage	£46.41	
Total	<u>£649.50</u>	

It is noted that cheque 100688 payable to ASC was made out incorrectly. It did not reflect the fact that the PC paid £1584.00 for the hire or the marquee. Therefore the clerk made out a new cheque for £680.00 which covers the annual donation for 2012.

7. **Correspondence for Information:** To note the attached appendix of items which have been circulated or will be available for inspection at the meeting. (OR a list of items will be available at the meeting.)

Council Tax Briefing to be held at Wychavon on 21st November @ 6pm - Clerk attending

SWDP Briefing to be held at Wychavon on Monday 3rd December @ 5.30pm

8. **Clerk's report on Urgent Decisions since the last meeting.**

9. **Councillors' reports and items for future agenda:** Councillors may use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas.

Gorse Hill, footpaths need attention - Still waiting on CC Hardman to arrange for the footpath to be rectified. Once the bad weather sets in there will be same bad falls happening, especially by the elderly people living up on the higher banks. DC
Blocked Drains near the Rooftop Housing Association bungalow which runs down the south side of BHM School is smelling, Severn Trent to investigate. – Clerk to report
Grass cutting is up to date. JF will take Simon around the village to identify areas.
Litter Pick will take place on the 2nd February. Clerk to order 20 kits and deliver to ASH on Friday 1st Feb.
A quotation to repair the wall around the War Memorial of £325.00 was agreed.

Supplementary Low Carbon Report for PC Meeting Nov 2012 following attendance at a “Communities Event” at the Civic Centre 24 Oct.

CAR CLUB – a really interesting talk on car clubs as opposed to car sharing schemes. Basically a group of car users, driving less than 6000 miles p.a., purchase old but reliable car(s). Members then reserve a car for any length of time from as little as 1 hour to a couple of weeks. Charges are based on actual running costs. Each car will have a guardian member. Savings are significant and the planet is greener with fewer cars on the road. See

WWW.greener.colwall.info/carclub

Broadband – Worcestershire CC is in process of improving Broadband speeds for the more isolated rural communities unlikely to be serviced by the major providers – we need to check on Ashton's future improvements.

Energy Switching Schemes – in short these are more than local buying groups and the speaker concentrated on Wychavon's chosen partner, “ichoosr” recently seen on TV. A Dutch company which, with the support of Wychavon DC, will pamphlet the region for subscribers, then on basis of anticipated numbers, negotiate with major gas and electricity suppliers. The savings are substantial and **I recommend we encourage whole village to participate** when pamphlets arrive – it's a “no brainer” and will be organised and supported by Wychavon.

Community Land Trusts is a co-operative type movement(s) by local communities to acquire land and buildings in perpetuity for the Community. Google “Gloucestershirelandforcoops” for more info.

Neighbourhood Planning – is a new Govt initiative to help communities develop their own plans within a village or community which in our case would complement/integrate with the SWDP. A plan might include dwellings, small businesses, social centres etc. It does not short circuit current planning regulations but empowers a community to develop its own ideas. It is quite complicated but might be worth investing some time.

The response to Oil Buying Group at Village Fete at beginning of September was very good and all interested parties have registered and indeed placed their first orders at the beginning of October with Evesons.

The Allotments Association is in the doldrums a bit following delays with Ashton Garden and Plant Centre's planning application and difficulties with neighbour's objections to increased

traffic. I am trying to persuade Mr Hughes (or land owner) to grant members access via old railway line off the Groaten.

I will report back on a "Local Communities Event – Wed 24th Oct at the Civic Centre, Pershore which includes Improving Broadband speeds, alternative fuel buying groups, Community Land Trusts and neighbourhood Planning.

Frank Moore 25th Oct 2012

10. To consider the exclusion of the public and press in the public interest for consideration of the following items:

- a. Personnel issues.
- b. Legal issues.

11. The next meeting will be held @ 7.30pm on Tuesday 15th January 2013 in the Green Room, Ashton under Hill

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

.....(chairman)

.....(date)