

Cofton Hackett Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Annual Parish Assembly 2019

Monday 20th May 2019 at 8.00pm

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Cllr Mr R Westbury (Chair)
Cllr Mr K Duncan
Cllr Mr J Slack
Cllr Mr M Pattison
Cllr Ms C Fryer

Clerk to the Parish Council:

Andrew Billau (AB)

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Mr R Deeming
Cllr Mrs J Fay
Cllr Mrs J Webb
Cllr Mr G Cook

Invited Attendees:

Mr Mike Dunphy, Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager, Bromsgrove District Council

31 Members of the public were present

Agenda Item	Discussion and Decisions	Action
1.	Apologies Apologies were received from Cllrs Deeming, Fay, Webb and Cook, these were accepted.	
2.	Mike Dunphy, Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager, Bromsgrove District Council Mr Dunphy spoke about the purpose of a Local Plan which is used to determine planning applications and land allocation. All authorities need to prepare one but there is no prescribed format. BDC is rewriting the plan which was prepared in 2017, which looked at housing and employment land up to 2023, but didn't consider the green belt. The new plan will look forwards from 2023 and will consider a period of 15 years from then. Evidence is currently being collected for the new plan, the old plan has been archived and can be viewed on BDC's website, it amounts to 400-500 supporting documents. Issues and options for the new plan were put out for consultation last September, the 2000+ responses are now being considered. Mr Dunphy explained that consideration now needs to be given to where new development in Bromsgrove can take place and that a 'call for sites' will be issued. In early Autumn work will start on the preferred options for development. This process could take up to 18 months. Development has to take place, there is no option, and it is inevitable that green belt land will need to be used. Stage 1 of the plan will divide the district into 60 sections, stage 2 will be the 1 st draft with issues and options. There will be 4 opportunities for the public to engage, followed by the Public Enquiry. The next opportunity for public comment will be around September this year. Mr Dunphy explained that at this stage there will be no detail available about areas planned for development.	

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	<p>Mr Dunphy then invited questions from the public:-</p> <p>Q. How many brown field sites are remaining in Bromsgrove? A. All the brown field sites have now been used, the last of these being the Rover East Works Site, and the former Garringtons site.</p> <p>Q. Why do developers build up 'land banks', obtain planning permission for them but leave them undeveloped? A. The government is looking at developing legislation to tackle this problem, however demand in Bromsgrove is high and land banking shouldn't be a real issue here.</p> <p>Q. Regarding 'call for sites', what tests are carried out to determine suitability. A. There is a site selection methodology, taking into account physical characteristics, flood risk, schools etc.</p> <p>Q. What percentage of social housing is included in housing targets? A. There are different scenarios for social housing. In the Bromsgrove 15-year plan there is a figure of 4,500 but this could vary. The percentage of affordable homes depends on viability but will probably be around 30/40%.</p> <p>Q. Are educational needs properly considered in new developments? A. BDC works closely with Worcestershire County Council on the issue, big development sites will include new schools.</p> <p>Q. Transport to schools is also an issue. A. Again, BDC works with WCC on this.</p> <p>Q. Does BDC work with other adjoining authorities on these plans? A. Yes, BDC consults with other authorities such as Redditch and Wyre Forest.</p> <p>Q. Will there be adequate provision of GP facilities on new developments? A. Yes, if the Public Health Authorities tell us it is needed. However new facilities can only be of use if doctors are prepared to occupy them.</p> <p>Cllr Westbury thanked Mr Dunphy for his presentation, Mr Dunphy then left the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held May 14th 2018</p> <p>The minutes of the Parish Assembly dated 14th May 2018 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>Chairman's Report – Cllr Westbury</p> <p>Cllr Westbury reported that this year has been a busy and eventful one, we have welcomed new residents in more than 300 new houses on the East Works Development and another building phase is underway. The new Village Hall is due for completion in June or July and we are looking forward to its opening. He explained that the Parish Council will own the Hall and lease it to a Charity which will run the hall. He asked that residents support events being run to support the funding needed to provide equipment for the hall.</p> <p><i>Cllr Westbury explained that Cllr Duncan is standing down after 47 years' service to the Parish Council, including 2 stints as Chairman. He has been instrumental in the transformation of land at the Myhill field, and spent 12 years as Chair of Planning. He is also heavily involved with neighbourhood watch, the development of Neighbourhood Plan and local CPRE. Cllr Westbury then presented Cllr Duncan with a gift and memento from the Parish Council. Members of the Public also offered their thanks and applause.</i></p>	

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5.	<p>Highways and Environment – Cllr Pattison</p> <p>Cllr Pattison gave his report:</p> <p>The Highways & Environment Committee comprises Cllr Joan Fay and Cllr Mike Pattison. It is responsible for assisting with the upkeep of parish footpaths, managing allotment facilities, the regular inspection and maintenance of the Myhill playing field, street lighting, grit bins and, this year, for beginning a review of the land assets owned by the parish council.</p> <p><u>Footpaths:</u></p> <p>Work has been undertaken with the Parish Paths Warden on the maintenance of footpaths and byways within the parish. This has included the North Worcestershire Way, footpaths and way-markers over Cofton Common, and, although not the responsibility of the Parish Council, some remedial work to the surface of Stocken above Myhill Field.</p> <p>Cllr Pattison has also campaigned for the reopening of Footpath CH521 which runs from Cofton Church Lane to a short gated tunnel beneath the railway tracks. The tunnel opens onto the Cofton Fields Estate and was closed in 1939 when the Shadow Factory was built. St Modwen currently keep the gate locked, although a new path linking the estate to the Stocken is soon to be opened.</p> <p><u>Allotments:</u></p> <p>Councillors have been involved in visiting allotment sites at other Parish Councils in order to update the tenancy agreement and in seeking to improve the security of our two existing sites. A steel tool-shed has been erected on the Myhill Allotments and the lengthsman has undertaken work to secure the boundary with the Myhill Playing Field. Negotiations have taken place with St Modwen to explore the possibility of providing access to the parcel of ‘trapped’ land at the Old Sewerage Works Allotments. As yet we have been unable to agree a suitable access route across land owned by St Modwen at the end of Aero Park. If a secure access route could be agreed, this would allow the provision of another nine allotments and would allow the lengthsman to assist in the upkeep of common areas and allotment pathways. Later in the year the Council hopes to secure additional Section 106 monies which should enable us to prune some of the trees on both allotment sites and, as far as access allows, to tidy the boundaries of the sites.</p> <p><u>Myhill Playing Field:</u></p> <p>The Myhill Playing Field is inspected for safety issues on a monthly basis. No serious faults have been found. Old play equipment has been stripped and repainted and the boundary secured. In addition ROSPA undertake an annual survey and no serious faults were found. The playground is well used by local residents and, occasionally, by visitors from further afield who have been very complimentary about the facility.</p> <p><u>Streetlighting:</u></p> <p>Sadly, the street lamps of Cofton Hackett are old and fail regularly (an issue we share with Alvechurch) and Cllr Fay, in particular, receives regular reports of lamp failures. Repairs are conducted as speedily as possible, although this can prove challenging when other agencies, such as Western Power are involved. The Council is trying to preserve the appearance of the village and replace like with like, but the supply of replacement parts for the older street lamps is often difficult to source. Where possible, energy and cost saving LED lights are being fitted where bulbs fail. In a few instances it has proved necessary to install more modern style lamps. In fact, there is already a wide variation in lamp styles around the village, and this has been the case for a number of years.</p> <p>If you notice any failing lamps, please report them to our Clerk so that we can act on them.</p>	

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	<p>Cllr Fay was also involved in securing repairs to the bus shelter on Groveley Lane at the end of Chestnut Drive after part of the roof collapsed under the weight of snow in the winter of 2017/18.</p> <p><u>Grit Bins:</u></p> <p>Each year the Council runs a pre-winter check on the stockpile of grit in the village and, where necessary, requests refills from Worcestershire County Council. Although the Cofton Fields Estate is not adopted, and therefore not part of the Parish Council's remit, the council has managed to secure the provision of some grit bins on the estate by St Modwen.</p> <p><u>Review of Land Assets:</u></p> <p>This year, the Parish Council has begun a thorough review of the land for which it is directly liable as there is often confusion as to which authority (County, District or Parish – or, in the case of the Stocken Dam, Severn Trent) has responsibility for which parcel of land. The Council is being assisted in this review by Horton's Solicitors.</p> <p><u>Bulb Planting:</u></p> <p>The Committee has been involved in planting spring bulbs around the village.</p> <p><u>Bus Shelter Cleaning:</u></p> <p>Cllr Fay has arranged for the bus shelter nearest the Oak Tree Pub on Groveley Lane to be cleaned. It was badly in need of disinfecting.</p> <p><u>Cofton Hackett Development Plan:</u></p> <p>Councillors from the Highways and Environment Committee have also been heavily involved in the environmental mapping of the parish and in pulling together the parish Development Plan. This identifies features in the landscape which would prohibit plans for future building projects in order to protect our landscape.</p>	
6.	<p>Finance – Cllr Slack</p> <p>Cllr Slack presented his report and introduced himself as Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Jennie Webb who is Vice Chairman and Andrew Billau, the Parish Clerk who is also the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) who undertakes all the administrative responsibilities of the Parish Council</p> <p>The Finance and General Purposes Subcommittee is responsible for the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review and update of the Financial Regulations and ensuring they are observed ● Overseeing the Financial Administration of the Council ● Making recommendations on precept requirements ● Monitoring performance against budget and making recommendations where action is necessary ● Reviewing all insurance ● Reviewing internal and external audit reports and arrange to implement recommendations ● Developing, maintaining and monitoring the policy on reserves <p>General Purposes</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Council’s information technology resources, including computing hard ware and software and telephones • Develop and recommend to Council policies relating to the areas of the committee’s responsibility • Oversee Parish Council’s Assets <p><u>State of Finances</u></p> <p>a. Cash</p> <p>Coming into this financial year (the beginning of April) we had approximately £74,000 in the bank accounts. Our precept this year was £40,680 and we receive this in 2 tranches from Bromsgrove District Council. We are also expecting to receive £47,200 this financial year from BDC as a s106 grant for improvement of open spaces.</p> <p>b. Allocations</p> <p>i. Annual budget</p> <p>Our projected expenditure for this financial year is just over £73,000 which is currently allocated to:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">G&A</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£18,065</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communication</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Highways</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£10,240</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Open spaces</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£11,100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Community grants</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£32,175</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£73,080</td> </tr> </table> <p>We are also currently planning to make a £10,000 contribution to the reserves.</p> <p>ii. Earmarked reserves</p> <p>At the year-end we are hoping that our earmarked reserves will be £58,000 and our general reserves £41,000.</p> <p><u>General Purposes</u></p> <p>Asset Review</p> <p>We have just started a formal Asset Review process with the aim of ensuring that all the documentation, legal liabilities and current physical condition of the assets that are owned by the PC are in a good state.</p> <p>New Village Hall</p> <p>The new Village Hall currently being built on the corner of East Works Drive and Groveley Lane should be ready to hand over to the Parish Council by the end of June. The Parish Council will lease the hall to the Charity, Cofton Village Hall, who will manage the building (as described by Roger). The PC has already spent nearly £20,000 getting the new Hall up and running and will probably need to make a grant of some additional funds later in the year (this has yet to be agreed). The Charity is currently fund raising and has currently raised approximately £30,000. £10,000 of this is from the PC. Letters went out to just under 1,000 households in the Parish asking for contributions to the hall and to date a total</p>	G&A	£18,065	Communication	£1,500	Highways	£10,240	Open spaces	£11,100	Community grants	£32,175	Total	£73,080	
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	<p>of 19 households have responded with contributions totalling just under £4,500. The Charity is actively seeking further funds from commercial and other sources but unless at least another £20K can be raised it appears unlikely that we will be able to open the building on time.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Planning – Cllr Duncan</p> <p>Cllr Duncan presented his report:</p> <p>To date this year, the Parish Council has received 30 Planning Applications, 23 have been approved, 6 are still under consideration with Bromsgrove District Council and 1 was withdrawn. It has been interesting to note the number of applications which come under the heading of 'Certificates of Lawful Use'. We have had 6 this year. This really means we, as a Parish Council, have no influence over the decision as they are seen as Permitted Development, usually as the proposal is below a certain area. These have been used to generally speed up the Planning process.</p> <p><u>Neighbourhood Development Plan.</u></p> <p>The Neighbourhood Development Plan, which has been generated as a joint exercise with Lickey and Blackwell Parish, has now been through all the public consultations including the Bromsgrove District Council Strategic Planning. You are able to view the document on the Parish Council website along with the Cofton Hackett Character Appraisal which forms part of the back-up documents for the NDP.</p> <p>Cllr Duncan offered thanks to those who helped with this document, Roger, Mike, Mrs Elisabeth Duncan, Gary Turland and Charles Hooper who we know as Cyd! He also thanked Keith Woolford for editing and printing. Please have a look at it as we believe it is a good snapshot of Cofton Hackett in 2019.</p> <p>We have also decided to enclose a copy in the time capsule to be buried at the new Village Hall along with other treasures supplied by local children, the Brownies and other organisations. You will see details of the burial in the local press and hopefully in the Village magazine, maybe not the June edition but most likely in July.</p> <p>The main document is now with an independent inspector for his comments and eventual approval. We received his initial comments a couple of weeks ago with about 60 questions and suggestions. The steering group had a meeting last week to go through all this information. We got about half way through and have agreed to meet again next week. We aim to reply to the inspector sometime early June.</p> <p>Assuming we gain the inspectors agreement there will be a referendum held in both Cofton Hackett and Lickey and Blackwell later in the year where all residents will be asked to vote, a simple majority of one will be a result. Obviously we hope the vote will be in favour and the NDP will then be lodged with BDC to be used as part of the overall planning process.</p> <p>Cllr Duncan added that as this was his last report to the Parish Assembly, he offered thanks to his colleagues on the PC for their help and friendship over the last few years. He said he has enjoyed his time since joining originally in 1972, adding that he had had a few breaks!! He said he feels that the PC has made a contribution to the life of Cofton Hackett and that he will miss the PC in many ways. It really is time now for some younger residents to take part in this very interesting and sometimes rewarding activity.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Communications – Cllr Fryer</p> <p>Cllr Fryer explained that the Parish Council continues to produce a quarterly newsletter, delivered to all residents, she added that this will become a little more pictorial going forward.</p>	

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	<p>Residents of the new estate are more likely to make use of Facebook and other social media sites; various Cofton Hackett groups have been created to address this. The New Village Hall will be a centre for activities for Cofton Hackett. The Parish Council's website does need updating.</p> <p>She explained that she is looking to present a co-ordinated voice for Neighbourhood Watch, planning and traffic issues. There will be a noticeboard at the New Village Hall and maybe a comments / suggestion box.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Questions from the Public</p> <p>Q. Once the new Village Hall is operational, what will happen to the existing Village Hall, could its sale contribute to funds required for the New Village Hall?</p> <p>A. The existing Village Hall has a lease for a further ten years and is likely to continue operating.</p> <p>Q. Who does the lengthsman take instructions from, can we ask him to cut back overhanging vegetation on Ten Ashes Lane?</p> <p>A. The Clerk maintains a list of tasks for the lengthsman and will add this request to his task list.</p> <p>Q. Who is responsible for cutting back the bank on the Stocken, this should have been left to encourage wildlife.</p> <p>A. This is the responsibility of the Canal and River Trust, the Clerk has already written to them about this issue.</p> <p>Q. There is a new incentive called Urban Tree Challenge Fund to give grants for the planting of trees, could we use this to plant new trees on grass verges.</p> <p>A. Grass verges are the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council.</p> <p>Q. The new footpath being laid down towards Cofton Church Lane appears to be far too wide.</p> <p>A. We are aware of this and are consulting with St Modwen developments to ensure no vehicular access is possible.</p> <p>Q. Do St Modwen intend to build on farmland adjacent to the new estate?</p> <p>A. St Modwen do own Cofton Richards Farm and may well decide to apply for planning permission.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Cllr Westbury thanked members of the public for their attendance.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 9.45pm.</p>	