



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 5th June 2024
At 7pm at the Pavilion, Fownhope**

Present:

Cllrs Tim Jones (in the Chair), Frank Hemming, Michael Short, Tony Kelk and Lavinia Smith.

In attendance:

7 members of the public; Clerk Helen Tinson, Ward Cllr Graham Biggs.

1. Fownhope Community Service Awards:

The Chairman presented two Fownhope Community Service Awards to Rob Price and Heather Percy in recognition of their outstanding and sustained service to the community, and extended his thanks to them both on behalf of the Parish Council and the Parish.

2. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Kevin Braybrook, Mike Simmons, Gareth Williams, Will Morris, Claire Patel and Sue Eames

3. To Receive any Declarations of Interest and Written Requests for Dispensation:

3.1. To receive any declarations of interest: there were none.

3.2. To consider any written requests for dispensations: there were none.

4. Open Session:

4.1. Report from Ward Councillor:

Cllr Graham Biggs read from a report, appended as Appendix A. The following comments were added:

4.1.1. Heart of Oak Walk AGM will be held on 11th September in the Tesco Room

4.1.2. An application for 350 homes in Hampton Bishop will go to Planning Committee if Planning Officers are minded to approve it. Concerns have been uploaded to the planning portal for developers to respond.

4.2. Representation from the Public:

4.2.1. A parishioner raised concerns about extensive nettle growth on FWD6a and FWA1 and asked the Parish Council to contact the landowners and ask for them to be cut back.

4.2.2. An email from a parishioner had been received thanking the Footpaths Team for creating a fully gated walk which has made a walk accessible to them.

4.2.3. A councillor raised a neighbour's concern about a telegraph pole that has been erected by Openreach outside the New Memorial Hall. A notice to direct objections was noted but it doesn't state the purpose of the pole, or if more are to follow. It was agreed that the Clerk would enquire.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on the 1st May 2024. Two queries were raised in connection with 10.2 (Investment Strategy) and 15.3 (Response to HC Local Plan Affordable Housing Discounts). It was agreed that an agenda item on Affordable Housing Discounts would be tabled for discussion at the next meeting.

It was RESOLVED: to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting. The minutes were signed by the Chair.

6. To consider matters arising from the Annual Parish Meeting:

Members considered two matters arising from Public Comments at the Annual Parish Meeting:

6.1. Streetlighting: the Parish Council were asked if they could look again at reducing the timing of streetlighting, the frequency (ie switch off alternate lights), or the direction of lighting.

It was RESOLVED: to ask the Environment Group to investigate and establish options for consideration.

6.2. Communication: concerns were raised about whether Parish Council communications are reaching all parishioners, in particular for those who find it difficult to leave their homes and younger parishioners. It was noted that Compassionate Communities (CoCo) are undertaking a survey of their clients to identify any difficulties and will present a report in due course. It was suggested that the Parish Council consider Instagram as a means of communicating with younger parishioners.

It was RESOLVED: to defer any decision until the results of the CoCo survey have been received.

7. Finance:

7.1. Finance Report:

Members received a financial report as appended (Appendix B).

It was RESOLVED: to approve the report.

7.2. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/2024:

7.2.1. Internal Auditor Report: Members received and noted the Internal Audit Report for 2023/24. Two recommendations were noted.

7.2.2. Annual Governance Statement: Members considered the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24.

It was RESOLVED: to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24. The statement was duly signed.

7.2.3. Annual Accounting Statement: Members considered the Annual Accounting Statement for 2023/24 and an Explanation of Significant Variances document.

It was RESOLVED: to approve the Annual Accounting Statement for 2023/24. The statement was duly signed.

7.2.4. Period for the Exercise of Public Rights: Members considered the dates of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights in line with the external audit requirements.

It was RESOLVED: to set the dates from Monday 10th June to Friday 19th July 2024.

7.3. Cyber Security Insurance:

Members considered the renewal of Cyber Security Insurance at a cost of £405.25 per year.

It was RESOLVED: to defer decision pending an assessment of cover over need.

7.4. Annual Subscriptions 2024/25:

It was RESOLVED: to approve the following annual subscriptions:

7.4.1. Anti-virus protection for Clerk computer

7.4.2. ICO/Data Protection Annual Registration

7.4.3. HP Instant Ink

7.4.4. Microsoft One Drive

7.4.5. .gov.uk domain and email addresses (10gb storage per mailbox) – noted renewed December 2023 for 2 years

7.4.6. Squarespace web hosting

- 7.4.7. HALC Annual Membership
- 7.4.8. Herefordshire Tree Warden Network Annual Membership
- 7.4.9. Herefordshire Green Network Annual Membership
- 7.4.10. PATA Payroll Services
- 7.4.11. Scribe Accounting Software
- 7.4.12. Open Spaces Society Annual Membership
- 7.4.13. Clerk salary in accordance with contract
- 7.4.14. HMRC – PAYE/NIC Payments

7.5. Payments:

Members were asked to ratify payments made between meetings.

It was RESOLVED: to ratify:

- 7.5.1 Dorothy Quayle, Reimburse Expenses Dawn Chorus Walk (FCS budget), £44.80
- 7.5.2 FNMH, NDP Consultation Room Hire 21.4.24, £44.00

7.6 Members noted the following payments made between meetings:

- 7.6.1 FRFA, Room Hire Costs for Fownhope Community Playgroup, £100.00 (approved FPC 1.5.24)
- 7.6.2 St. Mary's Church Donation Grass Cutting, £1000.00 (approved FPC 6.3.24)
- 7.6.3 PWLB Loan repayment, £494.49

7.7 Members considered invoices for payment.

It was RESOLVED: to approve payment of the following invoices:

- 7.7.1 Tree Warden Subscription, £30.00
- 7.7.2 Suzie Bruce, P3, £474.00 (inc £4.00 VAT)
- 7.7.3 Suzie Bruce, P3, £674.00
- 7.7.4 Suzie Bruce, Lengthsman, £85.00
- 7.7.5 Mike Simmons, Reimburse expenses Community Service Awards, £25.00 inc. VAT
- 7.7.6 Helen Tinson, Clerk Salary May, in accordance with contract
- 7.7.7 FRFA, Meeting Room Hire May, £99.00
- 7.7.8 Nick Maddy Bus Service, Ross and Ledbury Bus (May), £90.00

8 To appoint representatives to Fownhope United Charities:

Members considered appointing three trustees to Fownhope United Charities for a 3-year term 2024-2027.

It was RESOLVED: to appoint Mike Simmons, Jeremy Plummer and Siobhan Donnelly Maguire as trustees for 2024-2027.

9 Update from Herefordshire Town and Parish Council Charter Working Group:

Members received a report from Cllr Lavinia Smith. Eight members of the working group led by Herefordshire Council have held their first meeting to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the 2011 Town and Parish Council Charter, its overarching purpose and to identify what a revised charter should include. A further meeting is planned for later in the month.

10 Highways

10.1 Report:

Members received a report as appended (Appendix C). It was noted that the planned footpath and road closures would be published via the normal channels.

It was RESOLVED: to ask the Lengthsman to clean the road signs in the village, excluding the signs by Cherry Hill Rise (due to be moved).

It was RESOLVED: to table an agenda item at the July meeting to consider Herefordshire Council's response concerning the installation of a Highway Mirror at the junction of Hawkers Lane and the B4224.

10.2 Traffic Regulation Order (Speed Limit Variation Order B4224):

Members considered a response to the Traffic Regulation Order (Speed Limit Variation Order) on the B4224 to extend the 30mph limit past the new developments at Cherry Hill Rise and Old Barn Close. Cllr Biggs confirmed his support for a 20mph speed limit through the village and advised he would raise the matter with Herefordshire Council's Head of Highways.

It was RESOLVED: to support the Traffic Regulation Order and ask if the TRO could be extended to include a 20mph speed limit through the village.

10.3 Parking on Capler Lane and the B4224:

Members considered an update concerning church parking on Capler Lane. It was noted that the Churchwardens have supported a proposal to move the parking sign from its current location against the church wall to the edge of the grass verge against the telephone pole. Churchwardens will continue to place cones during events and encourage parking at the Recreation Field.

It was RESOLVED: to ask the Lengthsman to move the sign to the agreed position (noted above)

Members considered further concerns about parking on the B4224, outside the West End Stores, along to Ferry Lane which appears to have increased over recent weeks. It was noted that parking is still occurring over the dotted white lines and on the pavement. Concerns were raised about the impact on pedestrians and wheelchair users. A council member reported that on at least one occasion the car park for the stores was full bar two spaces but there was no-one in the shop. It is understood that the rightful route for cars accessing the River Wye for fishing is currently blocked and the suggestion was mooted that this may perhaps be the reason for the increased parking. A suggestion was made to place notices on the windscreen of cars incorrectly parked or a sign placed outside the shop to ask visitors to use the car park. The balance between addressing parking concerns and supporting the shop was noted, as were other areas of inconsiderate parking within the village. Pursuing 20mph speed limits through the village was proposed on the basis of slower cars being safer cars, and the support of Ward Councillor Biggs and Ward Councillor Durkin, also Cabinet Member for Roads and Infrastructure, was noted. A parishioner raised the option of double yellow lines and was informed that this had been discussed with the Locality Steward and reported to a previous council meeting.

It was RESOLVED: to table an agenda item for the next meeting to consider pursuing a Traffic Regulation Order to reduce the speed limit through the village to 20mph.

10.4 Pavement from West End Stores to Old Barn Close:

It was reported that a parishioner has queried why the new pavement between West End Stores and Old Barn Close stops by the 30mph sign. It is assumed that the area will be surfaced once the sign has been moved.

11 Environment:

11.1 Verge Cutting:

BBLP have advised that verges will be cut on the same frequency as last year unless notified otherwise.

It was RESOLVED: to approve one cut in late summer as last year.

11.2 Annual Tree Survey:

Members considered two dates for the Annual Tree Survey.

It was RESOLVED: to book the survey in line with the availability of the Parish Tree Warden.

11.3 Swing at Tan Brook:

Members were informed that a local parishioner has volunteered to carry out weekly assessments of the swing at Tan Brook and the Clerk has sought the advice of the qualified volunteer play area inspector. A query was raised concerning registering the title of Tan Brook and whether ownership of the swing would present a problem.

It was RESOLVED: that the Clerk would continue to connect the qualified play area inspector with the volunteer for the weekly assessments, and contact the parishioner who had erected the swing to ask

if they would be minded to transfer ownership of the swing to the Parish Council in the event ownership presents a problem to registering the title.

Ward Councillor Biggs left the meeting (8.30pm)

12 Footpaths:

Members received a report as appended (Appendix D) and considered the application for PROW grant funding from Herefordshire Council.

It was RESOLVED: to approve the application for the PROW funding to be submitted to Herefordshire Council.

It was further reported that a parishioner had contacted the Parish Council to express concerns about restricted access to the field and river across a permissive right of way from Ferry Lane and Old Barn Close. A member of the public reported that there is now an open pedestrian gate at that location.

It was RESOLVED: to write to the landowner to enquire about the status of the footpath and access.

Residents of Pagets Spring have reported unprecedented flooding this winter following the removal of Ash trees in Pagets Wood, and that the significant felling works appear to have disrupted the natural water course of Pagets Brook prompting further problems. Meetings with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust are ongoing with a potential solution to create a pond in Pagets Wood. No action is currently required from the Parish Council.

A larger, parish-wide concern about the poor condition of woodlands following tree felling was noted.

13 To Consider Comments on Planning Applications for Determination by Herefordshire Council:

13.1 241303: Manor Farmhouse, Fownhope, HR1 4PG. Proposed replacement of several windows to the south and east elevations.

Members considered the application noting the comments of the Conservation Officer to request putty rather than timber glazing beads.

It was RESOLVED: to support the application and endorse the request of the Conservation Officer.

14 Other Matters relating to Planning:

14.1 To note report of Planning Decisions taken by Herefordshire Council (HC):

Members noted the report as appended (Appendix E)

14.2 Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Draft Position Statement Consultation:

Members considered a response to a two-part consultation on Renewable Energy and Dark Skies. The response deadline of 14th June 2024 was noted.

It was RESOLVED: to support both consultations.

15 FRFA/Recreation Field:

15.1 Report:

There was no report. The Clerk asked members to consider purchasing replacement pads for the defibrillator outside the Pavilion.

It was RESOLVED: to approve the purchase of replacement defibrillator pads.

15.2 BMX Track:

It was RESOLVED: to defer discussion to the next meeting.

16 Training:

Members considered the quarterly training schedule from HALC.

It was RESOLVED: for Cllr Tim Jones to attend the 'In the Hot Seat' training on 24th June and the informal 'Chair's Chat' on 17th June.

17 Clerk Report:

The following information was noted:

- 17.1 Babble Ride Across Britain Event will pass through Fownhope on Day 3 (9th September)
- 17.2 NALC have issued a new Good Councillor Guide, the link has been shared with members
- 17.3 An invitation to a Lecture on Hedges with Professor Dover, 24th June 10am-12noon

18 Next Meeting: 7pm, Wednesday 3rd July 2024, Fownhope Pavilion.

19 Agenda Items Raised for Next Meeting:

- To consider the amended Environmental and Sustainability Policy
- To consider the Risk Register for 2024/25
- To consider and approve Financial Regulations for 2024/25
- To consider Cyber Security Insurance
- To receive and consider update on voluntary registration of Tan Brook Land Ownership
- To consider the outcome of response to the NDP Consultation and decide whether to review the FNDP
- To consider Affordable Housing Discounts
- To consider Herefordshire Council's response concerning the installation of a Highway Mirror at the junction of Hawkers Lane and the B4224.
- To consider pursuing a Traffic Regulation Order to reduce the speed limit through the village to 20mph.
- To consider the future of the BMX track

Meeting closed 8.52pm.

Signed
Chairman

Dated

Appendix A: Ward Councillor Report

Cllr Graham Biggs

Unfortunately, the Spring sunshine has turned back to rain and although the forecast for the week ahead looks to be improving nothing is guaranteed so please do be careful when travelling as heavy showers often lead to slippery road surfaces. Excess rain also leads to muddy fields and with farmers needing to enter and exit fields at the moment it is not uncommon to see mud on the roads. The vast majority of farmers are very diligent and clear up any mud very quickly but where you do spot a problem, please let me or the locality steward know so signage can be arranged.

The recent warm and wet weather has led to a surge in growth on the verges. This can cause visibility / safety issues at junctions and on narrow roads. The delay in cutting potentially dangerous junctions has been raised with Herefordshire Council / Balfour Beatty and if you are aware of any that haven't yet been cut then please do let me know. Equally Balfour Beatty have started the normal verge cutting programme and there is a list of verges which are

not cut due to community wildflower planting, if you are aware of any which should be on that list and would like to check then please contact me as soon as possible so we can avoid any inadvertent cuts.

As I mentioned in my previous reports, a new Public Rights of Way (PROW) scheme was due to be announced in May. I am pleased to confirm that details of this have been made available to all Parish councils via their Clerks – if you have been inadvertently missed off this list then please let me know and I will arrange for details to be sent to you. The scheme offers Parish councils the opportunity to apply for a fixed amount of funding to replace assets on PROW in their areas. The funding available for each asset is set at the rate Herefordshire Council would pay if they were to purchase the asset themselves. I would urge you to take up this funding opportunity as there is no guarantee it will be repeated but please do consult with the relevant landowner before applying so permission can be obtained for installation.

I have noticed that there has been an increase in pothole repairs over the last few weeks and although many areas require significantly more investment, it is a welcome step in the right direction. As always where you spot a repair completed by Balfour Beatty or a utility company that does not look to be of a sufficient standard please raise it with me and I will highlight it with the relevant team. Herefordshire Council does use its powers to force utility companies and Balfour Beatty to return and redo work where it does not meet the standards required however, if these issues are not flagged to them then they are unable to take action.

The third instalment of our additional funding to Parish councils (Aside from the increased Lengthsman Grant - £250k and the Prow Scheme - £250k) is the Local Drainage Fund - £445k. Expressions of interest were due in last month and I am told approximately 90 Parish councils registered their interest. Details of how to apply and the projects that can be funded will be published soon but please do not be concerned if your expression of interest has not been acknowledged. If you emailed the email address given in the initial invitation to express an interest (lengthsman@herefordshire.gov.uk) then you will have been included.

On a County level, you may be pleased to know that Herefordshire Council held its Annual Meeting last Friday and the current minority Conservative Administration retained control under our leader Cllr Jonathan Lester. The Chairman of Herefordshire Council remains Cllr Roger Phillips and the Vice-Chairperson is Cllr Steph Simmons.

Equally noteworthy was the publication of the Council's year end financials. When our administration took control of the council in May last year the predicted deficit was nearly £13.8m for this year and over £19 million for 24/25. I am pleased to say that through targeted action the deficit for 23/24 was reduced to £8.7m and a balanced budget set for the 24/25 financial year. We are delivering against this budget now and although I cannot provide exact figures at this stage all the signs point to our targets being met.

On a final note I would like to reassure residents and Councillors that although Government may grind to a halt throughout the election, Herefordshire Council is not subject to the same restrictions and will continue with business as usual. This includes the delivery of vital services, road investment and associated projects. I will provide a written update prior to the General Election but no matter who you chose to vote for, please do make sure you are registered and able to exercise your vote on 4th July. As always if you have any concerns locally, please contact me.

Appendix B: Finance Report

REPORT FOR COUNCIL MEETING: 5th June 2024

REPORT BY: Helen Tinson, Clerk/RFO

AGENDA ITEM: 7.1, Finance Report

Bank Balances:

Lloyds: £15,581.50 (excludes payments to be approved 5.6.24 £2,462.46)

Lloyds Reserve: £26,001.06

Hargreaves Lansdown: £22,952.68 (at 3.6.24)

Total funds held across all banks and investments at 3.6.24 = £64,535.24

Bank Reconciliation:

Has been completed to 31st May 2024 and will be passed to the Chairman to check and sign at the end of the meeting.

Finance Working Group:

Met on Tuesday 7th May:

- Considered External Audit documents and agreed the period for the exercise of public rights
- Reviewed model Financial Regulations for proposal to full council
- Considered Participatory Budget - HT to research and bring to full council
- Debit Card for the current account – HT to research and bring to full council
- Village Walkaround – as comprehensively covered in 2023 it was agreed to defer this until 2025

Appendix C: Highways Report

REPORT FOR COUNCIL MEETING: 5th June 2024

REPORT BY: Kevin Braybrook

AGENDA ITEM: 10.1: Highways Report

We have received the following advance notice from Freemans of planned traffic light use, road and footpath closures. This will be distributed via the usual channels.

Location	Dates		Notes	Works to be completed
	From	To		
Fownhope 1	11/06/2024	12/06/2024	Tarmac to Supply TM	Final Surfacing to onsite roads

Fownhope 3	03/08/2024	04/08/2024	Weekend Only Closure	Foul Drainage to Common Hill Lane
	10/08/2024	11/08/2024	Weekend Only Closure	Foul Drainage to Common Hill Lane
	17/08/2024	18/08/2024	Weekend Only Closure	Foul Drainage to Common Hill Lane
	19/08/2024	30/08/2024	2 Week Uninterrupted Closure	Foul Drainage to Common Hill Lane
Fownhope 3	15/07/2024	16/08/2024	Footpath Closure FWA 10	Edgings, Surfacing, S38 Path
Fownhope 3	22/07/2024	02/08/2024	Traffic Lights Nover Wood Drive and Croft Road	Tactile Paving Works, Kerbing and Surfacing

- The weeds in the kerb along B4224 have been sprayed
- Suggest that we request that lengths person clean road signs as part of our annual maintenance programme
- The TRO consultation for the extension of the 30mph zone from Cherry Hill is now open. Comments to: info@adltraffic.co.uk before 12noon on Friday 14th June.
- Despite regular chasing, we have had no further news on the schedule for completion of the traffic calming programme. Perhaps our Ward Councillor can request an update?
- Current SID Data for May is now available on the website. The manufacturers have been asked to investigate the loss of data from the SID at the Church end of the village. They have reported that the problem may lie with an intermittent loss of power from the solar panel resulting in some vehicle movements not being recorded. The volunteer managing the device is not convinced that this is the cause of the issue and will follow up on his return from holiday.
- Response received from Herefordshire Council concerning Highway Mirror on Hawkers Lane

Appendix D: Footpaths Report

REPORT FOR COUNCIL MEETING: 5th June 2024

REPORT BY: Will Morris, Footpaths Officer

AGENDA ITEM: 12: Footpaths Report

Survey of the Wye Valley Walk has been completed this month, as required for its 50th anniversary

- New way markers installed
- Areas for improvement identified and discussed with team in charge of upgrading the walk
- Permission for 4 new gates along the WvW granted by landowners (great news and many thanks to the residents of Pagets Spring!)
- Correct route re-established around common hill (walk had been incorrectly directed for approximately 400 metres.
- Next steps will be to meet with the team responsible for actioning the works identified.

PROW grant application form completed

- Huge thanks to Caplor Farm for agreeing to improve access by upgrading 6 stiles to gates. The stiles have been photographed and included in the grant application form (see attached form).
- Next steps are to await grant approval, for all or some of the requests.
- Thanks were extended to local landowners for giving permission.

PROW officer response regarding blockage at Tan Brook FWD6 and FWD6a:

- HC PROW Officer has inspected and reported a dam built in the water course. He was able to move some of it but found sticks pushed into the river bed with further stitch interwoven. He believes this has contributed towards the buildup of water around the footbridge. A letter has been sent to the landowner outlining their responsibilities.

New posts and signage installed by Cherry Hill development to encourage correct use of FWB9 PROW

Concerns raised by residents about overhanging hedge on FWB8, in the short passage between Cherry Hill and Scotch Firs.

- Residents have been advised that no work can be completed to trim hedge until nesting season is over.

Appendix E: Planning Decisions taken by Herefordshire Council Report

REPORT FOR COUNCIL MEETING: 5th June 2024

REPORT BY: Helen Tinson, Clerk

AGENDA ITEM: 14.1: To Note Report on Planning Decisions Made by Herefordshire Council

Planning Number	Address	Application	FPC Response	HC Decision
240524	Ferryboat Cottage Ferry Lane Fownhope HR1 4NX	Proposed balcony	Support	Approved with conditions
231392	Nash Farm Fownhope HR1 4PS	Proposed creation of a new access from the highway, a driveway, garage and car port building.	Support	Approved with conditions