



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd October 2024
At 7pm at the Pavilion, Fownhope**

Present:

Cllrs Tim Jones (in the Chair), Kevin Braybrook, Sue Eames, Gareth Williams, Frank Hemming, Lavinia Smith, Michael Short and Tony Kelk

In attendance:

9 members of the public; Clerk Helen Tinson.

1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Mike Simmons, Will Morris and Claire Patel; and from Ward Cllr Graham Biggs

2. To Co-opt a New Councillor and accept their Declarations of Interest:

This item was deferred.

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:

The Ward Councillor was not present and there was no written report.

4.2. Representation from the Public:

There were no representations from members of the public. The Chairman confirmed that he would accept comments during agenda items.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

Members considered the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on the 4th September 2024 and the minutes of the Extra Ordinary meeting held on the 18th September 2024.

It was RESOLVED: to approve both sets of minutes as true records of the meetings. The minutes were signed by the Chair.

6. Finance:

6.1. Finance Report:

Members received a financial report following the Finance Working Group meeting on 1st October 2024, as appended (Appendix A). The report included a review of income and expenditure for the first six months of the current financial year. In addition to the submitted report, it was noted that the Parish Maintenance and Improvements budget would be overspent at year-end as members had resolved to support the patio improvement project at the Pavilion. However, it was further noted that there are sufficient funds in the Projects budget and reserves to accommodate the overspend. There were no questions raised.

It was RESOLVED: to approve the report. The Chairman approved and signed the Bank Reconciliation to 30.9.24.

6.2. Draft Budget 2025/26:

Members received the first draft budget for 2025/26. It was noted that the proposal of the Finance

Working Group is to raise the precept by £2,000 to cover inflation. There was a query concerning the level of the proposed increase in the budget for Churchyard Maintenance. It was reported that the increase has been proposed because of increased grass cutting costs and because the budget has not previously been raised.

It was RESOLVED: that the Clerk seek further clarity on the current grass cutting costs and to publish the draft budget for public consultation.

Members also considered including a Participatory Community Budget within the annual budget. The Clerk explained the meaning and parameters of a Participatory Budget and members agreed that the focus of the budget should be carefully defined.

It was RESOLVED: to include a Participatory Community Budget of £2000.00 from the Special Projects reserve and a Participatory Community Budget from the Habitat and Youth Support grants.

It was RESOLVED: to use existing reserves and not to increase the precept further for this purpose.

6.3. Street Name Plate at Church Croft:

Members were informed that quotes to repair or replace the street name plate are still awaited and therefore this item was deferred.

6.4. Quotations to replace the Infant Swing Seat:

Members were informed that quotes to replace the infant swing seat are still awaited and therefore this item was deferred. It was reported that the Volunteer Play Area Inspector has assessed the seat and reported that it is still safe and useable.

6.5. Payments:

Members were asked to ratify payments made between meetings.

It was RESOLVED: to ratify:

6.5.1. Nick Maddy Coaches, Ross and Ledbury Bus July, £180.00

6.6. Members considered invoices for payment:

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

6.6.1. Nick Maddy Coaches, Ross bus, September, £90.00

6.6.2. FRFA, Room Hire September, £33.00

6.6.3. Open Spaces, Annual Membership, £45.00

6.6.4. Helen Tinson, Clerk Salary September, in accordance with contract

6.6.5. Helen Tinson, PAYE Q2, £848.24

6.6.6. Helen Tinson, Clerk Expenses Q2, £101.46 including £6.99 VAT

6.6.7. Helen Tinson, Work from Home Allowance Q2, £78.00

7. To comment on the following planning applications for determination by Herefordshire Council:

7.1.1.242381: Land at Common Hill, Hawkers Lane, Fownhope. Application for prior notification for proposed 11m high telecommunications monopole, 2 no. ground-based equipment cabinets and ancillary developments thereto within a proposed 6 x 3m compound area adjacent to a proposed hardstanding access area.

Members considered this application at length and received comments from members of the public. A number of concerns were raised concerning the impact of the infrastructure on the National Landscape; and the lack of response to previous questions asked concerning the use of existing infrastructure.

It was RESOLVED: to OBJECT to the proposed application (7 object, 1 abstain). The full response has been appended to the minutes (Appendix B).

7.1.2.242149: Broom Cottage, Fownhope, HR1 4QA. Proposed single storey extension.

Members considered this application and raised no objections.

It was RESOLVED: to SUPPORT the proposed application (7 support, 1 abstain).

7.1.3.242395: Garden House, Court Gdns, Fownhope, HR1 4PB. Work to trees in a conservation area. Members considered this application noting that the Parish Tree Warden had raised no objections. **It was RESOLVED:** to SUPPORT the proposed application.

7.2. To Consider Other Matters related to Planning

Members were informed that information has been received from a business owner on Ferry Lane summarising their rationale concerning permitted development for the storage units currently under construction. The information has been circulated to all members. An agenda item for the next meeting was requested to consider the matter in more detail.

7.2.1. To note report of Planning Decisions taken by Herefordshire Council:

There were no planning decisions to report.

8. Highways:

8.1. Report:

Members received a report from the Highways Working Group:

8.1.1 The white lining has been postponed again – HC have said they will monitor the weather and advise in due course.

8.1.2 The road sweeper was noted in the village this evening.

8.1.3 Drainage work has been scheduled for the lower part of Nash Pitch requiring a full road closure from 8pm to 6am beginning 28th October for three to five nights. The work is to install drainage to catch the run off from springs on either side of the road.

8.1.4 The ditch along the lower part of Common Hill Lane has been cleared by the Lengthsman.

8.2. Local Drainage Fund:

Members were informed that the Clerk has submitted an application for the Local Drainage Fund currently available from Herefordshire Council seeking to undertake fairly major repairs to long term faults on Common Hill Lane, Capler Lane and Woolhope Road.

It was RESOLVED: to ratify the application submitted between meetings in order to meet the deadline.

9. Environment:

9.1. Report:

Members received a report from the Clerk on behalf of the Environment Working Group. The Environment Working Group had met on the 30th September and considered matters around Dark Skies, including Streetlighting, a Dark Skies Bench and Information Board and the Stargazing event scheduled for the coming Saturday, 5th October. The Fownhope Wheelbarrows reported that further hand-weeding sessions have been arranged for October but that clearance of the brambles at the entrance to the village from Ross-on-Wye would be better suited to a contractor. An update from the Fownhope Community Car Club was received noting the Treasurer has now stepped down but a new volunteer has not been found. The role will be undertaken temporarily by the Clerk. The group wished to thank Danielle Thompson for her contribution to the Car Club, and to Bryan Maguire for his ongoing contribution. The next meeting of the Environment Group will be on Monday 18th November at 6.30pm at the Green Man.

9.2. Quotations for Hedge Works on Biggs Lane and Green Lane:

Members considered two quotations to reduce the height of the hedge on Biggs Lane by approximately 2ft to enable ongoing maintenance by the Lengthsman. A third quotation had not been achieved.

Contractor A: £650.00 plus VAT

Contractor B: £940.00 plus VAT

It was RESOLVED: to engage Contractor A at a cost of £650.00 plus VAT.

Members considered cutting back the hedge along Green Lane (lane side). Members were unsure who had previously carried out the work but assumed it had been the contractor farming the land to the side of Green Lane. A parishioner in the audience informed the meeting that he would shortly be cutting the hedge at the bottom of Green Lane and offered to continue as far along as he could gain access with the tractor.

It was RESOLVED: to accept the offer and cut back the hedge as far along Green lane as possible, and to offer to remunerate the parishioner for carrying out the work.

9.3. Update on Marches LEP Capital Funding Project – EV Charging Points:

Members received an update from the Clerk following her attendance at a recent webinar hosted by Herefordshire Council. The notes and recordings from the webinar have been shared with members. The current status of the grant application was reported - a location has been agreed with the Fownhope Recreation Field Association and a quotation for the installation of two charge points has been received. However, matched funding has still not been secured though it was noted that a second charge point at another location in the village, for example in the car park of a local business, would qualify. The webinar had provided information about compliance requirements if the Parish Council continued to progress an independent installation as well as information about an alternative option which would see Charge Point Operators install and take responsibility for charge points in the parish.

It was RESOLVED: to approach local businesses to establish their current interest in hosting a charge point in their car park; to approach established Charge Point Operators to identify interest in hosting charge points in the village; and to report to the November meeting.

10. Footpaths:

10.1. Report:

Members received a report from the Parish Footpaths Officer noting:

10.1.1. Two new gates are due to be installed imminently in the field between Green Lane and Shears Hill.

10.1.2. A quote from Hoople to install 12 gates via a HC grant is still awaited.

10.1.3. Various reports of fallen trees have been received throughout the month but have all now been cleared. A report of another tree fallen (across FWB6E) has been received today and forwarded to the Parish Footpaths Officer. It has also been reported to Herefordshire Council.

10.1.4. The Clerk reported that details of a new PFO scheme have been forwarded to the Footpaths Officer.

10.1.5. Herefordshire Council have advised that they will maintain the hoggin path between Ferry Lane and Old Barn Close on a reduced maintenance programme as the footpath has been superseded as the main pedestrian access to the village by the improved and extended pavement along the B4224. Maintenance arrangements will be discussed with the land owner and reported at the next meeting.

10.2. Drainage and vehicular access at Tan Brook:

The Clerk presented correspondence from the PROW Officer for Herefordshire Council following a meeting with the landowner concerning the lower part of Tan Brook.

It was RESOLVED: to respond to the HC PROW Officer and request that he seeks to resolve the matter with the landowner as a matter of urgency.

11. FRFA/Recreation Field:

11.1. Report: There was no report.

11.2. Volunteer support for the new patio and bench renovations:

Members wished to acknowledge the voluntary support received from Derek Colley for the management of the new patio project, now complete, and to Stuart Eames for the bench renovations currently underway. It was noted that a parishioner has made an offer to pay for a further bench in memory of her husband (to be discussed at the next meeting).

It was RESOLVED: to send a note of thanks and a bottle of wine to Derek and Stuart.
Cllr Sue Eames abstained from the vote.

12. West Mercia Police Community Charter:

Members were informed that the Q3 priorities have been submitted in accordance with the resolution made at the full Parish Council meeting on 3rd April 24.

13. Consultations:

13.1. Herefordshire Council Elections: to consider a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations.

It was RESOLVED: to publish the consultation in the Fownhope Flag and Parish Council Newsletter and invite parishioners to respond.

14. Clerk's Report:

Members noted the following information:

- 14.1. New Website:** a local volunteer has been working on the updated website amalgamating the calendar and existing website (concept agreed at the April meeting) that he hopes to present to the Parish Council for approval and go live before the end of the year. Volunteers will be needed to review the website pages before it is presented to the council. Cllr Lavinia Smith offered to help proof read the draft site. The new website will use Wordpress rather than Squarespace but costs are expected to be more or less the same. Definitive costs will be presented when known.
- 14.2. Parish Council Summit:** Is on Tuesday 8th October – Cllr Lavinia Smith and the Clerk are attending for FPC and will report to the next meeting. The agenda has been circulated.
- 14.3. Playground Questionnaire:** Is currently waiting for response from S106 lead at HC.

15. Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th November 2024, 7pm at the Pavilion

16. Agenda Items Raised for Next Meeting:

- 16.1.** To consider the use of a debit card for the Lloyds Current Account in accordance with a Debit Card Policy; and to consider and adopt a new debit card policy
- 16.2.** To consider the provision of warm spaces during the winter months
- 16.3.** To consider the construction of new storage units on Ferry Lane
- 16.4.** To receive and consider update on voluntary registration of Tan Brook Land Ownership
- 16.5.** To consider maintenance of the hoggin path between Ferry Lane and Old Barn Close
- 16.6.** To consider quotations for a replacement infant swing seat
- 16.7.** To consider quotations for the repair or replacement of street naming plate at Church Croft
- 16.8.** To consider next steps re EV Charge Points
- 16.9.** To consider the offer of a further bench at the Pavilion
- 16.10.** To receive report from the Parish Council Summit on 8/10/24

Meeting closed 8.29pm.

Signed
Chairman

Dated

Appendix A: Finance Report

REPORT FOR COUNCIL MEETING: 2nd October 2024
REPORT BY: Helen Tinson, Clerk/RFO
AGENDA ITEM: 6.1: Finance Report

Bank Balances:

- Lloyds: £26,116.92 (excludes payments to be approved 2.10.24)
- Lloyds Reserve: £26,105.50
- Hargreaves Lansdown: £22,607.11 (at 2.10.24)
- Total funds held across all banks and investments at 2.10.24 = £74,829.53

Precept: The second precept payment has been received. I propose to transfer £15,000 to the Reserve Account to take advantage of higher interest payments.

Bank Reconciliation: Has been completed to 30th September 2024 and will be passed to the Chairman to check and sign at the end of the meeting.

Finance Working Group: The FWG met on the 1st October and carried out a full review of income and expenditure, and Reserves, at the end of Q2 (30th September). A full report is attached but the summary position is that at the six-month point, both income and expenditure are pretty much on track.

The review included a forecast to the year-end which informed the discussion on the draft budget for 2025/26, to be discussed under agenda item 6.2.

Members considered transferring the unused habitat grant (£200) from 2023/24 to the Reserve account, and were minded to agree pending confirmation from full council.

Other matters raised at the meeting included:

- Debit Card – the group agreed that the use of a debit card would be useful for regular purchases that have to be paid via a debit or credit card and are currently paid by myself and reclaimed on expenses. A draft policy on the use of a debit card has been prepared and the concept and policy will be presented to full council for consideration at the next meeting.
- Participatory Budget – the group considered whether to include a participatory budget in the 2025/26 budget but concluded that if full council were minded to support a participatory budget that it should be focused around items that already exist in the budget and are not claimed, for example youth support or habitat, rather than increase the precept to accommodate a further grant.
- Internal Audit – it was noted that the internal audit report raised some questions about the investments and some further concerns were raised about succession. The FWG will look into this further and report to full council in due course.
- Risk Register – an action previously suggested at an FWG meeting was to consider linking the risk register to the financial regulations and this again is an ongoing action.
- Finally, it was noted that a letter has been received from Lloyds Bank advising that ‘the business would not be covered by the FSCS if financial firms fail’ as it states public authorities, other than a small local authority, are on the exclusions list. Further investigation established that the definition of a small local authority is ‘where gross income or expenditure does not exceed £6.5million per annum’. Therefore, Fownhope PC is a small local authority and protected.

The next meeting has been set for Wednesday 22nd January 2025.

Appendix B: Planning Response

242381: Land at Common Hill, Hawkers Lane, Fownhope. Application for prior notification for proposed 11m high telecommunications monopole, 2 no. ground-based equipment cabinets and ancillary developments thereto within a proposed 6 x 3m compound area adjacent to a proposed hardstanding access area.

This application was considered at a meeting of full council on Wednesday 2nd October. Whilst the site is in Woolhope Parish, it is very close to the boundary with Fownhope and will affect residents of Fownhope Parish, therefore members were pleased to be consulted.

It was noted that this is a revised application based on feedback from two previous applications, however members did not agree that all previous concerns have been addressed. In particular, the use of existing infrastructure and in relation to the impact of the infrastructure within the Wye Valley National Landscape.

Infrastructure:

The Parish Council response to the first consultation in 2022 included a request for the applicant to evidence why existing infrastructure cannot be used. It was noted that a submitted document at that time reported a number of existing local masts that had been considered and discounted for various reasons. However, the mast at Much Marcle had not been included in this report. This question was raised again in May 2024 in response to the second consultation (at a new location) but the question has still not been answered.

Furthermore, it was noted that the existing mast at Tump Farm had been discounted due to insufficient height but there has been no explanation as to whether extending this existing mast has been considered and, if it has, the reasons it has been discounted.

Landscape:

Concerns were raised about the protection of the natural beauty of the landscape. The proposed site falls within the Wye Valley National Landscape, next to an area of Ancient Woodland and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021 - 2026) stipulates the need for development to 'compliment, conserve or enhance the natural landscape character and natural environment'. It is understood that Herefordshire Council delegated the production of the plan to the Wye Valley Partnership and subsequently approved it, and therefore it was believed that the Council should now adhere to the policies contained therein.

Further, Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act (2000) requires Herefordshire Council 'to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (now the Wye Valley National Landscape). The Parish Council do not believe that this application fulfills this criteria.

In addition to its impact on the landscape and the biodiversity of this sensitive area, and despite the attempt to disguise the hardware, the mast will be highly visible on the Wye Valley Walk and will sit directly in the middle of the view offered at Viewpoint 8. The application does not state whether it will be illuminated which would negatively affect the dark skies in this area; and the negative affects understood to be caused by electro magnetic pollution on wildlife have not been addressed.

Therefore, for the reasons noted above, Fownhope Parish Council resolved to OBJECT to this application.