

BISHOPSTONE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Wednesday 11th September 2024 at 7.00p.m.
in Stretton Sugwas Village Hall
Web site address: bishopstonegrouppc-herefordshire.co.uk

PRESENT: Cllr S. Crump (Chairman) Cllr M Holmes; Cllr. R Morgan; Cllr C Taylor; Cllr. L Handscomb; Cllr S Keefe; Cllr D Hadley and Cllr L Goldwater.

ALSO PRESENT:

Mrs Lesley Hay (Parish Clerk); Ward Cllr David Hitchiner.

Chairman welcomed those present to the September meeting.

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr. J Macklin;

2. To receive declarations of interest or written requests for dispensations. None declared.

2.1. Cllr D Hadley explained that, despite hand delivering a copy of his revised Register of Interests to The Monitoring Officer, it had not been uploaded on to the website. The Clerk will follow up.

3. To approve and sign the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd July 2024 (circulated). It was agreed that these were a true record and it was unanimously voted by the Councillors in attendance that they be adopted and signed by the Chairman.

4. Co-option of Parish Councillor. Following the resignation of Cllr Mark Geary - the Chairman was delighted to confirm that Mrs Hayley Birch had put her name forward to be considered as a Parish Councillor representing Byford within the Bishopstone Group. It was unanimously agreed to accept Mrs Birch's application and the Chairman welcomed Mrs Birch to the Parish Council. Mrs Birch signed the Acceptance of Office form and came to the table with full voting rights. The Clerk will inform the Elections Officer.

Cllr Homes will liaise with Cllr Birch with regard to handing over a set of keys for the Byford Notice Board.

5. Chairman's Report 11th September 2024

It's been fairly quiet since our last meeting in July.

Lesley has made positive contact with our new Locality Steward Lara. We are to have a drive around the parishes with her on 19th September for her to familiarise herself with the area.

The PC Summit is to take place on 8th October and several of us will be attending - Lesley, David and myself.

I would just like to thank everyone for doing various things around and about the parishes and, of course, to Lesley for keeping us so well informed.

6. Ward Councillor's Report March 2024 –

Ward Matters

Enforcement Notices were served on the residents and landowner where Caravans have been parked in Stoney St. The recipients have appealed. It is likely that this will lead to a public enquiry.

The Stonewater Housing Development on the Kingstone Road, Clehonger remains on hold following the insolvency of the builder. There is another site similar to this near the Ford garage in Hereford

The new Labour Government are requiring the Council to increase housing numbers from 16,000 to 27,000 in the next 20 year plan. This is unacceptable given the rural nature of the county. The Independents for Herefordshire Group will be doing what we can to push back on this request.

The Council have received from the Government a very basic form to complete relating to Devolution. They ask for authorities to specify a preferred geography and a preferred model (Mayoral or not). The geography is problematic with none of the options being attractive. The Independents for Herefordshire may propose an area including The Forest of Dean, Tewkesbury, Malvern, Wyre Forest, South Shropshire and Herefordshire.

The potential bypass remains an issue. I have been told that the Department of Transport have asked the Council to provide an outline Business Case for the Western Bypass and a full Business Case for the SRR. The SRR must stand alone and assume the rest of the bypass is never build. No full Business Case has ever been prepared for the SRR and my belief is that it is problematic given the cost and the negligible travel saving times it will produce. As a standalone project it will have little effect on traffic going through Hereford.

In my role as Chair of Audit and Governance

We have identified someone to serve as an Independent person on the committee

We hope to be the first Unitary Council to complete the sign off of the 2023/24 Accounts. This is a tremendous achievement.

Miscellaneous

The Registry Office is moving out of the Town Hall into a next door building.

The Library is to be moved temporarily into the Town Hall.

I attended the official opening of the Luston wetlands by Kevin McLoud.

I attended a tour of the now empty Museum. There are some unexpected structural issues.

There have been two events for children in the Council's care including a Fun Day at the Rugby Club.

History Festival

I am working on a County wide Festival celebrating the history of the County to take place between 10 and 18 May 2025. This will give the opportunity for anyone willing to organise an event which will be promoted through a website and other publicity. The vision is to create something as professional and popular as H - Art within 10 years.

Cllr David Hitchiner

6.1 Open Session –

The Clerk raised the issue of a recent email (circulated) concerning installing Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the community. This issue had been discussed previously and it was again agreed that, with five small parishes, it would be difficult to find a convenient site to install a charging point.

Cllr Holmes raised concerns with regard to the A438 through Bridge Sollers. Whilst acknowledging the speed limit has recently been reduced to 40mph – it is still proving to be a very dangerous stretch of road with regular accidents and near misses. There was a general discussion which included the suggestion that maybe more signage would help warn motorists that vehicles ahead maybe stationary whilst waiting to turn into the café.

Situation to be monitored – item to remain on the agenda.

6.2 The Chairman closed Open session

7. Finance:

7.1 It was unanimously agreed to pay of outstanding invoices for August as circulated.

7.2. The Clerk confirmed that she had now received notification from the External Auditor regarding the 2023-2024 accounts – no issues raised.

8. Highways and Environmental Matters:

8.1 Locality Steward Paul Norris has left Balfour Beatty for pastures new – the Clerk sent good wishes on behalf of the Parish Council. A new Locality Steward – Lara Edwards - has been appointed and a 'meet and greet' site meeting is planned for Thursday 19th September at 10.00am meeting in Bridge Sollers Church Car Park. This meeting to tour the various parishes and to assess issues that could be covered from within the promised Drainage Grant. The Clerk explained that photographs and What3Words would be most helpful when submitting the application forms.

8.2 Update on Footpath grant funding.

The clerk confirmed that she had submitted a grant funding application form for the ML1 i.e. replacement of the present gate with a 'two in one' gate and an additional finger post.

Bishopstone: The Clerk confirmed that she had submitted a claim for the BN4 – replacement post for kissing gate.

Unfortunately, there was no up to date information available with regard to acceptance of these applications for grant funding.

8.3 Bishopstone BN3 – a plank across the big ditch with two handrails – one hand rail/post is loose. Clerk will liaise with Lengthsman.

8.4 Cllr Goldwater asked if the Bridleway at the back of Garnons Estate could be cleared by the lengthsman. It's about 50m long of bridleway and would be impassable at present for someone on a horse or bicycle.

The ownership is unclear as it is in a holloway between two fields and ownership is rarely demarcated by fence lines. Cllr Goldwater suggested it may belong to Garnons.

Cllr Goldwater did point out that wider context of responsibilities on Public Rights of Way, in HCCs Rights of Way Improvement Plan, 2018 to 2028 (https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/10510/rights_of_way_improvement_plan_rowip.pdf) it states that :

"The responsibility of maintaining the network falls to both landowners and Herefordshire Council. Landowners are responsible for maintaining stiles, gates and other structures used to enable access through hedges and fences. Landowners are also responsible for ensuring rights of way do not become blocked by obstacles such as crops, trees, and overgrowth. The council is responsible for maintaining signposts, way marking, watercourse crossings, steps and surface vegetation. They are also responsible for ensuring landowners meet their legal obligations."

In the first instance, Clerk will liaise with D C Gardening (Lengthsman).

8.5 Kenchester: Cllr D Hadley confirmed that he had prepared a full report on the Kenchester footpaths and would be liaising with the clerk with regard to applying for grant funding.

There was discussion with regard to the KT6 bridleway and the possibility of asking the PRow Officer to attend a site visit. Item to remain on the agenda.

Clerk to ask PRow Officer for some blue bridleway mark signs.

8.6 Bishon Lane – U90016 there is a large pile of natural waste/gravel/stones which needs to be moved. It was agreed the issue to be discussed with Locality Steward during the site visit planned for Thursday 19th September with a view to maybe the lengthsman hiring a digger with a bucket to move and spread.

8.7 The Clerk explained that she has received a £2628.00 purchase order from Herefordshire Council to be used before 31st March 2025 to fund work done by the lengthsman.

As the footpath grant appears to indicate that it is for materials only - it maybe that this additional lengthsman funding will support the labour needed to instal the footpath replacement/repairs.

The Clerk will collate all the existing lengthsman invoices from 1st April 2024 and, together with the September invoice, will make a claim for a reimbursement based on the first six months of the financial year..

9.Update on making space for nature.

General tidying up making ready for the dormant time ahead.

10. Planning – For information - Appeal Decision Site visit made on 6 August 2024 by Ben Plenty BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State
Decision date: 12 August 2024
Appeal Ref: APP/W1850/W/23/3333453 Cork and Bottle Barn, Mansel Lacy, Herefordshire HR4 7HP - The appeal is dismissed.

11. Correspondence: Council Summit meeting – 8th October 2024

Cllr S Crump and Cllr D Hadley have booked places to attend.

12. Update on gov.uk website address. As there has been no further response from HALC with regard to applying for a gov.uk website – it was agreed that the Clerk would apply direct for a .gov.uk domain.
Initially, the Clerk will have to apply for permission from the Government using the current domain but replacing .co.uk with .gov.uk ie <https://bishopstonegrouppc-herefordshire.gov.uk>. Once approval is confirmed, we will need to buy the domain and it was suggested that should be through Ionos our registrar would be probably the easiest. Item to remain on the agenda.

13. Items for the Next Agenda (no discussion).

14. Date of the Next Parish Council Meeting : Wednesday 13th November 2024
starting
at 6.30p.m.

The meeting will begin with be a tea and cake celebration to acknowledge Cllr John Macklin's 40th year as a Parish Councillor and to mark his retirement.

This meeting will be the Budget/Precept setting meeting for 2026-2027 financial year – Clerk will prepare the documents and circulate prior to the meeting.

The Chairman thanks everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.20p.m.

Signed:

Date: