

Monkland and Stretford Parish Council

*Minutes of the meeting of Monkland & Stretford Parish Council held on
Tuesday 23rd July 2019 from 7.30pm
in Monkland Village Hall, Monkland.*

Website address: monkland.org

PRESENT: Cllr L Brook (Chairman) Cllr A Turner (Vice Chairman);
Cllr P Povall; Cllr M Louth; and Cllr T Neave.

Present: Lesley Hay (Parish Clerk)

Two members of the public present.

The Chairman welcomed those present to the July meeting.

MINUTES:

- 1. Acceptance of apologies for absence – none**
- 2. Declarations of interests, Disclosable Pecuniary, Non-Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary interests – none declared**
- 3. To receive a report from the local Police Officer – no representative present.**
- 4. Footpath Officer's report.** The footpath's officer reported that he had walked most of the footpaths except SF3 and 4. All were in reasonable consideration for the time of year although some were cropped blocked – however, it was possible to walk around the headland. There is a broken bridge on the MK1 / MK10 although not dangerous at this time – the footpath's office will log with Balfour Beatty.

It was agreed that the Footpaths Officer would write a quarterly report and this would be made available for inclusion in each edition of the newsletter.

The Footpaths Officer reported that he is in the process of making contact with the various local landowners in order to establish a good working relationship which will hopefully assist in future negotiations as and when required.

5. Ward Councillor Trish Marsh's report for Leominster South –

Congratulations on the Monkland Common hay cut! And, also, on the very well attended opening of the gate to the memorial path for Private John Morgan.

The Alliance administration for Herefordshire Council now has a Cabinet of four independents, plus two from It's our County and two Greens.

After many years of Conservative administration, it is a considerable and interesting challenge for us all to get our heads round an organisation that, as our Section 151 Officer Andrew Lovegrove says, spends over £1 million a day, employs 1000 staff and has a bewilderingly large and important set of complex responsibilities, services and processes.

It's a whirlwind of learning for all the Cabinet team - and for the many new Councillors who were elected in May.

My cabinet portfolio now covers the lead on Environment, the Climate emergency, Tourism, Broadband, Economic development and Skills. All are vital areas, some well established, others where there has been little recent corporate focus.

Our long-established broadband programme Fastershire continues to roll out - now focussing on the 3% most rural properties. Interestingly they may end up with the highest speeds of all. One unexpected issue is that many of our residents have not yet upgraded their contracts to take advantage of the speeds now available to them. Residents can go to <http://www.fastershire.com/> to check speeds for their own home. They will benefit from upgrading their packages – and, as an added bonus, the council also gains income from increasing use of this considerable national capital investment which can make a substantial difference to our options for work, leisure and change our need to travel.

Work on the practicalities of addressing the climate emergency are underway. This is a national priority – recent polls show that protecting the environment is an increasing priority, especially among the young. We are, therefore, pleased that our officers recently announced that we are ahead of our current longstanding targets on both in-house and county reductions, with our Council carbon emissions down 43.19% against the cumulative 38% reduction target for 2018/19. Thanks to them for their sustained work over several years. Their skills will be vital in working out how best to reduce carbon from now on at a faster rate, aiming for zero carbon by 2030. It is immensely valuable to have a united councillor voice across all the parties on this vital and pressing topic.

Herefordshire Council's webpage on climate has useful links to more detail on work done and in hand.

Tourism is an area that the council has had a very low profile in for some time - and an increasingly important potential source of income for the county as a whole. We are currently running a feasibility study on pitching a county Business Improvement District, which could help fund marketing and development of tourism.

We are already looking ahead to the 2019/2020 budget. There will be a public consultation this autumn. There is considerable work going into the capital programme, an area in which there is more scope for initiatives than in the very constrained revenue budget, ravaged by a decade of cuts from central Government. As in so many areas of the council's operation there are considerable technical complexities to understand as well as opportunities. It is likely that the settlement from central government will not be announced till late this year, so there will be some inevitable uncertainty in the budget setting process.

Cabinet meetings will now be moving round the county with evening slots to enable more of the public to come – keep an eye out for local ones!

6. Chairman's report to Parish Council July 2019 – brief notes

We are delighted to welcome Trish Marsh back as our Ward Councillor following the May elections.

Thank you to everyone for sending off their 'no claim' travel expenses, in our non-contested village election; what a waste of everyone's time, trees etc sprang to mind during the process!

Various miscellaneous items

A fairly quiet couple of months – except for trying to sort the hay out!

The Commemoration and Memorial Gate Opening of the Private William Webb Memorial gate was held on Thursday 27th June at 7.30pm at the gate. This event was attended by approximately 40 people, some who walked from Eardisland and others from the Monkland village hall. Our thanks to Lesley for providing tea and cake there afterwards and to Alan for writing it up. We did suggest having refreshments at the gate but Hugh Vernon didn't seem to want that.

The defibrillator is now registered with the Ambulance service. This is very useful as the Ambulance Service then know where to send people who might need it urgently. Thanks to Alan for arranging this.

It was agreed to include this information in the next edition of the newsletter and to remind local residents where the defibrillator is situated and that it is ready for use at any time. Cllr Turner agreed to check on the state of the battery/pads on a regular basis and report back.

The sign for Pleck Orchard has now been put in place, which is most helpful. Currently 3 of the houses are sold and 2 occupied, 2 are still up for sale.

The June/Spring Newsletter was circulated around the village in early June. Alan and I followed up a misunderstanding with residents on the Common over an item raised at our last meeting. This matter is now closed.

Thanks to everyone who has helped make village life run smoothly

7. Monkland Common issues:

Following endless telephone calls, contacting Herefordshire hub, Pembridge Parish Council (who have a wild flower meadow) contacting various local farmers from contacts via Lesley Hay and Peter Povall it was all to no avail.

It was, therefore, agreed to place an advert in the Hereford Times. This resulted in contact from a number of farmers who showed interest in cutting the grass – however, the arrangements kept falling through mainly as financially it was proving too expensive to travel to Monkland when there is plenty of hay is available from more local sources.

However, the Clerk managed this morning to arrange for Geoffrey Jay, Contractor, to come and to begin cutting the grass on the common for hay. Mr Jay explained that he may not be able to complete the job all in one day as he had other hay to turn and bale before the weather broke.

Mr Jay also pointed out the amount of mole activity on the common – and this is not ideal for hay as it can result in cattle getting listeria. There are also a lot of docks in the grass and he recommended that before next year the moles are caught and the docks, where possible, are removed.

A letter has been received this evening from a local resident expressing concern about the untidy state in which the common has been left and asking for it to be tidied up. The Clerk explained that Mr Jay had hardly had time to complete the cut let alone tidy up as he only arrived that morning and he still had to turn and bale the hay. It was, therefore, agreed to leave any further work on the common until after Mr Jay has finished – a site visit will then be arranged, further action agreed and a work sheet sent to the lengthsman, Mr. D. Richards, outlining the outstanding work needed.

There was discussion on ownership and who is legally responsible for the common and the village green areas. It was acknowledged that it is likely that there may be no known owner of the common or the village green areas. In some areas there is a 'Common Residents Committee' established which take responsibility for the management/decision making associated with the common areas.

It was agreed that this maybe a way forward for the future management of Monkland common. The Clerk to follow up and item deferred until the next meeting.

It was agreed to look at alternative ways of future management of the common and Cllr T Neave has agreed to investigate and bring suggestions back to the next meeting

The Chairman opened the Open session:

The residents of Pleck Cottage raised the issue of a possible fire risk associated with the late cutting of the grass on the common. It was explained that this cut never takes place before the first to middle July due to the seeding of the wild flowers. This year there has been a huge growth spurt with all grass crops throughout the country. The resident pointed out that if there was an accidental fire on the common – the fire would spread and potentially could engulf his property and that a fire break should be established around his cottage.

There was a lengthy discussion on exactly whose responsibility this was and is the Parish Council liable for the safety of these properties when the surrounding area is common land. It was agreed the clerk will liaise with Helen Beale, Herefordshire Council's Common Consultant, on the liabilities associated with this issue and report back to the next meeting.

The same resident also brought up the issue of the ditch running in front of his property. The ditches either side of his property have recently been dug out in places - but not in others - and the water is not running freely due to an uneven channel base.

After lengthy discussion on who actually owns the hedge and ditch running in front of Pleck Cottage - it was agreed that the clerk would liaise, in the first instance, with the Balfour Beatty's Locality Steward and arrange a site visit.

After lengthy discussion, it was eventually agreed to discuss these issues further once the Parish Council have feedback from Cllr T Neave on possible ways forward with future common management; advice from Helen Beale on ownership; advice from the Locality Steward and the lengthsman on management.

Further to the mole problem on the common, highlighted by the Contractor, it was agreed to delay employing a mole catcher for the time being.

The Clerk reported that between meetings, she had been asked to arrange to get the path and bank alongside the A44 from Pleck Lane to Tagwell Lane cut back as the overgrowth is causing a health and safety hazard to walkers. Mr D. Richards has agreed to cut these on the 29th July. If this does not happen, the Footpath Officer will trim the path to make it safe and passable.

A resident reported an incident of two suspicious looking cars parked across the common by the entrance to the wood. There was discussion in that the local game keeper is often in the area and he would be very aware of anything suspicious but the resident was advised, if concerned, to ring the police on 101 and report the incident.

Church bench – The Chairman explained that a bench had been donated by the Parish Council to the Church/PCC in 2000 to commemorate the Millennium. It has now been reported that the bench is now in need of repair/replacement and the Parish Council have been approached with a request to help fund this.

The exact ownership of the bench was discussed and it was agreed the Chairman would refer back to the PCC to ask them to get a quote for the repair/replacement and, once this was available, the Parish Council would discuss making a donation.

The Chairman closed the Open session.

8. **Approval of minutes** from the Annual Parish Council meeting held on the 21st May 2019. It was agreed these to be a true record and it was unanimously voted that they be adopted and signed by the Chairman.

8. Parish Clerk confirmed the village Fete is on Saturday 3rd July and the Autumn Village Show is on Saturday 7th September. Schedules are available on website. There is to be a Grand Draw at the Show. A list for donations to make up a hamper will be circulated.

Newsletter – the Autumn edition of newsletter will be ready for the end of August in time to advertise the Show and the McMillan Coffee morning.

The Winter edition should be at the beginning of December but this issue will depend on available content.

10. Finance.

10.1 Up to date accounts and schedule of payments had been circulated. It was unanimously agreed that the July invoices should be paid and the clerk raised the cheques and these were signed.

11. Highways and Environmental Matters.

11.1 Lengthsman work sheet for July/August –since last meeting requested to trim the bus shelter tree; entrance and path – work carried out.

12. Planning issues – To consider any new applications – none to date

12.1 Planning application 191919/20

The Hollies, Monkland – the removal 2 no existing sheds and construct single replacement.

This application was discussed and there were no objections to either applications.

12.2 Proposed three houses on land at the East End of Old Road. There has been some recent investigation into the 2-metre footpath in front of these houses which. If developed, will definitely jeopardise the existing hedge. Verbally it was acknowledged by the inspectors present that this was not a feasible plan and it is hoped the path will now be removed from the existing planning application.

13. Correspondence: nothing not covered in minutes

14. Date of next full council meeting – Tuesday 17th September 2019

Please note earlier start of 7.00p.m.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.30p.m.

Signed:

Date: