

PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Pencombe Group Parish Council
held on

Tuesday 24th January 2023 at 7.30pm in Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall

Councillors Present;

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Cllr. W. Brazier, Chairman | Cllr. C. Hadley |
| Cllr. D Legge | Cllr. S. Barrett |
| Cllr. S Walsh | Cllr. J. Lewis (after item 5/23) |

In Attendance: Allan Drew Parish Clerk

Members of the Public: 8 members of the public attended

- 1/23** Apologies for absence.
Cllr. Harrington sent his apologies
- 2/23** Declarations of Interest and written requests for Dispensation
Cllr. Brazier declared a schedule 1 interest in item 7/23 regarding a payment for work done on the drainage system
- 3/23** To approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting of 22nd November 2022.
The minutes were approved and duly signed by the Chairman
- 4/23** Matters arising not otherwise covered in the minutes. None were raised
- 5/23** Co-option to fill the vacancy arising from the resignation of Cllr. Hope.
The only application received was from Mr James Lewis, 1 Wakefield, Pencombe. Mr Lewis was legally entitled to stand for office and Council asked some questions of his background and experience. A secret ballot was then held and MR Lewis was unanimously elected to join the Council which he then did having signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
- 6/23** **To receive:** an update on the Parish Hall
Mr Mottram reported that the secretary Mrs Alison Maynard had resigned and he thanked her for her service as a hall trustee over a number of years. A replacement for Mrs Maynard would be appointed as soon as possible.
Mr Mottram reminded Council that he had submitted an estimate for financial support for inclusion in the precept.
- 7/23** The finance report was presented by Cllr. Walsh

Bank Balances

Bank balance on 17/01/2023 was as follows-

Unity Trust current account £15,440.55

Payments made since last meeting.

| No. | Name | Amount £ | Details |
|-----|------------------------|-------------|--|
| 1 | A M Drew | 337.45 | Clerk's November salary, pay on 25 November |
| 2 | Berrys | 514.50+VAT | Staged payment for planning application |
| 3 | Berrys | 540.00+VAT | Re-design charge |
| 4 | D C Gardening Services | 1732.00+VAT | Drainage grant work on C1115. Under query. |
| 5 | A M Drew | 32.48+VAT | Refund for purchase of Parish Hall lights (external) |
| 6 | D C Gardening Services | 520.00+VAT | October grass cut |
| 7 | Unity Trust Bank | 8.00 | Cheque stop fee |
| 8 | H&G Canal Trust | 100.00 | Payment in lieu of cheque |
| 9 | HMRC PAYE | 253.00 | Made under delegated authority |
| 10 | Unity Trust Bank | 18.00 | Automatic |

Total Payments = £3569.43 + VAT (as appropriate)

Council to note that item 4 was under query. The invoice was subsequently reduced to £761.50+VAT. So total payments actually made since last meeting are £2589.93+VAT

Income received since last meeting

Nil

Payments for Authorisation

| No. | Name | Amount £ | Details |
|-----|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | A M Drew | 337.45 | Clerk's December salary, |
| 2 | A M Drew | 337.45 | Clerk's January salary, |
| 3 | Autela | 45.00+VAT | Q3 payroll |
| 4 | Viking | 57.95+VAT | Paper + stapler (NDP) |
| 5 | A M Drew | 10.99+VAT | Refund for plan for Wheelwrights ACV listing |



| | | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------|--|
| 6 | W A Brazier | 130.00 | Fabrication, painting and fitting letterbox drain cover in Pencombe village centre |
| 7 | Mrs Shirley Palliser | 70.93+VAT | Dog poo bags, holders, signs etc |

The RFO pointed out to Council that the claim from Mrs Palliser for a refund for the various items she had purchased was somewhat incomplete, in that although the claim was for £81.92 receipts had only been submitted for £71.92. The RFO had queried this with Mrs Palliser who explained that she had not received a receipt from the shop for one of the items and had not realised this omission until later. The difference was only £10 and the RFO had satisfied himself that the items had in fact been purchased. In these circumstances Council resolved that the full amount of £81.92 would be refunded and thanked Mrs Palliser for her work on behalf of the village to help deal with dog waste.

Total for payment - £989.77+VAT as appropriate. Council resolved these payments should be made.

Bank reconciliation Qtr 2

The discrepancy of £100 between the cash book and the bank account has been resolved. The cheque was cancelled as agreed at the last meeting and a bank payment made on 14 December 2022.

Deposit account.

Deposit account rates and notice periods had been investigated by the RFO. Council considered the RFO's findings and favoured the Hinckley & Rugby Building Society 60 day notice account (2.85% gross). The RFO would investigate further, with the aim of opening an account.

Banking reconciliation - Quarter 3

As at 31 December 2022 the Council cash book shows a running balance of £15778.00. The bank statement dated 31st December 2022 agreed exactly with the cash book and Cllr. Walsh and the RFO duly signed the reconciliation document.

Setting the precept for 2023-24

In setting the precept the RFO explained that-

- Currently the precept is £13875 which was set at this level in April 2020
- Cumulative inflation since April 2020 has been 17.9%.
- Inflation adjusted the precept would be £16358
- A contested by-election in March 2022 had cost Council £2092 and for which there was no reserve.

To restore the financial position of the Council the RFO recommended-
The precept should be £20300 in order to-

- Adjust for inflation
- Create a reserve of £2000 for possible future by-elections
- Recover the £2000 unforecast expenditure on the March 2022 election.

Council resolved that the election costs & reserve would be recovered over two years and the precept for the coming year would be set at £18300.

8/23 Planning report.Cllr. Colin Hadley

Planning applications/decisions:

New applications

224305 Land at Upper House, Little Cowarne. Re-use of 3 redundant barns

Council resolved to support this application and the following comments were submitted-

Council discussed this application at its meeting on 24 January 2023 and SUPPORTS this application though some conditions are suggested.

The applicant (Mrs Helen Bufton) was present and the owners of a neighbouring property (The Steppes) also attended.

There was general agreement by Councillors and also members of the public present that in principle this application was welcomed since it would improve the immediate area which was somewhat neglected. The application falls under Herefordshire Core Strategy policy RA3 which enables the re-use of redundant buildings of this nature, in a rural location.

The erection of three additional buildings (garages) would seem also to be within RA3 since these buildings would fall under the title of the existing barns. Given the size of the site it would seem appropriate that garage facilities should be provided so long as the scale and construction materials are in keeping with the barns.

Clearly since these barns are not currently inhabited the question of sewage and phosphates will arise. Council assumes the planning authority will ensure that suitable arrangements for the handling of sewage are put in place and that any phosphate related issues are dealt with.

If possible Council would wish to ensure that when completed these properties do not enter the holiday let market since residents feel strongly that there are already too many such properties in Little Cowarne. Should such change of use be considered by eventual owners an explicit planning condition requiring application for change of use would be welcome.

Finally access arrangements to the site are not good and a planning condition requiring any damage to roads, verges, ditches etc to be made good or improved would also be welcome.

224269 Meadow End, Little Cowarne. Installation of 28 solar PV panels on garage roof.

Council resolved to support this application and the following comments were submitted-

Council discussed this application at its meeting on 24 January 2023 and SUPPORTS this application. The installation of the proposed 28 solar PV cells will be unobtrusive since the

garage roof where they will be installed is essentially flat. It is unlikely there will be any visual harm but there will be significant benefits, primarily to the applicant, but also to the environment.

Existing applications

221751 Land at the 3 Horseshoes, Little Cowarne. Appeal due to non-determination.

Council had no further comment to make on this application

9/23 Lengthsman Scheme/Grass cutting: Report from Cllr. Brazier

Cllr. Brazier presented proposals for piping 90m of ditch on the C1114 from roughly New House farm upwards. The quotation from the Lengthsman was £4158+VAT most of which would come from the Herefordshire grant. Council resolved that this work should go ahead.

It was resolved that the grass cutting contract and the lengthsman contract would be renewed from 1 April 2023 with D C Gardening Services on the same terms as the current year.

10/23 Neighbourhood Development Plan. Report from Cllr. Legge

Council noted that the writing group to progress writing the first draft of the full NDP had been formed. Five residents had volunteered and the first meeting is scheduled for 30 January.

11/23 Provision of a village car park. Report from Cllr. Brazier

Council resolved that the Cotswold Survey of the car park site should go ahead. When the survey is completed the design should be ready for submission to planning.

12/23 The Wheelwrights

Note: Cllr. Lewis has agreed to take on the portfolio for progressing possible purchase of the Wheelwrights.

The Chairman reported that following Council's decision at the November meeting to investigate the possible purchase of The Wheelwrights and the adjacent Staple Cottage a number of activities have started or taken place-

- Favourable meeting with Ms Sue Clarke regarding purchase of Staple Cottage by the village.
- Meeting arranged with Mr Kevin Griffiths (owner of The Wheelwrights) but cancelled due to Mr Griffiths' ill health. To be re-arranged.
- Request to Herefordshire Council to have The Wheelwrights listed as an Asset of Community Value which can freeze the sale for up to six months. This requires a hearing at a panel which is scheduled for 14 February 2023.
- The Plunkett Foundation has been contacted and have offered expert advice on progressing the purchase of the pub. This (free of charge) advice will include preparation required (mostly around community consultation) to submit an application to the Public Works Loan Board.
- A local builder, Jonathon Baker, who knows the pub and the cottage well has been approached to provide an estimate of refurbishment costs.
- A comprehensive financial summary document has been created to record all costs as they are identified. (This is work in progress).



All of the above will be progressed over the coming month. The main short-term objective is to submit a well-researched application to the PWLB for approximately £750,000 less any share scheme which may be launched.

Mr Mottram informed the Council that, in the opinion of a retired pub licensee whom he knew, the pub was overpriced at an advertised price of £350,000. Council felt similarly especially given the amount of refurbishment which would be required.

Cllr. Hadley had pointed out that having a tenant in place was important to ensure that the loan repayments could be maintained. Some other community owned pubs had struggled to find suitable tenants.

13/23 Open session:

13.1/23 **To receive:** a verbal update from the Ward Councillor

- we will be setting the budget at Full Council on the 10th February. The proposal is for a 5% increase in Council tax (with 2% of that reserved for social care, Adult's and Children's. We spent approx. 75-80 % of our annual budget on Adult and Children's social care). Not something anyone struggling with cost of living at the moment but we have increased the support for those least well off who are struggling and there are details here of how to apply for exemption or reductions due to personal circumstances <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council-tax-1/council-tax-discounts-exemptions> As an authority we relied on government grants historically to support our particular demographic but that support, primarily in the form of the Revenue Support Grant (worth £62 million in 2010) has been almost completely removed. Our senior accountants tell us we are as an authority £100 million pounds per year in revenue worse off in 2023 compared to 2011. Shropshire looks set to raise its Council tax by 4.99% (with £244 million of cuts planned for the next 4 years) and Worcestershire by 4.49%. We are in very challenging times with the burden for funding falling increasingly on local taxation. I do not know what the solution or plan is and yet our MPs continue to vote for cuts https://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/11318/bill_wiggin/north_herefordshire/divisions?policy=6671
- A heads up, if not already aware, that the local elections in May will require some form of photo ID pf https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id?utm_source=partner_social&utm_medium=social_media&utm_campaign=voter_id&utm_content=voter_id_home
- A reminder from BBLP senior managers that Ward Members or Parish Councils need to report defects and issues on highways or the public realm by using the [council website customer services webpage](#) or, if urgent, by calling 01432 261800. You can also report issues on a mobile device using the [Reporting app](#). This is better than reporting to Locality Steward or Ward Member, although that can still be done too – or done if folks struggle with technology. Logging it via website or telephone number means quicker action and holds BBLP and the County Council more accountable
- There are a couple of outbreaks of avian flu in Herefordshire. One in came in recently. Domestic hen flock, please make sure your friends and neighbours are adhering to the conditions imposed by Defra where they are within the outbreak



area <https://www.gov.uk/animal-disease-cases-england/bird-flu-near-leominster-north-herefordshire-herefordshire-aiv2023-slash-04>

- Wetlands and trading phosphate credits. We have our first applications going through the planning process using credits from the Luston site, we will await and see if a positive Habitat Regulations Assessment can be achieved (ie/ Natural England does not object to the mitigation proposal and the detail of the phosphate credit trading). Titley and Tarrington will come online shortly too we hope

An action for the PC to consider. We had a political group consultation today (all ward members invited) as the County council is talking about using a private company to do some litter enforcement (they would probably get a contract for a year to see how that impacted on discouraging littering in our urban areas and possibly some villages) and David Hough (Council officer) mentioned that we couldn't do this for dog fouling but said that the wonderful PC in Pencombe was looking at a halfway house to monitor and discourage fouling locally. Are we waiting for Dave to get hold of us to start a trial or were we struggling to get volunteers to kick things off?

13.2/23 **To receive:** queries or concerns by local residents on parish matters

Mrs Wilcox raised the matter of a contractor working on Mill Lane but using Church Lane as a holding area for trucks and materials. There has been considerable damage to the lane and the hard standing at the church car park. The Clerk asked Mrs Wilcox to send him a note and some pictures.

14/23 **Matters for discussion at the next meeting**

None raised.

Cllr. Walsh reminded the meeting that on 8 February there would be a presentation at 7pm "Keeping Herefordshire Warm" and all residents are welcome to attend.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

Date of next meeting Tuesday 28th February 2023

Signed (Chairman).....

Date.....

26.02.2022