

VOWCHURCH GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Michaelchurch Escley, Newton, St Margarets, Turnastone, Vowchurch

Minutes of the Vowchurch Group Parish Council meeting held on

Thursday 17th September 2020 at 7.30pm in Vowchurch & Turnastone Memorial Hall.

PRESENT – Councillors P Mason (Chair), S Cole, E May, E Williams, T Williams, J Kernahan and M Engel.

IN ATTENDANCE – Ward Councillor P Jinman, PCSO F Witcher, Mrs L Cowles (Clerk) and one member of the public.

1. ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Councillors A Picton and R Lloyd.

2. RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & CONSIDER ANY WRITTEN APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION – Councillor E Williams declared a non-disclosable interest in agenda item 13; the declarations book was signed accordingly. There were no written applications for dispensation.

3. ADOPT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ORDINARY MEETING – 20th August 2020 – The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record.

4. OPEN DISCUSSION – The Chair welcomed Mr Ian Chadwick to the meeting who has expressed an interest in joining the Parish Council to represent Newton.

5. REPORTS

5.1 Local Police – PCSO Witcher reported that they have not attended any meetings since February as they do not have the facility to attend via zoom. Since then there has been a theft of oak planks near Monnington Court and 3 dogs have been stolen from St Margarets. A number of residents have made complaints about hedges being cut without the owners' authority on the Vowchurch Common road. Following this; a person has been served a Community Protection Notice as a warning. There have been no known breaches of Covid 19 rules thus far. Now the 'rule of 6' has been introduced the police will be stricter and offenders will be given a warning followed by a fine if they do not comply. PCSO Witcher confirmed that the police would need registration numbers of the offending vehicles driving at excessive speed or using mobile phones through Vowchurch/Turnastone village.

5.2 Ward Councillor – Ward Councillor Jinman reported that the development of Peterchurch primary school was being discussed. They are looking to spend £100,000's with monies possibly coming out of local funds. Moving the school isn't currently an option, its redevelopment is considered to be the most needed in the county. There is a high count of pupils in the area which would mean building on the current site. Councillor Engel enquired whether this means Longtown and Michaelchurch Escley schools would not be considered for closure. Whilst Ward Councillor Jinman could not guarantee that, the roll numbers in each school is good and whilst there was a need, closing either school is not the situation at the moment.

Roads are still an issue with flooding and potholes, parish councils have received some extra funding through the drainage grant.

Covid 19 is here, it's going to get worse, please remember to follow all the guidelines. There are a number of schools affected in the county. They have been working hard to keep children separate during the day only for parents to come together at the school gate and not social distance whilst collecting their children. There is a strong plea from Herefordshire Council to get the message out and follow the guidelines.

Many of the employees of the council are still working from homes or have been moved to different departments therefore some things are taking longer to action.

5.3 Lengthsman – The Lengthsman was unable to attend the meeting. His monthly report had been forwarded to Councillors prior to the meeting.

5.4 Footpath Officers – Councillor May continues to walk the footpaths and is reporting any defects online, via the Herefordshire Council website

6. CLERKS UPDATE – The Lengthsman will be installing the bench in Vowchurch tomorrow. Mr Langton has confirmed with the Clerk a value of approximately £350. This can be covered under the parish council's current insurance policy at no extra cost although there is an excess of £250. Herefordshire Council's 'Planning for the future – White Paper' had been forwarded to Councillors, although too late to be included in the September agenda. It was agreed to include this in the October agenda for discussion.

7. CONSIDER PLANNING

7.1 LISTED BUILDING CONSENT GRANTED

Site: Park House Farm, Rock Road, Newton St Margarets, Hereford. HR2 0QW
Description: Repoint and lime wash old stone wall facing the valley on the south side of the house and repair the old timber wall facing the drive on the north side of the house.

Application No: 201428 **Grid Ref:** 335553:233854

7.2 ALL OTHERS – PRIOR APPROVAL GRANTED

Site: Coed Robin, Michaelchurch Escley, Herefordshire. HR2 0PT
Description: Prior notification for proposed extension for covered fodder store.

Application No: 202706 **Grid Ref:** 329534:236194

8. FINANCE

8.1 Confirmation of bank balance - £9,825.57 Statement Sheet No. 148 issued 17th August 2020.
 Receipts – None.

8.2 Payment to Mrs Linda Cowles for August 2020 Clerk's hours, £20.94 plus Vat for Ink cartridges and £3.50 hand sanitizer – **Payment agreed.**

8.3 Payment to Mr T Griffiths, invoice no. TGC1197 for roads account August 2020 of £373.00 plus VAT – **Payment agreed.**

9. REVIEW FOLLOWING POLICIES AND PROCEDURE DOCUMENTS:

- Standing Orders – It was agreed to amend the standing orders to include 'voting on a question will be by a show of hands *or by ballot if deemed appropriate (e.g. for co-option) by a majority of councillors present.*'
- Financial Regulations – No amendments
- Complaints procedure – No amendments
- Risk assessment – A separate risk assessment has been completed for face to face meetings whilst there is a threat of Covid 19. It was also agreed to include a section in the main risk assessment schedule concerning Covid 19.
- Data protection – No amendments
- Planning applications between meeting – No amendments
- Website accessibility statement – The Clerk has been unable to look at this. It was agreed to defer to the October meeting.

10. COVID-19 AND LOCAL RESPONSE – Councillor Engel reported that the Newton St Margaret help network had helped approximately six households but there may have been more that he was unaware of. It was felt that Longtown figures were not dissimilar, whilst Madley and Clehonger had a greater need. The low take up locally reinforces the belief that family and farming networks and a strong sense of self-reliance still exists here. There is obviously a chance that things will get bad again this winter which raises the questions as to whether the Parish Council should be more pro-active. Should the welfare and safety of residents be the responsibility of the Parish Council? Whilst groups had kept in touch via phone calls, WhatsApp, visiting neighbours or through the church networks there are concerns that a small minority of people may have been missed and these could be the people who are most vulnerable.

Councillors discussed possible solutions, including a parish council newsletter similar to the newsletter produced by Councillor Engel in Newton St Margarets during the earlier lockdown. Councillor Mason confirmed this has not been considered before as the parish council has always used the Longtown and Peterchurch newsletters to communicate with residents. Councillor Engel suggested setting up a small group to consult if the situation with Covid 19 escalates again. It was agreed that Councillors Mason, E Williams and Engel would set up a working group. Talk Community, through Herefordshire Council can offer help and it was agreed that the Clerk would contact them to confirm that the help in the parish was registered and possibly invite them to a meeting. Councillor Cole also confirmed that there were grants available from Herefordshire Council to start up a Good Neighbour Scheme.

- 11. SPEED REVIEW B4348 AND C1206** – Balfour Beatty has confirmed that there is a request for a review of the speed limit along the B4348 between Poston Mill and the C1222 junction in the Traffic Regulation Order/Speed Limit Order prioritised work programme. The request currently sits at no 26 out of 112 requests. They have advised that the request is certainly not part of this year's annual plan workload and it is too early to predict what number of requests will be included in the 2021/22 annual plan submission as this will be wholly dependent on levels of available budget going forward. The parish council are disappointed that the request is not moving forward and there appears to be very little they can do other than wait. Requests from other areas appear to be more important and are pushed up the list. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact residents in Vowchurch to see if they had received any response from their letters and Ward Councillor Jinman would follow up with Balfour Beatty concerning the criteria used to move you forward on the list.

PCSO Witcher had previously confirmed that they would need registration numbers of the stock lorries travelling at excessive speed to take matters further.

The Locality Steward has confirmed there is no weight limit on the bridge at Vowchurch over the River Dore.

- 12. CODE OF CONDUCT** – Councillor Kernahan advised Councillors that in November 2019 he had a Code of Conduct complaint made against him concerning his visit to Stockley Hill Farm to discuss local concerns about the dogs there and access to a public footpath. A decision on the complaint was made in April this year when it was found there was no case to answer. This had been a distressing time and Councillor Kernahan wished to make colleagues aware of their responsibility to disclose any interest in a particular issue or any relationship with a person connected to that issue. Otherwise this could be perceived as not being impartial. The complaint had been very detailed and Councillor Kernahan had no idea how the complainant had obtained all the information he had set out in the complaint. Councillor Mason reported that there had been a very difficult discussion about this issue with a member of the public at the October 2019 meeting. It was unfortunate that Councillor Kernahan had not been present. The member of the public criticised the parish council's handling of this issue and questioned Councillor Kernahan's ability to assess whether the dogs were or were not dangerous and whether the footpath was accessible as reported in the Council minutes.

The Clerk confirmed that draft minutes were available on the Parish Council website approximately 1 week after a meeting. Ward Councillor Jinman advised everyone to read the minutes of a meeting and to ensure that Councillors declare any interest in every issue, you can still make a point but be aware of how others perceive it. The Clerk confirmed there is also Code of Conduct training available from HALC.

- 13. BRIDLEWAY ME3 (MICHAELCHURCH ESCLEY)** – Correspondence from a local resident regarding a proposed diversion of bridleway ME3 in Michaelchurch Escley has been received. Councillor May had visited but the landowner was not home. It was noted that the bridleway was not very well marked at present. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact the landowner to arrange a meeting with Councillor May to then report back at the October meeting.

14. OCTOBER NEWSLETTER – Covid 19 guidelines.

15. RAISE MATTERS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Thursday 15th October 2020 at 7.30pm, location to be confirmed, subject to Covid-19 restrictions – Speed review, Covid 19 response, ME3 Bridleway, Planning White Paper, Budget.

A RESOLUTION WAS PASSED TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC & PRESS DUE TO EMPLOYMENT MATTERS AND TO CONSIDER CO-OPTION OF PARISH COUNCILLOR

16. PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCIES – The Parish Council agreed to Co-Opt Mr Ian Chadwick as Councillor representing Newton

17. PARISH CLERK ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND SALARY REVIEW – The Parish Council were happy with the Clerks’ performance over the previous year. It was agreed to increase the Clerks salary as per the NALC recommended cost of living increase for SCP22 scale backdated to 1st April 2020.

Signed.....

Dated.....

DRAFT