

## MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Marden held on  
Monday 16 May 2022 at 19.00 in the Community Centre

**Present:** Cllr David Bennett (Chair).

**In Attendance:** Parish Clerks Alison Sutton and Jeremy Stephens; 8 members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence** – None received.
2. **Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting** – 4 May 2021 – ADOPTED and signed.

3. **Report from the Chairman NOTED.**

Welcome to you all.

**Some general comments first.**

The last year has seen us gradually return to something like normality as we have all had to learn to live with the Pandemic. From June 2021, legally Parish Council meetings had to be held in public again while we continued to hold most working group meetings via Zoom.

September 2021 saw two councillors co-opted followed by one resignation in February 2022. We now have two vacancies. An in-house training session was held for all councillors.

There were 12 Parish Council meetings held (3 via Zoom), 4 Environmental & Sustainability Group meetings, 2 Financial Advisory Working Group meetings (both Zoom), 6 Fundraising Group meetings (4 via Zoom), 7 Community Facilities Group meetings (all Zoom) and 1 NDP meeting (Zoom). All 32 meetings were open to the public. An average of 3 parishioners attending each Parish Council meeting raising an average of 6 questions. Councillors have represented the parish at a significant number of external meetings associated with Herefordshire Council. The main groups being Talk Community, Talk Parish, Talk Parish Reference Group, and the Herefordshire Green Network (all via Zoom). Several significant parish activities have evolved from these meetings. Two major project initiatives now up and running are a direct result of the interaction with Herefordshire Council. They are the Climate Emergency activities and Marden Links.

Planning application reviews represent a significant part of parish council time. In all there have been 20 applications reviewed in the last year of which 15 were supported. Over the year Herefordshire Council has approved 8 and refused 10 applications. To support and help the Parish Council in its deliberations, it is vital that you as parishioners make your views known, good or bad, and if you wish your views to be considered by the Parish Council you need to make the council aware at the earliest opportunity, again whether it is for or against a particular application. You should also make your feelings known as individuals to Herefordshire Council as they are the body that make the final planning decision.

Bridge strikes have continued to be a feature over the last year with one major strike closing Leystone bridge for several weeks while extensive repairs took place. Following this significant strike Herefordshire Council have agreed to a study into how such events might be avoided in the future. It is hoped that the study will take place soon and the results available later in 2022.

The new CEO of Herefordshire Council. Paul Walker joined the October Parish Council meeting to discuss Children's Services in Herefordshire. It was a pity that more parishioners could not attend this informative session.

**Four major projects have either started or continued during the 2021 – 22 financial year:**

1. **Climate Emergency** - (Environmental & Sustainability Group - includes parishioner representation) – arguably the most important group within the parish currently.

During the covid restrictions this group has been posting articles in N&V and on local social media indicating ways we can all help to meet the net zero target while being a sustainable and biodiverse community.

The Parish Council joined the Herefordshire Green Network and The Great Collaboration portal. The web-based portal allows individuals to sign up and find out ways they can help reduce their carbon footprint.

Anonymous data is provided to the Parish Council who can then look for specific ways to support the community. This initiative was launched in September last year. In early 2022 the Parish Council updated its Climate Emergency Declaration and carbon reduction plan.

The Environmental & Sustainability Group will be engaging with the community over the coming years, providing guidance and support.

2. **Neighbourhood Development Plan Update, 2021 to 2041** - (Neighbourhood Development Plan Group including parishioners).

As already indicated, the Parish Council reviews many planning applications annually. At the beginning of 2021, we struggled to make the feelings of the parish count due to the 2016 Neighbourhood Development Plan

being deemed to not carry significant weight in several key areas. This was largely due to Herefordshire Councils five-year housing land supply not being met.

To address the issue of a Marden NDP with no weight the Parish Council undertook a review of the 2016 NDP. The aim being to update the housing allocation and enhance some of the existing policies. Ultimately, the process was withdrawn as Herefordshire Council established a five-year housing land supply and the 2016 NDP carried significant weight once again.

In early 2022, Herefordshire Council began its own review of the Core Strategy and will cover the period 2021 to 2041. It has a target completion date of mid 2024 which is very rapid considering the last iteration took 7.5 years to complete.

To ensure the Marden Neighbourhood Development Plan remains relevant and with significant weight, a new Neighbourhood Development Group has just been formed with the remit to recommend appropriate updates to the current plan that reflect changes made to the Core Strategy as well as updating our own vision and policies. Once again, the most significant impact on the Parish will be that of the housing requirement and settlement boundaries.

3. **Marden Links** - (A Parish Council led volunteer group).

The group's objective is to promote sharing of skills and knowledge within our community for the good of all and to support wellbeing and independence for those who live and work in our Parish.

Marden Links began in January 2022 and is operating as a virtual "hub" with the desire that when daytime space becomes available face to face activities will commence to further support the community.

While still in the early stages, seed funding has been granted to allow the development of a new Marden Community Website, the production of a Welcome to Marden Information Pack and the purchase of an additional iPad. The website is almost complete and ready to go live once final testing has been completed and all the data /information has been updated. The Information pack is under development and should be distributed early in the summer while the iPad is an addition to the five the Parish Council has already has acquired, allowing communication and training as we move forward.

4. **Community Facilities** – (Community Facilities Working Group, a PC led group with parishioners representing various parish organisations).

The project is now in its seventh year. The focus for the last year was on submitting a finalised planning application and producing a business plan for the build of new community facilities and the development of a village green. The business plan was presented to parishioners at a series of consultation events followed by a parish poll on the increase in precept required to service a larger Public Works Loan.

To reach that point we engaged the newly appointed architects to carry out three short studies. The first to see if it would be possible to provide a different design at a cheaper cost, the second to evaluate the cost of specific environmental design options, and the third to carry out a detailed costing of the preferred design. The outcome being a fully documented business plan largely based on the original design approved in 2016.

Unfortunately, the poll did not go the way the Parish Council hoped, and we are now looking at alternative ways to fund a project, something that is still seen as a requirement for a growing parish.

The fundraising arm of the Community Facilities Group, almost exclusively volunteers, have been organising events at Halloween and Christmas to engage parishioners in festive competition. In a couple of weeks, the group will hold "The Big Lunch" to celebrate HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee which they hope as many parishioners as can, will come along and enjoy food, music, and games. I would like to thank Angela Sasso and her team for all their efforts on behalf of the parish.

All working groups welcome additional members and / or volunteers to join which would help give a broader parish view.

**Moving on to a summary of other key Parish Council Activities.**

Community engagement remains a key objective but also remains difficult to achieve. The Council encourages public participation at all council and working group meetings where parishioners can see how we operate and hopefully participate in a positive way.

In support of community engagement, the Parish Council has just set aside £2k to be spent on the best idea or ideas put forward by parishioners. You will hear more about this initiative in the coming weeks.

In 2019 we produced a three-year business plan and distributed it to all households. In addition, each year the Parish Council produces an update on progress made against the plan along with the Parish Council's proposal for the next year's budget, also distributed to all households. The Parish Council has just commenced an update of the business plan which will document the planned activities through to 2025.

The new Parish Council website and Facebook page have been operational for a little over a year now and while there have been a few teething problems with some individuals' system configuration, mine included, the products have been received very well, providing a focal point for updated and detailed information relating to Parish Council activity.

Seven environmentally friendly, long-lasting noticeboards have been purchased to replace all the existing noticeboards other than the one outside of the Academy. All notice boards are larger than the existing boards and

additionally are glass fronted to protect postings. They will not be locked so parishioners can display appropriate items should they wish.

We have continued to maintain contact with the major businesses that operate within the parish, the objective being to ensure that appropriate communication is timely and flows both ways. While this has not always been successful, general improvements have been made.

On a positive note, we should thank S&A for funding the 2021 Xmas tree, enjoyed by all in the parish. S&A have committed to fund the tree again for this year as well as providing funding for the work carried out by the Gardeners' Association on the land opposite the Volunteer. All major landowners have helped our Parish Footpath Officer to continue to improve the footpath & bridleway network and while there remain some areas of concern these are being addressed.

Finances again show the Parish Council is in a healthy position and able to meet future requirements. It ended the financial year with a surplus, mainly due to the Covid impact combined with reduced progress on the community facilities project. We currently have over £95k in reserves, £80k of which has been earmarked for the development of a village green and a community centre.

To provide financial oversight, the Financial Advisory Working Group met on several occasions with its principal activities being to review the year end accounts and develop the proposed budget for the coming year. Two internal audits were carried out.

General maintenance has continued in line with the agreed monthly Lengthsman plan. As a council we continue to minimise grass cutting in the early part of the growing year to allow the wild plants to flower first. The drainage issues of previous years have largely been addressed but we have applied for grant funding to carry out work that should further alleviate potential problems with flooding in the parish. This grant application has recently been approved but unfortunately at a lower level than we would have liked.

As you are aware the Parish Council has engaged with the Marden Gardeners' Association who put forward detailed proposals for improvements in several areas within the parish, namely the green area around the bus stop opposite the Volunteer Inn, as well as the War Memorial site where a new flagpole was installed and the triangle at the Moreton-Marden turn. Most of the work has been completed and looks fantastic, many thanks to the efforts of the Gardeners Association. Unfortunately, due to technical reasons the original plans for the green area around the Rudge Grove bus stop could not be started. It is hoped that a new plan will be approved and actioned in 2022. We also plan to look for further areas within the parish that could be given a makeover. One area of significance could be the area behind the mini market, fishing tackle shop and hairdressers. The Parish Council is in the final stage of agreeing a rolling five-year agreement for the area to be maintained as a quiet place, a garden for the community to come, sit and contemplate.

Sally Postlethwaite, and her helpers, continue to make a significant difference to the 28.5 km of footpaths and bridleways within the parish. She continues to build improved relationships with landowners and Balfour Beatty.

The Parish Council funded the installation a further 6 kissing gates and with Balfour Beatty agreement the 9 'Caution – Horses' signs were erected on key roadside sites throughout the parish.

Unfortunately, Herefordshire Council ended the freighter service and at present there does not seem to be a viable economic alternative.

Traffic concerns remain a significant challenge across the parish road network. To try and address the many concerns raised by parishioners a new working group has been formed to look at possible solutions. While an initial open event was poorly supported it is hoped that the wider community will assist in developing practical solutions. The initial aim of the working group will be to produce a list of workable short and longer term solutions that can be funded through available grants, Parish Council reserves, and the New House Farm S106 monies. Speedwatch, a voluntary group promoted by the Parish Council, continued to hold 2 or 3 one-hour sessions a week until the number of speeders identified meant that the police stopped the group's activity and replaced it with police enforcement vehicles.

In conclusion I would like to thank: councillors and working group members who give their time voluntarily; a special thanks to the current Clerk who retires at the end of June and a warm welcome to the new Clerk, both of whom have and will continue to ensure the Council runs smoothly and lawfully; our Ward Councillor who has supported many of our causes; those parishioners who volunteered to be part of the Parish Covid support network; our footpath officer and her helpers; and you, our parishioners, for your ongoing support.

Thank you, and now any questions.

David Bennett

#### **4. Report from Marden Village Trust NOTED.**

2021 again was a disrupted year due to the continuing Covid pandemic but the trust met monthly to keep up to date with Government Regulations and Guidelines from February to November. The Academy agreed that the Trust could invite users groups back to the shared facility, the main hall, in June with a strict cleaning regime in place and that Government regulations and guidelines had to be followed. To allow for these processes to be done between user groups, a half hour gap had to be in place for the safety of all user groups, therefore the

offered times were not suitable to some groups and they found alternative premises to use.

During the year wipe-able chairs arrived that had been agreed to in 2020, new flooring & decoration of the hallway and disabled toilet was completed and a storage cupboard for cleaning equipment was put in. New policies and updated user agreements were put in place. The AGM was held on 27th November 2021 there were 18 people present. The last MVT in November proposed to open up the lounge and kitchen in January 2022 and new bookings are on the cards so 2022 is looking more promising. All approved minutes are placed onto the community website.

Jess Tidball, MVT Secretary.

#### 5. Report from Marden Recreation Ground Trust NOTED.

As Covid restrictions relaxed in 2021, activity at the Playing Fields resumed. The football pitch was in regular use and is now the home of Marden Phoenix Football Club, a team who are keen to give opportunities to girls and youngsters and to help Trustees develop the facilities further.

The ground has been superbly maintained by Mike Darley who has invested significant time to ensure that the Teams that use the facility have the best possible surface to play on. A contractor was appointed to undertake tree reduction within the hedge line adjacent to Walkers Green.

Trustees met throughout the year with conversations very much focused on the ongoing development and maintenance of the facility and the prudent use of Trust funds which were very much increased through Government Covid grants.

A Planning Application was submitted by Trustees for the erection of a ball stop fence behind the goal posts adjacent to the houses at Rose Meadow. Unfortunately, the proposal did not receive Parish Council, neighbour or Planning Officer support and the application was therefore refused.

The play equipment receives a formal inspection annually and Trustees undertake regular interim inspections. The equipment remains in generally good condition and is well used. Insurance cover for the facility is provided.

At the time of writing works are underway to replace the fencing to the tennis court which is in poor condition. New fencing should be in place by the end of June 2022.

The current balance at the bank is £25,400.

M. Williams, Trustee, Marden Recreation Ground Trust

#### 6. Report from Marden Consolidated Charities NOTED.

Marden Consolidated Charities is a very old charity established in the 17th century to provide grants and one-off help to parishioners in sudden or specific real financial need.

We held our AGM on September 29th 2021. The accounts for the period ending November 2021 are below but need to be independently examined. We did not make any grants during the year.

The charity is administered by village trustees and the chairperson is Rev Paul Roberts. The other trustees are Mr John Ashcroft, Mrs Jean Price, Mrs Janet Hewlett, Mrs Jenny Thomas and Mrs Jane Keating.

Jane Keating, Secretary of Marden Consolidated Charities

#### MARDEN CONSOLIDATED CHARITIES – ACCOUNTS AS AT 30.11.2021

	Income £	Expenditure £
Brought forward	2,112.55	
BR Charity UK Equity (Charishare)	38.04	
BR Charity UK Bond (Charinco)	11.00	
Charity of Blanch Lingen	2.36	
Charity of Joan Lingen	7.92	
COIF (OCC) Dividend	46.31	
Bank Interest	0.24	
	Balance at Bank	£2,218.42
	£2,218.42	£2,218.42

#### 7. The Great Collaboration

A presentation was made with the following content:

How do we achieve net zero by 2030 – The Great Collaboration

##### What is The Great Collaboration

- The Great Collaboration provides a tool that can be used to provide ideas to enable you to reduce your carbon footprint and impact on the Environment
- It was developed in 2019 / 2020 to support local communities and individuals to help achieve Herefordshire's goal of net zero by 2030

- Through the Greener Footprints pledge and goals it is directly linked to supporting Herefordshire care for its climate and nature
- Partnership between Herefordshire Green Network, Caplor Horizons and Fownhope Parish Council working with HALC

#### **How does it work**

- It is an online platform which you sign up to, any questions or problems very happy to help
- It is divided into 8 categories where you can make an impact
- Just chose a category, click on information and you get lots of useful tips , practical suggestions and information on both cost savings and carbon reduction
- Browse through it decide what you want to commit to, we all have different priorities and it helps you keep track on the progress

#### **How do we use The Great Collaboration**

- The great thing is if Parishioners use it, at a collated level the Parish Council get information on how best to spend money supporting you
- It provides a tool kit that can be used across Herefordshire, Wellington Parish have just signed up.
- It provides lots of information and fun ideas
- I would love to run a series of interactive talks providing lots more information and hopefully sparking lots of ideas

Rod Lees, Chair of Marden Environmental & Sustainability Group

### **8. Age UK project for access to the internet, social media and computing**

A presentation was made with the following content:

Age UK Digital Inclusion for older people – Ensuring no-one is left behind.

These days we rely on our computers, smart phones, tablets and the internet for everything from socialising to shopping. But while many of us have grown up with these developments, not all older people are 'silver surfers', with some feeling left behind by the technological tide.

We have today had an example of how this might be causing difficulties in that Hereford Medical Group have said that from 1<sup>st</sup> August they will no longer be accepting telephone requests for prescriptions. Requests must be made either via the NHS APP, an online form, by letter, or via some pharmacies.

One Digital is a project funded in 2019 by the National Lottery Community Fund to deliver better digital skills throughout the UK, by providing support to a network of Digital Inclusion training and champions.

Locally, Age UK are providing funding and trainers to support local people wanting to be more connected digitally. With both group sessions at village halls and 1:1 instruction in peoples' own homes.

In Marden Parish, we have trained volunteers at Marden Links who can also assist anyone who is struggling with digital inclusion. When able we plan to offer face to face help, support and access to a laptop or iPads purchased for use by parishioners, with or without help/instruction.

Do let us know if you or any relatives, friends or neighbours might need help in this area.

Kate Ryan, Marden Links

### **9. Public Forum**

Push by government for digital interaction, increasing stress for those who are not computer or phone literate. Need to bring little bits of support and help together for the good of the community as a whole.

This meeting was closed at 19.45.

**SIGNED:**

**DATE:**

Chair