ALMELEY PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council
Held on Wednesday 5th July 2023
at Almeley Village Hall at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: Jon Argent (Chair), Michael Handley, Andy Cross, Rose Proctor, Colin Powell, Martin Skyrme and Vanessa Faulkner

In attendance: Emma Thomas – Clerk

Public: 9

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
   None

2. **To receive declarations of interest and written requests for dispensation**
   Cllr Colin Powell DECLARED a DPI against item 8.2 and signed the Register of Interest book

3. **To approve the minutes of the previous meeting – 17th May 2023**
   The minutes were APPROVED and duly signed by the Chair

4. **To consider the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 17th May 2023 and any issues raised therein.**
   The minutes were CONSIDERED. Any issues raised were either answered at the meeting or are within this agenda for consideration.

5. **Open session**
   5.1 To receive a report on Herefordshire Council matters from Ward Cllr Robert Highfield
   Cllr Highfield had emailed his apologies and a written report. The report included the following items:
   - Verge and hedge trimming in the parish
   - Planning concerns
   - Spring at Spring Cottage
   - By-pass is back on Herefordshire Council's agenda
   - Reviewing the decision to move the library to the Maylord Centre
   - List of his Council roles

   5.2 To receive views of local residents on parish matters
   The following items were RAISED:
   - Concerns about the verges being single-cut.
   - Delight in the beauty of the wild flowers found in the verges

6. **To consider concerns raised about the overgrown verges**
   The Chair summarised how the decision regarding the cutting of the verges had been arrived at. Disappointment was expressed that Balfour Beatty have not fulfilled their side of the contract by maintaining safety as requested by the Parish Council.
   It was RESOLVED to request that Balfour Beatty cut a 1 metre strip on all verges to maintain safety and visibility
   It was RESOLVED that a group will form later in the year to discuss the verge cutting for next year.
   The Chair thanked parishioners for attending the meeting and for bringing the issues to the attention of the Parish Council

One member of the public left the meeting

7. **Finance**
   7.1 To note the July bank balance finance report and sign both. – Appendix 1
   The clerk REPORTED that few payments had been made since the start of the year. The report was APPROVED and signed as evidence of budget monitoring and bank reconciliation.
   7.2 To note the following payments made under Clerks Delegated Authority (Finance Regulations item 5.5):-
   7.2.1 Clerks June Salary
   7.2.2 Environment Working Group Flyer - £254.27
   NOTED
   7.3 To consider the following invoices for payment
   7.3.1 Clerk's July salary
   7.3.2 Clerk's July expenses £66.90 previously circulated
   7.3.3 HMRC PAYE £669.60

7.3.4 DC Gardening Services – May and June works £1936.20
7.3.5 Almeley Village Hall – meeting hire £24.00
7.3.6 Eyelid Productions Ltd – Web support £100.00
7.3.7 Autela Payroll Services £57.98
7.3.8 SignWorx – Parish Leaflet £37.50
The above invoices were APPROVED for payment by BACS

7.4 To note the NDP display boards are missing
It was NOTED that the NDP display boards are missing. It was REQUESTED that should anyone know where they are, that they are returned. Cllr Powell will ask Eardisley Young Farmers if they know the whereabouts.

8. Planning

8.1 To note applications determined by Herefordshire Council
None

Cllr Colin Powell left the meeting

8.2 To consider the following planning applications for determination by Herefordshire Council
231879 - Upper Wootton, Almeley, Hereford, HR3 6PX
Prior approval for the proposed change of use of four agricultural buildings and their curtilage to create five dwellings (2x large and 3x small) and associated building works.
It was RESOLVED to submit the following comment:
The Parish Council opposes the granting of consent for Prior Approval of Application 231879 in respect of agriculture buildings at Almeley Wootton for the following reasons:

- Insufficient information has been provided by the applicant, in particular with regard to drainage systems, demolition of buildings and risks from contamination.
- The Council also has concerns over the additional traffic load on a single track access road and the lack of information on wildlife issues and environmental impacts. (NDP ALM15c)
- The access route is listed as a PRoW
- New Builds are planned rather than conversions
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Cllr Colin Powell rejoined the meeting

8.3 To consider formulating a Community Plan
It was RESOLVED that Cllrs: Vanessa Faulkner, Martin Skyrme and Rose Proctor would form a working group to advance this.

8.4 To consider a response to Herefordshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan Main Modifications Consultation
It was RESOLVED to make no comment

9. Commons

9.1 To consider an update on obtaining ownership of commons from Herefordshire Council
No update has been received. The item was DEFERRED

9.2 To consider next steps in setting up a Commons Management Group to formulate a management plan.
DEFERRED

9.3 To note the Open Spaces document on What Local Councils can do for public access to town and countryside.
NOTED

10. Parish Maintenance

10.1 To consider any lengthsman or footpath jobs that need undertaking.
None

10.2 To consider the response received from Balfour Beatty regarding Woonton Spring and next steps
The response from Balfour Beatty was NOTED. It was AGREED to wait for an update from the Ward Cllr before progressing this further. The Council and Parishioners were minded to form a volunteer group and fix the spring themselves

10.3 To consider purchasing a new litter bin to replace the one by Almeley bus stop
It was RESOLVED to purchase a bin for here and the War Memorial. Cllr Cross will bring costs to the next meeting.

10.4 To consider getting quotes to clean the war memorial
It was RESOLVED to get quotes for consideration in September

10.5 To consider signing the lengthsman contract with Balfour Beatty
It was RESOLVED to sign the contract. It was further RESOLVED to request £2000 in match-funding to assist in clearing the drainage system in the parish.

11. Highways and Footpaths

11.1 To consider any highways or footpaths issues that needs reporting
None

11.2To consider an update on siting a SID at Bells Orchard

The clerk REPORTED that she had still had no response and would resubmit the forms.

It was NOTED that data from the current SID in Woonton still showed a decrease in speeds while it is installed.

Thanks were given to Mr and Mrs Charles for continuing to assist with the management of the SID.

11.3To consider joining the Safer Village Initiative

It was RESOLVED that the clerk would get costs of doing so for discussion in September

12. Environment

12.1To receive an update from the Environment Working Group – including the meeting notes from the 23rd May and 20th June. Appendix 2 & 3

The minutes were NOTED. It was NOTED that Cllr Cross is standing down from the working group. It was NOTED that little of largely negative feedback has been received from the recent postcard mail drop.

12.2 To consider adopting an Environment Policy as agreed at the May meeting – Appendix 4

It was RESOLVED to adopt the draft policy

12.3To consider appointing a Parish Tree Officer

It was RESOLVED not to appoint a Tree Officer at this stage

13. To consider appointing Chair's for the Working Groups

It was AGREED that Working Groups would decide amongst themselves who will be Chair of each group and let the clerk know.

14. Community Group Updates

14.1 To note the update from the Almeley Green Group

The following update was NOTED:

The Green Group kindly acknowledges receipt of the grant approved by the council for the projects requested in the grant application.

1. ***Bat & Owl Boxes for the Parish***
   Using some of the grant money donated by the council, we bought materials to make some boxes. At a group workshop on Sat 24th June, we started construction and have so far built 3 Owl and 6 bat boxes for installation around the parish.
2. ***Species Counts***
   A meeting and survey session was held in the Churchyard on the 14th June. Several areas of the churchyard are notably rich in biodiversity. A wildflower species count was also carried out on Hopley's Green Common, which is a Local Wildlife Site and also notably rich in desirable meadow species. Our understanding is that one of the commoners ensures that the hay is cut and taken in order to preserve the richness in wildflower species.
3. ***Water Testing***
   Following discussion with Friends of the Upper Wye (FOUW) 3 potential testing sites have been identified and a number of the group have been trained in how to carry out the water testing and record results onto the FOUW testing programme database.

15. To note any Urgent Decisions made between meetings

None

16. Correspondence

- Response from Balfour Beatty regarding resurfacing the road up to Kymin Cottage - NOTED

17. To consider agenda items for next meeting – no discussion

To receive a report on the meeting held by the Chair with Balfour Beatty and Ward Cllr Highfield.

18. To note date of next scheduled meeting – 20th September 2023 at Almeley Village Hall

NOTED

The meeting closed at 20.50

Signed: [redacted] Dated: 21-9-23