

# Marden Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7.30pm at the Marden Community Centre.

Present:

Cllr David Bennett (Chair), Cllr Kate Ryan, Cllr Chris Morgan, Cllr Richard Paske, Cllr Mike Blake, Cllr Rod Lees & Cllr Lesley Hayward.

In Attendance:

Richard James (Clerk) and 15 members of the Public.

1. **To receive Apologies.** – Cllr Paula Barrett.
2. **To receive declarations of interest and written requests for dispensations.**

**Noted** – All the councillors declared an interest in item 6.3 and signed the dispensation form. Cllr D Bennett, Lesley Hayward and Cllr R Paske declared an interest in item 10.2.

3. **To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023**

**Resolution** – The minutes of the meeting held on 21.11.23 were adopted as a true record and then signed by the Chair.

4. **Open Session.**  
Ward Member – Cllr Peter Hamblin.

**Noted** – It was noted that Cllr Peter Hamblin (Ward Member) had given his apologies.

## Public Session.

Members of the public asked the following questions.

Q1 – How is the Marden Village Trust money going to be spent.

A1 – While it is a decision for the Charity Trustees the intent is understood to be on the purchase of a long term operating lease.

Q2 – Why did the Council spend £3k and then £1400 on drainage.

A2 – This for consultants to design a drainage scheme that could be connected into the New House development thus saving a significant sum of money.

Q3 – Who is the Architect

A3 – W. Architecture Ltd who were formally CBW.

Q4 – Are the Architects qualified.

A4 – The architects and their consultant partners have worked on similar projects. J Walton (W Architecture Ltd) is a Chartered Member of CIAT (Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists)

Q5 – Why was the precept going up £4000.00.

A5 – The precept has remained static for a number of years and as costs have risen significantly in recent years it was felt appropriate that the proposed increase was reasonable. In December 2023 the Parish Council hand delivered a Budget Newsletter in order to be transparent and consult on the proposed draft budget and associated precept. The clerk had not received any complaints or questions.

Q6 – Why was the Parsh Council wasting money purchasing items for the HUB and the Repair Café.

A6 – The HUB and the Repair Café had both received grant funding and has further been supported by Parish Council through its budget review process. Both the Hub and the Repair Café have been well supported

5. **Footpaths Officer Report & to consider actions.**

**Noted** – There was no written report, however the chair reported there was no significant new issues. There had been reduced use of the network due to the bad weather.

## 6. Finance Matters.

- 6.1 - Financial Report
- 6.2 – Bank Accounts
  - 6.2.1 – Unity Main - £29,360.65
  - 6.2.2 – Unity HUB - £607.96
  - 6.2.3 – Unity Reserve - £849.54
  - 6.2.4 – NatWest - £80,682.82
- 6.3 - Approval of Budget & setting the Precept 2024/25 of £55,500.00
- 6.4 - Banking Update

### Resolution –

- (6.1) – The Financial report was discussed and approved.
- (6.2) – The Bank Account statements were presented to the council and approved.
- (6.3) – The draft budget of £78,464.20 was agreed which meant an 8% increase in the precept to £55,500 for 2024/25 which was agreed.
- (6.4) – The full switch from NatWest to Unity Bank had stalled because there was a different address on the Old NatWest account. The Clerk has written a letter giving an explanation which had to be signed by the bank signatories.

## 7. Payments.

	Payments	Net	Vat	Total
7.1	Clerks Salary – November / December 23	As per Contract		
7.2	Clerks Expenses – Sept - Oct - Nov - Dec	1539.14	288.36	1827.50
7.3	S Lewis – Electric - November 23	108.42	0.00	108.42
7.4	S Lewis – Electric - December 23	118.33	0.00	118.33
7.5	PIP Printing – 76137 – Budget	209.35	0.00	209.35
7.6	PIP Printing – 76080 – News & Views	283.84	0.00	283.84
7.7	Herefordshire Council – Election Fees	189.47	0.00	189.47
7.8	DC Gardening Services – 1747 - November 23	2768.00	553.60	3321.60
7.9	HALC – Subs 24/25	937.93	187.59	1125.52
7.10	A W Architecture – Stage 4 – 3 <sup>rd</sup>	11711.73	2342.73	14054.07
7.11	A W Architecture – Drainage	1200.00	240.00	1440.00
7.12	St Mary’s Church – Churchyard maintenance Grant	1150.00	0.00	1150.00

**Resolution** – All the Payments were approved for payment.

*Cllr Lees asked why the Green Network membership has not been paid. The clerk reported that he had been in contact with the Green Network, and they are changing their membership invoicing process and once this has been completed the membership will be paid.*

## 8. Payments made under emergency policy and regular payments.

		Payment	Net	Vat	Total
8.1	D/D	BT – Broadband & Phone – November - Unity Bank	30.77	6.15	36.92
8.2	D/D	BT – Broadband & Phone – December - Unity Bank	30.64	6.13	36.77
8.3	S/O	HUB Rent – January 24	450.00	0.00	450.00
8.4	S/O	HUB Rent - December 23	450.00	0.00	450.00
8.5	S/O	Community Garden – Rent – November 23	15.00	0.00	15.00
8.6	S/O	Community Garden – Rent – December 23	15.00	0.00	15.00
8.7	D/D	O2 Mobile Phone – January 24	12.90	2.58	15.48

8.8	D/D	O2 Mobile Phone - December 23	12.90	2.58	15.48
8.9	BACS	A W Architecture – Stage 4 – 1 <sup>st</sup>	11711.73	2342.73	14054.07
8.10	BACS	A W Architecture – Stage 4 – 2 <sup>nd</sup>	11711.73	2342.73	14054.07
8.11	BACS	Information Commissioner’s Office	40.00	0.00	40.00

**Resolution** – The payments made under emergency policy were Approved and the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments were noted.

## 9. Clerks Expenses – Invoices

	Payment	Net	Vat	Total
9.1	Quick Skip – Skip for HUB	260.00	52.00	312.00
9.2	Heater Shop – Heaters for HUB	642.86	128.57	771.43
9.3	Booker – Xmas Cracker -	296.69	56.79	353.48
9.4	Radbourne’s -Sand Bags	130.00	26.00	156.00
9.5	Gazebo- Repair Cafe	124.99	25.00	149.99

**Noted** – These invoices were noted.

## 10. Planning

	Application No	Address	Permission Sought
10.1	233564	Post Office Marden Post Office & Stores Marden Hereford HR1 3EW	Proposed outdoor covered café seating area to the front of the property. Side infill extension to provide additional shop storage. Part change of use from residential to retail floor space and café.

**Resolution** – Marden Parish Council agreed to support this planning application.

### 10.1 - Planning Enforcement – Update

- a) Pikestye Farm.
- b) Small Ashes.
- c) Ashgrove Croft
- d) Berrington Bower.

### Resolution

- a) Contact planning enforcement for an update on the Heritage report.
- b) Contact planning enforcement requesting copies of the Environmental and Enforcement reports and to contact the PROW enforcement about a dangerous stile and other restrictions on the footpath.
- c) Contact planning enforcement as planning conditions No 3,6,9,11,13,14,15 and 16 still have not been met.
- d) Contact planning enforcement about the roof light and balcony which were both conditions of the planning approval and have not been.

10.2 – Drakeley Farm, Marden, HR1 3ES. – Planning Committee 17.01.24 at 10am.

Clrs Bennett, Hayward and Paske did not speak on this item and Cllr Bennett handed over the chair to the vice chair Cllr K Ryan for this item. The chair allowed the members of the public to speak on this item, as this application was very controversial within the community. One resident said that presently 20% of the PROW in the Parish were alongside polytunnels and if this application went ahead this would increase to just over 60%.

**Resolution** – It was agreed for Cllr R Lees to speak on behalf of the Parish Council’s at the Herefordshire Councils

*planning committee meeting on this application. Cllr Lees had prepared a 3-minute statement which he read to those present for comment.*

*Marden Parish Council Strongly object on the following grounds.*

*1. Transport*

- The current road system is not designed to support the current volume of vehicles let alone additional traffic. This is evidenced by the damage to the road edges and hedgerows.*
- We believe the exit from the field onto C1124 is potentially unsafe. The data used to design this junction is not robust. It was based on a 3-hour survey between 9.35 and 12.35 on a Thursday when traffic levels will be low. Best practice is it should be over a 7-day period. The summary by the planning officer 6.73 – 6.80 does not take this into account.*
- The information on the route taken by the additional traffic through the village is factually incorrect (4.7 in officers report). It states that the route is mainly through a rural residential area on the outskirts of the village. It actually goes through the middle of the village past the exit for the 90-house development and the shop and Post Office resulting in flawed conclusions being drawn on its safety and impact.*
- We would dispute the conclusions on HGV's and other visitors mostly going west to the A49. This route is regularly closed due to flooding and bridge damage caused by HGV's and large tractors. Observations also indicate a significant number of vehicles go East and North.*

*2. Flooding and Surface Water Drainage*

- We dispute the conclusions drawn and the robustness of the data. The basis of the argument is that the French drains coupled with the attenuation pools and reservoir collect all the water. Under item 4.8 it becomes clear that this is not necessarily the case. Since the permanent poly tunnels were installed, flooding has got worse, and we believe the tunnels have made it worse and additional tunnels will only compound this.*

*3. PROW*

- We do not believe the conclusions by the officer are robust. The new development impacts the key bridleways in Marden Parish which are used extensively by horse riders. Screening and barriers which are claimed to buffer the impact will only make matters worse spooking horses. We believe this will have a detrimental impact on tourism along with traffic and noise.*

*4. Noise and Nuisance*

- The information Environmental Health have based their recommendation on in 4.11 is inaccurate. They state there have been no noise and nuisance complaints. We know that a number of complaints have been raised about noise, impact of mud on the road and potentially dangerous incidents with vehicles.*

*5. Biodiversity*

- We challenge the conclusions. In the short term over 100 acres of poly tunnels will further reduce the biodiversity regardless of long-term mitigation.*

*6. Development of Marden*

- Marden is key to the plans of Herefordshire Council for delivering their long-term housing commitment. We do not believe any consideration has been given to this when recommending this development goes ahead. We would also like you to consider that whilst only 22 people objected to this planning application over 100 objected to the initial application. Many people did not realise they had to object again.*

**11. Community Project Working Group**

11.1– Working group Membership (4)

11.2– Terms of Reference.

11.3 - New design

The chair reported that the project was moving at speed and the next stage would be to tender for the “design and build”, this would provide a firm project cost to complete. The current plan is that the tendering would start in February with the tenders coming back in April/May 2024. This would allow time to evaluate submissions and carry out value engineering prior to final selection, with a possible build start date of June/July 2024. There had been 2 meetings between all the Councillors and all Trustees of the Marden Village Trust to discuss the project and how best it could be managed going forward. The group has developed a draft “terms of reference” for a project working group. These “terms of reference” require Parish Council approval. Due to the significant progress made by the Architect and Associates the group had also been looking at a number of design questions. These covered electrical points, ceilings and other additions within the project. It was now the time to formalise the working group in order to oversee the design and build, however all financial recommendations had to be presented and approved by the full Parish Council. Clearly the present size of this working group would be too large, and the proposal is to have 4 Councillors and 4 Marden Village Trust members. The chair said there was another Parish Hall at Whittington in Worcestershire, which was extremely close in project terms to the Marden Project and if councillors or members of the public wanted to know more, the Whittington parish council and community hall websites would be informative.

**Resolution - (11.1)** – *It was agreed for the following Councillors to be on the Community Project Working Group, Cllr’s Bennett, Ryan, Morgan & Blake.*

**(11.2)** – *The proposed Terms of Reference document which had been distributed was approved.*

**Noted - (11.3)** – *There had been a small alteration in the lobby area, where a wall has been removed for a more open and airy lobby area. Also, the toilet doors were moved so not to face into the lobby area.*

## **12 Working Group Reports.**

### 12.1– Community Working Group

#### 12.1.1 - Events & Fundraising subgroup

**Noted** – *It was noted that the events & fundraising group will be meeting soon to arrange the events for the year.*

#### 12.1.2 - Community project update

**Noted** – *This had previously been discussed on the agenda.*

### 12.2– Marden Links

#### 12.2.1 - Hub activity update

The HUB café remains well supported and the winter warmer lunch time is offering soup and bread free of charge. The HUB Café continues to be run within budget and, in addition, has received generous donations from the café users. The new energy efficient heaters have been installed which will help to reduce the running costs. A wide range of sessions are being looked at.

**Noted** – *The verbal report was noted.*

#### 12.2.2 - Repair Café Update

The Repair Café, like the HUB café, is well supported and is running at its maximum repair levels. It continues to have a very high repair rate of 85%. The new gazebo will be a great asset for the repairing of the so-called dirty items, which cannot be repaired inside, allowing repairs to take place in bad weather. The Repair Café would like to set up a Tools Library, where residents can borrow tools. The Hub has been gifted a significant number and variety of tools which are currently being catalogued. Once this has been completed parishioners will be able to sign up to join the library and borrow any of the available tools.

**Noted** – *The verbal report was noted.*

#### 12.2.3 - Community Garden

The community garden is moving forward, the volunteers have cleared the area for the raised beds. The Balfour Beatty Locality Steward has been very helpful on offering to source wildflower seeds, hedging and shrubs. He has also expressed interest in helping with the planting. With the Repair Café growing, and the wish to start a tool library, it has become apparent that more storage will be required. Several ideas have been discussed, but a shipping container is the preferred option for cost, security, size and the fact it could be relocated if required or even sold.

- A. Fencing and raised bed quotes.
- B. Container
  - i. Hire - £15 per week + £150 each way delivery
  - ii. Purchase- £1750.00 + vat

The fencing quotation was discussed, and it was agreed to purchase the fencing from the same supplier as the raised beds, not only because it was a very good quote but to make the logistics easier purchasing from one supplier. The shipping container location and its siting were mentioned, and the general consensus was to place the container on railway sleepers, which would help spread the weight and protect the bottom of the container.

**Resolution** – *The Council agreed to purchase the raised bed materials for £478.00 + vat and the fencing at £1104.00 + vat. They also agreed to purchase a shipping container for £1750.00 + vat.*

#### 12.3– Environmental & Sustainability update

**Noted** – *The Environmental & Sustainability working group had not met but hoped to meet before the next Parish Council meeting and provide a plan at the next Parish Council meeting.*

#### 12.4 – Neighbourhood Development Plan Review Working Group

**Noted** – *Neighbourhood Development Plan Review Working Group have not met, as the Herefordshire Local Plan 2021-2041 is currently at a ‘pause and review’ stage.*

#### 12.5– Financial Advisory Working Group

**Noted** – *The Financial Advisory Working Group had not met.*

### 13 Community.

#### 11.1 – Sandbags

#### 11.2 – Recent Flooding

Due to the recent bad weather and localised flooding, the chair and the clerk had received several calls for sandbags. The Parish Council does keep a small reserve of sandbags at New House Farm, but these reserves soon run out. The clerk under delegated powers purchased 50 additional sandbags to replenish the stock.

Local areas which had been previously flooded were discussed. The road at the turning to Moreton-on-lugg outside Old School House in particular which remains in poor condition. Its flooding history is well known with issues identified in the past relating to a field drain beneath Sutton Walls, blocked drainage pipes beneath the roadway and blocked ditches. While the landowner currently appears to be looking at the field drain it was thought that the Parish Council should write to Herefordshire Council to highlight the issue, which has been in the local press, and ask for the drains and ditches to be cleared now and work be prioritised to remedy the drainage pipe issues.

**Resolution** – *Council agreed the purchase of the sandbags by the clerk, and it was decided that a regular stocktake should take place to monitor the stock level and whether more needs to be purchased. The clerk to contact Herefordshire Council to prioritise the resolution of the drainage issues outside Old School House.*

### 14 Clerk Update.

#### 12.1 - Information Commissioner’s Office

#### 12.2 - Lengthsman Grant 24/25

#### 12.3 - Communications

The clerk reported that the Information Commissioner’s Office who were chasing nonpayment of their invoice. The clerk has now sorted this matter as it was a genuine mistake, and the paperwork has been corrected. The clerk asked if he could apply for Lengthsman grant funding for 2024/25.

The clerk reported that he would like to set up a “Councillors Shared Folder” where all the papers could be stored and accessed by the Councillor’s rather than keep sending all papers via e-mail. In the short term the clerk would still send out council papers via both methods until councillor’s were competent in using the new method.

**Resolution** – *Council noted the issue with the Information Commissioner’s Office which was now sorted. Council Agreed for the clerk to apply for Lengthsman grant funding and to set up a “Councillor Shared Folder”.*

**15 Future Agenda Items or Clerk action under delegated authority.**

*15.1 - The next meeting will be on 20<sup>th</sup> February in the Community Centre*

*15.2 - Clerk to arrange with the Treasurer of Marden Church to pay the annual churchyard maintenance grant now overdue.*

**Noted** – Movement of Reserves – Marden Links Money – CiLCA.

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.30pm.



Signed:  
Chair of the Council

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024.