Minutes of Cusop Annual Parish Meeting held in Cusop Village Hall on 20th April 2011

Present: Cllr Mrs S Sheldon (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Hughes, Mr I Jardin (Clerk - minutes), Cllr D Jones, Cllr N Jones, Mr S Sheldon, Cllr J Theaker, Mrs J Weaver, Mr J Wesley, Mrs M Wesley, Mr J Wilks, Mr B Williams.

1. Minutes of the last Parish Meeting
Draft minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting on 29th April 2010 were circulated. The meeting agreed the minutes, subject to the correction of the date in item 1 to read '2009', and the Chairman signed the corrected minutes as a true record.

2. Parish Council Chairman's Report
The Chairman said the the Parish Council had spent many hours trying to find an acceptable and affordable solution to speeding on Hardwicke Road. Speed indicator devices had been installed, but were not in place all of the time because their effectiveness appeared to decrease as drivers got used to them. They had been hired for two periods of one month and appeared to have been effective. Further hire periods were planned.
The Council was continually updating Amey Herefordshire about the state of the parish roads. Major works had been carried out in the upper Dingle in July and minor repairs elsewhere. The harsh winter had made road conditions worse, but Amey were having to concentrate on the main roads and there was a shortage of money for non-urgent repairs to minor roads. The Parish Council had accepted an offer from Herefordshire Council to take part in an experimental winter scheme under which the latter provided salt to the Parish Council to be stored locally and used by the lengthsman to help keep unclassified roads passable especially for the benefit of isolated people.
The Parish Council had provided input to Herefordshire Council's draft Local Development Framework which would categorise settlements for the purposes of new housing. The Parish Council had suggested the Cusop should be categorised as a settlement where a limited amount of new housing would be permitted, rather than a lot or none at all. Adoption of the Framework had been put on hold until after the May elections and could be modified by a new county council. The new government's Localism Bill could shift more decision-making to local communities and parish plans could play a significant part in this. With this in mind the Parish Council intended to update Cusop's own Plan and volunteers would be welcomed.
The Chairman thanked all the volunteers involved in the Village Hall and Playing Field for their hard work and commitment and also footpaths officer Stuart Sheldon and tree warden Phil Ferguson.
The Chairman said that regretfully four councillors were standing down. She thanked Geoff Soar and John Theaker who had been councillors for four and six years respectively and drew attention to John's invaluable input to the Council and community, especially the Playing Field refurbishment and the Parish Plan. Mollie Hughes and her husband before her had been stalwart members of the Council for many years and her support, knowledge and common sense approach would be missed. Finally the Chairman thanked Neville Jones who had been a councillor for thirty years for his outstanding contribution to the Council and to Cusop. His achievements were well-known and without him it was unlikely we would now be sitting in our own village hall. He had worked tirelessly and generously for the good of the community and she knew he would continue to do so. There were four new councillors and she looked forward to working with them.

3. West Mercia Police Report
No officer present - PC Lea had said he would attend unless an incident prevented him.

4. Herefordshire Councillor's Report
Cllr Price was not present.

5. Parish Clerk's Finance Report
The Clerk circulated copies of the draft Statement of Receipts and Payments for the Financial Year ended 31 March 2011. In answer to a question the Clerk said that the small deficit against the Playing Field Project was in respect of VAT which would be reclaimed in the new year.

6. Footpath Officer's Report
Mr Sheldon reported that drainage works had been carried out on the footpath at the top of the dingle and had greatly improved the situation there. In the coming year he would be concentrating on signs, stiles and bridges. He asked parishioners who were aware of problems to let him or the Clerk know.

7. Tree Warden's Report
The Clerk said that Mr Ferguson had emailed that he had received no requests for advice during the year.

8. Report from the Village Hall Committee
Mr Wesley reported that use of the Hall had risen dramatically and recently more than half of the hire slots had been filled. There were plenty of events and activities to become involved in and a timetable of these had been put on the parish noticeboards. Volunteers were always needed. Mr Wilks drew attention to the curtains that had been hung in the hall to improve acoustics.

9. Report from the Playing Field Volunteer Supporters Group
Mrs Weaver reported that after delays, caused by late signing off of the refurbishment grant, a further grant for Playing Field activities was now available. This would fund events for children and adults (details would be on the noticeboards), volunteer safety training, weeding equipment, and a new litter bin and sign. The Group was seeking a small grant to fund new shrubs to replace those lost to winter. There had been increased use of the Playing Field especially among pre-school and infant children and mothers. Mrs Weaver thanked all on the management committee and John Theaker and Ian Jardin from the Parish Council.

10. Report from St Mary's Church
The Chairman said that the Rector had sent his apologies for absence due to a bad back and read out a written report from him: he and his family had been warmly welcomed following his induction in March 2010. He had understood from meetings that the people here were very fond of their church and its traditions. He had planned some changes to the benefice because he had been told that people would be open to change and a new incumbency was an opportunity to bring this about and perhaps to promote the mission and evangelicalism. In the autumn due to staff shortage he had proposed a group service once a month. Despite the severe winter very few services had been cancelled and Christmas services had gone very well. The children's group was running very well thanks to the hard work of all the members. The youth group was active but needed more help. He was very grateful for the services of the churchwardens but they were ageing and new leadership was needed.
The Chairman said that Mrs Cundale had also sent apologies for absence due to attendance at a magistrates' meeting and read out a written report from her about Caring for God's Acre: the taskforce team continued to visit two or three times a year and as a result of its work a wider variety of flora and fauna was becoming apparent. Meadow and seating areas were being developed. New volunteers would be welcome. The PCC was grateful to the team and the volunteers and also to the Parish Council for its generous donation of £290 towards grass-cutting.

11. Comments or questions on any other matters
Mr Williams said that the lower dingle road was in appalling condition and asked why the upper dingle road had been repaired last year even though it was never in such bad condition. Mrs Hughes said that the lower dingle had never been resurfaced in the sixty years she had lived there and complete resurfacing rather than patch repair was needed now. The Chairman said that the Council would pursue this.
Mr Williams said that the salt bin at Victoria Terrace had not been refilled in the winter. The Clerk said the lengthsman had refilled one bin there several times through the severe weather. The Chairman asked parishioners to let the Clerk know when bins were empty and also not to remove salt for private use.
Mrs Weaver said that Hay's new parking enforcement had not so far seemed to have an effect on parking in the lower dingle but she would monitor this and let the Council know if it did.
Mr Wilks asked if there had been any action with the planning permission for new houses at Coopers Hall. The Clerk said that planning permission would not be granted until a Section 106 agreement had been completed and it appeared that this was still being negotiated.
Mr Wesley asked that glass-cleaning and litter in the bus shelter be addressed and suggested that a litter bin should be installed. The Clerk said he would investigate.

The Chairman closed the meeting.