

# Wyre Piddle ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**Clerk:** Lisa Cope

**Present:** Cllrs. C. Barnes, P. Carr, H. Laud, S. Lister (Chairman), Y. Butler

**In Attendance:** WCC County Cllr. Tucker, DC District Cllr. Boatright, 35 Members of the Public.

**Apologies:** None

Held on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 at 7pm

## **Annual Parish Meeting Minutes**

### **1. Welcome from the Chair**

Cllr Lister welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining the meeting.

### **2. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2023 held on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2023**

The minutes were approved as true and correct as proposed by all Cllrs.

### **3. Parish Council Chairman Report 2023/24**

As the current Chairman of Wyre Piddle Parish Council I am pleased to Chair this year's Annual Parish Meeting, which is an opportunity for parishioners to raise any matter they wish in relation to our Parish.

It is still quite a difficult time for everyone – be that locally, nationally and internationally, especially with the war in Ukraine ongoing for 2 years and now the war in the Middle East with Israel and Gaza. Our thoughts are with the all the people who are affected in these Countries.

Our pockets are still being hit by the steepest rise in the cost of living for many years, especially the cost of energy, and the climate emergency is as pressing as ever, as we have seen here with more flooding incidents than ever before.

With all this going on, it is even more important that people have somewhere to escape for a few moments from the daily pressures of life and I hope that all our open spaces are a way of doing this and we will continue to make them appealing and safe for all.

I would just like to say how hard it would be to run the Parish without the support of our Clerk Lisa Cope, who took over the role last year and has kept us on track on policies over this last year. I would also like to thank all the many residents, our contracted partners and of course our Councillors that give up their time in pursuit of a making Wyre Piddle a great place to live.

It is a privilege to have been part of such a strong and committed team of Councillors and there are 2 vacancies as we speak today, so have a chat with us over the next days or weeks to find out more about being a Councillor for your Village

Due to all the time and work done in the background by all our Councillors, volunteers and contracted colleagues we have managed to keep the precept low for the year ahead with just an inflationary 2.5% increase on last year. Which is good news for all of us especially in the current situation.

Last year has certainly been a very busy one, certainly in relation to Planning applications in and around our village. The SWDP Review with a proposed new 5,000

homes, is still taking a lot of time up, we are working in partnership with 4 other Parishes to put a strong united case on why this would be wrong for this surrounding area. The proposed white water canoeing application rose so many objections from our Parishioners and we again were part of a Parish Consortium to stand against same and as we stand today the application has been removed.

Many projects have continued over the last year including; the village conservation team, the protection of the Preaching cross, the boundaries and the hedge rows in Smith's Meadow were enhanced by the planting of over 400 saplings this year, again a big thank you to the many residents who assisted on a very wet muddy Meadow, we also planted 8 fruit trees down George Lane and they are flourishing already. The Village Green with it's newly installed protective fencing and planters, is looking better than ever and a big thank you to all who made this happen.

We continue to undertake the Village risk assessment, we purchased 'a state of the art life saving equipment' for Smiths Meadow and we renewed the dangerous path within Poplar Avenues Play Park.

We continue challenging the Highways in relation to the continued use of no through road over the Eastern Bridge and the real concern over speeding through the Village. We are not sitting back on this and will continue to make sure our Village is safe, secure and beautiful.

On this note a special thanks to our lengthsman Carl who is doing a great job.

All of the above projects and other much required tasks are undertaken by the following Cllrs...Cllrs Yvette Butler, Harvey Laud, Carole Townsend and Misan McFarland ( who both stepped down earlier this year) and to our newest Councillors, Caroline Barnes and Penny Carr. Thank you all for all your support.

I would also like to thank our District and County councillors Liz Tucker and Dan Boatright for their support and hard work over past year and well done in the recent elections and again looking forward to working with you again.

I am looking forward to next year, we have a new team on board, always good to have fresh eyes, minds and skills in a team, 2 vacancies though, to enhance even more, to ensure we deliver the best for our Village.

#### **4. District Councillor annual Report Cllr Liz Tucker**

The year went by fast! It always takes a month or two for a newly elected council to settle in, but it has been a busy year especially in regard to Planning.

Our new head of planning, Ian Macleod from Birmingham City Council, is now in place. He is experienced in major planning projects which will help with the SWDPR. Wychavon continues to have difficulty in retaining and recruiting planning officers – gaps are filled in with contracted planners but this is costly.

SWDPR This Review was started end of 2017 and covered Wychavon, Worcester City and Malvern Hills. Covid didn't help nor did the blanket of secrecy. Eventually the proposed plan was passed by councils and the final Regulation 19 consultation for the Bristol Inspectorate in the run up to Christmas 2022. Wychavon officers then had the task of organising submissions prior to sending everything on to the Inspectorate in September 2023. They were predicting that the Examination in Public could start as early as February this year but the appointed Inspectors have asked for further evidence and updated work which won't be complete to send off before August. If the Inspectors are happy then the Examination could take place January 2025 or at a pinch December 2024 – at least 7 years after the work began. These reviews are

supposed to take place every 5 years, now to be shortened to every 4 years! I asked a formal question to Council on how they plan to learn from this experience but was told they wanted to look forward not back.

Obviously the biggest issue for this area is the proposal for a new sustainable town of 2,000 dwellings by 2040, increasing to 5,000 dwellings in the next Review, roughly based on Throckmorton airfield. There are a host of serious flaws in this proposal including hugely costly archaeology, polluted land, and lack of local road capacity and the local parish councils are working together to make sure that these are recognised. My fear is that we could end up with urban sprawl from Pershore through the villages up to Bishampton, town or no town, because of the failure of the planners to ensure protected "significant gaps" between the settlements. There are current planning application for 185 and 44 dwellings in Pinvin, and 111 at the top end of Wyre Road opposite the KeyTec7 roundabout, as well as many smaller applications that all add up.

Because the Review has been going on so long and housing sites in Wychavon have been built out quickly because the area is attractive to buyers, we no longer have a Five Year land supply and therefore planners are required to give more weight to the "benefits" of extra housing versus implementing our normal planning policies, and so approve applications they would otherwise have refused.

Back to Wychavon, there has been a change of Leader of the Council. Bradley Thomas stood down to take up the role of parliamentary candidate for Bromsgrove and the role had been filled by Chris Day of Ombersley. The local government settlement was tight for all councils this year but Wychavon has a good record of income generation. Nevertheless they increased their council tax by 2 % this year after 6 years of nil increase.

Wychavon has a shared Senior Management Team of 6 with Malvern Hills which has saved a lot of money although I feel it has lost the individual focus and originality that Wychavon had before.

The weekend Emergency out of hours contact number has changed to 01527 912966 but it is only for real emergencies such as traveller encampments on council owned land, emergency homelessness or dangerous faults on council play equipment.

Wychavon has been working on reducing its own carbon emissions, replacing the windows at the civic centre. It has recently been awarded £2m+ to provide air heat pumps for Pershore Leisure Centre (and Evesham) reducing its electricity costs by 80-90% as we already benefit from the hydropower unit on the Avon installed by Charles Hudson of Wick.

50 years ago Wychavon was created on 1<sup>st</sup> April in 1974. During the Chairman's 50th Anniversary Tour, Cllr Raphael vowed to visit every parish in the District Council, highlighting the work of local organisations, meeting with volunteers, catching up on projects Wychavon has funded over the years and checking out some of the district's natural and historic sites. In Hill and Moor parish council he visited the Landfill Site where we had a long and muddy walk through the nature restoration areas. The anniversary tour ended with the Chairman's Civic Ceremony at Pershore Abbey on 21 April 2024, which was a celebration of Wychavon's role in the district, following its formation.

## **5. County Councillor Report – Cllr. Dan Boatright- Greene**

**Highways and drainage:** It is still wet! The past 18 months have just been wet. Every report I have written in the past year has referred to records being broken. Just this week we had rainfall that resulted in water back on the roads from fields.

Life continues to centre around drains, ditches and flooding. The county council are reviewing the response to the recent floods and this is going to a committee this week. There is a lot of issues around communication that need ironing out. This is always a complex process as several agencies have to work together, including the Environment Agency. The current plan is to work through the issues and work with the Environment Agency and the different council departments to ensure we can get to trouble spots more quickly and ease pressures where we can. This is very much an ongoing process.

The easiest thing we can do is keep the drains clear. There is a dedicated team who are out clearing the drains and gullies. If you know of any drains that need clearing please report on:

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/travel-and-highways/report-road-or-path-issue/drainage-and-flooding-highway>

And let me know so I can chase it up. If you have already reported an area that isn't draining and there hasn't been any action, please email me.

George Lane in Wyre Piddle: parish councillors reported sewage flowing down and out under the railway bridge. Severn Trent have inspected and said they can find no defects. If anything is seen, can people please get pictures so we can follow up.

**Roads and potholes:** Back in November 2023 Rishi Sunak announced £8 billion for improving potholes in the country. In December 2023 local MPs informed us we would get £139 million for Worcestershire over 8 years. We have currently received £2.6 million and I will pursue for every penny! There has also been an announcement of £209 million of redirected HS2 money for the county but no rules on how it can be spent are yet available. Some people are getting excited about raising roads to limit damage caused by flooding. Others have suggested dualling the railway. We shall see what comes to pass.

*Request to put defibrillator signs on lampposts. At this time we can't attach signs to lamp columns. We await a new policy due out soon. Barry Barnes spoke with the Licensee at The Anchor and she has no objection to the sign being moved closer to the corner of the pub where the defibrillator is fixed. At the Village hall there appears ample wall space adjacent to the defibrillator.*

**Fire service:** The fire service has completed its spending review and the proposals included changing some of the on call fire service. The document can be read here: [Consultation | Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service](#)

The review has already changed, with Malvern's vehicle being kept on. This has caused some arguments about the validity of the consultation. This is likely to be discussed at length in the coming months.

**Council Tax 2024-25:** The county council have increased the council tax for next year by 4.99%. Much of the pressure is on adult social care and children's services. The council is currently undergoing a restructuring of the management structure of the council, which will result in some savings for the coming year.

**Education:** New school in Worcester and new school in Malvern for those with Autism are taking hold. Still a long way to go and there is still a shortage of SEND places so a lot of work to do. There is recognition that the lack of places is having an impact but there is yet to be a full explanation by the council on how this will be resolved. National problem or not, this is our problem- it needs fixing.

The change from three tier to two tier in Pershore remains stalled- meetings being held with various stakeholders. Timetable should be seen in the summer. There was

a consultation by Pinvin Federation about remaining Middle School age range so the situation is fluid.

New head of children's services from June as current one moves to Herefordshire. Children's services being brought in house and WCF disbanded.

**County Hall:** RAAC at county hall... the saga continues! Still no sign of what is happening and awaiting report on what needs to be done. I ask every time I am in the building.

**Landfill liaison committee:** we have requested further information on fly tipping as it seems to have doubled in tonnage in the last 12 months.

**Highways contributions to planning meetings:** I have concerns after previous planning meetings when the Highways contribution was poor. I have spoken to Wychavon planning about the issue and solutions are being looked at as this has been flagged repeatedly.

## **6. Reports from local groups and organisations:**

### **The Church**

St Anne's Church has a great team of volunteers enabling it to open every day. It is well looked after with a book stall, prayer request book and you can light a candle.

They hold many events including for Valentines, Coronation, Lent and various flower displays.

There is an active Choir and bell ringers.

### **WI**

The local WI is growing with 33 members of all ages in the village.

They are a national force which has resolutions, last year it was to monitor water purity in the Avon and next year will be lobbying for more NHS dentist.

New members always welcome

### **Table Tennis**

The Club was formed in 1981 and Ray Griffiths was the founder.

In 2019 the club inherited 8 11 year olds and was the only club to have junior players.

Two years ago the club won everything that they entered and now having 46 members the club has outgrown the village hall and now trains at Pershore Leisure Centre

### **The Village Hall**

In 1900 there was a grand fete in the village by the river to raise money towards a Parish Room which opened in 1911.

In 1980 this formerly became know as the Village Hall.

Various renovations over the years including central heating, roof insulation and decoration.

With thanks to many Trustees who help look after the Hall it is well used with Thursday coffee mornings, puppy classes, WI and yoga to name a few of the groups.

### **Village Fete**

Originally started in 1910.

Thanks to Carrie Oakley and the entertainments team who helped revive it in recent years with brass bands, morris dancing, local beer etc and the local boating team

who organise boat trips along the river.

There are lots of games and entertainments organised by villagers and there is now a new team looking to bring back the fete after Covid- please help if you can.

### **Piddle Post**

Originated many years ago and then Malcolm and Penny Carr revived it from last year in email form.

It holds lots of important information for villagers and has a circulation of 178 and 12 printed editions.

Please share with residents who would like to be added to the distribution list.

### **Water Testing Group**

Every Saturday Julie and Kay test the River for Sulphates, Nitrates, Phosphates and Electro productivity through a company called 'Safe Avon'.

Looking for more helpers everyone is welcome.

As it has only been going less than a year will have more data to share soon.

### **Neighbourhood Watch**

There is a What's App group for the village with 74 members please see Caroline Barnes if you would like to be added- any suspicious local activity is then shared.

### **Parish Games**

Wyre Piddle is often successful in the Parish Games please do join in if you can and would like to, more info can be found in the Piddle Post.

## **7. Open Public Forum**

No questions

The meeting closed at 8:30pm