

Monkland and Stretford Parish Council

Minutes of Monkland & Stretford Parish Council held on Tuesday 16th March 2021 from 7.00pm

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Clerk's email address: thelesleyhay@hotmail.co.uk

**Due to present Government restrictions this meeting was
a 'virtual' meeting held via Zoom.**

PRESENT: Cllr L Brook (Chairman); Cllr A Turner (Vice Chairman) Cllr P Povall; Cllr Tony Neave.

Present: Lesley Hay (Parish Clerk)

Present: Ward Cllr Trish Marsh; 3 members of the public.

The Chairman welcomed those present to the March virtual/Zoom meeting.

Minutes

- 1. Acceptance of apologies for absence:** Cllr M Louth
- 2. Declarations of interests,** Disclosable Pecuniary, Non-Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary interests. No interests declared.
- 3. The minutes of the Parish Council** meeting held on Tuesday 19th January 2021 were agreed as a true record and it was unanimously voted that they be adopted and signed by the Chairman.
- 4. Chairman's report**

Another couple of quiet months – governed only by the weather. Very wet and some flooding on the common in January, bitterly cold and windy and then very mild weather, followed by balmy spring days!!! At least the snowdrops have been out in abundance and the daffodils are more than poking through especially on the bank down the A44 which promises to look magnificent again this year following its recent trim!

Many villagers have had their COVID19 vaccinations - which is marvellous – offering us all a chink of light at the end of this very long tunnel.

Following our last meeting, it was acknowledged that the drainage work carried out outside the village hall had been left in a messy state. D C Gardening, the contractor who did the work on behalf of Balfour Beatty, was asked to re-visit the site. He explained that – due to the drainage grant funding having to be claimed before the end of the financial year – work had to be carried out in the winter. However, he was confident that the appearance would ‘improve’ and look considerably better by the spring and summer.

This visit was prompted by observations made by a local resident who strongly objected to the work done and demanded that it be reversed. However, as predicated - three months after the work was completed – the area does now look considerably improved and the flooding in Pleck Lane certainly cleared more quickly following the ditch clearing work - which was the intention.

The same villager complained about the plan to install white gates at each end of the village. This decision had been made democratically following a survey held in the December Newsletter. Unfortunately, progress in arranging surveys etc is slow due to the ongoing restrictions/guidelines associated with the current Covid19 pandemic.

It is important to remember that the correct medium for discussing the work of the Parish Council is either to submit a written comment prior to the meeting or by attendance at the PC Zoom meeting. It is not acceptable to engage in private discussions outside the democratic decision-making processes of the village.

It has to be noted that - in this particular instance - there was plenty of time between the work being completed (mid - December) and the January PC meeting for either a written comment or by attendance at the PC Zoom meeting.

There have been worrying messages about dog thefts locally – fortunately we have all been alerted to this and everyone is keeping vigilant. No reports of any very local thefts. There are large numbers of extra dog walkers bringing their dogs to walk locally – this is of course fine – as long as they clear up after their dogs.

There has been a disturbing incident with a drone over Pleck Cottage on the Common. The police were informed.

Fly tipping is a problem across the County and we have had some unwanted items dumped here, but luckily it hasn't been a huge problem for us, and was dealt with quickly.

Thank you to everyone for their continued support and enthusiasm for village affairs.

5. **Ward Councillors Report** – please see full report at the end of these minutes.

A Resident asked Ward Councillor Marsh whether the findings of the survey had been published that had been untaken with regard to the setting of the budget? There is a document on line setting out the findings/recommendations of the survey – Ward Councillor will forward link

6. **Lengthsman Highways and Environmental Matters** –

(6.1) A44 speeding issues –

White Gates for A44 – summary for PC meeting 16th March 2021

White Gates for A44 – summary for PC meeting 16th March 2021

1. The Parish Council (PC) decided to run a consultation for villagers regarding proposals for traffic speed restrictions /noise calming on the A44.

2. There is absolutely no requirement for the PC to consult as the PC does have full authority to make decisions about the spending of the budget. However, we chose to consult about the traffic options, including the White Gates, because it is such an important issue and sought input as widely as possible.

3. The aim of the consultation was to inform ALL residents of the PC's intent, provide the research collated for review and request any correspondence from residents to 'have their say' on the proposals. (Recorded in the minutes and published).

4. An article was prepared for the December 2020 newsletter and included in that newsletter

5. Methods of collection – the PC decided to request email correspondence via the newsletter - responses to the Parish Clerk, email address provided, or to give written comments to Peter Povall (PP) – address supplied. A sub-committee was established to collate the responses and report results. (Recorded in the minutes and published).

6. Collation of the correspondence considered all responses as either

a) Approval for the proposal via email

b) Against the proposals via email

c) Approval via a nil return (no response received within the consultation period).

d) Normally a 5 to 30% response rate can be expected from surveys

e) As everyone had the newsletter delivered to their door, and this is a document that most people would certainly have a look at, the PC can say fairly that people in the village were given a good chance to make their views known if they wished to.

7. Results of the collated results will be reported in summary in the next edition of the newsletter.

8. Responses during the consultation period were as follows:

2 x emails covering 3 individuals – All in support

1 x letter covering 2 individuals – All in support

Since the consultation period PP is aware of one further email response covering one individual, not supportive. He is also aware of multiple verbal responses which have, all except one, been supportive. A 6% response.

Nil responses approval 94% of households.

One of the responses includes a significant anonymous offer of a donation towards the gates. PP has since also received a verbal offer of a £100 donation towards the cost of the gates, but again the donor wishes to remain anonymous.

Lengthy discussion followed with regard to finance – Cllr Neave reported that he and Cllr Louth had been in touch with the Police Commissioner’s Ambassador with a positive response. However, all the 2020 financial allocation has been spent but the new financial year starts on the 1st April 2021.

Cllr Neave stressed that it will be necessary - if the Parish Council wish to approach the Police Commissioner for funding- to have a survey of the site carried out and official approval that the white gates/SID can go ahead.

The possibility of having double white lines from the bridge to the top of the village road to stop overtaking was discussed – but it was explained that this would require a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which can take years to achieve.

Measuring the noise levels would be best delayed –as the decrease in traffic due to the present restrictions would not give a true picture. However, once these restrictions are lifted, it may be possible to borrow or purchase a noise meter.

Any further action /progress on any of these issues is being held up due to the present guidelines– but it is hoped to arrange for Balfour Beatty to visit as soon as restrictions are eased.

Cllr Neave did acknowledge that the end result maybe a fusion of several aspects of the proposals above - but the main aim is to slow the traffic down and to reduce the noise levels.

(6.2) Daffodil banks – cut in early January – invoice paid.

7. Footpath Officer’s report and Monkland Common.
March 2021:

With the weather improving and the evenings drawing out it is great to see more walkers around the village and also some who are travelling in from neighbouring areas.

In the last month I have walked every footpath, other than the small area at Stretford, and can confirm that all paths are accessible for walkers with good mobility. There are a number of stiles and heavy gates around the local network which make access more challenging for those less able but it will be a very long process to get these changed. The small footbridge on path MK10, towards Bury Farm has

totally collapsed and I will look to replace this over the next few weeks.

Recent repairs and maintenance to the network include the replacement of more footpath signs and rehangng the gate at the end of Baker Lea, leading into the field opposite the Cheese Shop.

I have received a request to remind people that there is no public right of way from the village green on the far side of the common, across the fields to the water splash. I have therefore placed a sign on the gate to this effect and have noted that the gate is now securely closed.

If you become aware of a path which is inaccessible or if repairs are needed then please let me know. I also have copies of the local footpath map available if anyone would like one, either printed or electronic.

The signs reminding people to clean up after their dogs appear to be having some impact and a few more signs have been added in areas where problems persist. Thankfully the bulk of owners are responsible and that is appreciated.

Residents may also become aware of some significant hedge management which is being carried out locally. Whilst this does look severe in places, the work is being carried out as part of a Countryside Stewardship scheme working towards the long-term health of the hedgerow.

With regard to the common, it is good to see the early signs of wildflowers and the wildlife is making a regular appearance. I have personally seen Muntjac deer on the common and even bouncing around the village hall setting off the security lights.

I will shortly contact the three residents with commoners' rights to check their wishes with regards to the hay crop so that an early decision can be reached.

Thank you all for your continued support and enjoyment of our natural resources.

A resident raised the question of who was responsible for the maintenance of the hedge along the short footpath from the bus shelter to the common road. In the past, this has been trimmed by the lengthsman at the Parish Council's expense – but, now that the new

houses have been build, does this become their responsibility? Cllr Povall will approach both families and see if the hedge is on their deeds. In the meantime, until ownership is established, Cllr Povall offered to edge the footpath and make sure the hedge does not restrict walkers.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Povall for all this hard work and dedication to keeping the village looking good.

(7.1) Update on piece of land behind The Monkland Arms

Cllr Povall and Jed Dunn, landlord from The Monkland Arms, went to see the landowner about the possibility of creating a community area on the land behind the Monkland Arms. After careful thought, the land owner has confirmed that, although he has not future plans for this area, he does not wish for this land to be used as a community area.

8. Finance: Accounts

(8.1) It was unanimously agreed to pay of outstanding invoices.

(8.2) To agree Clerk's annual increment. After discussion, it was agreed to increase the Clerk's salary point from Grade 19 to Grade 20 as from the 1st April 2021. It was acknowledged that as yet a revised salary scale for 2021-2022 had not yet been received. The Clerk also explained that there had been no indication, as yet, of any 'cost of living' increase for 2021 -22 - any information with regard to this usually comes via SLCC.

After discussion, it was unanimously agreed between the Clerk and Councillors that her hours would remain at 6 hours per week – but that any increase would be discussed at the budget/precept setting meeting in November.

The Chairman thanked the Parish Clerk for all her hard work and efficiency. She is a constant source of marvellous information and good advice for the Parish Council.

(8.3) End of year accounts. Internal and External audit.

The Clerk confirmed that there had been no correspondence as yet from the external auditor. In the meantime, the accounts will be

finalised for the internal auditor – in readiness to be sent to the external auditor.

(8.4) It was unanimously agreed to continue the SLCC membership and contribute towards the annual subscription.

(8.5) It was unanimously agreed not to renew the HALC membership for the 2021-22 financial year.

9. Newsletter - Update on advertising – the clerk confirmed she has received 6 applications to advertise in the Newsletter for next four editions. The Newsletter will be ready to go to the printers on Friday. The Chairman extended thanks to Mr Jancey who has confirmed he will be happy to deliver.

10.Planning issues – Application No: 210061 – Bainstree Farm, Monkland - proposed repositioning of vehicular access splay – no objection.

11. Open Session

Now that there are a lot more children in the village – a resident has raised the question of providing a play area on the village green. Whilst this was thought to be an excellent idea – the issues of insurance; noise; health and safety were raised. Ward Cllr Marsh suggested contacting Julia Debbidge with regard to ways of creating a safe play area and that there are grants/funding available.

It was suggested this was deferred until the next meeting.

With regard to the digging out of the ditch by the village hall – it had been acknowledged (please see Chairman's report) that this area had been left a mess following the work - which had taken place in the winter - but that the appearance would improve during the next three months.

However, a resident strongly opposed this - saying that the area's habitat had been totally destroyed and that there had been no improvement in the flooding issues and that the work had been a total waste of time. The resident condemned the Parish Council

for not consulting with the rest of the community and that she had received dozens of complaints. The resident asked would the Parish Council re fill the pond and return it to its original state.

The Chairman explained that this was not possible – firstly the PC did not have the finances to support this – and, secondly, that the work had been carried out under the guidance of the Balfour Beatty's Locality Steward with the very best intentions that this would improve the flooding situation.

The resident said that she was not prepared to accept this decision and would be reporting the Parish Council to the Environmental Agency.

It was noted that the no other complainants had approached the Parish Council and that it was a pity they had not been in touch or attended this meeting. Villagers are encouraged to attend and/all Parish Council meetings.

The Chairman acknowledged the resident's concerns and her proposed referral to the Environmental Agency.

The discussion was brought to a close by agreeing that the Parish Council and the resident would have to 'agree to disagree' over this issue.

In the meantime, it was suggested that a small working party should be formed – and that they would work to landscape the area; planting wild flowers; etc in an effort to generally 'beautify' the area. Several volunteers came forward at the meeting. Cllr Povall will liaise.

It was noted that there seems to be an influx of deer around the common and local gardens.

It was also noted that the Village Hall security light is constantly being activated – but, it was explained, that it has to remain active due to the possibility of theft/break in at the village hall.

(11.1) The latest news is that Local Council Elections will go ahead on the 6th May 2021.

(11.2) Due to the ongoing restrictions/guidelines - it is reported that Robert Jenrick MP is planning to extend the right to convene remote meetings beyond the 7th May.

(11.3) Police – warning re disruption of visual meeting – circulated.

(11.4) Proposed revised Code of Conduct is being considered - maybe ready to adopt at the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

(11.5) Although the EU GDPR no longer applies directly to the UK due to Brexit; its requirements must still be complied with. The new regime is known as the UK GDPR and incorporates the Data Protection Act 2018 and other regulations.

It was mentioned that there may be an NHS Celebration Day - possibly on the 5th July – perhaps to take the form of a street party. Hopefully there would be more information available for the next meeting in May – item to be added to the agenda.

12.Date of next Meeting:

Tuesday 18th May 2021 – Annual Parish Meeting - 7.00p.m. start.

Annual Parish Council Meeting – 7.30p.m. start

Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30 p.m.

Signed:

Date:

Ward Councillors' Report - Monkland Ward report, 16 March 2021

Parish councils pay such an important role! Entrusted with doing their best for their community with the modest resources available from the precept.

I was pleased to speak about Monkland as an excellent example of an engaged parish in the Herefordshire Council budget debate. Your councillors do an excellent job for the village and put in a great deal of their own time, skills and effort for the community good. Meetings are open to the public – and are easy to attend online or in person. There is always a slot for public questions to raise both matters of concern and opportunities.

Using the precept, the parish council, ably guided by the Clerk, are able to do things for the village that no-one could manage alone. It's a really valuable resource. And I am particularly grateful for parish councils as Herefordshire Council has had to make the deepest budget cuts in 10 years due to loss of income during the pandemic and also extra costs associated with it. Government has covered about 70% of the costs - but that has still left a major shortfall. That is why there has had to be a council tax increase.

Covid case in the county are now (15 March) low at 30 per 100,000 and the vaccine rollout is going well. There will of course be more cases with the schools now back in operation and other relaxations on the horizon, if things go as hoped. I'm reassured that our track and trace is being operated by Herefordshire Council staff, using their local knowledge. We all hope there will be more chance to get out and about this summer. The new Visit Herefordshire website is now live, which we hope will attract more visitors to our lovely county. They would certainly enjoy Monkland's fine footpaths!

Market towns provide vital services to their surrounding villages and I hope Leominster will remain an important destination for Monkland residents. The strong partnership between Leominster Town Council and Leominster in Bloom continues to boost the town's attractiveness. Leominster's new Heritage Action Zone officer has now started work and an economic development plan for the town is also being drawn up. Our towns and high streets face many challenges after Covid, so the work of these two programmes will be a major help.

Earth Day this year is being celebrated from April 20-22nd. I know Monkland residents care about your surroundings and the plants and animals we share it with. We can all make a difference, however small, and I'm sure you will find ways to make a contribution. Working with your parish footpath officer would be one possibility. Another is to join 'Hereford Community Clean Up Group', as they combine their efforts with all the other groups around the county to do a Herefordshire litter pick. We are encouraging everyone to take a bit of their time out of their

day and will be contacting schools to encourage children and parents play a part. For more info see <https://fb.me/e/4i2bKhsST?ti=icl>
Dropping litter is of course an offence under the 1990 Environmental Protection Act, so stopping people littering is even more important!

All the best to you as Monkland's daffodils bloom and bring the promise of spring. Trish Marsh Ward Cllr for Monkland and Leominster South.