

BERKSWICH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Berkswich Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 1 October 2024 at 7.30 pm at Walton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Alan Taylor (Chair), Cllr Caroline Pearson (Vice Chair), Cllr Sue Francis, Cllr Ann Millichap, Cllr Malcolm Millichap, Cllr Beverley Hughes and Cllr Vicky Campbell.

In attendance: Stafford Borough Councillor Peter Edgeller, PCSO Emma Fry and Mrs Sue Fullwood as Clerk.

Cllr Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1 Public session

a) Police and Crime

PCSO Fry said that there had been two or three police surgeries in the Parish over the past few months and while they were not very well attended, they were good opportunities for people to go along and speak to them. Unfortunately, the mobile police station was in the garage on 30 September so they had used a portable shelter and the weather had been terrible.

PCSO Fry informed the Council that over the last 6 months there had been only 27 anti-social behaviour incidents in the area which was very encouraging, a 62% drop from 2023. General crime had fallen 24% in the past year. PCSO Fry added that the darker evenings sometimes saw an increase in crime.

Cllr M Millichap asked PCSO Fry if there were still Special Constables in the force. PCSO Fry responded that there were 6 or 7 at Stafford and that they did voluntary work usually on Friday and Saturday nights or when specific events were planned.

PCSO Fry told the Council about a new initiative called Red Snapper, a pot of money to deter anti-social behaviour predominantly in the town centre. The officers wear purple t-shirts and stab vests and tried to disrupt groups of people.

Cllr A Millichap led the Council in thanking PCSO Fry for attending the surgeries and the meeting. Cllr Taylor added that it was reassuring for the wider public to have a police presence in the area.

PCSO Fry left the meeting at 7.40 pm.

b) Planning application for Land off The Rise

Borough Cllr Edgeller informed the Council that the application to build 5 houses on the land had been given permission by the Planning Committee at SBC, but not the design of the properties themselves. A further application on the design of the development would be required. Cllr Edgeller was disappointed in the outcome as it would have been good to keep the open green space. Cllr Taylor added that the application was seeking to establish permission to develop the site. The Parish Council's main objection was regarding the difficult access to the site which was chaotic at Walton High School start and finish times. Cllr Edgeller said that there were a lot of school pupils in the area who walked to school which was great, but the new development of 5 houses could add up to 15 cars right at the junction where pupils were trying to cross. He didn't feel that the objections had been taken into account. Cllr Taylor responded that everyone would be consulted again when the detailed application came out.

- 24/126 Apologies** – Cllr Tim Luker and Cllr Bob Gilson who were away and Cllr Michael Norris who was unwell.
- 24/127 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2024 - Resolved:** It was agreed that the minutes were accurate.
- 24/128 Declarations of Interest regarding items on the agenda.** None.
- 24/129 Clerk’s Report for September 2024 - Resolved:** the report was accepted.
- 24/130 Flower Beds on Main Road**
The Clerk had chased TGM for information. Item deferred to next meeting.
- 24/131 Review of Changing to a .gov.uk Web Domain**
The website had been redirected to berkswich-pc.gov.uk and reCoded Solutions had set up mailboxes for the Clerk and all the Parish Councillors. Some councillors had successfully set up their new mailboxes whilst others were still having difficulty. To be reviewed again at the November meeting. **Action: Clerk**
- 24/132 Storage of Important Council Documents**
The Clerk had asked 6 local solicitors if they offered storage of documents such as deeds and only one had replied to say that they didn’t offer that service. Cllr Taylor felt that the box was vulnerable to being stolen and the Clerk should continue to pursue responses from solicitors. **Action: Clerk**
- 24/133 Claiming the Land Adjacent to 19, 21 and 23 The Village**
The Clerk had looked at the website for HM Land Registry and the land was not registered. There were NALC Legal Topic Notes on Registered Land and Adverse Possession. **Resolved:** Clerk to contact a solicitor regarding the land and ear marked funding could be used if necessary. **Action: Clerk**
- 24/134 Maintenance of the Benches at Hollybush Playing Fields**
Cllr Pearson had noticed that the benches were becoming very tatty and needed stripping and painting. **Resolved:** to be included in budget plans for 2025/26. **Action: Clerk**
- 24/135 Upkeep of Planters Within the Parish**
Cllr Pearson said that people within the Parish had mentioned that they filled individual planters with compost and flowers. She suggested a scheme where people could claim up to £20 per box (estimated as 5 or 6 around the Parish) as reimbursement for the costs involved. **Resolved:** scheme agreed and to be included in budget for 2025/26. **Action: Clerk**
- 24/136 Relocating the Noticeboard from Berkswich Primary School**
Various locations were discussed to put up the noticeboard. Cllr Francis asked whether it was necessary to relocate it, or if the Council had enough already. **Resolved:** it was agreed that 6 noticeboards were sufficient and the Clerk could dispose of the one formerly based at Berkswich Primary School. **Action: Clerk**
- 24/137 Production of a Parish Leaflet**
Cllr M Millichap suggested that an A5 leaflet should be produced which introduced the Parish Council and the work it does, to be given out at events. Cllr Campbell suggested including a QR code linking to the website and suggested pull up banners were good for use at events too. Cllr Hughes added that it was important that a leaflet should stand the

test of time and should not refer to anyone by name, just direct people to the current information on the website. **Resolved:** Cllr M Millichap to prepare a draft leaflet for other people to add to if they wished to. **Action: Cllr M Millichap**

24/138 Plans for 80th Anniversary of VE Day on 8 May 2025

Cllr M Millichap suggested asking the WI to do a joint celebration afternoon tea for the 80th Anniversary of VE Day at the Village Hall. Cllr Francis said that she had mentioned it to the WI, as she was on the committee, and they didn't seem very keen. Cllr Campbell suggested finding out if any other local events were planned as the Council would not want to be competing with other events. **Resolved:** Cllr M Millichap to liaise with the WI, the Phoenix Club, the Church, etc, to find out if other events are planned and if they would be interested in a joint event. **Action: Cllr M Millichap**

24/139 Speeding on Old Croft Road

The Clerk had been contacted by a resident of Old Croft Road about cars speeding along there. Councillors agreed that it was difficult to reach 30mph along Old Croft Road due to the number of vehicles parked. It was possible that the speed seemed higher because more traffic was cutting through because of the roadworks around Radford Bank. **Resolved:** It was agreed that speeding was not felt to be an issue on Old Croft Road.

24/140 Plans for Remembrance Sunday

Cllr M Millichap had been in touch with Fr Graham who had been assured by SCC that Amey would remove all their equipment before Remembrance Sunday so that the usual service and walk to the War Memorial could go ahead. **Resolved:** Cllr Pearson to lay the wreath at the memorial on Remembrance Sunday. **Action: Cllr Pearson** There was no interest shown in attending the service at the Borough War Memorial so apologies would be sent. Cllr A Millichap suggested that the plants around the War Memorial could be updated. **Resolved:** budget for new plants to be set aside for 2025/26 when the roadworks were complete. **Action: Clerk**

24/141 Walton Coppice Fence Repairs

The Clerk had tried to get quotes for fencing repairs for a number of months. One contractor had contacted her in September to say that they would not be interested in completing the repairs as the rails often split when removed from the posts and it was more difficult that replacing the whole lot. The Environment Group had agreed that if some of the fence posts were rotting above the ground, they all probably were beneath the ground so the Clerk was now seeking quotes to replace the whole fence. Item deferred to the November meeting. **Action: Clerk**

24/142 Emergency Planning Requirements

The Clerk had noticed NALC advertising Emergency Planning events and asked Council if they felt that they should have any plans in place in case a state of emergency was declared that affected the area. Cllr M Millichap had previously been employed as an Emergency Planning Officer in both Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent and he felt that the Parish Council would not be involved in Incident Management Teams as they didn't have the resources. In an emergency the government would release funds to SCC. **Resolved:** It was agreed that the Clerk would be the contact for SCC or SBC, directing them to potential resources within the parish.

24/143 Fence at the Chicken Run, Congreve Close

The Clerk had asked the Rights of Way team manager if SCC held records of the High Court case in the 1970s/80s and whether there was a requirement to have a fence to separate the footpath from the properties. He had said he would make enquires with the legal team at SCC, but he didn't hold out much hope. Cllr A Millichap asked who had tarmacked the Chicken Run, but it was not known. Cllr Hughes asked if it was a Parish

Council matter and Cllr Taylor responded that the Council could have a responsibility as they may be able to help. Item deferred to the next meeting. **Action: Clerk**

24/144 Bill on the safety of Lithium-Ion Batteries

The Clerk had confirmed that the Bill was still going ahead following the change in government. **Resolved:** Clerk to write confirming that the Council agreed with the Bill in principle but felt it was too narrow in its focus and that controls should cover disposal of batteries too. **Action: Clerk**

SBC Councillor Edgeller left the meeting at 8.40 pm.

24/145 Financial Matters:

i. Potential Projects for financial year 2025/26

Projects for 2025/26 agreed were:

- Refurbishment of benches at Hollybush Playing Fields;
- Planters scheme;
- Speed Indication Device at Milford;
- Planting at the War Memorial;
- Flower beds on Main Road;
- Solicitors' fees at approximately £300 per hour.

ii. Bank Reconciliation and Expenditure for September 2024 – Resolved: The bank statement from Virgin Money had not been received and a statement from Unity Trust Bank had not been received since 3 September, therefore it was not possible to agree the bank reconciliation. Item deferred to November meeting.

iii. Budget Report for September 2024 – Resolved: The budget report was unanimously approved.

Budget Report September 2024

01/10/2024

| RECEIPTS | To date | Budget | Less / more than budget |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Precept inc concurrent function | 20,637 | 42,781 | -22,144 |
| Council tax support grant | 352 | 705 | -352 |
| SCC Minor Highways Agreement | 3,502 | 2,750 | 752 |
| Interest Stafford Railway BS A/c | 0 | 600 | -600 |
| Interest Teachers A/c | 0 | 350 | -350 |
| Interest Hampshire Trust | 26 | 70 | -44 |
| Grants | 9,192 | 0 | 9,192 |
| VAT Reclaimed | 1,339 | 0 | 1,339 |
| Misc. Receipts (e.g. wayleave payments) | 193 | 300 | -107 |
| Total income | £ 35,241 | £ 47,556 | -£12,315 |

Closed Jul 24, funds split between TBS & SRBS

| PAYMENTS | To date | Budget | Under / Over budget |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Staff costs | 7,592 | 15,820 | 8,228 |
| Office costs | 2,829 | 4,541 | 1,712 |
| Maintenance costs | 6,278 | 11,650 | 5,372 |
| Additional maintenance | - | 750 | 750 |
| Play Area | 90 | 2,610 | 2,520 |
| Capital purchases | - | 500 | 500 |
| Community support | 295 | 2,385 | 2,090 |
| Projects | 2,795 | 9,300 | 6,505 |
| Total Expenditure | £ 19,878 | £ 47,556 | £27,678 |

Earmarked Funds Allocation

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Elections | £10,000 |
| Crime Prevention Measures | £24,000 |
| Walton Coppice Maintenance Fund | £12,500 |
| Hollybush Coppice Maintenance Fund | £10,000 |
| Asset Replacement Fund | £45,000 |
| Environmental Care | £35,000 |
| General Reserve | £30,623 |
| Total funds | £167,123 |

24/146 Reports from other Meetings

- i. **Environment Group** – The Hollybush Coppice project was progressing, Trentham Fencing had now adjusted the fence and widened the entrance from the school. The hedging plants and school equipment would be ordered soon.
- ii. **Village Hall Council of Management** – nothing to report.

24/147 Agenda Items for the Next Meeting scheduled for Tuesday 5 November 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Main Hall, Walton Village Hall

Agenda items agreed were: flower beds on Main Road; review of change to .gov.uk domain; storage of important Council documents; land adjacent to 19, 21 and 23 The Village; and parking at Pretty Pots.

The meeting closed at 8:50 pm.