

PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Pencombe Group Parish Council
held on

Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at 7.30pm in Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall

Councillors Present;

Cllr. J. Lewis

Cllr. T. Brazier

Cllr. C. Hadley

In Attendance: Ward Cllr. Bruce Baker, Allan Drew Parish Clerk

Members of the Public: 6 members of the public attended.

1/24 To receive: apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Legge (illness), Thomas (illness) and Burge (international business).

Council accepted these reasons for absence

2/24 To receive: Declarations of Interest and written requests for Dispensation

None received

3/24 To receive and approve: the draft minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2023

The minutes were agreed and duly signed by the Chairman.

4/24 Matters arising not otherwise covered in the minutes

- The Clerk had obtained dates for Councillor training from HALC as 13. 20 or 22 February. However, with three Councillors absent the Clerk would circulate these dates to obtain agreement from all of a suitable date.
- The school had agreed that the kerb on the north edge of the school car park area could be painted white to assist visibility at night-time.
- The Clerk explained that, unusually, he is requesting that members of the public be excluded from part of item 12/24 (NDP update) when a personnel matter would be discussed. Such exclusion required a resolution by Council, which was granted, and, to assist in running the meeting, the NDP update would be the last item to be discussed.

5/24 To receive: a verbal update from the Ward Councillor.

Cllr. Bruce Baker reported that-

- a. Drainage is currently a considerable problem.
- b. The National Planning Policies are being reviewed. The detail is not yet known but any changes will likely result in revised arrangements for Herefordshire Planning Committee and planning applications.
- c. He had arranged a meeting for Parishes with the Assistant Police & Crime Commissioner (Paul Middlebrough) which was held on 15 December. The attendance was disappointing, but Pencombe was represented.

- d. A meeting had been held with National Highways which for Herefordshire is the A49. The main issue discussed was the junction with the A417 at Hope under Dinmore. The possibility of fitting traffic lights was discussed.
- e. Herefordshire now has full control of Childrens' Services but the service continues to cost significant amounts. A recent report stated that in the most expensive case it cost £63,000 per week for one child, although normally the costs are rather lower than this at £10-£30k per week.
- f. Adult Social Care also has high costs with about one third of the County population now over 65 years old. These costs will only continue to rise.
- g. The Three Counties Hotel and the Talbot in Leominster were used to house asylum seekers. These hotels are now being emptied and the residents moved to other locations, probably outside the County.
- h. There are delays in renewing firearms certificates and the PCC has said that more Police resources are being allocated to speed up renewals. Cllr. Hadley raised the point that doctors' certificates seemed to be an issue.
- i. The budget will be discussed at full Council on 9 February.
- j. Trailer permits for the waste disposal sites are going digital.

6/24 To receive: queries or concerns from local residents to the Ward Councillor

Mrs Legge asked if there was a plan to build houses on Merton Meadow, Hereford which currently acts as a much-needed car park. Cllr. Baker had not heard of such a plan though there had been a report in a recent Hereford Times edition. (The Clerk checked planning applications but there was no application for Merton Meadow at present.

The Chairman raised the matter of the unsatisfactory drainage maintenance which is the responsibility of Herefordshire Council. Despite paying the Lengthsman to clear the Parish ditches the flooding issues have not been alleviated because the drains are blocked and have not been cleaned and maintained. It was confirmed that these had been reported (and re-reported many times) but to no avail. The Chairman wondered if legal action against Herefordshire Council was now the only possible way forward. Cllr. Baker would look into why the reports are not being attended to.

Cllr. Hadley raised the outstanding issue of the damaged roadside barrier outside the White House farm which had simply been marked with coloured tape since it had been reported about 8 months previously. Cllr. Baker would look into this matter also.

Cllr. Hadley also complained that despite reporting the absence of a stile on a Little Cowarne footpath outside the Three Horseshoes nothing had been done. The Clerk has ordered a stile from PROW and the Lengthsman will fit it.

7/24 To receive: a planning report from Cllr. Colin Hadley

Cllr. Hadley reported that there were no new applications in Group Parish and there no outstanding applications either.

8/24 To receive: an update on the Parish Hall

Mrs Legge gave the following update-

- a) Bookings remain constant and that it is hoped that when the new car park arrives bookings could rise significantly.
- b) The January LinC event went very well especially since normally there is no lunch organised for January. 38 lunches were served and there was also a matinee film screened after lunch.
- c) An afternoon tea to raise funds is planned for March
- d) The front door handle has been replaced.
- e) The heating boiler is quite temperamental though there are some funds available towards the cost of replacement.
- f) The next Trustees meeting is on 29 January at 7pm

9/24 Finance Report from the Responsible Finance Officer.

Bank Balances

Bank balance on 18/01/2024 -Unity Trust current account £20,862.25-

Payments made since last meeting.

No.	Name	Amount £	Details
1	A M Drew	363.35	November 2023 salary
2	D C Garden Services	624.00	Grass cutting October 2023
3	Elections (Herefordshire)	120.26	Little Cowarne
4	Elections (Herefordshire)	136.86	Pencombe with Grendon Warren
5	A M Drew	110.94	Refund for daffodils (working group)
	Cumbria Clock Co. Ltd	594.00	Spring repair to church clock
	Unity Bank	18.00	Bank Charges
	Total	1967.41	

Income received since last meeting –

£7615.00 NDP Grant from Groundworks

Payments for Authorisation

No.	Name	Amount £	Details
1	A M Drew	363.55	Clerk's December 2023 salary
2	A M Drew	363.55	Clerk's January 2024 salary
3	Autela	48.32+VAT	Q3 payroll charges
4	HMRC PAYE	272.60	Q3 PAYE charge
5	Herefordshire Association of Local Authorities	481.62+VAT	HALC annual subscription
6	Viking Direct	24.99+VAT	Sparrington Noticeboard
7	Viking Direct	69.32+VAT	Laser printer cartridge (to be paid from the NDP grant)
	Total	1622.95+VAT	

Total for payment £1622.95+VAT as appropriate.

Council agreed these payments.

3rd Quarter Bank Reconciliation

PGPC CASHBOOK 2023-24						
Date	Details	Receipt	Payment	Classification	VAT	Running Balance
01/10/2021	Balance brought fwd	15739.31				15739.31
04/10/2023	Richard Leveson		168.80	Parish Hall		15570.51
15/11/2023	A M Drew October 23 salary		363.55	Clerk		15206.96
15/11/2023	Autela Q2		76.29	Administ ration	20.00%	15130.67
15/11/2023	PKF Littlejohn		252.00	Insuranc e, audit, profession al	20.00%	14878.67
15/11/2023	Community Heartbeat Trust		162.00	Maintena nce	20.00%	14716.67
15/12/2023	Groundworks NDP grant	7615.00		Grants		22331.67
18/12/2023	Ricky Baker Glazing		96.00	Parish Hall	20.00%	22235.67
18/12/2023	Wild Native Bulbs (refund to A M Drew)		110.94	Other Exp.	20.00%	22124.73
27/12/2023	D C Gardening Services SI-1729		624.00	Lengthsm an		21500.73
27/12/2023	Herefordshire Council 91492954		257.12	Administ ration		21243.61
27/12/2023	A M Drew Clerk's salary Nov 2023		363.35	Clerk		20880.26
31/12/2023	Service charge		18.00	Bank Charges		20862.26
Oct-Dec	Sub-totals for period	7615.00	2243.25			
	Totals	23354.31	2492.05			
	<i>Balance carried forward</i>		20862.26			
	<i>Reconciliation calculation</i>	23354.31	23354.31			
	Totals for financial year to dat	29945.29	21575.96			

Your Current T1 account transactions:					
Date	Type	Details	Payments Out	Payments In	Balance
27/12/2023	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: DC Gardening Servi	£624.00	£0.00	£21,500.72
27/12/2023	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: Herefordshire Coun	£257.12	£0.00	£21,243.60
27/12/2023	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: A M Drew	£363.35	£0.00	£20,880.25
31/12/2023	Fee	Service Charge	£18.00	£0.00	£20,862.25

Council to noted the discrepancy of 1p between the bank account and the Council cash book. HALC had subsequently advised that no action was necessary although the supplier could be asked to credit 1p to the Council's account.

The Chairman signed the reconciliation having noted the above discrepancy.

Clerk's salary award.

In November 2023 HALC wrote to Clerks advising that a National Pay Award had been agreed with the Employers for the financial year 2023-24. The award is for £1/hour for scale points up to 43. The Clerk is on scale point 17 so will receive £1/hour (to £14.95/hour) for the contracted 416 hours pa. The award is backdated to 1 April 2023.

Council agreed this salary award and, the Clerk will draft a letter for the Chairman's signature to Autela asking that suitable payroll changes be put in place.

Ms Barnard asked about the resignation of Mr Pardoe as the Council's internal auditor and the RFO confirmed that Mr Pardoe had indeed resigned and a replacement is being sought. If no local replacement can be found then it may be necessary to use the HALC audit service for this current year.

10/24 Provision of noticeboards.

Sparrington hamlet.

The Clerk reported that the noticeboard has been fitted and the residents at Sparrington have been informed that it is their board to post community notices. He showed a photograph of the small board which had been fitted in the kiosk housing the defibrillator.

The Causeway.

The response received from the school showed that Mrs Peddar was the originator for this idea through the working group. The Clerk has written to Mrs Peddar asking her to get back in touch with the school and agree the most suitable way forward.

11/24 Lengthsman Scheme/Grass cutting:

To receive: a report on current Lengthsman work from Cllr. Tony Brazier.

The lengthsman (David Campbell) has been on holiday since early January and will not return to work until February. Luckily before he departed he was able to carry out the routine ditching requested around the group Parishes. This work has improved the flow of surface water somewhat but the problem of blocked drains remains and flooding over the past month has been particularly widespread.

There was considerable discussion of the very poor performance of Herefordshire Council (and their contractor Balfour Beatty) and the increasing realisation that if any remedial action is to happen on drainage the Parish will somehow have to find a way of funding it. This in effect is paying twice for the service.

The problems with the road leading into the village from the south-west past The Wheelwrights were discussed and there was considerable frustration with lack of sanctions available against Herefordshire Council.

No firm conclusions could be reached though the Chairman felt that engaging other Parish Councils might create some leverage with Herefordshire Council.

13/24 Provision of a village car park.

The Clerk was able to provide a verbal report as he had very recently been able to talk with the planning officer concerned with the car park, Mr Jack Dyer. Essentially a new planning application would be required since the boundaries of the new proposal did not match the boundaries of the proposal which had received consent. However, many of the details

remained unchanged from the original application and the Clerk distributed a sketch drawing of the new proposal. Cllrs. supported the revised plan and thought that submission of something similar to the sketch drawing would be sufficient to support a revised application.

12/24 Neighbourhood Development Plan

To receive: update on NDP from Cllr. David Legge

In Cllr. Legge's absence the Clerk reported that –

A ZOOM call was held with AECOM to discuss the Design Codes part of the project. It is expected that AECOM will commence work before the end of January.

The first NDP workshop of the year is now scheduled for Monday 19 February 2024 7-9pm in the Parish Hall.

As described last month the objectives of the workshop remain the same-

- Examine, discuss and decide which sites identified as possibly suitable for development are supported by the community.
- Community views and input into the design codes exercise.
- Receive and comment on the first full written draft of the NDP.

By Council resolution the public were excluded from the following part of the meeting.

The Clerk explained that progress has been made on engaging a consultant to assist with NDP work. Ms Jane Legge has accepted an offer of engagement to work on the NDP along with the Clerk. The result will be that the Clerk's hours on the NDP will reduce and Jane will take up that work. so there is no increase in expenditure expected compared with 2022-23. Ms Legge will not be an employee of the Council but paid as a self-employed person.

Council discussed the appointment of Jane Legge as the NDP delivery manager. A contract has been drawn up which Council discussed. It was then resolved that Ms Legge should be recruited to assist with the delivery of the NDP on the terms laid out in the draft contract.

14/24 Matters for discussion at the next meeting

No matters were raised

Date of next meeting Tuesday 27th February 2024

The meeting closed at 8.30pm


Chairman..... Date 23 January 2024