

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PARISH MEETING FOR
OMBERSLEY AND DOVERDALE HELD IN THE NARTHEX, ST ANDREW'S
CHURCH, OMBERSLEY ON TUESDAY, 18th APRIL 2017 at 7.30p.m.

PRESENT: Cllr. D Ingram (in the Chair), J. Jordan (Clerk),

Cllrs. W T Arnold, M J H Best, F Cody, Mrs S Collier, Mrs J Goodman, C McKenzie-Rowan, Mrs J Mitchell, P Reynolds, R Reynolds, Mrs. B Serrell, C Welch.

Cllr P Tomlinson (County and District Councillor) also attended along with 11 electors of the parish.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Cllr Mrs H Barningham.

Apologies were also received from Jo Hughes (Omersley DAA), John Silvester (Tree Warden) and David Miles (Parish Lengthsman)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th APRIL 2016 had been displayed on the website and notice board for the previous 2 weeks. The meeting agreed that they were an accurate record and they were signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES - None

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (summary):

The Chairman began his report by introducing himself and those members of the Parish Council who were in attendance.

He reminded everyone present that Parish Council meetings were held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. In addition finance meetings were held as necessary. Parish Councillors also continued to comment on planning applications within the parish.

All members of the public were most welcome to attend any meetings. All agendas, minutes and other notices are posted on the Parish Council website and on the village notice board.

The Parish Council continued to support local businesses and organisations through rural rate relief and by awarding grants.

The Chairman reported on the continued success of the Church Fete and thanked everyone who assisted with the organisation of this key event in the village calendar.

Councillor Mrs Judy Goodman continued to work very hard to ensure that Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the parish were co-ordinated. She continued to work with local residents to ensure that those areas that did not currently benefit from a scheme were covered.

He believed that the benefits of this work were now becoming apparent and it was intended to continue to work with the local police and Neighbourhood Watch Groups with the aim of seeking to reduce instances of crime in the parish in the future.

On behalf of the Council and residents of the Parish, the Chairman thanked Cllr Mrs Goodman for her work in this area.

The Chairman further reported that the Parish Council was currently looking at the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. It planned to establish a Working Group

to move this initiative forward. If such a plan was to be successful it would need to engage with all residents of the parish. As part of this work, any potential upgrade to the existing play area would be considered.

The Parish Council had previously changed the way in which planning applications were considered. The vast majority of applications were now dealt with by delegated authority. The Parish Council itself dealt with any applications not dealt with under the delegated authority procedure.

During the period 12th April 2016 to 14th April 2017, 88 applications had been. 61 had been approved, 8 refused, 6 withdrawn by the applicant and 13 pending a decision.

There continued to a number of high profile planning and enforcement matters in the Parish. The Parish Council, with the assistance of the local District Councillor, continued to pursue these matters.

POLICE REPORT

PCSO Aidan Goundry was in attendance and presented an update for those present.

He was aware of locally expressed concerns about the number of reported crimes in recent months. This was not only an issue in Ombersley and Doverdale as many rural parishes were experiencing similar levels of increase.

Criminals were increasingly targeting outbuildings with a number of items of garden machinery and power tools being stolen. Locally there had also been three confirmed incidents involving the theft of lead.

Whilst it may not appear that much action was being taken to address the increase in crime, he assured those present that action was being taken in an attempt to combat the recent increase in reported crime and apprehend those involved.

Additional patrols were being deployed from late evening into the early hours of the morning. However, the rural nature and size of the parish meant that such patrols were not always visible. He did assure those present at the meeting that although patrols were not always visible, they could be assured that they were taking place. Additional resources had also been allocated to the Droitwich area.

Increasingly links were being developed with other areas and this was helping to track crime and the perpetrators of crime. Effective links with the Droitwich and Stourport areas were now in place and this allowed a more effective co-ordination of crime reports over a wider area.

PCSO Goundry also commended the work being undertaken by Cllr Mrs Goodman and members of the Neighbourhood Watch Group.

It was accepted that the increase in crime did not just affect Ombersley and Doverdale. However, the Parish Council had previously met with Supt Kevin Purcell and he had agreed to ensure that the Parish Council was routinely supplied with feedback on reported crime (including when arrests were made). The lack of feedback received left many with the impression that a very limited level of success was being achieved. As a result the fear of crime was increasing amongst residents in the parish. In order to give residents some confidence, there was a need to share feedback with the Parish Council.

The concerns being expressed in the Parish were accepted by PCSO Goundry and he would ensure that these concerns were communicated to relevant personnel within the police force.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

PARISH COUNCIL (subject to audit). The Chairman of the Finance Committee Cllr. M. Best presented the Statement.

Income: Precept and District Council Grant £23,625.00, Lengthsman (inc administration charge) £3,250.00, County Councillor Grant £9,279.61, Bank Interest £1.07, VAT Reclaimed £8,395.97, Rural Rate Relief £2,002.53, Poppy Re-imburement £1,563.75, Income (SVH) £825.00, Income (Alzheimer's Society) £150.00, Income (St Mary's Church) £155.00 **Total Income: £42,679**

Expenditure: Statutory/administration £7,465.32, Councillor Expenses £36.00, Rural Rate Review, £2,008.53, Newsletter, Printing, Website £138.07, Grants and Donations – Clock, mowing, St Andrews, St Mary's, RBL, £8,272.54, Lengthsman £3,350.00, Ombersley Memorial Hall £1,399.00, Sytchampton Village Hall £2,421.41, Ombersley Junior Cricket Club £480.00 Weighbridge Improvements £1,654.53, Misc/contingency £1,417.50, VAT on expenditure £1,809.58 **Total Expenditure: £46,233**

Bank balances as at 5th April 2017 - £43,628.40 in the current account, £3,110.81 in the Reserve Account.

Whilst the Parish Council's Bank balances appeared to be healthy, Cllr Best reminded those present that the Parish Council continued to hold funds on behalf of a number of local organisations. A list of the balance held had been prepared and was circulated. This showed that around £38,000 was currently being held on behalf of other organisations.

The Parish Council continued to reclaim VAT where it could and this year had supported 6 local businesses via the Rural Rate Relief scheme.

Some improvement work was being undertaken around the Telephone Box and Noticeboard and Weighbridge Gardens. The Parish Council would continue to work with the Ombersley Conservation Trust both on these and other enhancement schemes which would benefit the village.

In addition to the income and expenditure summaries, Cllr Best referred to the table showing the extent of funds held by the Parish Council on behalf of other organisations. When this total was subtracted from the Parish Council's Bank balances it showed the extent of the Parish Council's true balances.

Finally, as referred to in the Chairman's Report, the Parish Council would, during the coming year, need to consider whether a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish should be produced. Should it be agreed to proceed down this route, this would require funding. The Parish Council had not raised the precept for a number of years but an increase in the precept would be required to fund the costs of developing such a plan.

To support this, and to begin into account of future areas of expenditure, the Parish Council would, over the coming year, look to produce a five year budget plan. Such a budget plan would also seek to mitigate against any changes in the way in which the Parish Council was funded in the future.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Best for his work in managing the council's finances.

REPORTS FROM RECEIVING ORGANISATIONS

- Ombersley Memorial Hall (Iain Freeman)

Mr. Freeman thanked the Parish Council for its grant funding which continued to support the improvements to the Memorial Hall. He also reported in outline terms on the activities being undertaken at the Hall.

With the Parish Council's support, replacement tables had been purchased for the Hall and some internal decoration had been undertaken.

Unfortunately the Hall's application for Lottery funding to support the plans to redevelop the Hall had been turned down. The Hall Committee, however, intended to carry on with improvements to the Hall, albeit in bite size chunks, as and when funding was available.

The Hall Committee had been successful in securing a £10,000 Heritage Lottery Fund Grant. This funding would support a specific World War I project which was being delivered in conjunction with Ombersley First School. Further details of this scheme would be announced in the coming year.

- Sytchampton Village Hall (Cllr M Best)

Cllr Best thanked the Parish Council for its continued support during the last year. The funds provided by the Parish Council were pivotal in enabling the Hall to continue with its programme of maintenance.

The Hall had generated a small surplus in the current financial year. Although some regular hirers had been lost, the overall footfall had increased.

The Hall Committee was aiming to continue its ongoing maintenance in the coming year with its overall objective of providing an affordable venue hire available to residents of the Parish.

- Ombersley Guides and Brownies

Thanks to the Parish Council for its continued support. With the financial assistance provided by the Parish Council they had been able to continue their programme of maintenance works on the Guide Hut. In the current financial year it had been possible to replace a number of windows at the Hut.

- Ombersley Junior Cricket Club

Kevin Davies thanked the Parish Council for its continued support. With the assistance of the Parish Council, the Junior Cricket Club would be able to continue to update vital equipment.

- Ombersley Dementia Action Alliance

A report on the Alliance's activities was circulated and presented by Cllr Welch. The Report highlighted the establishment of the Ombersley Dementia Action Alliance with the aim of making Ombersley a dementia friendly village. To date a number of organisations and businesses (including the Parish Council) had signed up.

An Action Plan had been developed and this was continually being assessed and updated.

PATH WARDEN REPORT (Cllr. P Reynolds)

Over the last twelve months the team of volunteers had maintained some 85 miles of public footpaths. Footpath Wardens had responded to 17 reports of broken stiles, overgrown paths and fallen branches from members of the public; 14 of these issues were fixed and the remaining 3 reported to Countryside Services.

During the year support has been received from the Young Offenders Programme provided by Worcester Probation Service in rebuilding broken steps and have enlisted the help of the maintenance team at Worcester Ramblers in clearing Himalayan Balsam from a well-used footpath. Both of these organisations were thanked for their ongoing support.

Since the last Annual Meeting the path wardens had organised four quarterly walks throughout the parish starting and finishing at either Ombersley Memorial Hall or Sytchampton Village hall. A total of 119 parishioners joined in on these rambles aimed at opening up as many footpaths as possible.

During the year meetings had been held with the newly appointed area manager of the Woodland Trust to discuss the maintenance of the Millennium Wood.

Finally Cllr P Reynolds (on behalf of the Parish Council and Residents) paid tribute to the small team of path warden volunteers who give their time so generously to help maintain our myriad of footpaths and bridle ways. As always more could be done with additional help. Anyone who might consider giving time to join the existing Path Wardens would be most welcome.

TREE WARDEN REPORT

The Parish Tree Warden was unable to be present at the meeting. He had, however, produced a short report which was presented by the Clerk. The Report covered: Ash Die Back, improvements to the Millennium Orchard, involvement in responding to planning applications as requested by the Parish Council and the identification of some of the old apple, perry pear and cherry trees.

LENGTHSMAN REPORT (Mr. D. Miles)

The Lengthsman was unable to be present at the meeting and had tendered his apologies.

The Clerk offered to forward any comments or issues back to the Lengthsman.

COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS (Cllr. Tomlinson)

Cllr Tomlinson's reports had been circulated.

Cllr Tomlinson reported on two specific issues he was involved in at a District Council level. He continued to Chair the Member Conduct Committee which adjudicated on complaints made against parish and district councillors. He also continued to play an active role in the Scrutiny Panel which was looking at the way Wychavon DC's Enforcement process operated. All of the report's recommendations had now been accepted and it was hoped that improvements may be seen in future processes.

In August, following the death of Maurice Broomfield, Cllr Tomlinson was also elected County Councillor for the Ombersley ward. It was still early days and Cllr Tomlinson was still finding his feet. He hoped, however, to be able to effectively represent the Parish and its residents at County Hall.

ANY OTHER MATTERS

The following matters were raised:-

- Progress with the development at The Racks.
- The need for improved Broadband connectivity, particularly in the Lineholt Area.
- Flooding in Uphampton Lane.
- Lack of consultation in relation to a forthcoming Cycle event.

These matters would be looked into by the Parish Council.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN