

BISHOPSTONE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting
held on Wednesday 8th May 2024 in Stretton Sugwas Village Hall

PRESENT: Cllr. J Macklin; Cllr. R Morgan; Cllr. Muriel Holmes; Cllr. Serena Crump; Cllr D Hadley; Cllr L Handscomb; Cllr C Taylor and Cllr S Keefe.

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs Lesley Hay (Parish Clerk) and Ward Cllr D Hitchiner.

No members of the public.

Chairman welcomed those present to this the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

1.To Elect Chairman.

Cllr. John Macklin had previously expressed his wish to stand down as Chairman. Cllr Serena Crump was proposed by Cllr Macklin and seconded by Cllr Charlotte Taylor and was unanimously elected as Chairman. Cllr Crump accepted the nomination and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Chairman form.

Before moving on to the official business of the meeting – the new Chairman expressed a huge vote of thanks to Cllr John Macklin for the time and effort he has given to Bishopstone Group Parish Council both as a Councillor and Chairman over the last 40 years. Cllr Crump was delighted to confirm that Cllr Macklin will remain a Parish Councillor – to allow a time of hand over - but he will officially resign in November

2. Parish Councillor vacancies. It was agreed to try and recruit to fill these vacancies.

2.1. The Clerk reminded Councillors with regard to the legally required 6 month attendance rule (not 6 meetings).

3. Elect Vice Chairman. Cllr C Taylor was unanimously elected as Vice Chairman.

4. Elect Responsible Finance Officer - Lesley Hay as RFO was re-elected.

5. Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr. C Draper and Cllr L Goldwater.

6. Disclosure of Interests. Disclosable Pecuniary, Non- Disclosable, Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary interests plus written requests for dispensation – no declarations made.

6.1. All Councillors, except Cllr D Hadley, declared that there were no new or changed interests to their originally declared register.

Cllr D Hadley will fill in his amended Declaration of Interest form and return to the Parish Clerk to submit to the Monitoring Officer.

7. Election of Council Representatives

7.1 Footpath Officers –

Proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed -
Bridge Sollars – Cllr C Taylor

Byford - Cllr M Holmes
Bishopstone - Cllr R Morgan
Mansell Gamage - Cllr Lewis Goldwater
Kenchester – Cllr D Hadley

7.2 Planning Officers - as per parish

The Clerk reminded those present that notification of all Planning Applications affecting the parishes are emailed to the clerk.

As previously agreed, a Councillor - together with another Councillor (as required) - will arrange to visit all planning application sites. The site meeting will be arranged at a convenient time and will provide an opportunity to discuss the proposed plans with the applicant.

This information would then be reported back to the next Parish Council meeting for discussion and - if required - a comment submitted to the Planning Officer.

7.3 Cllr S Keefe agreed to manage the Bishopstone Notice Board and accepted the keys from Cllr Macklin.

7.4 Cllr R. Morgan agreed to manage the defibrillator and the information folder was handed over by Cllr Macklin. Cllr Macklin will inform the authorities of the change of email address.

8. Ward Councillor David Hitchiner's Report - May 2024

County Council matters.

Two particularly significant decisions by Cabinet since the last meeting

Southern Relief Road and the Western Bypass.

Cabinet has approved the spending of £10.3m on these road projects.

I have raised a number of issues of concern:

The concerns in summary are:

- The new Clehonger roundabout is designed without an arm onto the Western Bypass. It has 4 arms when 5 will be needed. If built as designed it will need to be redesigned and rebuilt when the Western part is built. It will not be a simple matter of putting another arm into the roundabout. So why not get it right first time? The Council has a choice. Go ahead with the roundabout as planned knowing that it is not fit for purpose, with the associated criticism when it has to be dug up not long after it is built, with the associated additional cost, and with all the inconvenience to local residents of the second build, or alternatively have the roundabout redesigned now to include a fifth arm.
- A report from WSP dated November 2018, which is after the date of the Planning Permission for the SRR, refers to a number of significant issues that need to be addressed

including a need to raise the bridge over the railway by 0.5m. I have asked whether these changes have been taken into account in the decision made by Cabinet.

- A key factor in determining that the Western Route is the favoured one is that the A49 through Hereford is to be de-trunked. This has the benefit of enabling the County Council to take full control of this road through the City, but also the burden of maintaining this road and the bridge over the River Wye which is likely to need to be repaired. Cllr Price has said that a deal will be done with the Highways Agency in connection with this. This will also mean that the Bypass will need to be built in such a way that the Highways Agency will take it on.

Many see the benefit of a bypass to speed up traffic into and out of Hereford. The Council data attached to the report predicts that once the full bypass is built, journey time along the Belmont Road will reduce by 59 seconds. For Kings Acre the reduction is 1 second, before account is taken of new housing on Three Elms. The project will therefore not deliver what many residents expect. I am not convinced that spending over £300m (at current prices) on the Bypass is good value to local residents.

BBLP

Two years notice has been given to terminate this contract. I am no longer privy to the negotiations that are taking place but the options including continuing with BBLP but on different terms which would include more flexibility with more work being done by the Council, a new provider, or taking the role in house. I have a hope that BBLP might want to keep the contract and so work hard over the next two years to convince the public and the Council that this is appropriate. Taking the work in house is my least favoured option. As the Conservatives are a minority administration they need the votes of others to push through their preferred option, when this is known. I hope that this means that they will have to seek consensus of Councillors.

8.1 Herefordshire Planning Department – Local Plan and future of existing Neighbourhood Development Plan. After discussion, it was agreed to postpone revisiting the existing Neighbourhood Development Plan until the Herefordshire Local Plan had been finalised and adopted – which is thought to be June 2026.

8.2. Outgoing Chairman's annual report:

Two Councillors, Sharon Knight who represented Bridge Sollars Parish and Mark Geary who represented Byford Parish resigned from the Parish Council during this year both have moved out of our area. I would on behalf of the Parish Council thank them for their time spent on Council work. We have been able to co-opt two new Councillors on to the Parish Council David Hadley to represent Kenchester Parish and Charlotte Taylor to take over from Sharon Knight and represent Bridge Sollars.

The Parish Council was again successful in their application for additional funding towards the Lengthsman scheme. In my opinion this has been a success, enabling the Parish Council to carry out regular maintenance on our highways, plus additional drainage work, cutting back vegetation at the junctions and maintaining our footpaths, also replacement of several broken gate posts, work which would not have been carried out without this scheme.

We still have major drainage problems on our road network, road surface erosion from a spring by Byford Church, surface water collecting and running down the road in the west end of Bishopstone Village, resurface work needed on Bishon Lane and a cross road drain collapse at Kenchester Rectory causing the road to flood. Over the years I along with Parish Councillors and the Ward Councillor have had many meeting with the Locality Stewart and representatives of Balfour Beatty over the pre listed items, we have had promises to rectify these problems but nothing has been forth coming.

Making space for Nature in our Parish was a scheme taken up by Councillor Sarah Keefe and Councillor Rosemary Morgan with help from Councillor Muriel Holmes for Byford this includes planting wild flowers throughout the parishes on verges and green spaces, thank you all for your efforts in supporting this very worthwhile scheme.

The parishes carried out their annual litter picking on Saturday March 30th 2024, we gathered eleven bags of rubbish from out verge sides thanks to everyone who helped. Please note I have handed over the Parish litter picking kit to Councillor Sarah Keefe.

Finally, I wish to thank all the Parish Councillors for their support over the last fourteen years I have been Chairman and I would like to record the Parish Councils thanks to our Clerk, Lesley Hay, for all her advice and help throughout the year.

8.3 Open Session – no members of public present. No issues raised.

8.4 The Chairman closed the Open session

9. The Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 17th March 2024 were agreed to be a true record and it was voted and unanimously agreed that they be adopted and signed by the Chairman.

Follow up issues:

9.1 The Weir. The Clerk confirmed that she had had no further communication from David Bailey or Anna Watts - National Trust in Herefordshire – following their to talk about their plans for The Weir. However, Cllr Keefe confirmed that had spoken with Anna Watts and that they are still in the process of following up legal procedures/planning etc. associated with their plans at The Weir.

9.2 Cllr Hadley asked about the map which shows The Old School boundaries. The Clerk will forward a copy of the map and associated email.

9.3. The Rectory Kenchester – the lengthsman reported to the clerk that he had visited the the drain by the green outreach box and had rodded in an attempt to free the blockage under the road. Whilst the rodding would only go half way – water was trickling out the other end which would indicate that the drain may only be partially blocked. The Lengthsman suggested that the drain be jetted to see if the blockage could be freed. After discussion, it was agreed to ask the lengthsman for a quote and to get this done before the Autumn.

Sign on the Wye Valley Walk – junction U90011 and U90012 needs a new post –lengthsman will liaise with the Chairman when he visits Bishopstone next week.

Shetton Barns. The drain under the oak tree just beyond Shetton turn that leads to Yazor Brook is constantly blocked. The Lengthsman confirmed that they had dug out a pit and the water is slowly moving towards the corner – however, it then stops - which may be due to the tree roots having caused damage. It was acknowledged that the ditch had been jetted within the last 2/3 years and, after discussion, it was agreed to ask the Lengthsman for a quote to get this pipe jetted again.

At the same time, Cllr Taylor asked if the Lengthsman could liaise with her with regard to the ongoing problems in Bishon Lane. In the first instance, Clerk will ask lengthsman to contact Cllr Taylor by telephone prior to his visit next week.

Cllr Holmes would also like to discuss a problem between Old Rose Cottage and The Court – opposite the Church in Byford - with regard to possible jetting to attempt to clear the brick pit. In the first instance, Clerk will ask the lengthsman to contact Cllr Holmes by telephone prior to his visit next week.

10.Finance Matters:

10.1. Schedule of Payments for April had been circulated and it was unanimously agreed to pay all outstanding invoices for April 2024.

End of year Bank Balances had been circulated together with copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/2024.

10.2 The Annual Governance Statement for 2023/2024 was agreed and accepted by Council. The External Audit Form was duly signed by the Chairman and the Clerk as Responsible Finance Officer.

10.3 The Annual Accounts for 2023/2024 had been audited and these were agreed and accepted by Council. The External Audit form was completed and signed by the Chairman and Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer.

10.4 The Certificate of Exemption was signed and together with the Contact details will be returned to the External Auditor

The Notice of Date of Commencement of Period of the Exercise of Rights is ready to be displayed on the 2th June 2024 for 30 working days up to and including 12th July 2024. The Clerk informed those present that all documentation will be up loaded on to the website and displayed on the village Notice Boards within the appropriate time scale.

10.5 It was unanimously agreed to appoint Robert Taplin as Internal Auditor.

10.6 It was agreed to make a donation of £50 to the internal auditor – the Clerk will get a thank you card and send donation.

11.To Consider adopting the Standing Orders; Financial Regulations; Financial Risk Assessment and Code of Conduct.

The Clerk explained that the Standing Orders and the Financial Risk Assessment had not changed since last adopted 2023. The Financial Regulations had recently been amended and circulated. There was codicil now to be added to the existing Code of Conduct which had also been circulated. After discussion, it was agreed to adopt the existing and revised documents. Clerk will circulate email copies.

11.1 The annual insurance renewal policy has been received. As there was no increase in the annual premium - it was unanimously agreed the clerk should settle the invoice. The Clerk explained that the name on the policy was – Bishopstone & District Group Parish Council – and she was in the process of getting that changed to Bishopstone Group Parish Council.

11.2 To confirm acceptance of D C Gardening's 2024-2025 Contract and to confirm receipt of his Insurance Policy for 2024-2025. Both on file.

11.3. The Clerk confirmed that the Public Realm Services contract with Balfour Betty Living Places (BBLP) is due to end in 2026. Further details will be shared as Herefordshire Council process the changes.

The Clerk informed Councillors that the administration of the Lengthsman scheme has, as of 1st April 2024, been taken back 'in house' by Herefordshire Council.

The Clerk confirmed she had registered Bishopstone Group Parish Council as a member of the Parish Lengthsman Scheme; had prepared and submitted an Annual Maintenance Plan for 2024-2025. The Clerk also confirmed she had a signed Contract with Herefordshire Council for the grant funding of £1752.00 in relation to Public Realm Maintenance as outlined in the Annual Maintenance Plan and to be matched funded by Herefordshire Council. The Parish Council will be expected to match fund by £876.00

11.4 Fly tipping. There had been a recent incident of local fly tipping which had been reported and removed the same day.

11.5. Herefordshire Waste Service Webinar – change of date to 25th June 2024 – 12.45 to 14.00pm. The Clerk confirmed she had booked a place to attend.

12. Planning :

Planning Consultation - 230681 - Cork And Bottle Barn, Mansel Lacy, Hereford, Herefordshire. Proposed removal of condition 2 of planning permission 82/575 (Conversion of first floor of outbuilding to a first floor flat) - to regularise the current arrangements. The barn has been let as a full time home since 2002 and in separate ownership. After discussion – no objections were raised.

13. ‘Making space for Nature in our Parish’ All present expressed their thanks to Cllrs Keefe and Morgan and to Cllr Holmes for their continued efforts and that the planted/cultivated areas were a real show.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk would liaise with Lengthsman (D C Gardening) and ask him to contact the Cllr Keefe on his next visit to Bishopstone to make sure the correct areas are strimmed etc. The Clerk will also try to find out from the Locality Steward who the contractor is that strims/cuts the verges on behalf of Balfour Beatty.

14. New website. The Clerk explained that despite numerous emails to HALC she had not be able to get a response or acknowledgement with regard to obtaining revised .gov.uk website. The Clerk confirmed that she had liaised with Mark Millmore and had officially cancelled the incorrect Bishopstone and District .gov.uk website.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk and Cllr Keefe would meet in June and Cllr Keefe would help the clerk to register .gov.uk website via a SLCC link.

15. Legacy Fortress for Generation – circulated. No further action.

16. Date of the Next Parish Council Meeting as Wednesday 3rd July 2024 - please note change in date due to Clerk’s holiday.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30p.m.

Signed:

Date: