

Whixall Parish Council

Chairman: Ian Mercer

Minutes of the Parish Council's Monthly Meeting held on 8 January 2020 at
Whixall Social Centre starting at 7:30pm

Present:

Councillors: I Mercer (Chair); R Harris; A Rawlinson; J Spenser; G Turnbull; A Hague; M Howard;
J Broadhead (following co-option)

County Councillors: C Mellings

Clerk: A Roberts

Members of the community: 0

Representatives of other bodies/ organisations: PC Deborah Wheeler (West Mercia Police); Alun Morgan (Shropshire Council Head of Highways & Transport); Andy Wilde (Shropshire Council Highways Operations Manager)

1/20 **Apologies for Absence**

None

2/20 **West Mercia Police Report**

PC Wheeler gave a verbal report to members and covered the following:

1. The Community Messenger Service (CMS) is now up and running and two officers are trained to use it.
2. The Whitchurch team now has four members – Deborah, Graham, Dave and Hannah who is the new PCSO. Graham will focus on the rural area and Hannah on the town centres with Dave providing cover as required.
3. There have been two Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) recently. Both have been single vehicle incidents with no injuries.
4. There have been two suspicious circumstances reported, including sheep worrying. In addition, there was a burglary in which digger keys were taken and incidents of criminal damage in the Hollinwood area.
5. DW now has access to leaflets on non-police issues (eg Drones). These can be emailed to the Parish Council on request.

Cllr Turnbull raised the question of ongoing support within Whixall, similar to the work carried out in the past. DW made it clear that resources were an issue, but the team will try to get involved in more village activities in the future.

3/20 **Highways Matters**

Alun Morgan and Andy Wilde gave a verbal report to members:

1. AW outlined the areas for which he has responsibility (reactive maintenance, street scene, routine inspections and strategic projects).
2. In June 2019 there were 3,700 defects waiting to be repaired. These were due to a combination of a legacy from the previous contractor and the effect of the winter on the highway network. To tackle this the Council set up a dedicated inspection team for the whole County. Their role is to inspect defects and categorise them (for repair within 1-day, 5-days or 28-days). By having one team they are now able to ensure the contractor receives consistent information from all areas of the County. This in turn allows the contractor to programme the work. This approach appears to be resulting in a reduction in the number of outstanding repairs.
3. The Council has trialled a new material for repairing potholes and are now able to repair up to 50 defects in one night.
4. The wet weather has already increased the number of outstanding defects and the key focus of the team going forward is to adapt the preventative maintenance strategy in order to keep water out of the road surfaces.

5. In the past the Council's approach to gulley emptying has been 'firefighting'. This approach has now been changed to a programmed one and the Council plans to have covered all gulley and catch-pit assets by the end of March. The new approach has already shown results (600 assets visited in June 2019, 800 per day in January 2020). It is hoped to be able to guarantee a visit to every asset at least once every year.
One outcome of this approach is that reactive gulley emptying is less available now.
6. It is recognised that there is currently a lack of a clear land drainage strategy (in relation to land water draining onto the highway). This is being developed and, in the meantime, a mobile technician has been appointed to work outside of the office and identify solutions. AM committed to getting the drainage technician into the Parish for a day to explore solutions to drainage issues that affect the highway.
7. Information to be shared with the Parish Council and public includes the gulley emptying frequencies and the annual maintenance plan. The team recognise that they need to make better use of the website for disseminating information.
8. The Council has appointed a Drainage and Flood Risk Manager (John Bellis)
9. The Council has reached the point where the 2020/21 Planned Maintenance Programme is defined and can be published.

Members raised their concerns in relation to land drainage issues at Moss Lane and the ongoing highway drainage problems at Slacks corner. They also raised the question of the Council carrying out work and then recharging landowners. AM stated that this approach was a last resort as much could be achieved through discussion with landowners. Following a question from Cllr Mercer, AM confirmed that the highways team will work with the Parish Council to try and find a solution to flooding problems.

Cllr Mercer also asked where culverts fit in to the gulley/catch-pit programme and AW stated that these assets need to be added to the Council's inventory and would probably need to be jettied (which involves a different contractor).

Cllr Turnbull queried the criteria for deciding if defects are to be repaired individually or put into a resurfacing programme. AW explained that the team would like to carry out more surface dressing but, because of limited funding, the current approach has to be a 'managed deterioration' of the network. However, the team is going to trial thermal patching which is a more permanent approach to individual pothole repairs.

4/20 Casual Vacancy

Following an interview which took place prior to the meeting, Cllr Mercer proposed that the process of co-opting John Broadhead should commence. Seconded by Cllr Hague. **All voted in favour of co-option.**

Having signed their Declarations of Acceptance of Office Cllr Broadhead was able to take an active part as Parish Councillor for the remainder of the meeting.

5/20 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded of their obligation to declare any interests/ gifts/ hospitality:
None declared

6/20 Minutes of Previous Meetings

Meeting of Whixall Parish Council held on 13 November 2020:

It was proposed by Cllr Harris that the draft minutes, of the meeting detailed above, were an accurate record. This was seconded by Cllr Spenser and agreed by all present.

7/20 Planning

8/20 Planning Applications Received

Reference	Details	Parish Council Response
19/05452/FUL	Mossley Well Farm SY13 2SA Alterations in connection with conversion of an existing traditional barn into one residential dwelling to include insertion of rooflights and new doors and windows	Support (No comment)
19/05274/P3MPA	Abbey Green Farm SY13 2PT Notification for Prior Approval for a proposed change of use of agricultural building to C1 use a bed and breakfast under (prior notification Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R of Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015)	Support (No comment)

9/20 Clerk's Report Correspondence

- a) At a previous meeting Members had supported a request for a needs-based dwelling at Yew Tree Farm. However, the subsequent planning application was submitted too late for the November Parish Council meeting with a consultation deadline ahead of the January meeting.

The clerk contacted Shropshire Council Planners to check if an extension was required and the Planners confirmed that support for the initial request was considered to be sufficient.

Peter Richards who submitted the planning application contacted the Clerk asking when the application would be discussed and has since indicated that Cllr Mellings is requesting that the application is heard at a development control committee meeting. CM confirmed this at the meeting. A member of the council will probably be asked to attend and speak on behalf of the application.

- b) Bowling Club Lease

Helen Cowley (Hatchers) had written to the Clerk suggesting the addition of a definition of the Bowling Club Account to say "any bank account(s) in the name of or held on trust for the Bowling Club from time to time". The Clerk reported that, as this is simply a clarification of the terms rather than an amendment to the lease, this can be approved by the clerk.

Actions Since the Last Meeting

- a) The Clerk has started the review of the financial regulations. It is hoped that this can be discussed at the February meeting. As agreed, the Council's bank account will stay with Barclays until the revised Financial Regulations are adopted.

- b) Due to other priorities there has been no progress in relation to land ownership at the Social Centre. It is anticipated that this will not be picked up until the new financial year.

10/20 Financial Matters

- a) To receive monthly bank balance record.

The Clerk advised the council of the council's bank balances.

DATE	ACCOUNT NAME	AMOUNT
27 December 2019	Community Account	£6,442.62
	Business Saver Account	£927.78
TOTAL		£7,370.40

The Clerk informed members that, due to difficulty paying coins into the Council's bank account, she had transferred the £1 Marlot rent from her personal bank account and retained the £1 coin that had been paid to her.

- b) To resolve to approve outstanding accounts.

Orders for the payment of outstanding invoices (under "Power to Spend" LGA1972 s.112(2) and 124(1)). As per the financial report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)/ Clerk proposed by Cllr Turnbull, seconded by Cllr Hague and agreed by all present.

Resolved: The outstanding accounts should be paid and the cheques signed by two authorised councillors

- c) Options for the 2010/21 precept and budget.

Proposed Cllr Mercer, seconded Cllr Harris **Resolved: the precept for 2021 should be £8,900.** The clerk will action this decision.

Proposed by Cllr Mercer, seconded by Cllr Hague. **Resolved: The following will be incorporated in the budget:**

- 1. Budgets will be increased by 3% (inflation) if the specific budget requirement is unknown.**
- 2. The value of the Chairman's fund will be increased.**
- 3. The staff costs budget will be increased to allow for the annual pay rise.**
- 4. An audit budget will be set.**
- 5. The painting and maintenance reserves contribution will be increased to reflect predicted asset maintenance.**

Budget proposals will be presented to Members at the next meeting.

11/20 Parish Matters

- a. The Marlot – Asset Management

Cllr Turnbull gave a verbal report to members:

- During December 90 hours of work were carried out by volunteers.
- It is proposed to ask Nicky Hunter (Harper Adams) to assess the ponds for pond-life prior to digging out using plant to be provided by Natural England. The material removed from the ponds would then be used around the site.
- Grazing will cease next week
- Cllr Rawlinson has worked with Martin Spenser to create a raised walkway to allow visitors to walk over difficult areas of the site. Cllr Turnbull thanked him for the work he has done at the site.
- Tree felling will start shortly and will last a few days
- A new action plan has been created (to be distributed separately). This was shared with members at the meeting.
- The Council should look at ways of encouraging others to use the site.
- Cllr Harris is to look at bird boxes shortly

The Clerk confirmed that there is sufficient budget to cover the predicted expenditure for the year.

Members discussed options for improving signing at the site but agreed that this must be done with a view to landownership and legislation.

b. Senior Citizens Christmas Party

The Clerk provided members with a summary of the costs of the party. The total cost to the Council was £181 (£5.20 per head as 35 people attended). Members discussed the quantities purchased this year as well as the option to set up for the party on the Friday morning only. The Clerk will provide a revised action plan for the 2020 party in the Autumn.

c. Parish Plan

Deferred to the February Meeting

d. Attendance at Meetings

The Clerk gave a verbal report on attendance at meetings and stressed that Members are required to send apologies if they are unable to attend meetings. This has not always happened. Members supported the Clerk's decision not to publish attendance figures on the Council website as the information is already available from the meeting minutes.

12/20 Councillor Reports

a. Shropshire Councillors

Cllr Mellings circulated his report by email prior to the meeting.

b. Parish Councillors

Cllr Rawlinson queried whether planning permission is required for siting of a static caravan on farm premises.

Cllr Mercer reported on a meeting with Natural England and Cllr Harris and the Clerk. The outcome of the meeting was that the Marlot Masterplan does not need to be re-written but does need to be refreshed and the Marlot could be designated as a Local Nature Reserve. Cllr Mercer asked NE to talk to Cllr Turnbull and Martin Spenser and give them advice.

The Clerk was asked to chase up the question of providing a mirror on Platt Lane cross roads.

Scheduled date of next meeting: **12 February 2020 at 7.30 pm**

The meeting closed at 9.50pm