

BERKSWICH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Berkswich Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5 November 2024 at 7.30 pm at Walton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Caroline Pearson (Acting Chair), Cllr Sue Francis, Cllr Ann Millichap, Cllr Malcolm Millichap, Cllr Beverley Hughes, Cllr Vicky Campbell, Cllr Michael Norris, Cllr Bob Gilson and Cllr Tim Luker.

In attendance: Stafford Borough Councillor Peter Edgeller, two members of the public and Mrs Sue Fullwood as Clerk.

Cllr Pearson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

24/148 Public session

a) Flower Bed on Main Road outside the Village Hall

The first member of the public raised an issue about the flower bed on Main Road next to the telephone box. He said it was overgrown with brambles and the large square stone had been covered up. Cllr Francis explained that councillors had met with a grounds maintenance company to discuss replanting all of the 11 flower beds and had been waiting for a quote from them for the work. Cllr M Millichap added that all the flower beds had been inspected in the summer and it had been agreed that the one near the telephone box was a priority. A quote had now been received and would be discussed during the meeting.

b) Resurfacing of the top of Green Gore Lane

The first member of the public asked if the Council would like to repay the Phoenix Club for some of its contribution to the resurfacing of Green Gore Lane. Cllr Pearson responded that an application for a grant had been made to the Council after the work had been completed so it had been turned down.

c) Planning Application at Walton Garage

The second member of the public explained that he felt that the Parish Council should have recommended refusal of the planning application. He felt that the site was being overextended and that he had been fighting W R Davies for two years now over the site. He felt that transporters would completely block the site if plans went ahead and he felt it should either be a supermarket or a garage, not both. Building a shop next to 28 The Rise meant they would only have a view of the air conditioning units. The member of the public circulated an artist's impression of what the site would look like that he had paid for himself. Cllr Pearson responded that the councillors had all read the email from the member of the public and they would consider if more should be done. The first member of the public added that a pre-demolition asbestos survey done before any demolition takes place, they are demolishing large buildings over petrol tanks.

The two members of the public left the meeting at 7.50 pm.

24/149 Apologies – Cllr Alan Taylor (Chair) as he was working.

24/150 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2024 - Resolved: It was agreed that the minutes were accurate.

24/151 Declarations of Interest regarding items on the agenda. None.

24/152 Clerk's Report for October 2024 - Resolved: the report was accepted.

24/153 Flower Beds on Main Road

A quote had been received for £5918 + VAT for the 11 flower beds along Main/Milford Road. Cllr A Millichap felt that it may be better to have the work done in stages. Cllr Francis added that the company had said they would break down the quote for each individual flower bed and suggested that the work could be done in stages over a few years. Cllr Norris felt that if some were redone and others weren't it might show up the ones that had not been done. He felt that doing it piecemeal was a retrograde step and there was money in reserves that could be used if the Council wanted to. Cllr Hughes added that the precept had been increased to try and rebuild some of the reserves spent on play equipment, etc for future purchases. Cllr Gilson suggested asking companies to sponsor the flower beds. Cllr Norris proposed going ahead with the work to the 11 beds for £5918 +VAT, seconded by Cllr Campbell. Three councillors voted for the motion; five voted against – motion rejected. The Clerk to ask the company for a breakdown of the quote. **Action: Clerk.**

24/154 Review of Changing to a .gov.uk Web Domain

Cllr Pearson raised a concern that she seemed to be receiving more scam emails since moving to a .gov.uk email address. Cllr Hughes had had the opposite experience. Councillors should report all scam emails to the Clerk so the domain could be blocked from the Council's system. Cllr Luker was still to switch his email address but would contact reCoded Solutions for assistance.

24/155 Storage of Important Council Documents

The Clerk had not been able to find an alternative location to store Council Documents. **Resolved:** Documents to be stored in the fire and waterproof box in the Village Hall. **Action: Clerk/Cllr Pearson**

24/156 Claiming the Land Adjacent to 19, 21 and 23 The Village

Jobson's Solicitors had advised that the piece of land could be registered as a Village Green. The guidance notes had suggested the first step was to establish from SCC if there was a right to apply to have the land registered as a village green and if there was a landowner statement for the land, so the Clerk had emailed SCC to ask those questions and was waiting for a response. Item adjourned to the next meeting. **Action Clerk**

24/157 Plans for 80th Anniversary of VE Day on 8 May 2025

Cllr M Millichap had suggested a joint event to the WI and they had put it to their committee but he did not know the result. He had discussed it with Fr Graham and the Church was looking for a date between VE Day and VJ Day to celebrate the anniversary of both events. SBC hoped to hold an event in Victoria Park, but there was no budget for it. Item adjourned to the next meeting. **Action Clerk**

24/158 Walton Coppice Fence Repairs

It was felt that both quotes received were excessive. **Resolved:** leave repairs for the time being and monitor how the hedgerow grows.

24/159 Parking at Pretty Pots

Cllr Pearson raised the issue of parking outside of Pretty Pots. It was felt that parking on the road was appalling and getting worse now that Milford Cricket Club no longer allowed their customers to use its car park. Often vehicles covered the whole pavement and prevented people getting through including wheelchair and pushchair users. The cars parked on the road caused chaos with the traffic. **Resolved:** Clerk to write to Pretty Pots asking them to prevent their customers from parking on the pavement. Cllr Francis would ask SCC Cllr John Francis if there was anything Highways could do. **Action: Clerk/Cllr Francis**

SBC Cllr Edgeller left the meeting at 8.15 pm.

24/160 Parking and Footpaths Near to Berkswich Primary School

Berkswich Primary School had met with a new PCSO and subsequently raised issues about parking around the school and the lack of footpaths around The Village in particular. It was felt that the school should take the lead regarding the parking issue as they had regular contact with parents. Problem parking was often featured in the Council's newsletter and on social media. The lack of footpaths was a more difficult issue as The Village was part of the conservation area. There was no room for footpaths even if it wasn't a conservation area. **Resolved:** Clerk to write to the homeowner on the corner of The Village asking them to keep their hedge trimmed back; and to reply to the school asking them to liaise directly with parents over parking. **Action: Clerk**

24/161 Draft Parish Leaflet

Cllr M Millichap had prepared a draft leaflet which the Clerk had circulated. Cllr Francis suggested that the information might be better as bullet points as not everybody would read all of it. The content was excellent and Cllr M Millichap was thanked for the work he had done. **Resolved:** The Clerk would try to put the information into bullet points where possible. **Action: Clerk**

24/162 Grant Application from Berkswich Methodist Church

A gentleman from Berkswich Methodist Church had completed a grant application for a contribution towards replacement of a defibrillator. He had provided a copy invoice dated January 2024 so it was unclear if the purchase had already been made. **Resolved:** Clerk to ask if the purchase had already been made – if it had it would not be eligible for a grant. **Action: Clerk**

24/163 Replacement for Clerk's Laptop

The Clerk had asked Cllr Norris' advice on a replacement for the Clerk's laptop which was running very slowly. Cllr Norris had looked at what was available for the budget available and recommended four options. The Clerk had prepared a report for Council recommending an AcerSwift Go 16 Laptop with a 2 year warranty. **Resolved:** Council unanimously approved the purchase. **Action: Clerk** Cllr Norris was thanked for his work on this matter.

24/164 Grounds Maintenance Specification 2025

The Clerk had updated the specification for 2025. **Resolved:** Agreed unanimously. Clerk to seek quotes. **Action: Clerk**

24/165 Policies and Procedures

- i. **Standing Orders** – the document had been amended to cover what would happen in the absence of the Clerk for more than 5 days. **Resolved:** Agreed unanimously. Policy to be updated on the website. **Action: Clerk**
- ii. **Social Media Policy - Resolved:** Agreed unanimously. Policy to be added to the website. **Action: Clerk**

24/166 Financial Matters:

- i. **Bank Reconciliation and Expenditure for September and October 2024 – Resolved:** Agreed unanimously.

Bank Reconciliation and Expenditure September 2024

| Receipts | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| Company | Description | Amount | Date Received |
| Total Receipts | | £0.00 | |

| Payments | | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Paid to | Description | Invoice date | Cheque # | Gross Incl. VAT | VAT | Net |
| Virgin Account | | | | | | |
| Berkswich Parish Council (SRBS account) | Bring SRBS balance to £75k | 18/09/2024 | 873 | £10,995.45 | £0.00 | £10,995.45 |
| Berkswich Parish Council (Teachers PG Account) | Excess over £75k that SRBS wdnt take | 18/09/2024 | 875 | £931.51 | £0.00 | £931.51 |
| Unity Account | | | | | | |
| Mrs S Fullwood | Clerk salary & expenses September 24 | 30/09/2024 | | £1,102.47 | £24.37 | £1,078.10 |
| Staffs Pension Fund | Emper & empee contributions Sept 24 | 30/09/2024 | | £285.55 | £0.00 | £285.55 |
| HMRC | Emper NI Sept 24 | 30/09/2024 | | £30.81 | £0.00 | £30.81 |
| Trentham Fencing | Create footpath and gate for Hollybush Coppice | 30/08/2024 | | £1,662.00 | £277.00 | £1,385.00 |
| Trentham Fencing | Adjust fence to make wider entrance to Hollybush Coppice | 20/09/2024 | | £416.40 | £69.40 | £347.00 |
| TGM | August maintenance plus trimming shrubs at Hollybush Coppice as prep for fence work | 30/08/2024 | | £1,379.50 | £229.92 | £1,149.58 |
| Forvis Mazars LLP | External Audit 23-24 | 12/09/2024 | | £378.00 | £63.00 | £315.00 |
| reCoded Solutions Ltd | .gov.uk domain and emails | 07/09/2024 | | £48.00 | £8.00 | £40.00 |
| D M Payroll Services | Payroll Apr - Sept 24 | 06/07/2024 | | £60.00 | £0.00 | £60.00 |
| Walton Village Hall | Hall use 6.8.24 | 30/08/2024 | | £20.00 | £0.00 | £20.00 |
| ROSPA Playsafety Ltd | Annual Inspection 2024 | 16/08/2024 | | £108.00 | £18.00 | £90.00 |
| Unity Trust Bank | Account service charge | 30/09/2024 | | £10.96 | £0.00 | £10.96 |
| Total Payments | | | | £17,428.65 | £689.69 | £16,738.96 |

Cashbook

| | | |
|---|--------|------------|
| Opening Balance at 01.09.2024 | | 32,677.97 |
| Add: | | |
| Receipts 01.09.2024 to 30.09.2024 | | 0.00 |
| Less | | |
| Payments 01.09.2024 to 30.09.2024 | | 17,428.65 |
| Cashbook Balance at 30.09.2024 | | 15,249.32 |
| Current Account | | |
| Bank statement Balance at 01.09.2024 (Unity £21067.37 + Virgin £12098.81) | | 33,166.18 |
| Less payments made | | 17,916.86 |
| Less: Unpresented payments | Chq No | Amount |
| | | £0.00 |
| | | 0.00 |
| Add: Unpresented Receipts | | 0.00 |
| Unity C/A balance 30.09.2024 carried forward (Virgin £0.00) | | 15,249.32 |
| Available funds in C/A | | £15,249.32 |

Bank Reconciliation as at 31 October 2024

| Receipts | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------|
| Company | Description | Amount | Date Received |
| Stafford Borough Council | Precept, Concurrent function allowance & CTSG | £ 21,743.00 | 21/10/2024 |
| Total Receipts | | £21,743.00 | |

| Payments | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Paid to | Description | Invoice date | Gross Incl. VAT | VAT | Net |
| Walton Village Hall | Hall use 3 and 18 Sept 2024 | 30/09/2024 | £40.00 | £0.00 | £40.00 |
| TGM | Grounds Maintenance September 2024 | 30/09/2024 | £1,837.88 | £306.31 | £1,531.57 |
| Muddy Faces Ltd | Gardening Equipment for Berkswich Primary School | 04/10/2024 | £409.83 | £68.31 | £341.52 |
| Mrs S Fullwood | Clerk salary & expenses September 24 | 31/10/2024 | £1,186.81 | £51.43 | £1,135.38 |
| HMRC | Emper NI Sept 24 | 31/10/2024 | £30.81 | £0.00 | £30.81 |
| Staffs Pension Fund | Emper & empee contributions Sept 24 | 31/10/2024 | £285.55 | £0.00 | £285.55 |
| Unity | Service Charge | 31/10/2024 | £5.40 | £0.00 | £5.40 |
| Total Payments | | | £3,796.28 | £426.05 | £3,370.23 |

| Cashbook | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|------------------|--------|--|--|--|--|------|
| Opening Balance at 30.09.2024 | | 15,249.32 | | | | | | |
| Add: | | | | | | | | |
| Receipts 30.09.2024 to 31.10.2024 | | 21,743.00 | | | | | | |
| Less | | | | | | | | |
| Payments 30.09.2024 to 31.10.2024 | | 3,796.28 | | | | | | |
| Cashbook Balance at 31.10.2024 | | 33,196.04 | | | | | | |
| Current Account | | | | | | | | |
| Bank statement Balance at 30.09.2024 | | 15,249.32 | | | | | | |
| Less payments made (as above) | | 3,796.28 | | | | | | |
| Less: Unpresented Payments | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Chq No.s</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Chq No.s | Amount | | | | | 0.00 |
| Chq No.s | Amount | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Add: receipts | | 21743.00 | | | | | | |
| Add: Unpresented Receipts | | - | | | | | | |
| C/A balance 31.10.2024 carried forward | | 33,196.04 | | | | | | |
| Available funds in C/A | | 33,196.04 | | | | | | |

- ii. **Budget Report for October 2024 – Resolved:** The budget report was unanimously approved.

Budget Report October 2024

| RECEIPTS | To date | Budget | Less / more than budget |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Precept inc concurrent function | 41,274 | 41,274 | 0 |
| Council tax support grant | 705 | 705 | 0 |
| 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 | £ 56,231 | £ 46,049 | £10,182 |

| PAYMENTS | To date | Budget | Under / Over budget |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Staff costs | 8,711 | 15,820 | 7,109 |
| Office costs | 2,940 | 4,541 | 1,601 |
| Maintenance costs | 7,810 | 11,650 | 3,840 |
| Additional maintenance | - | 750 | 750 |
| Play Area | 90 | 2,610 | 2,520 |
| Capital purchases | - | 500 | 500 |
| Community support | 295 | 2,385 | 2,090 |
| Projects | 2,828 | 9,300 | 6,472 |
| Total Expenditure | £ 22,674 | £ 47,556 | £24,882 |

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 | £48,559 |
| Total funds | £185,059 |

24/167 Reports from other Meetings

- i. **Environment Group** – The felling and flailing had now been done at Hollybush Coppice.
- a) The Clerk had prepared a list of expenditure for approval as the hedgerow plants and trees would cost more than the FiPL grant offered and the Council would need to make up the difference. **Resolved:** agreed unanimously. **Action: Clerk** Cllr Norris commented that the Council were spending a considerable amount of money on the coppices which not many people saw which he felt was

incongruous. Cllr Francis responded that a lot of the money spent on the coppices came from grant funding.

- b) Cllr Taylor had asked for approval from Council to hire a battery powered brush cutter at £56 per day. **Resolved:** agreed unanimously. **Action: Cllr Taylor**
- ii. **Village Hall Council of Management** – no meeting in October therefore nothing to report.

24/168 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; land adjacent to 19, 21 and 23 The Village; planning status for Walton Garage; and traffic at Holdiford Road bridges.

The meeting closed at 8:42 pm.