

BISHOPSTONE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Wednesday 13th November 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. J Macklin; Cllr H Birch; Cllr C Draper; Cllr D Hadley and Cllr L Goldwater.

ALSO PRESENT:

Mrs Lesley Hay (Parish Clerk); Ward Cllr David Hitchiner. One member of the public.

Chairman welcomed those present to the November meeting.

1. Apologies for absence .Cllr M Holmes explained that, due to health reasons, she was unable to attend the meeting. Cllr Holmes gave her apologies and left the meeting.

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

3. To approve and sign the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 11th September 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. Chairman's Report

A meeting took place with Lara, our new locality steward, in September. We visited Byford and looked at the erosion by the church in the road, the ditching by the footpath and discussed a gantry over the pond. It was agreed that a spring could possibly be causing the problem by the church but unfortunately a ditch could not be dug by the wall due to the concrete base of this wall.

Kenchester Rectory - we looked at the collapsed drain across the road by Allan Johnson. The pipe was going to be attempted to be rodded under the road (I think this may have been done), as the stretch to the next drain is too far to be addressed by our lengthsman, Dave. We also looked at the other drain by the wild flowers on the bank. Also, in Kenchester, we looked at the erosion down the lane and the ditching actually in the village which needs to be kept clear. Some of the debris has been lifted from the brook by the villagers and cleared by ourselves.

Lesley has received confirmation of some grants applied for – i.e. £680 for the 'gate within a gate' on Bishon Lane but not the £120 for the 2 posts.

We have also had confirmation of acceptance of the application for £3150 for general ditching work but the grant application for £4500 for work in Byford has been delayed until Hereford Council have liaised with the clerk and visited the site.

I know several properties were recently affected by flooding. Each parish will get a chance to state where flooding took place when we reach that item on the agenda.

4.1 Co-option of Parish Councillor. The Chairman accepted the resignation of Cllr Jonn Macklin - who had represented Bishopstone for 40 years as their Parish Councillor. The Councillors present were unanimous in their sincere vote of thanks to John and wished him well in his retirement.

Accepting a formal letter of resignation from Cllr John Macklin – the Clerk will now inform the Elections Officer.

The Chairman explained that, despite the resignation of Cllr Mackin, there was still a vacancy for a Bishopstone Parish Councillor which has been carried over from the Election in 2023. The Chairman was delighted to confirm that Mr Adam Russell had put his name forward to be considered as a Parish Councillor representing Bishopstone within the Bishopstone Group.

Mr Russell was invited to introduced himself and gave a brief presentation.

It was unanimously agreed to accept Mr Russell's application and the Chairman welcomed Mr Russell to the Parish Council. Mr Russell signed the Acceptance of Office form and came to the table with full voting rights. The Clerk will inform the Elections Officer.

5. Ward Councillor David Hitchiner's Report

The Ward Councillor commented on the flooding from the Yazor Brook and the ineffectiveness of the flood prevention works in Credenhill which seems to have been contributed to by the lack of maintenance. David and Cllr Taylor will be meeting with Officers for an explanation of future work to be done.

The flooding of the Bridge Sollars Road had continued for too long.

The Locality Steward work force is at half its proper strength. David is making representations to the Council about this.

David reported that county wide it has been quiet with Cabinet meeting in October being cancelled. On the positive side, there is now a new head of planning and there is a full complement of permanent Planning officers which should enable applications to be dealt with more quickly. The Interim Head of Children's Services contract has been extended.

The Parish Summit was eventful with discussion over PROW where improvements are needed.

The National Budget will have a negative effect on Council Finances due to the increase in National Insurance contributions which will affect suppliers to the Council. Also the increase in Minimum Wage will have an effect.

Cllr L Goldwater gave his apologies left the meeting.

5.1 Open Session –

The Clerk reported that she had recently attended the HALC AGM and that a resume of the presentations etc will be circulated.

5.2 The Chairman closed Open session

Ward Councillor Hitchiner gave his apologies and left the meeting.

6. Finance:

6.1 It was unanimously agreed to pay the outstanding invoices for October (circulated).

6.2 The Clerk explained that the annual administration pay award for 2024/25 has now been accepted by the National Joint Council (NJC) with an overall increase of 0.63p per hour across all scales backdated to 1st April 2024. It was agreed that the Clerk be awarded an increase in line with the above pay award.

It was acknowledged that, as a result of Hereford Council plans to give Parishes more power in making local decisions – they had now taken back ‘in house’ the footpath scheme; the lengthsman and the drainage grant schemes - this has resulted in a great deal of additional work for the Parish Clerks.

After discussion, it was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that the Parish Clerk hours should increase from 7 to 9 hours per week as from the 1st November 2024. This increase would be for 5 months and will be reviewed at the end of the financial year on the 31st March 2025. However, as it is likely this additional work will continue into the next financial year – it was proposed and unanimously agreed that provision for this increase should be included in the budget/setting/precept submission for 2025-2026.

6.3. Budget/Precept for 2025-2026

The Clerk had circulated copies of a forecast of costing up to 31st March 2024. A lengthy discussion followed and eventually it was proposed, second and unanimously agreed to increase the precept from £9,500 to £11,000 for 2025-2026. This increase is to take into account additional lengthsman funding that may be essential to deal with extreme weather conditions and to allow for the possible continued increase in the clerk’s hours being taken forward to 2025-2026. The Clerk will submit the application form before the 31st December 2024.

7. Highways and Environmental Matters:

7.1 The Clerk confirmed that the application for £680.00 to fund a ‘gate within a gate’ had been agreed. Once Cllr C Taylor has liaised with the landowner - the clerk will liaise with D C Gardening to get this work completed. Once completed with ‘before and after’ photos – the clerk will claim reimbursement via the Herefordshire Council purchase order.

7.2 The Clerk confirmed that she had received notification that the application for £3150 + VAT had been successful. This funding is to be used to undertake revisiting ditches and grips which have been done in the past and which has helped with keeping the water off the road. These works will be carried out on the following roads: C1097, C1098, U90013,

U90011, U90010, U73205 and she will liaise with D C Gardening once a purchase order has been received.

However, regarding an application for £4500 + VAT to alleviate the flooded road leading down to Byford Church. Works to include digging a trench through the property belonging to the estate leading down to the pool in the field and laying of a 9" pipe, covering over with drainage stone and covering back over with soil and turf. This application has been put on hold with a view to Herefordshire Council Contractors visiting the site.

7.3 The Clerk circulated detailed maps for each parish and hopefully Councillors and members of the public will be able to update these with drains; ditches and gullies associated with their area.

7.4 There was a lengthy discussion on the Bishon Lane flood issues. Cllr Taylor confirmed Bishon Lane has huge ongoing flood related problems. It was agreed that these problems are beyond the remit of the Parish Council's local lengthsman. Despite this, the local lengthsman has suggested some jetting work which may help alleviate the problem – but, in the first instance, the Clerk will contact Herefordshire Council to see if this work can be funded from within the drainage grant funding scheme.

It was acknowledged that Bishopstone's Ward Councillor, David Hitchiner has been very active and is very aware of the problems but, despite his regular visits with Balfour Beatty's Locality Steward (s), there is never any action just promises for jobs being added to the waiting list.

It was acknowledged that Bishon Lane is on yet another waiting list - having had a visit by Lara (current Locality Steward) she has agreed that the lane itself is so full of massive pot holes and craters - it needs flattening - but, again, the residents have no idea when that will happen - in the meantime, the lane continues to cause serious damage to cars and vehicles.

7.5 Sand bags – Kenchester. It was confirmed that the sand bags that had been in storage had been used during the recent very bad flooding. Cllr Hadley will liaise with Kenchester residents and inform the Clerk if replacements are required.

7.6 Shetton Barns - again a problem with flooding. D C Gardening has suggest jetting the area but again the Clerk will have to liaise with the Herefordshire Council Team with regard to whether it is possible to apply for this work to be undertaken from within the drainage grant funding.

7.7. It was agreed to ask the lengthsman to visit the parishes monthly from now until the end of March in order to keep the drains; grips; culverts clear. It was agreed, that this additional work could be funded from within the Herefordshire Council's lengthsman grant.

7.8 Further to the questionnaire sent out by Steve Hodges (previously circulated) with regard to reporting information on local flooding – the Councillors were asked to complete and send via the link.

7.9 The clerk distributed paper copies of Steve Hodges's request for up to date information regarding Footpath Officer's contact information. The Footpath Officers were asked to complete and send in the information to enable Herefordshire Council's data base to be updated.

8. It was confirmed that the .gov.uk website is now installed and up and running.

Cllr Keefe will check on the email address :

clerk@bishopstonegroup-herefordshire-pc.gov.uk.

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

10. Date of the Next Parish Council Meeting : Wednesday 8th January 2025 starting at 7.00p.m.

The Chairman thanks everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.45p.m.

Signed:

Date: