

BERKSWICH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Berkswich Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 3 December 2024 at 7.30 pm at Walton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Alan Taylor (Chair), Cllr Caroline Pearson, Cllr Sue Francis, Cllr Beverley Hughes, Cllr Michael Norris, Cllr Bob Gilson and Cllr Tim Luker.

In attendance: Mrs Sue Fullwood as Clerk.

Cllr Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

24/169 Public session – none present.

24/170 Apologies – Cllr Vicky Campbell as she was working; Cllr Ann and Cllr Malcolm Millichap as they were unwell; and Stafford Borough Councillor Peter Edgeller as he was at an SBC meeting.

24/171 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024 - Resolved: It was agreed that the minutes were accurate.

24/172 Declarations of Interest regarding items on the agenda. None.

24/173 Clerk's Report for November 2024 - Resolved: the report was accepted.

24/174 Flower Beds on Main Road

Cllr Francis had been visited by TGM and they had explained that the quote for all the beds would be better value in the long run as it included digger hire which would need to be repeated at each stage if the work was spread out. Cllr Norris said that some of the underspend for 2024/25 could be used to do the work in this financial year. He added that he had looked at all of the flower beds and each was as bad as the next so it would be difficult to identify which to do first. **Resolved:** Cllr Francis proposed to go ahead with rejuvenating all 11 beds using the 2024/25 budget, seconded by Cllr Hughes and agreed unanimously. **Action: Clerk**

24/175 Land Adjacent to 19, 21 and 23 The Village

The Clerk had chased a response from SCC with regards to 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. Item adjourned to the next meeting. **Action: Clerk**

24/176 Grant Application from Berkswich Methodist Church

The applicant had confirmed by email that the defibrillator had not been purchased and they were still trying to raise funding. **Resolved:** Church to be offered a grant of £500 towards the purchase. **Action: Clerk**

24/177 Draft Parish Council Leaflet

The Clerk had reformatted the leaflet to a two-fold double sided A4 sheet and edited some of the information to bullet points. **Resolved:** It was agreed that the leaflet was ready to be printed and the Clerk should ask for quotes from printers for how many could be purchased for £200. **Action: Clerk** Leaflets would be used for fetes, published on the website, placed in the phone box, the Village Hall and Cllr Gilson would put one in each of the three Berkswich Parish Churches.

24/178 Plans for 80th Anniversary of VE Day and VJ Day in 2025

Item discharged – no further action.

24/179 Grounds Maintenance provider for 2025

The Clerk had asked for quotes from 5 different contractors. Of those 5 only one had provided a quote, two had replied saying that they wouldn't be quoting and two had not responded at all. **Resolved:** Agreed unanimously to accept the quote from TGM.

Action: Clerk

24/180 Traffic Lights on Holdiford Road

Cllr Luker said that in his experience since the installation of the traffic lights on Holdiford Road, vehicles were now going faster over the bridges – they seem to feel they can go faster because they have got the green light. It is not safe for pedestrians trying to cross the bridges, particularly when vehicles have got stuck between the two sets of lights, if there are two vehicles adjacent to each other there is nowhere for pedestrians to go. Cllr Francis felt that it was hard to gauge now because of the additional traffic caused by the Radford Bank roadworks. **Resolved:** to be kept under review when traffic levels were back to normal.

24/181 Response to Remote Attendance at Meetings Consultation

Cllr Luker felt that remote meetings were not as effective as face-to-face meetings. It was felt that remote meetings shouldn't be custom and practice, but it would be useful to have the facility in case of pandemic, etc. Microphones and software licences would be expensive. It was agreed that a mix of face-to-face and remote attendance would be the worst of both worlds. **Resolved:** It was agreed not to respond as a Parish Council but that anyone could respond as an individual if they wished to.

24/182 Replacement of Wooden Planters Around the Parish

The Secretary of Berkswich Football Club regularly replanted the planter under the Walton on the Hill sign on Old Croft Road and had notified the Clerk that the planter was in need of replacement. Cllr Hughes had been discussing it with her neighbour who had offered to replace the planter like-for-like. **Resolved:** It was unanimously agreed to accept the offer with grateful thanks. **Action: Cllr Hughes** Clerk to check state of the other planters in the parish and report back to the February meeting. **Action: Clerk**

24/183 Financial Matters:

i. Budget for 2025/26

The Clerk had prepared figures which had been discussed by the Finance Committee. **Resolved:** The budget was agreed unanimously. Cllr Francis passed on thanks to the Finance Committee.

Budget proposal for 2025-26								as at Nov 24	
	21/22 budget	21/22 outturn	22/23 budget	22/23 outturn	23/24 budget	23/24 outturn	24/25 budget	24/25 predicted outturn	Proposed 25/26 budget
Staff costs									
Salary	8,000.00	8,898.92	11,400.00	11,847.38	11,400.00	11,742.79	11,760.00	11,742.79	11,760.00
Study time	-	-	-	1,833.38	-	518.93	-	-	-
Pension	-	2,130.64	3,000.00	3,502.32	3,000.00	3,042.51	3,560.00	2,778.96	3,000.00
Employer NI	-	142.91	300.00	663.87	650.00	451.52	500.00	369.72	1,100.00
Total staff costs	8,000.00	11,172.47	14,700.00	17,846.95	15,050.00	15,755.75	15,820.00	14,891.47	15,860.00
General running costs									
Travel	500.00	-	50.00	-	50.00	-	-	-	-
Clerk's Training	500.00	230.00	150.00	715.00	100.00	-	100.00	-	100.00
Use of home as office	312.00	312.00	312.00	312.00	312.00	312.00	312.00	312.00	312.00
Post & stationery inc printer, mobile	350.00	611.35	600.00	484.10	550.00	385.48	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,000.00
Hall Hire	300.00	373.17	450.00	390.00	300.00	380.00	360.00	240.00	240.00
Insurance	1,400.00	1,303.05	1,400.00	1,414.13	1,600.00	1,188.50	1,189.00	1,316.70	1,500.00
Audit	400.00	434.70	400.00	320.00	400.00	452.50	500.00	437.50	500.00
Payroll Services	60.00	120.00	120.00	622.50	140.00	120.00	140.00	120.00	140.00
Info Commissioner/subs	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	50.00
Elections (SBC)	-	-	-	-	-	159.33	-	-	-
SPCA (inc. NALC)	400.00	378.00	420.00	384.30	-	377.65	400.00	396.00	425.00
SLCC	130.00	140.00	140.00	171.00	-	-	-	-	-
Members' training	100.00	25.00	100.00	-	300.00	120.00	120.00	120.00	120.00
Web domain and hosting	1,000.00	-	250.00	131.95	140.00	125.00	140.00	173.00	200.00
Total running costs	5,492.00	3,967.27	4,432.00	4,984.98	3,932.00	3,660.46	4,801.00	4,655.20	4,587.00
Maintenance costs									
Grounds maintenance	10,000.00	9,377.10	11,000.00	8,708.00	11,000.00	8622.35	11,000.00	10,131.45	11,500.00
War memorial	500.00	-	3,000.00	6,171.67	250.00	40.00	250.00	-	250.00
Village pump	100.00	-	100.00	-	50.00	-	100.00	-	100.00
Noticeboards	100.00	17.52	100.00	-	50.00	785.00	100.00	500.00	200.00
Phone box	200.00	-	200.00	35.00	200.00	1,095.00	100.00	210.00	200.00
SIDs	-	-	100.00	-	50.00	-	200.00	-	200.00
School Lane trees	500.00	-	2,000.00	700.00	500.00	9,019.15	500.00	-	1,000.00
Trip rails	-	250.00	300.00	175.00	100.00	-	250.00	250.00	250.00
Coppices maintenance	4,500.00	2,959.14	32,000.00	13,683.00	500.00	9,272.01	9,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
Total additional maintenance	15,900.00	12,603.76	48,800.00	29,907.67	12,700.00	28,833.51	21,500.00	14,091.45	16,700.00
Play area equipment									
Maintenance	3,000.00	459.00	1,000.00	30.33	500.00	-	500.00	200.00	1,200.00
Purchases	-	107.88	20,000.00	29,366.23	-	-	2,000.00	-	2,000.00
RoSPA inspection	100.00	90.60	100.00	80.50	90.00	85.50	110.00	108.00	140.00
Total play area	3,100.00	657.48	21,100.00	29,477.06	590.00	85.50	2,610.00	308.00	3,340.00
Community support									
Grant 1	500.00	-	500.00	-	-	-	250.00	171.85	250.00
Grant 2	500.00	-	500.00	-	-	-	250.00	250.00	250.00
Grant 3	500.00	-	500.00	-	-	-	250.00	-	250.00
Grant 4	500.00	-	500.00	-	-	-	250.00	-	250.00
Chairman's allowance	100.00	164.99	150.00	35.83	75.00	33.34	75.00	50.00	100.00
Parish Newsletter	600.00	690.00	1,000.00	229.00	50.00	-	50.00	-	50.00
Parish events	-	-	1,000.00	1,386.04	1,000.00	-	1,000.00	60.01	500.00
Educational Support	500.00	-	-	-	-	-	200.00	200.00	200.00
Total community support	3,200.00	854.99	4,150.00	1,650.87	1,125.00	33.34	2,325.00	731.86	1,850.00
Projects									
Planters scheme	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120.00
SIDs	2,500.00	2,090.58	-	-	-	-	500.00	-	4,300.00
New planting at War Memorial	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000.00
Flower Beds on Main Road	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,000.00
Total projects	4,500.00	2,090.58	-	-	-	612.95	500.00	-	8,420.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	40,192.00	31,346.55	93,182.00	83,867.53	33,397.00	48,981.51	47,556.00	34,677.98	50,757.00
Receipts									
Precept (April & Oct)	26,535.00	25,304.00	25,799.25	25,799.25	27,744.97	27,744.98	41,274.08	41,274.08	
Council tax support grant	1,231.00	1,231.00	1,230.75	1,230.75	1,230.75	1,230.77	704.92	704.92	
B.C. (Concurrent Function Allowance)	1,507.00	1,507.00	1,507.00	1,507.00	1,507.00	1,507.00	1,507.00	1,507.00	1,507.00
SCC Minor Highways Agreement	1,500.00	-	1,500.00	5,094.00	2,200.00	2,662.00	2,750.00	3,502.00	3,600.00
Interest on Stafford Railway BS a/c	185.00	-	185.00	591.74	250.00	1,590.61	600.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Interest on Teachers a/c	125.00	154.56	125.00	374.83	200.00	1,002.36	350.00	800.00	800.00
Interest on Hampshire Trust Bank	125.00	83.09	85.00	61.91	75.00	36.22	70.00	26.08	-
Grants	-	-	-	-	-	11,210.75	-	13,000.00	-
Other Receipts (Wayleaves etc)	50.00	-	50.00	7,695.79	45.00	12,368.62	300.00	192.58	1,000.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	31,258.00	28,279.65	30,482.00	42,355.27	33,252.72	59,353.31	47,556.00	62,006.66	7,907.00

24/25 tax base - 788.53
24/25 Band D Tax Amount - £52.34

25-26
25/26 tax base 793.14
Expenditure 50,757.00
Minus receipts (before precept and CTSG) 7,907.00
Total precept required 25/26 42,850.00

£54.03 per Band D
3.2% increase
£1.69 increase

The total precept for parish councils in 2024/25 is £783 million, which is 1.9% of the overall council tax.

ii. **Precept Demand for 2025/26**

The percentage increase for the Precept for 2025/26 was suggested as 3.2% by the Finance Committee. **Resolved:** The 3.2% increase was agreed unanimously. Clerk to confirm to SBC. **Action: Clerk**

iii. **Current Budget Surplus**

Covered in item 24/174.

iv. **Confirmation of Internal Auditor for 2024/25**

Resolved: Clerk to request that Sandie Morris continues to be Internal Auditor for the Council. **Action: Clerk**

v. **Bank Reconciliation and Expenditure for November 2024 – Resolved:** Agreed unanimously.

Bank Reconciliation as at 30 November 2024

Receipts			
Company	Description	Amount	Date Received
Keogh's LLP	Excess for accident at War Memorial	£340.00	22/11/2024
Total Receipts		£340.00	

Payments						
Paid to	Description	Invoice date	Date paid	Gross Incl. VAT	VAT	Net
Information Commissioner's Office	Renewal 24/25	06/11/2024	08/11/2024	£35.00	£0.00	£35.00
John Lewis & Partners Business	Acer Swift Go 16 Laptop	06/11/2024	11/11/2024	£1,077.02	£179.50	£897.52
Lichfield Treeworks Ltd	Tree felling & pruning at Hollybush Coppice	29/10/2024	11/11/2024	£600.00	£100.00	£500.00
Lichfield Treeworks Ltd	Flailing & logs at Hollybush Coppice	01/11/2024	11/11/2024	£660.00	£110.00	£550.00
TGM	October Grounds Maintenance	30/10/2024	07/11/2024	£1,461.16	£243.53	£1,217.63
Walton Village Hall	Hall use 1 Oct 24	30/10/2024	07/11/2024	£20.00	£0.00	£20.00
Hedges Direct	Hedgerow plants for Hollybush Coppice	08/11/2024	13/11/2024	£2,078.03	£346.34	£1,731.69
Mrs Susan Fullwood	Clerk salary & expenses Nov 2024	29/11/2024	29/11/2024	£973.35	£20.08	£953.27
HMRC	Employer NI Nov 2024	29/11/2024	29/11/2024	£30.81	£0.00	£30.81
Staffs Pension Fund	Emper & empee Pensions contributions Nov 24	29/11/2024	29/11/2024	£285.55	£0.00	£285.55
Walton Village Hall	Hall use 5/11/24	26/11/2024	27/11/2024	£20.00	£0.00	£20.00
TGM	Walton Coppice Herbicide Treatment	19/11/2024	27/11/2024	£558.00	£93.00	£465.00
Unity	Service Charge	30/11/2024	30/11/2024	£6.00	£0.00	£6.00
Total Payments				£7,804.92	£1,092.45	£6,712.47

Cashbook

Opening Balance at 01.11.2024	33,196.04
Add:	
Receipts 01.11.2024 to 30.11.2024	340.00
Less	
Payments 01.11.2024 to 30.11.2024	7,804.92
Cashbook Balance at 30.11.2024	25,731.12

Current Account

Bank statement Balance at 01.11.2024	33,196.04
Less payments made	7,804.92
Less: Unpresented Payments	0.00
Add: receipts	340.00
Add: Unpresented Receipts	0.00
C/A balance 30.11.2024 carried forward	£ 25,731.12
Available funds in C/A	£ 25,731.12

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

Budget Report November 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)	533	300	233
Total income	£ 56,571	£ 46,049	£10,522

PAYMENTS	To date	Budget	Under / Over budget
Staff costs	9,955	15,820	5,865
Office costs	3,961	4,541	580
Maintenance costs	9,027	11,650	2,623
Additional maintenance	-	750	750
Play Area	90	2,610	2,520
Capital purchases	-	500	500
Community support	295	2,385	2,090
Projects	6,531	9,300	2,769
Total Expenditure	£ 29,859	£ 47,556	£17,697

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	£41,094
Total funds	£177,594

24/184 Financial Matters:

- i. **Planning Status for Walton Garage 24/38959/FUL**
Cllr Taylor had prepared a draft response to the member of the public who had attended the meeting on 5 November. Two councillors had checked the plans and they showed planting at the roadside and room for the transporters to turn.
Resolved: Clerk to send response to the member of the public. **Action: Clerk**
- ii. **Ratification of response to Planning Application 24/39841/HOU proposed alterations and extensions at 31 The Village, Walton on the Hill**
The Council's objection letter had been sent to SBC before the deadline of 28 November. **Resolved:** Unanimously agreed.
- iii. **Planning Application 24/39750/FUL at Pretty Pots, The White House, 76 Main Road, Milford**
It was felt that Pretty Pots were not taking the parking issues seriously enough. One councillor had seen children travelling from Berkswich Primary School having to cycle right into the road to pass cars parked on the pavement there. **Resolved:** The draft objection letter was unanimously agreed. **Action: Clerk**

24/185 Reports from other Meetings

- i. **Environment Group** – The hedgerow plants had been delivered to the Clerk's home and had been moved around to Hollybush Coppice. Cllr Luker and Cllr Taylor had met with the teacher at Berkswich Primary School earlier on 3 December and she hoped to get the pupils to plant all of the plants before Christmas.

Cllr Norris asked for an update on the hedgerow planting at Walton Coppice. Cllr Luker confirmed that quite a few of the plants had failed, but the hazel plants were doing quite well. Cllr Francis added that it would be best to review the hedgerow planting in Spring 2025.

24/186 Agenda Items for the Next Meeting scheduled for Tuesday 4 February 2025 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; planters around the parish.

The meeting closed at 8:25 pm.