

**PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Pencombe Group Council held on**  
**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020**  
**Video meeting 7.30pm**

**Councillors Present;**

Cllr. T. Brazier (Chairman)

Cllr. C. Hadley

Cllr. J. Barrett

Cllr. P. Hope

Cllr. D. Legge

**In Attendance:** Ward Councillor John Harrington, Allan Drew (Parish Clerk)

**Members of the Public:** Andrew Mottram (Chair, Parish Hall, Susan Drew (Treasurer, Parish Hall).

**50/20 Apologies for absence**

No apologies had been received. Cllr. Hayes later reported an internet fault which prevented her attendance.

**51/20 Declarations of interest and written requests for dispensation**

None were received

**52/20 Draft minutes of the previous meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020**

Councillor Hadley proposed that the minutes be signed as a true record of the meeting and Councillor Hope seconded. The Chairman signed the draft minutes as a true record of the meeting

**53/20 Action Tracker.**

**Damage to the churchyard wall.** The clerk reported that he had been unable to find a surveyor who was prepared to take on the work to survey and value the wall. He had contacted six different surveyor companies, none of whom were prepared to take on work at this stage. Along with the difficulties of working with COVID there has been a surge in demand for housing surveys. The clerk would continue his efforts to find a suitable surveyor  
Action Clerk

**Lengthsman and ditch near Little Cowarne church.** Cllr. Legge reported that he had spoken with the owner of Upper House. The owner was happy for council to carry out the ditch clearing and remove the fence but the Chairman pointed out that because the fence was rotten it would not be possible to re-instate. Cllr. Legge would raise the matter with the owner.

Action: Cllr. Legge

**Funding of Lengthsman scheme for current year.** The clerk will discuss with the Chairman and other Councillors the content for the annual maintenance plan. Action point to remain open pending submission by the clerk of the maintenance plan.

**Unpaid invoice for ditching work at Sparrington Farm.** The Chairman stated he had not yet been able to contact Mr. Thomas to resolve the matter. Action remains open.

**Road deterioration at Hollybush Lane and at the A465/C1117 junction.** An update has been received from Colin Smith, the Locality Steward-

*“Inspected on 21/09 – “This is a quarterly inspected road (A465/C1117) Upon further inspection we cannot find anything safety critical at this location currently”*

*“17/9/20. There are 12 outstanding pothole type defects on this feature from the 20/21 August Quarterly Inspection. I have today raised a new sweeping defect for the 150M from the A417 junction heading East and reviewed the surface for safety defects thereafter. One other new pothole. The surface up to the surface dressed / resurfaced section heading towards Marsh Court Farm is in need of attention – Asset Management for site review, to check data and for consideration of forward works”*

Possibly we may get some action on the A417/Hollybush Lane junction

Remaining open action points were covered by an agenda item on the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

## **54/20 Open session:**

54.1/20 Cllr. Harrington reported that Callum Bush from BB and who is in charge of TROs will visit the village on 17<sup>th</sup> November. Also he had spoken to Simon Hobbs (Herefordshire Council Safety officer). Mr Hobbs felt that a weight limit was unlikely in this location but did think that a reduction in the speed limit was a strong possibility. Discussion is ongoing.

As regards NDPs Cllr Harrington had spoken with Edwyn Ralph residents' association which would be happy to provide advice to Pencombe Group with preparation of an NDP. The residents' association should contact the clerk. (N.B. Later in the meeting Cllr. Harrington felt that Bredenbury would be a better choice for advice)

Lengthsman scheme update. Whilst it remained likely that no grant would be made to the parish this year, Cllr. Harrington reported that Herefordshire had received money from central Government under the pothole challenge fund. Some of this grant could be used for surface water schemes and re-surfacing so we should continue to prepare our plan for drainage works required.

Although still one of the lowest COVID areas, Herefordshire has seen an increase in COVID cases to 114 cases in one week to the end of last week, up from 78 the previous week. Total deaths are now 131, with 3 in the past two weeks, the first for many months. There are 25 cases in hospital. Roughly half the deaths are in care homes so a new facility at Hillside is being provided for recovering patients so that they do not return directly to care homes. The Three Counties Hotel is also on standby should extra capacity be required.

Balfour Beatty have just been put through review using PWC and the Council's external auditor. The results showed that the contract was fit for purpose and that BB was a fair value supplier. The area of some weakness was the clienting skills of Herefordshire Council. The technical staff had been overly reduced in numbers. As a result BB had fulfilled these roles, in effect being both advisor and supplier. Recent personnel changes in BB gave Cllr. Harrington some optimism – Laura Lloyd is now in charge of the contract locally and is being very helpful. She also has a new deputy – Paul Rainer who is also very helpful. Currently under discussion is how parishes can do more of the work, including using volunteers which happens in some other areas.

A review of planning services has also been commissioned during November. Of particular concern is enforcement which is considered to be weak. The review will be carried out by the Planning Advisory service and it is expected the review will be rigorous.

Pollution in the Lugg is now being progressed with Powys council and Natural Resources Wales. Herefordshire is investing £3m in 8 wetlands to improve river health. A solution is

emerging and when the plan is completed it is expected Natural England will withdraw their statutory ban on development. Legal advice is being taken to decide if consents could recommence.

The Herefordshire Transport review has completed with six options presented. The review will shortly go to Scrutiny and recommendations around the favoured option will emerge.

Two Hoots enforcement was raised and Cllr. Harrington stated enforcement was underway and he felt confident of a satisfactory outcome.

54.2/20 No matters were raised by residents

## 55/20 **Parish Hall update**

The Parish Hall Chairman reported that the Hall was very quiet with only the school and the Post Office using the facility. The Trustees were talking with Herefordshire about opening for some social events so long as social distancing and group sizes (6) were observed. Young Farmers are hoping to hold their AGM and have undertaken to observe the relevant rules.

The Treasurer reported that at current activity levels the Hall could continue until September 2021 without additional financial support. However, there was optimism that some carefully managed events could be re-started.

The Chairman said he had been contacted by a parent about the water on the Hall steps which needed attention before frosty/icy weather arrived.

## 56/20 **Finance – to receive an update.**

### 56.1/20 **HSBC bank balances & spend against budget**

Members were informed that the bank balances on 27/10/2020 were as follows:-

- Community Account: £6619
- Business Money Manager Account: £13169

Spending and income were both running to budget with no change since the full update given at the September meeting

### 56.2/20 **To note income received/due.**

09/10/2020	Interment fee for Mr Richard Davies	£100.00
24/09/2020	Parish Hall loan repayment	£62.50

### 56.3/20 **To consider and authorise payments due and note payments made since last meeting;**

#### Payments due for authorisation

No.	Name	Amount £	Details
1	A M Drew		Clerk's salary for October 2020

2	A M Drew	£175+VAT	HALC training event for CiLCA
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## Payments made since last meeting-

28/09/2020	CiLCA fees to SLCC	£350
15/10/2020	AC Garden Services, October grass cut	£310.00
15/10/2020	Autela payroll services	£42.71+VAT

All payments were authorised by Council. Proposed by Cllr. Legge and seconded by Cllr. Hadley

## Receipts due but not yet received

26/5/20	Mr G Thomas, Sparrington Farm (Ditching)	£135.00
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**57/20**  
57.1/20

## Planning applications/decisions

Planning applications received.

Application no. 203160, Mandeleen, Pencombe. Mr & Mrs Schmeltz. Demolition of existing bungalow and erection of replacement dwelling. The clerk had received a statement from Mr & Mrs Schmeltz which was read out to Council. Cllr. Barrett was concerned should the footprint of the new build be bigger than the current bungalow. (The clerk checked later and the footprint is actually twice the footprint of the existing building). Taking all the points raised the clerk submitted the following comments to Herefordshire Planning-

*"Dear Mr Jones,*

*On 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020, Pencombe Group Parish Council considered application 203160 to demolish the existing bungalow and erect a replacement dwelling.*

*The Council noted that-*

- The applicants had submitted a personal statement to the Council providing reassurance on minimising disturbance during construction works. It is considered that the site is large enough to accommodate contractors' vehicles hence minimising any congestion on the highway.*
- The replacement dwelling has twice the footprint (on a like for like basis) of the existing bungalow. However, Council felt that the site was sufficiently spacious to accommodate the proposed dwelling.*
- The current bungalow has little to commend it and the standard of construction would fall short of current standards by some way. A well designed and constructed dwelling would be a benefit to the village both visually and in terms of energy efficiency.*

*Overall Council would support the application and would ask that if consent is granted, that a condition requiring limits on hours of working and minimal highway obstruction is part of that consent"*

57.2/20 Planning permissions granted  
No new permissions had been granted

- 57.3/20 Planning refusals  
None since last meeting
- 58/20 Lengthsman scheme/Grass cutting**  
58.1/20 Grass cutting. Now completed the summer cutting program and Council agreed that the contractor had done a good job during difficult weather conditions  
Cllr. Harrington mentioned that BB had a rotary cutter for clearing ditches at a much faster rate. A new process for riparian owners was also being introduced. The Chairman was concerned that rotary ditch cleaners were not suitable for roadside ditches and he and Cllr. Harrington would discuss further.
- 58.2/20 To consider payment of invoices**  
There are no outstanding invoices awaiting payment
- 59/20 Launching the NDP**  
The Clerk summarised for the meeting his discussions with the grant giving body, Locality. Locality confirmed that no exceptions could be made to the financial year condition, but added that a further application could be made in the following financial year. It looked likely that grant money was no longer a barrier to progress. The Chairman's view that we should go ahead with the NDP and explicitly asked other Councillors for their support in moving forward with the NDP. All Councillors agreed that we should now proceed with the NDP and the clerk reminded councillors that they would all have to play their part in what is a community led project.  
The clerk would now apply for the grant to progress the NDP. Action: Clerk
- 60/20 Footpath through school to Parish Hall**  
The clerk had contacted the Herefordshire footpath officer (Susan White) with details of our position regarding the historic use of a footpath from the church to the parish Hall. Ms White's view was that we might well have a case to alter the definitive map, but raised the question of placing the Council at odds with the school in a small village. After some discussion it was agreed that the clerk would draft a letter in response to the reply received (just before lockdown) from the school's property advisor stating that no accommodation would be made since no footpath existed. (But please see following item 61/20)
- 61/20 Road safety in Pencombe**  
The clerk had drafted a letter to raise our concerns about road safety. Council discussed the letter but eventually thought that the issue was really about a safe place for children to meet. Apart from the school playing field (now fenced off and essentially permanently locked) there is no safe meeting place in the village. The unanimous view was that the school gates should be open to allow access to the field when the school was not in session. Since the playing field is owned by the LEA Cllr. Harrington volunteered to ask the Education Department if there was any good reason why the gates could not be opened in these circumstances
- 62/20 Changing banking arrangements**  
The clerk presented a paper proposing that Council moves its banking arrangements from HSBC to Unity Trust Bank. The advantages of the changes are that Unity deals mostly with public sector bodies and understands issues such as multiple signatures on internet banking arrangements. There would be a small cost (£6/month) but the simplification of our arrangements would be considerable. Council unanimously resolved that the clerk should proceed to implement the new arrangements. Action: Clerk

**63/20 Using ZOOM for Parish Council meetings**

The clerk introduced a paper to move from Microsoft Teams to ZOOM for future Council meetings. The issue with ZOOM was that the £12/month charge but currently a 20% discount for 12 months was available. Additionally Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Council had stated (subject to formal agreement at 18<sup>th</sup> November meeting) that they would be prepared to share the cost with Pencombe. For each council this would bring the cost down to £4/month net of VAT. Council resolved that ZOOM should replace Teams on the terms described. Cllr. Legge proposed and Cllr. Hope seconded.

Action: Clerk

**64/20 Matters for discussion at next meeting.**

Precept

The date of next meeting is Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020, at 7.30pm

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.



Signed..... Chairman of the Parish Council

**Dated 24 November 2020**