

Marden Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 19th March 2024 at 7.30pm at the Marden Community Centre.

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Richard James (Clerk) and 5 members of the Public.

1. To receive Apologies.

To Note – No Apologies

2. To receive declarations of interest and written requests for dispensations.

To Note – There was no declarations of interest or written requests for dispensations.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 16th January 24.

Resolution – The minutes of the meeting held on 20.02.24 were adopted as a true record and then signed by the Chair after a date amendment.

4. Open Session.

Ward Member – Cllr Peter Hamblin

The Ward Member report.

The Publication of the Draft Revenue Budget

Like all Councils across the country, we are facing significant and sustained financial headwinds which if left unaddressed will have serious long-term implications for this county and its residents. There are no easy choices, but a draft budget has been published which, through a proposed 4.99% increase in Council Tax and an additional £19.5 million in savings - balances.

To add further context had we done nothing the forecast deficit for the next financial year was some £28 million. The inflationary pressures facing the council are still significant and, due to the provisions of many of the council's contracts, the council is still facing a rate of inflation above 6% in some areas. Whilst I would welcome the proposed increase in council tax to be lower given the ongoing cost of living crisis, even dropping it by 1% would cost £1.3 million this year and lead to additional cuts of approximately £4.5 million being necessary in the years ahead. The action we are taking now will keep Herefordshire Council solvent and reduce the need for cuts in future years. Alongside this we are maintaining the Council Tax relief scheme which offers reductions of up to 100% for those on low incomes and for Pensioners. The small glimmer of good news is that after the publication of the draft budget a further £2.5 million was made available to the council by the Government and, depending on the inevitable political machinations that come with being a minority administration, this should enable us to cancel the proposed parking charge increase, allocate money to strategic housing and add money to our depleted reserves.

Passing of the Revised Capital Budget

The revised capital budget has finally passed and the money for the refurbishment of Shire Hall, the additional funding for roads and the funding for economic development in our market towns is finally available to spend.

Formal Sign Off for The Transfer of the Library Funds

The Stronger Towns board agreed to sign off on the proposed move of the Library to Shire Hall and re-allocate the money to this project that would otherwise have been spent on Maylords Orchards. This amounts to some £3 million and will be ring-fenced for the library part of the Shire Hall project.

Public Session.

Q1 - Why was the Footpaths officer report not included in the minutes.

A1 - It was a short verbal report, which did not include anything of great importance on that occasion.

Q2 - Requested a list of the membership on the new Marden Parish Hall working group.

A2 - The full list will be released in time, all the Councillors on it, have been reported in previous Parish Council minutes.

Q3 - Requested to know what is being discussed in the Private & Confidential session.

A3 - Matters of a sensitive nature, which could include quotes, names and legal advice.

Q4 - When will the public see the tender documents.

A4 - The Parish Council are currently reviewing the draft tender document. It is planned to keep parishioners informed throughout the process.

Q5 – Why is the new parish hall a big secret.

A5 – It has never been a secret, but currently there is little to report. The Parish Council is looking to set up a webpage on the Marden Links website dedicated to the project and its progress. The Parish Council is also looking into a newsletter relating to the project and potentially, other current topics.

5. Footpaths Officer Report & to consider actions.

The footpaths officer was present and presented her report.

No new issues so far this month.

Progress with fallen trees:

- 1) Junction MR24 and MR26. Dead willow tree with large dead branch resting on the top of young trees over metal kissing gate. Waiting response from Landowner.
 - 2) MR18A. Walkers can walk round the fallen tree. Landowner aware.
 - 3) MR48. Fallen tree removed by Landowner.
- MR45 Laystone Bridge to Church. Concern about new raised area between Court Farm and river. Three wooden stiles near Church are rotting. Landowners aware.
 - Six finger signs will need attention but not urgent.
 - MR 20 Landowner reminded about wobbly drain cover on Bridleway.
 - MR25 Steep banks on the M-on -L road and S-St-N Road will be made safer.

To Note –*The report was noted, and the Footpaths officer was asked to come up with a budget figure for the maintenance of the PROW for the foreseeable future.*

6. Finance Matters.

- 6.1 - Financial Report
- 6.2 – Bank Accounts – 29.02.24
 - 6.2a - Unity Main - £24,280.12
 - 6.2b - Unity Marden Links - £607.96
 - 6.2c - Unity Reserve - £51,115.04
- 6.3 – To Appoint Internal Auditor

Resolution –

- (6.1) – The Financial report was discussed and approved.
- (6.2) – The Bank Account statements were presented to the council and were noted.
- (6.3) – The Parish Council agreed to appoint the same auditor as last year, which was Mircoshade, and is now trading as Town and Parish Audit Service.

7. Payments.

	Payments	Net	Vat	Total
7.1	Clerks Salary – February 24	As per Contract		
7.2	Clerks Expenses – February 24	187.79	31.80	219.59
7.3	S Lewis – Electric – February 24	163.57	0.00	163.57
7.4	DC Gardening Services – SI-1795 - February 24	385.00	77.00	462.00
7.5	PIP Printing – 76520 – News & Views	303.31	0.00	303.31

Resolution – All the Payments were approved for payment.

8. Payments made under emergency policy and regular payments.

		Payment	Net	Vat	Total
8.1	D/D	BT – Broadband & Phone – March 24- Unity Bank	29.34	5.87	35.21
8.2	S/O	HUB Rent – March 24	450.00	0.00	450.00
8.3	S/O	Community Garden – Rent – March 24	15.00	0.00	15.00
8.4	D/D	O2 Mobile Phone – February 24	12.90	2.58	15.48
8.5	BACS	Marden Village Trust – Room Hire	60.00	0.00	60.00

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	Defib Pads	149.00	29.80	178.80
9.2	EU-Host – Domain – mardenparishhall.co.uk	9.99	2.00	11.99

To Note – These invoices were noted.

10. Planning

	Application No	Address	Permission Sought
10.1	240427	Park Lodge Marden Hereford HR1 3EZ	Proposed variation of condition 2 of planning permission 220115 (Rear extension to existing dwelling with single and 2 storey elements, as well as internal works) - amended ground floor and first floor plans and corresponding elevations to include reconfiguration of window and doors in the kitchen at ground floor and to utilise the remaining space above the approved rear extension.

Resolution – Marden Parish Council would like to make the following comment. The development is a significant increase in the footprint of the dwelling, but it would be sited at the back of building so would not be very visible. The PC requests a condition for environmental enhancement features.

	Application No	Address	Permission Sought
10.2	232825	Sutton Lakes House Sutton St Nicholas Hereford, HR1 3NS	Proposed 4 bay carport, with ancillary accommodation within the roof.

Resolution – Marden Parish Council **OBJECTED** to this application on the following grounds.

- 1) The development would be harmful to the rural character and appearance, due to its design and size which is disproportionate to the main house.
- 2) The proposed accommodation is too large for an ancillary building and there are major concerns about its size as this could be or will be converted into a dwelling in the future.
- 3) The size of the development will have a major impact on the surrounding area, and nothing is mentioned about the wildlife. There is NO Ecology report, NO Habitat Assessment been requested or submitted with the application.
- 4) This whole area is subject to flooding there has been NO Flood Risk Assessment carried out or any sort of Drainage report.
- 5) There are major concerns about this development and its usage as an ancillary to the main dwelling house. This is a totally standalone project and its distance from the main dwelling makes it impractical to be an ancillary building.

10.3 - Planning Enforcement – Update

- a) Pikestye Farm - The Heritage officer's report is awaited.
- b) Ashgrove Croft - It seems the enforcement office has visited the site as some work has commenced.
- c) Berrington Bower - Planning enforcement say this matter is closed.

Resolution – (a) – Will continue to pursue an update.

(b) – It was reported that some action had been taken but the site still remains a mess

and this should be chased to ensure all conditions from the planning approval have been met.

(c) - The Parish Council reluctantly agreed that there is nothing further they can do with regards to this application.

11. Marden Parish Hall Working Group

The lead of the working group reported that it was understood that the NHF development had been delayed by a month due to the terrible weather we have had of late. It is still hoped that the Parish Hall build can start in May or June 2024 with a completion by July 2025.

Citizen (Signature) homes have been very helpful throughout the process in allowing our scheme to access their drainage. They have asked if they can use part of our site, the area ultimately to be the Village Green, as a work yard, which the Parish Council have agreed. The Parish Council wanted to continue a good working relationship with the developer as it will provide benefits to both parties.

12. Working Group Reports.

12.1 - Marden Links

a) Hub activity update

i. Terms of Reference

The HUB continues to be well supported, which shows that there is a community need. The soup and roll sessions, which were introduced over the winter months, have now stopped, back to tea and cake. The hours have also reverted back to Wednesdays and Fridays 2pm – 4pm. The HUB will be running a Sewing Workshop on the 4th & 11th April, all welcome, regardless of age, come learn a new skill. The new Terms of Reference were discussed and has been updated to reflect the changed nature of the activities of the HUB.

To Note – *The report was noted and a huge thank you went out to all those who make it happen every week.*

Resolution – *The New Terms of Reference were agreed and approved.*

b) Repair Café Update

The repair café still amazes everyone on the number of requests it gets, they will be adding cycle repairs to the list at the next session.

To Note – *The report was noted.*

c) Community Garden

The community Garden has been delayed due to a boundary dispute and it is looking like fencing the site is no longer going to be an option. It is still an aspiration of the residents to have a community garden.

To Note – *The report was noted.*

12.2 - Neighbourhood Development Plan Review Working Group

The group had not met, but things were now starting to move forward with regards to the future development of the County. The Draft Local Plan and Transport Plan were due imminently. It may be required to re-look at the membership of this working group in the light of potential requirements for Marden.

To Note – *The report was noted.*

12.3 - Financial Advisory Working Group

The working group is going to meet before the next Parish Council meeting.

Resolution – *The clerk was to find a convenient date and call a meeting.*

12.4 - Environmental & Sustainability Working Group

The working group had met on the 4th March and the outcome was that it was decided to disband the working group on the grounds that within the current structure of central and local government it was felt that the group could not make a significant difference within the parish. Individual members are all actively involved in other groups where it was felt that their time and effort would be more productive. They will continue as a loose group using the Herefordshire Green Network and other organisations and feed in information and ideas to the Parish Council as and when appropriate. To this end a WhatsApp group will be setup to help communication.

To Note – *The report was noted. The Parish Council thanked group members for their efforts over the last 4 years.*

13 Community.

13.1 – 20mph speed limit.

Cllr L Hayward had concerns about the cars which continue to speed through the village. There were some concerns on who was going to enforce this speed limit. The Parish Council thought that there could be other ways to slow the traffic going through the village, from village gateway enhancements, road reduction marking, raise platforms etc.

To Note – *That speeding remained a major concern, but to investigate other methods of slowing the traffic . Potential enhancements will be looked at once the NHF S106 monies are confirmed.*

13.2 - Plan for old phone box

A resident asked what was happening with the old phone box.

For Information – The phone box is currently used as an information point, where people can find PROW maps etc. Other ideas are welcome and would be considered.

13.3 – Dog Poo stickers on General Waste Bins.

Dog fouling seems to of increased over the last few months, and the Parish Council were ashamed to say there are still inconsiderate dog owners within the Parish. Not only the Parish Council but the Herefordshire Council have promoted good dog ownership and anti-dog fouling campaigns. Do the inconsiderate dog owners, not realise that they can deposit dog waste into general waste bins around the parish.

Resolution – It was agreed that the clerk should look into get dog waste stickers for the general waste bins around the Parish.

14 Locality Steward Drive Round.

Summary Comments on Drainage

1. Almost all the drainage issues raised by parishioners have already been reported (in some cases multiple times over many years) and some action taken.
2. Not all issues are Herefordshire Council /highways. A number of issues relate to land drainage, ponds not looked after, ditches not cleared by landowners as they used to be, field drains not maintained in good order.

3. The drainage systems throughout the parish are clearly no longer fit for purpose with the changes in agriculture, increase in large vehicles, many more houses that increase runoff and reduce the land available as soakaway as well as climate change.
4. This winter has seen further significant flooding in both the usual areas but more disturbingly in areas where flooding has not been significant in the past.
5. It will only get worse and more rapidly if solutions are not found.
6. It should be noted that over the winter months a significant amount of rain has fallen, and the ground is saturated and therefore more recent rains have nowhere to go, and so the flooding of the roads a fields continues.
7. Permanent solutions come at a very high cost and Marden is only one of many parishes with similar problems – we are currently seen as low priority.
8. It is counter-productive (wasting money) to fix roads before the drainage issues are resolved.
9. The level of large vehicle traffic, tractors, and trailers as well as 40t lorries causes much damage to roads, drainage, verges, and hedgerows.
10. Funds are very low to do anything! More and more likely to be devolved to the Parishes along with some funding.

To Note – *The detailed report was noted.*

15 West Mercia Police Community Charter Priorities.

The clerk reported that the police were looking for the policing priorities for the Parish.

Resolution – It was agreed that the 3 main priorities were (1) – Speeding (2) A more visible police presents around the Parish. (3) for the Police to attend the odd Parish Council meeting and give a report, maybe on current scams and how to avoid them.

16 Annual Parish Meeting

Discussion took place about the date of the Annual Parish Meeting and what the topic of that meeting should be.

Resolution – *It was agreed the Annual Parish Meeting should be on the 21st May and ask the local Police team to attend. In addition, the Parish Hall Working Group couldn't give an update on the new Marden Parish Hall development.*

17 Future Agenda Items or Clerk action under delegated authority.

To Note – *The next Parish Council meeting date is the 16th April 2024 at 7.30pm in the Marden Community Centre.*

To exclude the members Public and Press from this part of the meeting to discuss items of a confidential nature.

18 Review Marden Parish Hall Tender

The tender document was gone through, and a wish list was agreed for items the Parish Hall would like if funds became available.

Resolution – The Tender document was approved along with the wish list and the architect will now be instructed to go out to formal tender.

The Chair closed the meeting at 10.25pm.



Signed: Chair of the Council
Date: 16th April 202