

CUSOP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of an Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on
Wednesday 16th November at 19.00 at Cusop Village Hall

Present

Councillors: Mark Hainge (in the Chair), Julia Whittall, Ian Jardin, David Evans and Phil Gilbert.

In attendance

Clerk Helen Tinson – on behalf of HALC (Herefordshire Association of Local Councils);
Ward Cllr Jennie Hewitt; 21 members of the public.

1. Consideration to access HALC Clerk Cover for the meeting:

Following the resignation of the Clerk, it was unanimously RESOLVED to access HALC's CiLCA qualified Clerk/RFO Cover for the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence: There were none.

3. Declarations of interest & written dispensation requests: There were none.

4. Minutes of Parish Council Meeting 19th October 2022:

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of 19th October 2022. A number of inaccuracies were reported and the following amendments were proposed and accepted:

- 4.1** Page 212 Minute 5: S106 Monies: The order of the two proposals considered was incorrect. Amendment – change the order of the proposals;
- 4.2** Page 213 Minute 7: Cusop Speed Awareness Group: Ward Cllr Hewitt had received communication from Cllr Harrington. Amendment – change initials from JWi to JH;
- 4.3** Page 213 Minute 7: Cusop Speed Awareness Group: Correct spelling error. Amendment – change ACON to ACOM.
- 4.4** Page 214 Minute 12: It was suggested that Cllr Wesley 'expressed his intention to resign' at the meeting, rather than 'wished to tender his resignation with immediate effect'. Amendment – change the wording.

It was RESOLVED: to amend the draft minutes accordingly and present them to the next meeting for approval. 4 in favour, 1 against.

5. Public Participation:

- 5.1** Ward Cllr Jennie Hewitt reported that the final decision of the reallocated S106 funds lies with Herefordshire Council Officers and the Ward Member, and not the Parish Council. The decision to reallocate S106 funding from the playground to road safety has already been made by the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure, Cllr John Harrington. S106 money is designed to

mitigate the impact of new developments. Communication with the parish, including letters from residents, has made clear that lives were being affected by road safety concerns.

Council members expressed their disappointment that the decision had not been communicated effectively to the Parish Council. Ward Cllr Hewitt will feed this back.

A further member of the council reported that the planning policy in place at the time of the S106 agreement stated new developments (of this size) should include an allowance for play facilities, and therefore the S106 agreement to improve the existing play area rather than create a new one reflected this policy. Ward Cllr Hewitt agreed an action to establish the legalities/obligations around providing play facilities because it was within planning policy at the time of the planning decision.

A member of the public wished to compliment the Parish Council on the S106 decision made at the last meeting. He reported new traffic calming measures in Stretton Grandison which were part funded by the parish and hoped that HC will now fund a full traffic calming project for Hardwicke Road and Newport Street. It was noted that plans are available detailing a £30,000 scheme for Hardwicke Road and £64,000 scheme for Newport Street.

A member of the public also thanked the Parish Council for their ongoing work, but challenged the way the decision was made at the last meeting. Concerns were raised about a possible non-declaration of interest, pre-determination and bias of the whole council for liaising closely with one community group but not others. The Clerk clarified the position concerning members declaring interests and informed the resident that complaints can be made to the Monitoring Officer if they feel there was a breach in the code of conduct. The Member refuted the accusation.

Several further comments were received from other members of the public reiterating previous comments made and noted above.

- 5.2** A member of the public reported a number of blocked drains and was informed of the process to report them directly to HC via the 'Report a Problem' website. It was agreed to put a notice on the noticeboard informing parishioners how to do this, and that Ward Cllr Hewitt would follow up the blocked drains with the Locality Steward.
- 5.3** A member of the public asked whether the Parish Council had received a response to the noise complaints from the 'How the Light Gets In' Festival, due at the end of October.

The Parish Council reported that they had not but would chase a response.

The Ward Councillor and 16 members of the public left the meeting. The Chairman changed the order of the agenda.

6. To Consider Recruiting a New Clerk:

Members considered accessing HALC's recruitment services noting the ex-clerk's resignation. Concerns were raised about continuity in view of the forthcoming elections in May and members discussed the possibility of recruiting a temporary qualified clerk for 6-9 months to cover the election period if a permanent clerk could not be found in the meantime.

It was RESOLVED: to access HALC's recruitment service at a cost of £220 plus VAT; and to continue to advertise the role on the Parish Council/Village Facebook page directing all enquiries to HALC.

7. Allocation of Clerk's Duties:

Members considered allocating the clerk's duties during the recruitment process, noting HALC can provide meeting cover and carry out any urgent actions.

It was RESOLVED:

- 7.1** The Chairman will contact HALC and ask what other functions are available from temporary clerk cover;
- 7.2** The Chairman will continue to monitor correspondence via the Clerk's email;
- 7.3** The Chairman will update the website to remove the ex-Clerk's contact details;
- 7.4** Cllr Ian Jardin will take temporary responsibility for financial matters;
- 7.5** Cllrs Julia Whittall and Phil Gilbert will take temporary responsibility for the Lengthsman;
- 7.6** All councillors will take on other residual activities as required.

8. Casual Vacancy:

Members were informed that the casual vacancy following the resignation of Cllr Jim Wesley on 20th October 2022 has been reported to Electoral Services and notices to advertise the vacancy have been issued.

Three members of the public left the meeting.

9. Finance Report:

Members received a financial report (Appendix A) including a bank reconciliation (Appendix B) to the 31st October; the approved budget for the current year; actual income and expenditure for the current year to 31st October; and the projected final position at 31st March 2023.

10. 2023/2024 Budget and Precept:

Members considered a draft budget (Appendix C) based on current expenditure plus 10%

increase in costs and an allowance for possible contested election costs. Money has accumulated as a result of reduced spending during COVID and no current Lengthsman. Members considered balances for General and Earmarked Reserves, with an associated Reserves policy.

It was RESOLVED: to defer the decision to adopt the budget and set the precept to the next meeting.

11. Playing Field Repairs and Improvements:

Members referred to the resolution made at the last meeting to seek parishioner feedback and obtain quotes. Whilst the playground undoubtedly requires maintenance, it was noted that all safety aspects are regularly assessed and recorded by volunteer Play Inspector, Andy Fryers. A schedule of works and associated tenders were obtained in 2021, but put on hold at that time pending S106 payment.

It was RESOLVED:

11.1 to defer discussion on indicative funding;

11.2 that the Chairman consult with the volunteer Play Inspector and seek revised quotes from the two lowest tenders.

12. Cusop Speed Awareness Group:

Members were informed that the group have been communicating with Bruce Evans at Herefordshire Council and are awaiting information on the process and positioning of village gateways. Concerns were raised about the perceived relationship between the Speed Awareness Group and the Parish Council when communicating with Herefordshire Council, and members acknowledged that Terms of Reference to clarify the group's role and purpose were never written as originally intended. A query was raised about the previous resolution to write to HC to confirm the PC decision to redirect S106 funding. It was confirmed that the ex-Clerk had emailed Justine Burnett before she left and the Chairman would forward a copy of the email to members.

It was RESOLVED: that the Speed Awareness Group provide a written report for Parish Council meetings, which will be circulated with supporting papers, considered and approved, and appended to the minutes for reference.

Two members of the public left the meeting.

13. Planning:

223072: Land at Pentre Higgin, Craswell, HR3 5FG: Retrospective permission for proposed earthworks to create a level livestock handling area as part of an established agricultural unit. Members considered the application; there were no objections.

It was RESOLVED: to SUPPORT the application.

14. Councillors Reports:

14.1 Lengthsman: It was agreed that the Chairman would look for the old maintenance agreements and distribute to members to consider and propose an updated annual

maintenance plan for discussion at the next meeting.

15. Clerk's Report: There was no report.

16. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 13th December, 7.00pm, Cusop Village Hall

Meeting closed 9.50pm.

SIGNED DATE

APPENDIX A: FINANCIAL REPORT

APPENDIX B: BANK RECONCILIATION

APPENDIX C: DRAFT BUDGET REPORT