



# BUSINESS PLAN

JULY 2019

## MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL Herefordshire

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

This is Marden Parish Council's Business Plan and it lays out in detail the Council's Vision for the Parish over the next three years (2019 - 2021) and the projects we are planning which will deliver this.

### WHAT IS THE PARISH COUNCIL?

The Parish Council has eleven elected or co-opted, non-political volunteer councillors, supported by a qualified Parish Clerk.

It is the tier of local government closest to the public. The Parish Council raises funds through the parish precept part of council tax, to pay for work and services in the parish.

### Business Plan and Vision

The business plan sets out the priorities for the Parish Council which are both deliverable and provide good value for money to the community.

Importantly they are within our control to progress and reinforce the vision of the current Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan sets out the Parish's Vision for Marden as being:

*By 2031 Marden will have grown proportionately and will remain a rural parish and village. It will continue to have a strong sense of identity and have a vibrant village centre. The smaller surrounding hamlets and countryside will have been protected from over-development.*

*Marden will have a mix of open market and affordable housing, of high quality, sustainable homes satisfying all needs and age ranges. The nature and scale of housing and commercial development will have enhanced our rural appearance, feel and identity and protected the countryside. Necessary services - retail, service, school, community, care, sport & leisure, a dedicated multi-use community centre, public transport etc. - will be provided and supported locally. There will be opportunities for working from home as well as locally, in activities that positively enhance our natural environment. Continuing agricultural and other business activities in the parish will enhance our natural and built environment. Access to the countryside will be improved and enhanced to support exercise, health and wider wellbeing.*

The Parish Council's work covers six main areas

1. Communication & Management
2. Planning
3. Finance
4. Maintenance
5. Roads & Traffic
6. Major projects

## About Marden

Marden is one of the largest parishes in Herefordshire, covering 1,396 hectares. Apart from the main village of Marden, we have the hamlets of Burmarsh, Urdimash, The Vault, Venn's Green, the Vern and Litmarsh, with further scattered housing through the parish.

The 2011 census showed 1,302 residents living in 560 households. However, since then we have seen a lot of new building and conversion of disused farm buildings into housing and the number of houses is now around 640, with another 90 about to be developed.

Both Moreton and Laystone bridges are grade II\* listed and we have Sutton Walls a scheduled ancient monument on the edge of the parish, as well as over 50 other listed building including the parish church and 2 chapels.

Although much of the parish is farmland and rural, we have a large company growing, packing and distributing soft fruit and vegetables, as well as a small industrial estate, a water bottling plant and various small enterprises and home workers.

## Communication & Management

Marden Parish Council aims to be professional, competent, open, transparent and accountable in all it does to ensure good practice and that legal requirements are met for good management of finances and resources. Our communications strategy is based on 4 key principles: the right information; to the right people; in the right medium; at the right time.

Our aims are to:

1. Achieve better communication, leading to better feedback and decision-making
2. Encourage engagement of parishioners with us
3. Provide better information and communication channels to enable community participation
4. Increase awareness and understanding of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, its purpose and relevance
5. Engage with the larger businesses in the parish and encourage open discussion.

We have plans to update the website and add a Facebook page as a means of communication with parishioners. You can access information about community and parish organisations on the website, as well as the minutes of parish council meetings and notes of working groups.

You can also find links to current planning applications, the footpath map of the parish and information about local issues such as road closures in the news updates.

We recognise that many parishioners do not have access to the internet, so agendas for parish council meetings and notices are put on the parish notice boards as well as the website and regular reports are included in News and Views.

We want to reach everyone with a stake in the future of the area including: people living, working or doing business here; those who deliver services to the local community; and people who have influence over the future of the area. We want to continue a dialogue with people based on where they live and on common interests. We want to communicate with and listen to people whom others have traditionally found hard to reach and hard to hear.

## Planning

Commenting on planning applications within and bordering the parish is a major part of our role. Our opinion is important as it gives the local view. However, the planning authority Herefordshire Council has the ultimate say whether to approve, refuse and apply conditions to a planning application. We use the Marden Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) as the cornerstone for commenting on every local application. This was developed after full consultation with the parish and gives the blueprint for how the parish should develop up to 2031. Other key documents that are used by us and Herefordshire planners to determine an application are Herefordshire's Core Strategy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and material grounds laid down by law.

To ensure that we are up-to-date with relevant policy and process, all councillors will undertake regular relevant training.

When you submit an application, it will really help us if you can attend the parish council meeting when we are considering your application, so that we can ensure we have a full picture of all the details. We look forward to seeing you. If you would like to see the documents we refer to and how meetings are conducted, these can be found on the parish council website or contact the Parish Clerk who will be happy to help.

A review of the NDP in 2020 is being considered to ensure we are meeting the current requirements of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

## Finance

The work of the parish council is funded by the parish precept - part of your council tax bill. We do not receive any funding now for Lengthsman or footpath work, so this must be paid from parish funds. Legally, we have to employ a Responsible Financial Officer to manage the finances and accounts for us. This is part of the Parish Clerk's role.

We have to comply with various laws and regulations when spending parish funds. The parish council can reclaim VAT, though it has to pay it first and claim it

back every year. We are able to have a loan for planned major work, with a very low fixed rate for the length of the loan.

At least twice a year, a Financial Advisory Working Group of councillors meets to monitor financial management and issues and recommend financial proposals to the full council to consider.

## Maintenance

We live in a beautiful part of Herefordshire and the parish council aims to keep the parish looking attractive and well maintained. As with many things, we have a limited budget to use.

We employ a Lengthsman on your behalf, to do specialist work such as highways and drainage, mowing and work to upgrade the footpath network. Currently, volunteers undertake litter picking, managing the Speed Indicator Device, planting to provide colour and the roles of Parish Footpath Officer and Tree Warden.

We would like to expand volunteer work in the parish to include jobs such as painting and maintaining notice boards and bus shelters, Neighbourhood Watch or just reporting suspicious behaviour. Volunteers are offered training, protection equipment, insurance and support as needed.



Laystone Bridge -  
a grade 2\* listed structure

## Roads and Traffic

As speeding is an issue highlighted by many parishioners, we have a Speed Indicator Device (SID), jointly owned with Sutton Parish Council. We put this up at one of 3 sites in the parish, to remind drivers what the speed through the village is and what speed they are driving at. We also have a Speedwatch Group, which needs more volunteers to be able to check speeds regularly. Drivers measured as going over the speed limit by this group are sent letters by the police, whereas the SID is a deterrent to speeding.

We have 2 grade II\* listed bridges, Laystone and Moreton bridges, which are vulnerable to bridge strikes. So we are looking at ways to protect them.

As part of the new housing development at New House Farm, we will have funds to help manage the speed and flow of traffic through the parish. The Traffic Management working group will recommend options to us.

## Major projects

We have recently agreed to take forward the new community building project, when the land at New House Farm is given to the parish, hopefully later this year. We are looking at a build with a footprint of 262m<sup>2</sup>, consisting of two community rooms that could be made into one room with a sliding partition wall, a kitchen, lobby, toilets and storage. This build is future proofed as it is designed to be expandable in two directions.

We have looked at various costing options. The proposed new build has a total cost of around £400,000, of which we effectively have £45,000 on deposit and will aim for a low-cost loan of £300,000 following further consultation with parishioners. The loan would be funded from an already increased precept and we will also have to find a further £55,000 from other sources and grants.

Work is underway to get detailed costings and a

sketch plan for the community consultation later this year. This information will also be needed for the business plan that we have to write for loan and grant applications. We will then go through a formal tender process to get a builder, as we are not allowed to approach any company directly to ask them to undertake the build.

A planning application for the new building will also be prepared and submitted to Herefordshire planning department.

There are also major projects in process for other parish organisations:

- Marden Recreation Ground Trust - is using the money from the mast to provide a multi-use games area on one tennis court and some refurbishment of the second court
- Marden Village Trust - received a grant and has installed an acoustic partition between the hall and community lounge; new windows and a new kitchen are also planned.

We have supported both trusts at times to improve their facilities.



### MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS

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