# Minutes

of a Parish Council meeting

7.30 pm Tuesday 17 January 2023

At Pitchford Village Hall

**Present**: Cllr. Paul Harrison (Chairman), Cllr. Gareth Ball, Cllr. Carmen Culliss, Cllr. Graham Davies, Cllr. Keith Faulkner, Cllr. Alan Hotchkiss, Cllr. Robert Morgan, Cllr. Tracy Johnson, Cllr. John Long.

**In attendance**:

Sharon Clayton, Locum Clerk

* + 1. **Chairman’s Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

* + 1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Shropshire Cllr. Dan Morris.

* + 1. **Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests, Bias and Pre-determination**

In accordance with Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 Members were informed they are personally responsible for deciding whether they should disclose an interest at this meeting. Members were also reminded they should not make decisions with a closed mind and must declare a bias and not vote on matters where their decision could be pre-determined.

* + 1. **Public Session**

There were no members of the public present.

* + 1. **Minutes**

The minutes from a Parish Council meeting held on 8 November 2022 were considered for approval.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the minutes be APPROVED and ADOPTED as a true record.

* + 1. **Police Report**

There was no report from the police.

* + 1. **Shropshire Councillor Report**

Shropshire Councillor Dan Morris provided the following written report:

* The police minister had been asked a question in the House of Commons concerning the blight of rural crime in response to a community concern rural crime meeting in Pulverbatch that Dan Morris chaired in December 2022.  The assistant PCC for West Mercia would be visiting All Stretton/Smethcott/Woolstaston Parish Council on 25January 2023 to discuss rural crime issues.
* Shropshire Council was asking people for their views on a revised policy which outlines how unsafe walking routes are assessed in relation to home-to-school transport.  Shropshire Council was proposing a revision to its Extremely Hazardous Routes Policy and a six-week consultation had been launched to seek feedback from all interested parties including councillors, town councils, parish councils, schools and colleges, parents and students.  The consultation would end on 10 February 2023.
* People could travel around Shropshire by bus for no more than £2 for a single journey until the end of March as part of the ‘Get Around for £2’ campaign’ which runs from 1 January to 31 March 2023. It aimed to get more people to travel by bus and backed by £60 million of Government investment to help passengers save money this winter, by capping single tickets at £2 across England, outside of London, for most bus services. Two bus services in Shropshire Council’s Burnell ward were involved in this scheme: the 546 Arriva Bus Shrewsbury/Pulverbatch) and the 435 Minsterley Motors Bus. (Ludlow/Leebotwood/Longnor/Dorrington/Ryton/Condover/Shrewsbury).
* Millions of the lowest-income households across the UK would get £900 – or up to £1,350 – from the Government in 2023/4 to help with the cost of living.  Starting from spring 2023 cost of living support would include: £900 Cost of Living Payment for means-tested benefit claimants, extra cash support for people with disabilities and some pensioners’ households would receive extra cash. Shropshire Council and its partners were offering help and advice on money, bills and wellbeing, which may also be useful to many.
* Shropshire Council’s Cabinet had approved a recommendation to hand back the site of Acton Scott Historic Working Farm to the owners of the site, the Acton Scott Estate.  Detailed negotiations between Shropshire Council, which has operated the visitor attraction under a lease agreement for the past 47 years, and the Acton Scott Estate had resulted in mutual agreement that the lease be surrendered.  The settlement allows the owners to invest in essential infrastructure improvements required to support endeavours to open a new historic attraction. The attraction had been operating at a deficit of £168,000 per annum and the Shropshire taxpayer has been subsidising the running costs of the farm at a cost of £8.40 per visitor.
* Plans by Shropshire Council to close its budget gap, manage the impacts of inflation, deliver priorities in the Shropshire Plan and bring its budget into balance, were out for consultation.  The council was proposing a transformation and efficiency programme that would save £50.6 million in the next year.  Ongoing impacts of COVID and broader economic conditions, particularly the effects of inflation and rising energy costs, were at the root of the budget challenge facing the council.  Pressures continued from increased demand for social care currently accounting for three quarters of the council’s budget, and the cost of living crisis was increasing the demand for support and services from residents. The Government’s budget settlement for councils would see the council’s spending power grow by 8.6% next year through a combination of money raised from council tax, Government grants and business rates. The increase in Council tax was equivalent to £1.38 a week for the average Shropshire household. The proposed increase would provide an extra £10m, while inflation alone was having a £43m impact on the council.
* Shropshire Council was looking for someone with practical experience in financial management or accountancy to join its Audit Committee as a co-opted independent member.  This role was to provide independent and high-level focus on the council’s audit, assurance and reporting arrangements, as well as independently reviewing governance, risk management and control frameworks, and overseeing the financial reporting and annual governance processes.  The successful person would not be a staff member nor Shropshire Councillor, and the role was unpaid although they would be reimbursed for expenses and receive specific training.
* From 1 April 2023, the amount Shropshire Council pays foster carers would significantly increase in a bid to encourage more people to come forward and look after some of the county’s most vulnerable children.  More financial support would be provided for foster carers, including connected carers who look after children from their extended family. Allowances paid would be increased for each child in their care.
* More census data had recently been released. The national economic activity rate was marginally higher than in Shropshire (58.6%). 149,300 people over 16 in Shropshire were in employment. Levels of self-employment were higher in Shropshire than the average in England. 6,500 people in Shropshire were unemployed at the time of the 2021 Census (2.4%). A high proportion of the economically inactive population in Shropshire were retired (influenced by the county’s older demographic profile), at 28.5% of those aged 16 and over and notably higher than in England (21.5%). In 2021, 96.7% of usual residents in Shropshire identified were within the high-level “White” category compared to 81% in England. The next most common high-level ethnic group was “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh” accounting for 1.3% of the overall population, compared to 9.3% for England. In 2021, 96.4% of usual residents in Shropshire were either English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, and Cornish compared to 90% in England.
* Simon Jones had stepped back from his Cabinet responsibilities covering adult social care and public health, due to suffering long term effects following contracting COVID-19 earlier this year and his responsibilities were being shared on a temporary basis between Cabinet members Cecilia Motley (adult social care and public health) and Dean Carroll (housing).
* From 4 May 2023 voters in England must show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections, including local elections, parliamentary by-elections, Police and Crime Commissioner Elections, and recall petitions. From October 2023 it will also apply to UK General elections. *No elections were planned in the Shropshire Council area this year*, but from late January anyone who did not have one of the accepted forms of ID could apply for free ID – known as a Voter Authority Certificate or by completing a paper form.

NOTED.

* + 1. **Clerk’s Report**

Members received a written report from the Locum Clerk on action taken following decisions made at the last council meeting.

NOTED.

* + 1. **Finance**

1. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the following payments for November and December 2022 be APPROVED.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PAYEE** | **DESCRIPTION** | **AMOUNT**  **£** |
| **Parish Council account** |  |  |
| O² | Mobile phone | 31.47 |
| HMRC | PAYE | 876.98 |
| HSBC | Bank charges | 10.80 |
| Sharon Clayton | Salary/office expenses/travel expenses, reimbursement for postage | 599.65 |
| Anna Morris | Salary | 552.00 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **2070.90** |
| **Lightsource account** |  |  |
| HSBC | Bank charges | 11.60 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **11.60** |

1. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the bank reconciliations from October to December 2022 be APPROVED.
2. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that income and expenditure from 1 April to 31 December 2022 be APPROVED.
   * 1. **Budget and Precept 2023/2024**

Members considered for approval the budget and precept for the fiscal year 2023/2024.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the following be APPROVED:

* The precept be set at £6,500.00, an increase of 8.9% on last year. This represents £1.99 for middle band council tax payers.
* The budget for the Parish Council be set at £7,196.
* The budget for Lightsource be set at £15,490.
  + 1. **Community Event**

Given the general advice that the King’s Coronation should be “low key” Members agreed not to organise an event over the Coronation weekend.

Following the success of the Jubilee Picnic in 2022, Members considered whether the Parish Council should facilitate a community event later in the year. It was suggested that the Parish Council could host an event, such as a picnic, at each of the four villages, one each year. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that Cllr. Paul Harrison would put a note in the Village Views and on Facebook and ask for feedback to try to ascertain whether the community would support this. Willing helpers will be needed and suitable locations will need to be found.

* + 1. **Defibrillators**

Members considered for retrospective approval the purchase of 3 defibrillators and cabinets to replace existing units, initially agreed in July 2022. Prices had been compared and the serious consequences of not replacing existing units led to the Parish Council placing an order with Med UK Ltd. to carry out immediate replacements. Funds were from the Lightsource charitable account but marginally exceeded the limitations of LGA 1972, S137.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that due diligence had been carried out and that the purchase of new defibrillators and accessories at a cost of £4,997 + VAT be retrospectively APPROVED.

* + 1. **Civility and Respect**

Members considered whether to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge promoted by the SLCC which commits the Parish Council to:

* Treat everyone with civility and respect.
* Put in place a training programme for councillors and staff.
* Councillors sign up to the Code of Conduct.
* Have good governance arrangements in place, staff contracts and appropriate policies.
* To seek professional assistance to deal with any civility and respect issues that may arise.
* Commit to calling out bullying and harassment should it occur.
* Continue to learn from best practice in the sector.
* Support the continued lobbying a change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to sign up to the Pledge.

* + 1. **General Power of Competence**

Members considered for approval whether the Parish Council met the required criteria for the Council to use the general power of competence for future expenditure where applicable.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that in pursuance of the Localism Act 2011, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, the Parish Council met the required criteria of at least two-thirds of its Members being elected and the Clerk had one of the required qualifications (CiLCA), and that the general power of competence in accordance with the (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 would be used for future expenditure where applicable.

* + 1. **Planning Matters**

**Planning Applications Considered**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Application number** | **Details** |
| 23/00073/AGR  Oaklands Farm, Pitchford, Condover | Proposed agricultural reservoir.  It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED no comment. |

It was further AGREED to seek an update on 19/06442/ENF 19/06414/ENF.

* + 1. **Planning Applications Previously Considered**

No planning applications had been considered since the last meeting.

* + 1. **Planning Decisions**

The following planning decisions were NOTED.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 22/04668/FUL & 22/04669/LBC  1 Frodesley House Farm Barns, Frodesley, Shrewsbury | Conversion of one bay of double garage to form utility room.  Permission GRANTED 19 December 2022. |

* + 1. **Consultation**

1. The Boundary Review.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED no comment.

1. Shropshire Council’s Budget 2023/2024.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED no comment.

1. Shropshire Council’s Draft Sustainable Warmth Strategy.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED no comment.

* + 1. **Traffic Calming**

Nothing further had been heard from Shropshire Council even though the Parish Council had offered to assist with funding towards traffic calming.

Cllr. Carmen Cullis AGREED to contact Shropshire Councillor Dan Morris and ask for an update concerning the installation of a mirror and maybe other measures at Frodesley crossroads and gateway signs at other villages to help slow traffic.

* + 1. **Proposed Footpath from Acton Burnell to Pitchford**

Cllr. Paul Harrison had had discussions with the landowners concerning the proposed footpath from Acton Burnell to Pitchford and, although no agreement had been reached, further ideas would be pursued.

NOTED.

* + 1. **Jubilee Tree Planting**

Councillors had had further discussions about finding suitable land on which to plant trees to commemorate the Queen’s Jubilee, but no suitable land could be found for tree planting.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that, in spite of the council’s best efforts, the planting of Jubilee trees would no longer be pursued.

* + 1. **Parish Matters**

Members expressed concern that part of the highway through Oaklands Farm had been blocked/diverted and the matter had been referred to Shropshire Councillor Dan Morris for action.

NOTED.

Vehicles driving in the direction of Shrewsbury from Acton Burnell and approaching the Veolia yard at Weeping Cross were being confronted by a bright light that obscured vision.

Cllr. Paul Harrison AGREED to contact Veolia to ask that the light be adjusted to prevent it from dazzling drivers at night.

Concord College had been in contact with Cllr. Paul Harrison and a meeting had been arranged to discuss how the college and the Parish Council can work together for the betterment of the local community.

NOTED.

Councillor email boxes were getting full, and Members were asked to manage their mailboxes and delete unwanted emails so as to ensure they received all of their emails.

In response to concerns and a reluctance to delete certain emails Cllr. Paul Harrison AGREED to make enquiries about the cost to increase the capacity of councillor email boxes.

Concerns were expressed about three Oak trees with dead bows that needed trimming as they posed a hazard. Two were on Shropshire Council land situated near to Haypole Farm on Frodesley Lane and one was on private land approximately 250 metres from the cross roads at Longnor Green on the right-hand side of the road from Frodesley.

It was AGREED that the Clerk should report these concerns to Shropshire Council for action.

Concerns were expressed about the road between Acton Burnell and Evenwood, just beyond the turn off to Acton Piggott near the Concord College entrance which was regularly blocked by mud and/or water (sometimes frozen). It was thought that the gully in the verge may be blocked.

It was AGREED that the Clerk should report this to Shropshire Council.

* + 1. **Next Meeting**

It was NOTED that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 14 March 2023 commencing 7.30pm at Pitchford Village Hall. Cllr. Gareth Ball gave his apologies.

**PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the above Act and due to the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted it will be PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the public and press should not be present

* + 1. **Staffing**

1. Cllr. Paul Harrison informed Members that the Locum Clerk/RFO, Sharon Clayton would be leaving the Council on 27 January 2023 and that the Clerk, Anna Morris would not be returning from maternity leave until June 2023.

NOTED.

1. Due to the Locum Clerk’s resignation Members considered the appointment of an RFO.

The Locum Clerk advised that it is a legal requirement in accordance with the LGA 1972, Section 151 which states that “…every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs”. Section 112 (1) of the LGA 1972 states that “…a local authority shall appoint such officers as they think necessary for the proper discharge …of their functions”. Section 112 (5) states that “…a parish or community council may appoint one or more persons from among their number to be officers of the council, without remuneration”.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that, as Cllr. Paul Harrison had agreed to take on the role until the Clerk returned, he would be appointed as an officer in accordance with the LGA 1972, S112 and appointed as RFO in accordance with the LGA, S151.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 20:51.

Signed: Date:

Chairman