

## **LITTLE BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL –**

**ANNUAL PARISH, GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING AND MAY ORDINARY PC MEETING HELD ON  
Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 7.00pm – at Little Birch Village Hall**

### **DRAFT MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Councillors; (MD) Mike Davies; Chris Atkinson (CA); Nick Deacon (ND)

**ALSO:** Neil Barrington (NB) (Parish Clerk), Toni Fagan (TF) (Ward Councillor) ; Chris Fowler (CF)(Footpaths Officer)

**Meeting Opened: 7.00pm Annual Parish Meeting**

1.	<p><b>Chairmans Report</b></p> <p>(MD) Made the following report:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Little Birch Parish Council Chairman's report 2022/23</p> <p>The apocryphal Chinese curse of 'May you live in interesting times' certainly applies to this council over the past year. Parishioners may recall that in March of '22 the Chair, Vice Chair and clerk all resigned within a period of four weeks or so and the Council was obliged to seek recruits to fill all vacancies. Thankfully Chris Atkinson and Nick Deacon volunteered to become new parish councillors and Neil Barrington filled the Parish Clerk position. Neil has now completed his training and only has the assessment module to submit this year when he will be a fully qualified Parish Clerk. I would like to thank all three and both Kate Dillon and Kate Robbins, who did not seek re-election, for their hard work and support this year during what has been a challenging time. May I take this opportunity to remind residents that 2 more councillors will be required to take us to the necessary five.</p> <p>During the year Angela Middleton, our long serving, excellent footpath officer also retired and Chris Fowler kindly volunteered to continue this valuable service to the Parish. Can I take this opportunity to thank them both.</p> <p><b>Finances.</b></p> <p>The PC realises that financially these are difficult times and as a consequence we elected to increase the precept by a percentage well below inflation.</p> <p>We have also appointed a payroll company to manage the Clerk's salary so that it is independent of the Pc itself.</p> <p>Our HSBC account, which was previously free, had been costing us between £120 and £150 per year. We have now changed to a Lloyds Treasurers Account which is free and electronic allowing constant transparency of the account by the Clerk and council and the ability to pay bills via BACS for councillors.</p> <p><b>Expenditure</b></p> <p>The PC made a £200 donation to cover part of the indemnity insurance cost for the village celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.</p> <p>A joint inspection in September by the PC and Lengthsman of local drainage issues identified work on Castle Pitch that needed to be undertaken. The first stage was completed early in 2023 with the remainder to follow shortly. This work will cost £2400. Similarly, Balfour Beatty undertook ditch clearance on Wrigglebrook Pitch but we must remind parishioners that under Riparian Responsibilities they are obliged to keep their own watercourses and ditches adjacent to their properties clear.</p>
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	<p>Planning. The PC commented on various planning applications.</p> <p><b>Issues requiring resolution</b></p> <p><b>A month ago, the PC received an unanticipated demand from HMRC which we are presently trying to resolve with the aid of our payroll service.</b></p> <p>Following the chair's report. Parishioners had an opportunity to comment. There was discussion on the MD report. He commented that matters were being looked into it. As such individual sensitivities should be respected.</p> <p>Meeting concluded at 7.04</p> <p><b>Meeting Opened: 7.05pm Annual General Meeting</b></p> <p><b>Election of officers</b> - Chair and vice chair.</p> <p><b>Mike Davies was put forward as chair.</b></p> <p>Proposed: CA      Seconded: ND MD accepted the position but emphasised that he would only be able to hold the role until August as he leaves the Parish at that date It was resolved to appoint MD as the chair</p> <p>Chris Atkinson was proposed as Vice Chair.</p> <p>Proposed: ND      Seconded: MD Chris Atkinson accepted the post of Vice Chair. It was resolved to appoint CA as the vice chair.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> <i>necessary paperwork to be completed at the end of the meeting.</i></p>
2.	<b>Election of Parish councillors:</b> - NB congratulated MD, CA and ND on re-election. However, with the situation re MD there is a need for volunteers to come forward as councillors. Member of the public expressed an interest in the role. To be discussed at the next meeting
3.	Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting held in May 2022 agreed June 2022
4.	<b>Clerks Annual Financial Report</b> – NB gave a run through of the financial report. Was reiterated that this information is publicly available
5.	<p><b>Review of appointments:</b></p> <p><b>Footpaths Officer:</b> Chris Fowler CF was happy to continue in the role.</p> <p><b>Internal Auditor:</b> Geoff Young</p>
6.	<b>Review of insurance policies:</b> It was resolved to change insurance provider from BHIB to Zurich. As the quote was significantly lower for virtually similar cover
7.	<p><b>Review Subscriptions</b></p> <p>HALC renewed despite some disappointments at the level of service. Other subscriptions to website and ICO also renewed</p>

	<b>Action:</b> Subscriptions renewed
9.	<b>To remind Councillors to update their notice of Registrable Interests:</b> Done
9.	<b>Adoption of accounts for audit</b> i. Resolve to sign the Certificate of Exemption. ii. Resolve to accept the Annual Governance Statement  Meeting concluded at 7.29pm
	<b>Parish Council Meeting Started at 7.30pm</b>
1.	<b>Open Session for members of the public.</b> There will be no longer than 10 minutes allowed for any members of the public present to speak for up to 3 minutes. Member of the public expressed an interest in filling one of vacancies for a parish councillor
2.	<b>To accept apologies for absence.</b> None
3.	<b>To receive Declarations of Interest.</b> None.
4.	To accept reports from :- i. Ward Cllr report (Cllr Toni Fagan) Was very pleased to have been re-elected at the recent unitary election. She commented on some of the disappointing turnout figures and a lack of diversity in the candidates. Currently there is no information on the make up and leader of the new administration. Stated that this year's budget is £193mil. Though there has been a considerable loss of grants available. There are also continuing issues with transport funding, children's services, morale and recruitment in council services. There are however causes for optimism and opportunities in new homes, stronger towns funding, cyber centre investment and the museum. She reiterated that there was a need for people to come forward as prospective foster parents. There was mention of issues with Japanese Knotwood in Parish Lane. Finally she informed the council that during the campaign it was mentioned about the possibility of creating a play area for children ii. James Howell, Balfour Beatty - Reports sent weekly. iii. Police update. Newsletter report sent iv. Footpaths officer- including discussion on bye ways and footpaths CF reported that he would need more fixed way markers. Also, that he'd been inspecting the Aconbury footpaths and one in AC4 had lost the path definition. There are also some issues with misleading signage. There is a proposed Parish walk planned for June 2
5.	<b>To accept minutes of the April Parish Council meeting:-</b> Passed Proposed: MD      Seconded: ND  All in agreement. It was resolved to accept that the minutes as a true record of the meeting.
6.	<b>Action points from previous PC meetings</b> All addressed, or on the agenda.
7. 1	<b>Planning Matters:</b> <b>To consider applications to be determined by Herefordshire Council as listed below or on the Planning website prior to the meeting: –</b> No planning applications currently to consider  <b>Planning decisions made:</b> None.
8.	<b>Lengthsman – update, identification of work;</b> NB will contact Terry Griffiths to invite him to the next parish meeting. For a discussion on contract and work needed. NB will contact Balfour Beatty for status of drainage grant for 23-24
9.	<b>Finances:</b>

i	<b>Balances:</b> HSBC account (at 04.04.22)      £ 3965.75
ii	<b>Payments to be agreed:</b> <b>Parish Acct</b> Clerks Salary April:                      As per contract Clerks expenses                              £ 56.10 HMRC                                              £57.10 Village Hall                                      £205 SSL Certificate                                  £41.99 Bank Charges (April) pd by DD                                              £ 12.00  Proposed: CA      Seconded: ND
iii	New Lloyds account will now be used exclusively and HSBC account is closed.
iv	MD stated the clerks salary will increase by incrementally by one point to reflect one years service.  All in agreement. Payments to be made. <b>Receipts</b> – First half of precept £3,500 <b>Requests for financial aid</b> – None.
10	In regard to their AGAR – end of year accounts:
i	To resolve that LBPC meets criteria set for 2022/23 and wishes to claim exemption for that year.
ii	To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-23.
iii	To approve the Accounting Statement for 2022-23.
11.	<b>In regard to switching bank accounts:</b> As stated, HSBC account now closed. Lloyds account used by Parish council going forward
12.	<b>In regard to SSL Certificate :</b> It was resolved to install SSL certificate for Parish website
13.	<b>To adopt DM Payroll as HMRC agent:</b> It was resolved to adopt DM Payroll as our agent specifically to deal with HMRC
14.	<b>To note date of next scheduled PC meeting</b> – Wednesday 7th June 2023 at 7.00pm
	Meeting closed at 8.21 pm

SIGNED:..... CHAIRMAN

Dated:.....

#### Future Meetings

	Wednesday June 7th	7.00pm
	Wednesday July 5 <sup>th</sup>	7.00pm
	Wednesday September 6 <sup>th</sup>	7.00pm
	Wednesday October 4 <sup>th</sup>	7.00pm

	Wednesday November 1st	7.00pm
	Wednesday December 6th	7.00pm