

VOWCHURCH GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Michaelchurch Escley, Newton, St Margarets, Turnastone, Vowchurch

Minutes of the Vowchurch Group Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 17th October 2019 at 7.30pm in Newton Church Room

PRESENT- Councillors P Mason (Chair), H Franklin, E May and A Picton.

IN ATTENDANCE – Mrs L Cowles (Clerk), PCSO Pete Knight and three members of the public.

1. **ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – Councillors J Kernahan, E Williams, S Cole, T Williams and Ward Councillor Peter Jinman.
2. **RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & CONSIDER ANY WRITTEN APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION** – There were no declarations of interest or written requests for dispensation.
3. **ADOPT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ORDINARY MEETING** – 19th September 2019 – The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record.
4. **OPEN DISCUSSION** - For residents to raise local matters – A local resident criticised the Parish Council for its handling of concerns that local residents had expressed informally about dogs being loose around Stockley Hill Farm and about a barrier across a public right of way in the same location. The resident was particularly critical of the references in the September 2019 Parish Council minutes in which Councillor Kernahan was quoted as saying that the dogs were not a threat and in which the owner of the farm was reported as claiming that the barrier across the footpath had been approved by an official of Herefordshire Council. The resident referred to legislation which forbade owners from allowing dogs to threaten people and which forbade placing any obstruction across a public highway, including footpaths. This barrier has now been removed. There has been an incident recently when several cattle got out of a field at the farm. In response the Chair explained that the Parish Council had contacted the dog warden about the concerns raised and were referred to the police. The police had visited the farm and spoken to the owners. The police had concluded that the dogs they saw were not displaying any aggressive behaviour and they would not be taking any further action. The Parish Council had asked the Locality Steward to look at the footpath and he had raised no concerns. Councillor Kernahan along with the Parish Footpaths Officer had visited the farm to make it clear to the landowner, who claimed to being victimised, that the Parish Council had acted on concerns raised by local residents. It was during this conversation that the owner had claimed that the barrier had been approved. The Chair suggested that if residents had any continuing concerns about the dogs, they write formally to the Clerk so that this can then be raised with the Dog Warden.
Another resident present wanted reassurance from the Parish Council that they would not be withdrawing their objections to the Public Path Diversion Order of VO57 and VO53. The resident was aware that others had objected and he would not be withdrawing any objections. The Parish Council confirmed that they would not be withdrawing their objections. They also have concerns about speeding through Vowchurch & Turnastone villages although it was noted that this will be discussed later in the meeting. They would also like to thank the Lengthsman for recent works clearing the drains in the village which was appreciated.
5. **PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION ORDER – PUBLIC FOOTPATHS VO57 AND VO53 (Part) VOWCHURCH** – A letter has been received from the Rights of Way Officer at Balfour Beatty Living Places requesting the Parish Council re-consider the objections to the Public Path Diversion Order. It was agreed that the Parish Councils points were still valid and it would not be appropriate to withdraw the objections. The Clerk would respond accordingly.

- 6. VERGE CUTTING FOR BIODIVERSITY** – A local resident raised concerns that in agenda item 14 of the June 2019 minutes the Parish Council has stated that they would prefer the verges cut once per year. This is against both Verging on the Wild and Plantlife advice who state they prefer verges to be cut twice each year to maximise biodiversity. It also appears that the Parish Council did not discuss collection of the verge cuttings or raking of the verges. The Clerk had checked the minutes and explained that the Parish Council had responded to Balfour Beatty with a pro-forma letter sent in fact from Verging on Wild which states that the 'Parish Council wish to see the roadside verges managed for wild flowers and to enhance biodiversity, in line with the Plantlife guidelines. They would like them to be cut once per year in the late summer/early autumn and would like the full width of the verge to be cut at that time. Cutting and collection of the grass would be the preferred option but we understand that this is not yet available. For the rest of the year we would like Balfour Beatty and it's contractors to limit the cutting to safety cuts of 1m or one flail's width wherever cutting is necessary'. Councillor May had attended the verges meeting in Longtown and whilst Plantlife's ideal would be two cuts per year it can vary depending on the flora in the local area. The thatch can only be removed if there is a team of volunteers available.
- 7. B4348 & C1206 SPEED LIMIT** – Local residents have raised concerns about the proposed 40mph speed limit through the villages of Vowchurch and Turnastone and about the use of large farm vehicles. Their preference would be for a speed limit of 30mph. The Chair suggested that any attempt to change the current Traffic Regulation Order application for a reduced speed limit might cause even further delay to the process which had been on going for several years. (The latest update from Balfour Beatty is that the current application sits at position 36 of 111). It was agreed to discuss this issue at the November meeting when it would be possible to take into account the concerns that have been raised and information from the police about the number of traffic incidents that have been recorded over the last five years. PCSO Knight confirmed that the police would be able to provide this information along with the number of casualties in any accidents. It was agreed that the Clerk should make a formal request for a record of any accidents on the B4348 at Vowchurch and the C1206 through the two villages. It might then be possible with advice from the Ward Councillor to contact Balfour Beatty to ask for the application to be expedited.
- 8. REPORTS**
- 8.1 Local Police** – PCSO Pete Knight advised that Roger Bradley had retired in July after 30 years' service with the force. PC Jeff Rouse had now joined the team although couldn't be at the meeting tonight. Whilst crime in general is low a Toyota Pick Up had been stolen in Michaelchurch on 4th/5th October and has been recovered in South Wales whilst two stolen transit vans have been recovered in Longtown which originated from South Wales. There are some concerns as lots of farm gates have been left open recently along with farm building disturbed. PCSO Knight reminded Councillors that the 'Stop that thief' campaign is still running. Landowners are able to trial the scheme for three weeks for free, you can then choose to have it removed or are charged at cost price. Property marking using Cremark is also still available and is a free service. If you require any further information on either scheme, please contact the police. Councillor Picton enquired if West Mercia police liaise with the forces in South Wales. PCSO Knight confirmed they liaise with Dyfed, Powys and Gwent police.
- 8.2 Ward Councillor** – Ward Councillor Peter Jinman was unable to attend the meeting.
- 8.3 Lengthsman report and any new road defects** – The Lengthsman was unable to attend the meeting. His monthly report had been forwarded to Councillors prior to the meeting. The Clerk advised that three of the September defects have been reported to Balfour Beatty but the remaining two where either jobs to be considered by the Parish Council or making contact with the relevant landowners. It was agreed to invite the Locality Steward to a Parish Council meeting. Councillors also requested an update on the ditch issues near Maerdy Farm, Michaelchurch. Include on the November agenda.

8.4 Footpath Officer – Mr Neil Lewis reported prior to the meeting that there are no new issues for Vowchurch & Turnastone. Councillor May reported that she has now completed walking and replacing footpath markers on the majority of footpaths in St Margarets. A number of defects were reported to the Clerk.

9. CLERKS UPDATE – Friends of Hay Swimming Pool have sent thanks for the Parish Council donation. Councillors were reminded of the Core Strategy & Neighbourhood Plan workshop to be held on 6th November and CPRE AGM on 19th October. The Parish Footpath Officers have been invited to a PFO briefing on 23rd October. Both Councillor May and Mr Lewis have agreed to attend. They have also signed the Parish Footpath Offices guidelines which will be forwarded to Balfour Beatty to enable them to receive official confirmation to walk the footpaths. The Clerk advised that she could get the George V Silver Jubilee tree plaque post in Vowchurch replaced by Bordercraft at a cost of £20.00 and would then get this repositioned by the tree. It was agreed to go ahead and do this.

Councillor May enquired if HALC have forwarded any reports from the recent Climate Change meeting? The Clerk confirmed they have not and will chase for the information.

10. CONSIDER PLANNING

10.1 PLANNING CONSULTATION

Site: Wells Green, Newton St Margarets, Herefordshire. HR2 0QG
Description: Proposed extension to the curtilage of the existing dwelling together with a relocated vehicular access, new off-road parking and turning area and static caravan providing temporary ancillary accommodation for the existing cottage. Retrospective.

Application No: 192983 **Grid Ref:** 332910:234878

NO OBJECTIONS

10.2 PLANNING CONSULTATION/LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

Site: Outbuilding at Fair Oak, Bacton, Herefordshire. HR2 0AT
Description: Proposed conversion of redundant outbuilding to one-bedroom annexe.
Application No: 193276/193276 **Grid Ref:** 335441:232084

NO OBJECTIONS

10.3 (PART 3) CLASS Q – PRIOR APPROVAL IS NOT REQUIRED

Site: Agricultural building at Castle Ibo Farm, Newton St Margarets. HR2 0RF
Description: Notification for prior approval for a proposed change of use of an agricultural building to create two larger dwelling houses (Class C3) and for associated operational development.

Application No: 192895 **Grid Ref:** 332675:235401

10.4 PLANNING PERMISSION GRANTED

Site: Gwerndwr House, Newton St Margarets, Herefordshire. HR2 0QY.
Description: Change of use of the farm yard at Gwerndwr House to a light storage and distribution yard (retrospective)

Application No: 191949 **Grid Ref:** 334311:234221

10.5 PLANNING PERMISSION GRANTED

Site: Yew Tree House, Batcho Hill, Vowchurch, Herefordshire. HR2 9PF
Description: Demolition of existing single garage and attached lean to and erection of a Double garage with study over for private residential use.

Application No: 192750 **Grid Ref:** 339524:236071

11. FINANCE

11.1 Confirmation of bank balance - £10,553.51 Statement Sheet No. 137 issued 17th September 2019.

11.2 Receipts – None

11.3 Payment to Mrs Linda Cowles for September 2019 Clerk's hours and 2018-19 back pay – **Payment agreed.**

11.4 Payment to Mr T Griffiths, invoice no. TGC0891 for roads account August 2019 (1) of £364.00 plus VAT – **Payment agreed.**

11.5 Payment to HMRC for PAYE July-Sept 2019 of £46.00 – **Payment agreed.**

11.6 Finance Working Group – The quarterly reports were distributed to Councillors prior to the meeting. The Finance Working Group confirmed that spreadsheets, invoices and PAYE had been checked and all were in order. The Chair also reported that the Clerks amended contract was signed as per the agreement at the September 2019 Parish Council meeting.

11.7 Budget 2020/21 – The 2020/2021 budget was **approved.**

11.8 Precept for 2020/21 – It was agreed to increase the precept for 2020/21 by 10%.

12 NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER – Increase in precept, potential speed limit reduction through Vowchurch & Turnastone, landowner ditch responsibilities, where to report potholes and thanks to the police.

13 NOTE THE CORRESPONDENCE SHEET – The correspondence sheet was noted.

14 RAISE MATTERS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Thursday 21st November 2019 at 7.30pm in Vowchurch & Turnastone Memorial Hall – Roads.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed.....

Dated.....

DRAFT