

**LITTLE BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL – Annual Parish Meeting held on
Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 7.00pm – On Zoom online**

DRAFT MINUTES

PRESENT: Councillors; (PR) Peter Rees(Chair);(JG) Janet Gwinnett; (MD) Mike Davies; (KR) Kate Robbins:

ALSO: Ward Cllr: Toni Fagan, Angela Middleton (FO); Sophie Glover (Parish Clerk),

Meeting Opened: 7.03pm

There was a comment from Angela about some one putting weedkiller down the Wriggle Brook Pitch verge. Clerk to ask if there are any laws against this.

1.	Apologies - Kate Dillon	ACTIONS
2.	Election of Chair and Vice Chair Proposed: Peter Rees Proposed by : MD Seconded : JG all were in favour and he was happy to accept. Vice chair, Proposed: Janet Gwinnett Proposed By; PR Seconded: MD all were in agreement. Co-option of councillors: no vacancies to fill.	<i>Chairs acceptance of office to be signed and filed by clerk.</i>
3.	To accept minutes of the previous Annual Meeting in May 2020. These had been agreed at the June meeting in 2020.	
4.	Chairman's annual report. Attached. But the chair was happy to announce that the village hall was now ready to be used again, and would be the polling station tomorrow.	
5.	Clerks annual financial report. The clerk told the meeting that there was a carry over of £2,448.38 from last financial year.	
6.	Review of other appointments: footpaths officer- Angela was happy to carry on in the role and the PC thanked her for her work over the past year and were delighted to keep her in the role; PR proposed that she remain in post. Seconded by JG and all were in favour of keeping her in the role. Internal Auditor- The PC thanked Geoff Young for stepping into this role at the last minute, they also passed their thanks and best wishes to Margaret Skriven who has done a great job as the IV for a number of years. It was proposed to keep Geoff as the IV going forward. Proposed: PR Seconded: JG all were in favour.	
7.	Review of insurance policies: all happy to continue with BHIB.	<i>Clerk to prepare cheque for annual renewal.</i>
8.	Review of Subscriptions: Halc: all were happy to continue to be affiliated with them.	

9.	Remind Cllrs to update their notice of registerable interests – Done.	
10.i	Adoption of accounts accounting statement Accounts had been circulated and all were in agreement to adopt them	<i>Clerk to submit accounts for exclusion of audit with PKF Littlejohn.</i>
ii	Agreement of Annual Governance Statement The meeting was in agreement with the findings on the statement.	
iii	Approval of the Confirmation of the Certificate of Exemption form. The Cllrs approved this certificate.	<i>Meeting Closed at:19.04</i>
	Little Birch Parish Council May meeting	<i>Started at: 19.05</i>
1.	To accept apologies for absence: Kate Dillion	
2.	Declaration of interest None	
3.	To accept reports from:	
3.1	Ward Councillor Toni Fagan: TF will circulate the leaders newsletter, in addition TF told the meeting that Herefordshire has a new Chief Executive - he has walked into a tricky situation with Childrens Services. An interim director of Childrens Services has been bought in to help try and sort out some of the problems. TF asked for Cllrs to contact her if there were any concerns with any young people in the parish. Hereford Council meetings will be happening at Halo Leisure Centre whilst the Town Hall is renovated. There is a new 'Visit Herefordshire' website to re-energise the visitor economy. TF is helping groups to work on the renewable energy fund. MD asked if TF had any update from Gigaclear for when broadband might be expected in the village, she will continue to chase Fastershire for an update.	<i>TF to circulate the Leaders newsletter.</i>
3.2	Balfour Betty – James Howell Submitted weekly by e mail.	<i>TF to contact Fastershire/ Gigaclear</i>
3.3	Police update: Golden Valley submitted by e mail monthly.	
3.4	Footpaths officer: Angela is doing a parish walk on May 23 rd . LB18 from the Church to Much Birch, the metal gate keeps jamming. Clerk to inform KD so that she can ask the land owner to look at it.	<i>Clerk/KD</i>
4.	Acceptance of minutes from 7th April 2021 Proposed: PR Seconded: JG All agreed that they were a fair representation of the meeting.	
5.	Action Points from last meeting – all addressed or on the agenda - apart from broadband, where the clerk told the meeting that David Bland had been in contact with her to explain that he was currently looking into the provision of vouchers for the Little Birch area, as long as these were available, he felt that he could bring Broadband to the parish by October/November this year.	
6.	Planning application: 211025 – Bromley Court, Hoarwithy Proposed replacement to existing agricultural storage and machinery building.	

	The Parish Council opted to make a comment of 'no objection' to this application.	<i>Clerk to submit comment</i>
7.	Jobs for the lengthsman Clerk asked for any jobs to be reported to her. She was asked to remind the lengthsman to do the grips and gullies on Pendant Pitch.	
8.	Finance Balances: HSBC account (at 4.04.20) £ 2,448.38 Payments to be agreed: Parish Acct Clerks Salary : £ 196.00 Clerks Expenses: £ 8.60 HMRC PAYE: £ 48.80 BHI Insurance: £ 227.66 Proposed: PR Seconded: JG All in agreement. Payments to be made. Receipts – First half of the precept: £3,175 not showing on bank balance above. Requests for financial aid – None	
9.	Reports from any meetings or training attended: Clerks conversation was attended by the clerk: many parishes are concerned about holding the June meeting face to face in case members of the public want to attend and make the numbers too high, instead they are waiting for the July meeting when the restrictions should have been lifted nationally. It was proposed to cancel the June LBPC meeting, instead holding the next meeting on July 7 th Proposed: PR seconded: MD All were in agreement.	<i>Clerk to make sure that this is noted on the web site and notice boards.</i>
10.	Dog mess in the parish: Parishioner had written in about dog mess on Ruff Lane, another had complained to JG about the same problem. It is thought that it is one particular dog owner, clerk to hand over a 'No dog Fouling' sign to PR to put up along the lane.	<i>Clerk and PR</i>
11.	Matters arising between meetings: The Chair asked for the meeting to go 'in session'. Meeting in session: Redacted.	
12.	To Receive Agenda items for the next PC meeting in July	
	To note date of next scheduled PC meeting – Wednesday 7 th July at 7.30pm Currently, this has to be a face to face meeting at Little Birch Village Hall.	

SIGNED:..... CHAIRMAN Dated:.....

Future Meetings

	Wednesday July 7 th	7.30pm
	Wednesday September 1 st	7.30pm
	Wednesday October 6 th	7.30pm
	Wednesday November 3 rd	7.30pm

DRAFT

Little Birch Parish Council - Chairman's Annual Report May 2021.

Cllr Peter Rees – LBPC Chairman

Covid-19

Once again the year has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and has drastically changed the way in which we all live and operate. The Little Birch response to Government advice for elderly and vulnerable residents to self isolate, the Parish Council set up the LB Covid-19 Action Group, comprising all Parish Councillors, to provide essential services for those residents including collection of prescriptions, shopping etc. All households in the Parish were notified of this service by a leaflet drop. A number of residents have made and continue to make use of this valuable community effort to keep themselves and others safe. Regular information updates have been provided to the community by means of the Birches Newsletter, the Parish website and village Facebook Group.

Meetings and Attendance

Monthly meetings have continued over the last 12 months albeit via online Zoom meetings in order to comply with current legislation. These have allowed us to stay current with planning, other local issues including the ongoing monitoring of compliance with the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). 11 routine parish council meetings were held during the year. Councillor attendance continued to be very good. The ward councillor, Cllr Toni Fagan, was present at the majority of meetings. A representative of West Mercia Police has attended one meeting. Weekly written reports were received from Balfour Beatty.

Angela Middleton acts as our voluntary footpath officer and has continued to organise and lead the parish walks where permissible and is extremely proactive in the timely identification of any footpath maintenance issues. Cllr Janet Gwinnett continues as the Parish Tree Warden. The Parish Clerk, Sophie Glover, has continued to bring a high degree of professionalism to the Parish Council meetings keeping everyone on the right path. She continues to consult with the County Council, Hereford Association of Local Councils (HALC) and the Balfour Beatty Localities Steward.

Planning

The NDP was formally adopted on 28 June 2019 and was reviewed in March 2021 to decide if there was a requirement to add, alter or correct any aspect of the Plan. Following consultations with the NDP Team at Hereford Council, it was decided it was inappropriate to change the plan whilst the Core Strategy Plan for Herefordshire is currently being reviewed as any changes to one plan will have an effect on the other.

8 planning applications have been considered by the Parish Council. All planning decisions have been in accordance with the planning policies detailed in the NDP.

Website and Newsletter and Social Media

The Parish Council website continues to provide essential information about the Parish. Parish council agendas, minutes and planning applications are routinely included as is local news and events. The Little Birch parish Facebook group is proving popular with a mix of community events and information being posted by the local community. The group now has 511 members, an increase of 146 in the last 12 months. The Birches newsletter is still an excellent source of information, adverts and news. It is financed by Little Birch and Much Birch Parish Councils, Aconbury Parish Meeting and advertising. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions focus has been on producing an online version of the newsletter but printed copies are still being produced for those residents who still prefer hard copy. It is entirely produced and circulated by volunteers. The newsletter is edited by Liz Hall and Mike Leigh who is also responsible for printing and distribution to the volunteers who then deliver it to local homes. The newsletter continues to be managed by the Little Birch village hall committee.

Village Hall

As custodian trustee of the Village Hall, LBPC has some responsibilities to ensure conformation to the requirements of the Charity Commission. The Chairman was a member of the Little Birch Village Hall Committee until March 2021 and is succeeded by Cllr Kate Dillon. The LBPC representative makes reports to the hall committee on activities at Parish Council meetings and vice versa. All activities at the village hall have been suspended for the much of the past year and some committee members have used this period to carry out some much needed refurbishment projects making good use of the Covid-19 relief funding provided by Government. All activities at the village hall have been suspended for the immediate future but are expected to resume as soon as legislation permits.

Precept

The precept was increased to £6,350. This represents an increase of just over 11% from 2019-20. The increase covers the cost of inflation and increased costs of the services provided by the lengthsman and a modest salary increases for the Parish Clerk who has also agreed to reduce her hours worked.

Hereford Association of Local Councils (HALC)

The Council continued its membership of HALC which provides excellent training courses for councillors and clerks as well as that valuable legal and professional advice not available from the Herefordshire Council. LBPC will continue to monitor the value for money that membership of HALC provides in the future.