

Marden Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18th June 2024 at 7.30pm
at the Marden Community Centre.

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Richard James (Clerk)
Cllr Peter Hamblin (Footpath Officer)
3 x Member of the Public.

1. To receive Apologies.

To Note – Apologies were received from Cllr Mike Blake.

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

To Note – There were no declarations of interest and written requests for dispensations.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 15.05.24 & 21.05.24.

Resolution – *The Minutes of the 15.05.24 were adopted by the Council, the minutes of the 21.05.24 were adopted subject to a couple of numbering amendments both were then duly signed by the Chair as a true record.*

4. Open Session.

Ward Member Report

Cllr Peter Hamblin the Ward Member indicated that his report, detailed below, had been sent to the Clerk in advance of the meeting and would now be forwarded to councillors.

Unfortunately, the Spring sunshine has turned back to rain and although the forecast for the week ahead looks to be improving nothing is guaranteed so please do be careful when travelling as heavy showers often lead to slippery road surfaces. Excess rain also leads to muddy fields and with farmers needing to enter and exit fields at the moment it is not uncommon to see mud on the roads. The vast majority of farmers are very diligent and clear up any mud very quickly but where you do spot a problem, please let me or the locality steward know so signage can be arranged.

The recent warm and wet weather has led to a surge in growth on the verges. This can cause visibility / safety issues at junctions and on narrow roads. The delay in cutting potentially dangerous junctions has been raised with Herefordshire Council / Balfour Beatty and if you are aware of any that haven't yet been cut then please do let me know. Equally Balfour Beatty have started the normal verge cutting programme and there is a list of verges which are not cut due to community wildflower planting, if you are aware of any which should be on that list and would like to check then please contact me as soon as possible so we can avoid any inadvertent cuts.

A new Public Rights of Way (PROW) scheme was due to be announced in May. I am pleased

to confirm that details of this have been made available to all Parish councils via their Clerks – if you have been inadvertently missed off this list then please let me know and I will arrange for details to be sent to you. The scheme offers Parish councils the opportunity to apply for a fixed amount of funding to replace assets on PROW in their areas. The funding available for each asset is set at the rate Herefordshire Council would pay if they were to purchase the asset themselves. I would urge you to take up this funding opportunity as there is no guarantee it will be repeated but please do consult with the relevant landowner before applying so permission can be obtained for installation.

I have noticed that there has been an increase in pothole repairs over the last few weeks and although many areas require significantly more investment, it is a welcome step in the right direction. As always where you spot a repair completed by Balfour Beatty or a utility company that does not look to be of a sufficient standard, please raise it with me and I will highlight it with the relevant team. Herefordshire Council does use its powers to force utility companies and Balfour Beatty to return and redo work where it does not meet the standards required however, if these issues are not flagged to them then they are unable to take action.

The third instalment of our additional funding to Parish councils (Aside from the increased Lengthsman Grant - £250k and the Prow Scheme - £250k) is the Local Drainage Fund - £445k. Expressions of interest were due in last month and I am told approximately 90 Parish councils registered their interest. Details of how to apply and the projects that can be funded will be published soon but please do not be concerned if your expression of interest has not been acknowledged. If you emailed the email address given in the initial invitation to express an interest (lengthsman@herefordshire.gov.uk) then you will have been included.

On a county level, you may be pleased to know that Herefordshire Council held its Annual Meeting last Friday and the current minority Conservative Administration retained control under our leader Cllr Jonathan Lester. The Chairman of Herefordshire Council remains Cllr Roger Phillips and the Vice-Chairperson is Cllr Steph Simmons.

Equally noteworthy was the publication of the Council's year end financials. When our administration took control of the council in May last year the predicted deficit was nearly £13.8m for this year and over £19 million for 24/25. I am pleased to say that through targeted action the deficit for 23/24 was reduced to £8.7m and a balanced budget set for the 24/25 financial year. We are delivering against this budget now and although I cannot provide exact figures at this stage all the signs point to our targets being met.

I would like to reassure residents and Councillors that although Government may grind to a halt throughout the election, Herefordshire Council is not subject to the same restrictions and will continue with business as usual. This includes the delivery of vital services, road investment and associated projects. Prior to the General Election and no matter who you choose to vote for, please do make sure you are registered and able to exercise your vote on 4th July.

At the Annual meeting of the council, we agreed the Council's plan which sets out how we will work to increase prosperity, protect the environment, and provide the services that people need. The vision is: Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do.

This falls in to four interconnected themes:

- **People** feeling healthy, safe, and supported in their communities.
- **Place** - our local environment being protected and enhanced, supporting the right housing in the right place; helping to fund council phosphate mitigation measures

to improve the health of our rivers.

- **Growth** - attracting inward investment, creating more jobs, enabling housing development and providing the right infrastructure to keep Herefordshire moving forward.
- **Transformation** - a council embracing best practice, delivering innovation through technology, and demonstrating best value for money in the services we provide.

To deliver these outcomes we will focus on working with our residents, the voluntary, community and public sectors along with businesses; all of us have a vital role to play in Herefordshire's success.

We build of course on a strong foundation. Herefordshire is already a wonderful county and a great place to live. Better life expectancy, a thriving business base, entrepreneurialism and a growing educational sector are all factors underpinning the positive change we aspire to achieve for the county. The real impact of this is in delivery and working up the milestones and monitoring of progress will be critical.

Public Session

Q1. – Which month did the Repair Café receive its grant.

A1. – This information was not readily available. Post meeting update: An initial grant of £968.50 was received in May 2023 with a final £1134.18 in August 2023

Q2. – When will the new Parish Hall website be online.

A2. – The new webpage is currently in progress.

Q3. – Can I have a Parish Hall update.

A3. – This is an item for discussed later in the agenda.

Q4. – What is the membership of the Parish Hall working group.

A5. – Four Parish Councillors and all five Trustees of the Marden Village Trust. It is anticipated that a maximum of four trustees will attend any single meeting.

Q6. – A resident demanded a copy of the Repair Café and Marden Link accounts.

A7. – This resident has previously been given a detailed accounting analysis. Apart from the cash books that contain details of donations received and minor day to day expenditure, ALL the detailed accounting entries for Marden Links are posted in the Parish Council accounts which are legally available to be reviewed by appointment with the clerk.

5. S & A Meeting

5.1 – Date

Resolution – Council agreed to one of the following dates 29.07.24 / 01.08.24 & 02.08.24.

5.2 – Attendees

Resolution – Council agreed Cllrs Ryan, Bennett, Barrett & Lees.

5.3 – Items for discussion

Resolution – Council agreed matters like Mud on Road, Blocked drains, Damaged verges, better transport management etc. The Clerk with the Ward Councillor will finalise the agenda and circulate to councillors.

6. Footpaths Officer Report & to consider actions.

The clerk reported that he had met with the footpaths officer prior to this meeting, and her report was in the papers. The footpaths officer had produced a very detailed list (with pictures) of areas of improvement required on the Marden Public Rights of Way. The Clerk was to ask the Lengthsman to quote for this work in order that a submission could be made

to Herefordshire Council.

Resolution – Council agreed that the Clerk should ask a question about who would have the responsibility for the work. It is important that the Parish Council understands the role and responsibility it is taking on before final agreement, but to still go ahead and submit the grant application.

7. Finance Matters.

7.1 - Financial Report

7.1a – Budget Monitoring

The Clerk present the new budget monitoring report, which some found to be incorrect; however, the Chair presented an updated report in the old style.

Resolution – Council approved the Chairs old style budget monitoring report.

7.1b – Bank Reconciliation

The Clerk present the new bank reconciliation, which some found to be incorrect; however, the Chair presented an updated report in the old style.

Resolution – Council approved the Chairs old style budget monitoring report.

7.1c – Transfer from Main to Reserve

The Chair suggested that to maximise interest received it would be beneficial to move funds out of the Main account and into the Reserve account. This is on the understanding that there are no restrictions on immediate access of reserve account funds.

An initial allocation and amounts were proposed.

Allocated	£
Parish Hall Project	6,750.00
VAT Reclaim 23/24	14,064.00
Lengthsman Grant	6,300.00
For Interest Purposes	20,000.00
Total	47,014.00

As part of the review of the Financial Regulations, currently being undertaken, a procedure should be added to allow the Clerk to move amounts (up to a defined limit) between accounts daily.

Resolution – Council Agreed to transfer £47,014.00 from the main to reserve account and for the FAWG to develop a proposal for the necessary changes to the Financial Regulations.

7.2 – Bank Accounts – 31.05.24

7.2a - Unity Main - £62,646.02

7.2b - Unity Marden Links - £894.96

7.2c - Unity Reserve - £52,109.03

To Note – The Parish Council noted the bank account balances at the 31.05.24.

7.3 - To Approve Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement – 2023/24

7.4 - To Approve Section 2 – Accounting Statement – 2023/24

Resolution – The Parish Council approved both the Annual Governance Statement – 2023/24 & the Accounting Statement – 2023/24 and they were duly signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

7.5 - Internal Auditors Report

To Note – The Parish Council noted the Internal Auditors report.

7.6 - To Adopt the new NALC Financial Regulations.

Resolution – Council Agreed for these would be reviewed at the next Finance and Administration working group.

8. Payments.

	Payments	Net	Vat	Total
8.1	Clerks Salary – May 24	As per Contract		
8.2	Clerk Expenses	104.97	20.99	125.96
8.3	PIP Printing – 76958 – News & Views	303.31	0.00	303.31
8.4	Marion Griffiths – Payroll	100.00	0.00	100.00
8.5	Paul Russel – Internal Auditor	137.50	0.00	137.50
8.6	D C Gardening Services - 1897	1010.00	202.00	1212.00

Resolution – Council agreed to pay all the invoices.

9. Payments made under emergency policy and regular payments.

		Payment	Net	Vat	Total
9.1	D/D	BT – Broadband & Phone – May 24- Unity Bank	29.34	5.87	35.21
9.2	S/O	HUB Rent – May 24	450.00	0.00	450.00
9.3	S/O	Community Garden – Rent – May 24	15.00	0.00	15.00
9.4	D/D	O2 Mobile Phone – May 24	12.90	2.58	15.48
9.5	BACS	Wessex Insurance – Repair Café	242.70	0.00	242.70

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

10. Planning

	Application No	Address	Permission Sought
10.1	241388	Land adjacent to The Oaks Litmarsh Marden HR1 3EY	Proposed erection of one self-build dwelling and associated works

Resolution – The Marden Parish Council resolved to **OBJECT** to this application for the following reasons:

- 1) The development is outside of the settlement boundary.

- 2) The development does not comply with any of the Core Strategy open countryside requirements.
- 3) Concern that any development would make the flooding issues worse in this area.

	Application No	Address	Permission Sought
10.2	240994	Green Acre House Litmarsh Road Marden HR1 3EZ	Outline for erection of one bungalow.

Resolution – The Marden Parish Council resolved to **OBJECT** to this application for the following reasons:

- 1) The development is outside of the settlement boundary.
- 2) The development does not comply with any of the Core Strategy Open Countryside requirements.
- 3) Concern that any development would make the flooding issues worse in this area.
- 4) The is No proper drainage scheme.

	Application No	Address	Permission Sought
10.3	221112	Land adjoining Sutton Lakes House Sutton St Nicholas Herefordshire HR1 3NS	(On hold due to phosphates) Retrospective planning application for the change of use of agricultural land and associated development to site 2 Shepherd's Huts for holiday accommodation.

Resolution – The Marden Parish Council resolved to **OBJECT** to this application for the following reasons, which have not changed since the last application:

- 1) The application is retrospective. A previous objection was submitted on 10th May 2022 and the reasons for that objection are still considered to be valid. The application states that the huts are moveable structures, and it is accepted that the decking has been removed. However, significant permanent drainage and facilities have been installed which are not suitable for moveable structures.
- 2) The size of the proposed area for change of use from agricultural use suggests that there will be more development in the future, which does not conform with policies M3 and M10 of Marden's Neighbourhood Development Plan. The access is onto a private un-adopted lane, not onto the highway as stated in the application, and is unacceptable and in non-conformity with policy M3, especially as the applicant could access the development from his own property.
- 3) Finally, there were significant concerns raised about the loss of prime agricultural land for the growth of sustainable crops to supply our own needs at a time when it has been reported that imported fresh produce is to be restricted.

On this basis, the Parish Council respectfully requests that this application be refused.

	Application No	Address	Permission Sought
10.4	241476	Barn West of The Cider House Burmars Road Sutton St Nicholas Herefordshire HR1 3BW	Change of use of an existing agricultural building from agricultural to commercial mixed use.

Resolution – The Marden Parish Council would like to make a general comment on this application. The Parish Council has concerns about the size of vehicles, the frequency of vehicles and the times of vehicles using this site. Changing the use could have adverse effects on the Parish as a whole, which already suffers from large vehicles using its inadequate and poorly maintained roads.

10.5 - Planning Enforcement – Update

The Ward Member Cllr Peter Hamblin spoke on this item.

- a) Berrington Bower – Case now resolved. The Parish Council reserves its right to raise issues should they arise.
- b) Ash Grove Croft – Many of the Conditions have been met, the illegal element has been removed. The correct sitting has now been resolved, but it still remains an active case which is ongoing.
- c) Pikestyle Farm – could not find anything relating to this address.
Council informed the Ward member that was it is an Heritage issue rather than planning enforcement. The parish Council were still awaiting the Heritage Report on the Grade 2 Listed Barn.

To Note – Council noted the comments of the Ward Member and thanked him for investigating.

11. Marden Parish Hall Working Group

The Chair gave a brief update on the Parish Hall project. The Architect had received a healthy number of tenders, some from local companies and some from away. The quantity surveyor was now obtaining clarification on some of the works tendered for and will provide a comparative report for Council to consider.

To Note – Council noted the update.

12. Working Group Reports.

12.1 - Marden Links

- a) Hub activity update
Cllr Ryan reported it had been a quiet month overall, but they were still having 8 - 12 resident attend each time.

To Note – The Parish Council noted the report.

- b) Repair Café Update
The repair café continues to be very well supported; they now have 2 new PAT testers. The July Repair Café date clashes with the Community Fete. In order to ensure that both events can be run the Repair Café will be shortened by one hour.

To Note – The Parish Council noted the report.

c) Community Garden

Much work had taken place on the Community Garden. The site had undergone further clearance and most of the raised flowerbeds had been constructed. A huge thank you to all the helpers that turned up. Work continues with the aim of being in a position for the garden (while not complete) to form part of the Marden Open Gardens event in early August. The new container had already been used to store the materials. There have been two requests to plant memorial trees. Continued thanks to Balfour Beatty for their continued support for the Community Garden Project.

To Note – The Parish Council noted the report.

12.2 - Financial Advisory Working Group

Will meet before the next parish Council meeting to discuss issues.

Resolution – Council agreed that it would meet on Monday 15th July at 10am.

12.3 - Neighbourhood Development Plan Review Working Group

Will meet when the new Local Plan had been adopted.

To Note – The Parish Council noted the report.

13. Community.

13.1 - Locality Steward Drive Around.

The chair had a drive around the Parish with our locality steward to go through concerns within the parish. The chair reported that Balfour Beatty, Parish Council, Councillors, and residents were all reporting defects to the Herefordshire Council and hope this continues. Sadly, the Urdimash & Burmarsh roads were currently a low priority with Herefordshire Council highways. Several of the culverts had been jettied (Frankland's Corner & the Moreton Road junction) but there were others, which remained a problem.

13.2 - Locality Steward Review.

The clerk report that he had received a request for a reference for the Locality Steward.

Resolution – The Parish Council agreed to submit a very supportive reference.

13.3 - Dog Poo Sign

The clerk presented an appropriate sign which could be fixed to the general waste bins within the Parish. However, Council needs to agree on the size of the signage.

Resolution – Council Agreed the size should be A5.

14. Future Agenda Items or Clerk action under delegated authority.

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.18pm.

Signed: Chair of the Council

Date: 18th June 2024