

Cofton Hackett Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Annual Parish Assembly 2021

Tuesday 27th April 2021 at 7.30pm

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Cllr Mr R Westbury (Chair)
Cllr Mr J Slack
Cllr Mr M Pattison
Cllr Mrs J Webb
Cllr Mr L McGarry
Cllr Mr N Banyard

Clerk to the Parish Council:

Andrew Billau (AB)

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Mr R Deeming
Cllr Mrs J Fay

Did Not Attend:

Cllr Mr G Cook

2 Members of the public were present

Agenda Item	Discussion and Decisions	Action
1.	Apologies Apologies were received from Cllrs Deeming and Fay, these were accepted. Cllr Cook did not attend.	
3.	Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held May 20th, 2019 The minutes of the Parish Assembly dated 20th May 2019 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.	
4.	Chairman's Report – Cllr Westbury Cllr Westbury welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented his report: It's been two years since we were able to hold this meeting and a lot has happened in the meantime. Thanks to all my fellow Councillors for their contributions over the last two years and for adapting to Zoom meetings so readily. Thanks also to our clerk Andrew who is now an official "Zoommeister". Andrew is making good progress towards his CiLCA qualification and once he obtains his certificate, we will be able to resolve to adopt the General Power of Competence which will enable us to do more for the local community. The only other requirement for adopting this power is that two-thirds of our Councillors are elected rather than co-opted and we already meet this stipulation. We lost two Councillors over the last two years through resignations - both Keith Duncan and Claire Fryer stood down from the Council and we thank them both for their contributions over the years. In their place we were able to co-opt Nick Banyard and Leigh McGarry to the Council and they are both settling in well and proving to be an excellent addition to the team.	

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	<p>From my point of view there have been four major achievements over the last two years which are:</p> <p>i. Cofton Village Hall was completed and handed over to the PC by St Modwen and a CIO was set up to run the hall and raise funds for its launch. It got off to a flying start before COVID forced its temporary closure but by reducing running costs and successfully applying for Government grants the hall has managed to survive financially and should be fully open from June 21st. Cofton Hackett Village Hall also survived financially and we look forward to both halls being fully operational again.</p> <p>ii. More new houses have been completed on the East Works site and we now have more than 450 additional dwellings in the Parish. We warmly welcome all of the new residents to the Parish and thank them for the support and enthusiasm they have brought to the area.</p> <p>iii. We have finally received the £50,486 section 106 monies from St Modwen which was a condition of the planning permission for the East Works site. This will be spent on open spaces schemes such as new allotments, additions to the play area and general environmental improvements.</p> <p>iv. We completed our Neighbourhood Development Plan for Cofton Hackett and Lickey & Blackwell and this has now been adopted by Bromsgrove District Council. A referendum asking residents to approve the plan was an overwhelming success with 87% of voters being in favour. This has given the Parish Council more say in planning and development matters and was used to good effect to successfully challenge St Modwen's plans to build 5-storey apartments on East Works Phase 2, next to Cofton Village Hall. Revised plans with more traditional family housing have now been drafted and will shortly be submitted to BDC for planning approval.</p> <p>Thanks again to all of our Councillors for their contributions over the last two difficult years and I look forward to continuing to work with them and returning to face-to-face meetings in the near future.</p>	
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</p> <p><u>Myhill Playing Field:</u></p> <p>The Myhill Playing Field was, unfortunately, briefly closed during the first Covid lockdown, in accordance with Government guidelines. We are pleased that it is now open and being well used by our local children. It is inspected for safety issues on a monthly basis, no serious faults have been found but we did have an issue with a broken beam on the climbing frame, kindly reported to us by a parent. This was replaced and refitted by the supplier at no expense to the Parish Council. In addition, ROSPA undertake an annual survey and no serious faults were found. In the coming year we hope to replace some of the older equipment using Section 106 monies granted to us.</p> <p><u>Footpaths:</u></p> <p>I would like to thank Steve Bach for his work as Parish Paths Warden in maintaining the rural footpaths around the community (a voluntary role which often goes unrecognised).</p>	

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	<p><u>Allotments:</u></p> <p>At the Myhill field allotment site, we have carried out some tree pruning on the boundary with Cofton Gardens and will soon be replacing the main gate into the allotments, which is showing signs of its age. Negotiations are continuing with St Modwen to explore the possibility of providing access to the parcel of 'trapped' land at the Old Sewerage Works Allotments. Discussions are at an advanced stage and we hope to have some positive news on this soon. 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 utilise Section 106 monies to 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>Streetlighting:</u></p> <p>We continue to maintain the street lights on our side streets and have taken the decision to replace any failed 'sodium' lights with newer, more efficient LED lamps. This programme will continue during the year and will help to improve street lighting efficiency and ultimately, reduce costs.</p> <p>If you notice any failing lamps, please report them to our Clerk so that we can act on them.</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>Flagpole</u></p> <p>During the year the Council purchased a new flagpole and Union Flag on the embankment at Lickey Road. We have agreed with our 'flag-flyer' that the flag will be flown only on recognised special occasions, to reduce wear on the flag.</p> <p><u>Christmas Lights</u></p> <p>The Christmas tree on the embankment at Lickey Road was this year decorated with a new set of colour lights in place of the old white ones. I'm sure residents will have been pleased with the result. Councillors will this year be looking at the possibility of acquiring some additional Christmas lights to decorate areas of the parish.</p> <p>Finally I would like to add that in comparing what the Parish Council offer the community with what private maintenance companies offer on new estates, I feel that the council offers very good value for money.</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 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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> <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>Coming into the last financial year (beginning in April 2020) we had approximately £75,000 in the bank.</p> <p>Expenditure 2020-21</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">G&A</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£16,306</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communication</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Highways</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£13,166</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Open spaces</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,454</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Community grants</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£3,780</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asset Maintenance</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£9,811</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£49,068</td> </tr> </table> <p>Income 2020-21</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Precept</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£47,290</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rents</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,517</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Worcs CC</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1,674</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Miscellaneous</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£2,692</td> </tr> <tr> <td>s-106</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£50,486</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£107,658</td> </tr> </table> <p>Coming into this financial year (the beginning of April 2021) we had approximately £128,000 in the bank accounts. Our precept income this year, i.e., is £49,059 and we receive this in 2 tranches from Bromsgrove District Council. Our projected expenditure for this financial year is approximately £49,000 plus an additional contribution to our reserves of £9,000.</p> <p><u>Earmarked reserves</u></p> <p>At the year-end we are hoping that our earmarked reserves will be £59,000 and our general reserves £28,000. Our s-106 grant of approximately £50,000 is currently earmarked for open spaces projects.</p>	G&A	£16,306	Communication	£600	Highways	£13,166	Open spaces	£5,454	Community grants	£3,780	Asset Maintenance	£9,811	Total	£49,068	Precept	£47,290	Rents	£5,517	Worcs CC	£1,674	Miscellaneous	£2,692	s-106	£50,486	Total	£107,658	
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	<p><u>General Purposes</u></p> <p><u>New Village Hall</u></p> <p>The Cofton Village Hall is now up and running, subject to Covid restrictions, and leased to the Charity, Cofton Village Hall, who manage the building.</p> <p><u>Mission Hall</u></p> <p>We have had to spend nearly £10,000 in the last financial year updating the facilities and on external maintenance in the Mission Hall. The new tenants moved into the hall in the last year, but Covid-19 has had a significant effect on their ability to run their business.</p>	
7.	<p>Planning – Clerk and Cllr Pattison</p> <p>During the previous 12 months the Parish Council has considered and commented on 21 planning applications, Most applications are for minor works such as extensions but Councillors always view plans, consult with neighbours and ensure comments are posted on the Bromsgrove Planning Portal. The Council objected to 2 applications - a proposal for 3 new houses on Barnt Green Road (since refused by BDC) and St Modwen’s application for reserved matters at the Longbridge East Site (since withdrawn).</p> <p>The Council objected strongly to the proposal by St Modwen to develop the Longbridge East site, which included a 5-storey apartment block fronting Groveley Lane. The Council argued that the five storey apartments were not in keeping with the area and clearly contravene the Neighbourhood Development Plan. This states that any new plans should "sensitively enhance the area", should be consistent with "the existing density and 'feel' of the area" and should be "sympathetic and appropriate to the areas in which they are sited". It notes the "semi-rural" nature of the district and that "any new development must not spoil this aspect". The apartments are more appropriate to an urban setting, such as Longbridge town centre, rather than the semi-rural community of Cofton Hackett. The Council’s objection was accompanied by more than 250 others from local residents. The application has since been withdrawn and Councillors have met with St Modwen who have now put forward a much more acceptable proposal which they will shortly be submitting to Bromsgrove District Council.</p>	
8.	<p>Communications – Cllr Westbury</p> <p>Due to Covid restrictions we had to suspend the printing and delivery of our quarterly newsletter. Instead we have published a Cofton Hackett Parish Council page in the Village Magazine which has proved very effective. We also use Facebook where appropriate to advertise meetings.</p> <p>Cllr Nick Banyard will be leading a Communications Strategy Working Group which will examine current and future communications media and will report back to the Parish Council with its recommendations in due course.</p>	
9.	<p>Questions from the Public</p> <p>Q. The traffic calming scheme on Groveley Lane has clearly not worked and speeding continues along Barnt Green Road. The Council should again raise the issue with WCC and speed cameras should be introduced.</p> <p>A. The highways department have installed speed wires and results should be available soon.</p> <p>Q. The Parish is looking ‘down at heel’ and street cleaning needs attention.</p>	

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	<p>A. The Parish Council will monitor in conjunction with Bromsgrove District Council. There is a voluntary litter picking group in operation.</p> <p>Q. What is happening about the fly-tipping at the Bilberry Centre.</p> <p>A. Cllr Fay has been dealing with this problem and has written to Sajid Javid MP. It was noted that the rubbish has now been removed.</p>	
9.	<p>Cllr Westbury thanked members of the public for their attendance.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 8.25pm.</p>	