

**LITTLE BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL -ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON
Wednesday 2nd May 2018 at 7.00pm - At Little Birch Village Hall**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Councillors Ben Roberts; Mike Morley; Janet Gwinnett; Steve Naylor; Annette Wissler

Apologies: Ward Cllr David Harlow

ALSO: Sophie Glover (Parish Clerk).

Meeting Opened: 7.06pm

1. Election of Officers

Chairman: Ben Roberts Proposed: MM Seconded: SN

Vice Chair: Steve Naylor Proposed: MM Seconded: BR

All forms signed.

2. Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting held on 14.05.17

These were signed at the July meeting last year.

3. Chairman's Annual Report – at end of the minutes

4. Clerk's Annual Financial Report/ acceptance of the Annual Governance Statement / adoption of accounts for audit

The Parish Council's books were being prepared for Audit. There are new external auditors and the paperwork has been a problem to down load, so accounts will be presented at the June PC meeting.

Margaret Scrivens, the internal auditor, will again be asked to undertake the PC's internal audit.

Appointment of members to Committees and working groups

5. Village Hall committee: MM told the meeting of the importance of our representation on this committee as custodian trustees.

Ben Roberts to remain as the PC rep.

Proposed by; MM Seconded: SN

6. Review of other appointments ie Footpath Officer, Internal Auditor

Footpath Officer: Angela Middleton

Margaret Scrivens will remain as the PC's internal auditor.

Voted in their absence.

Review of Insurance Policies

7. Aon are no longer insuring Parish Councils, the clerk had got quotes from two other insurance companies and had forwarded the information to the Councillors. It was resolved to renew one of them, clerk to verify what cover we need? Data protection is not covered by BHIB.

8. Review Subscriptions

All agreed to renew subs for HALC when they come round.

9. To remind Councillors to update their Notice of Registrable Interests

Done.

10. **Adoption of Accounts for audit**
Deferred to the June meeting.

Meeting closed 7.28pm

Signed:

Date:

DRAFT

LITTLE BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON
Wednesday 2nd May 2018 at 7.30pm
AT LITTLE BIRCH VILLAGE HALL
MINUTES

Present
Also

Councillors Ben Roberts(BR); Mike Morley(MM); Steve Naylor(SN);

Janet Gwinnett(JG), Annette Wissler(AW)

Sophie Glover (Parish Clerk)

Also 3 Parishoners and David Atkinson (DA) from Balfour Beatty until end of item 3.3.

1. Apologies

Ward Cllr David Harlow.

2. Declaration of interest

None

3. Open Discussion, public forum

A resident from Crows Nest Lane asked if Herefordshire Council accepted that the lane was adopted, even if BB thought that it was. DA assured the meeting that should a road be 'unadopted' there is a long process that has to be undertaken. The parishoner was still concerned that the road does come up as unadopted at the moment. It was resolved to pass this concern on to David Harlow and also to Andy Bing at Herefordshire Council. DA will also take it back to Herefordshire Council's officer who deals with this. MM voiced suspicion about the situation, and endorsed the efforts to get to the bottom of the problem.

Two parishoners from Forge Lane, came to discuss the road closures recently which had had a very adverse impact on their lane. The clerk had advised them to attend the Much Birch PC meeting tomorrow evening as this lane falls under Much Birch Parish, but they wanted to explain the problem to LBPC as the traffic does affect LBPC parishoners as well. MM pointed out that the north end of Forge Lane was in Much Dewchurch. The chair directed him to the Herefordshire Council web site for an excellent map of all of the parishes.

Clerk to send him a map of the parish.

3.1 Ward Councillors Report

He was not present but had sent a report.

3.2 Police Update –

Not Sent Electronically – clerk to approach, Lowri Anderson and Sgt Freer to find out what has happened to ours.

3.3 Balfour Beatty

DA explained and apologised for not attending meetings over the last year. He explained that the roads were really suffering from the harsh winter, and the BB team had not got any bigger to deal with them. SN asked if there had been a fundamental change in approach – in the old days the roads were maintained, it seems that now it is all reactionary. DA agreed, BB worked towards KPIs rather than customer satisfaction. SN; how long is the delay between potholes being white lined and them being filled in? Depends how deep they are – very dangerous ones filled in 24hrs, then with in a week, the next size, a month. Very rural lanes with little traffic could be up to two months, but they are monitored during this time. MM asked about the 'lake' which happens outside

his place. DA said the team had been to jet the site, but the team will have to come back to look into the problem again. At Merrivale Farm, DA's team have identified that the pond used to take the water off the road, but it must be silted up. The pond is on private land, so the landowner should be responsible for this.

4. Acceptance of minutes of the last meeting

MM noted that on Item 7 the name should have been John Jones. Apart from this, these were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed: MM Seconded: BR

5. Action points from last meeting

Are all addressed or on the agenda apart from the Castle Inn being registered as a Community Asset. The Clerk and AW asked for this to come to the next PC meeting so that all cllrs can have a look at the new Community Asset form together.

Clerk to put on June agenda.

6. Planning applications

None.

7. Discussion of the GDPR

HALC have circulated documents about this, the clerk will amend the templates and then with the PC or committee approval, they can be uploaded to the web site.

Clerk to amend documents and send to all cllrs to be checked.

8. Dobbin Cottage

The enforcement officer had told the clerk that the Council team were due to have started work on the outside of Dobbin Cottage at the end of April. SN had talked to workmen there and they are contracted to put one coat of paint on windows, and do the minimum of work in the garden. The chair suggested that we keep the pressure on the Council to keep the work going. MM voiced concerns that this work was cosmetic and not addressing the real cause of the problem.

Clerk to follow up with enforcement officer to see what the next steps will be.

9. Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council has been successful in applying for £1,500 of grant money towards the NDP. Dr Nicholson has now been tasked with completing his analysis of the consultation findings, he will be presenting these findings in early May and then a steering group meeting will be called to discuss any changes to be implemented. Steering group meeting set for the 16th May at 7pm.

*Clerk to cost the remainder of the NDP
Clerk to send out meeting info.*

10. The Lengthsman

The clerk reminded the meeting that there was no lengthsman grant this year, only monies for the P3, and in order to utilise this, any defects noted on footpaths had to be reported to her so that she could task the lengthsman with undertaking the work.

Lman to come to meet MM to look at the lakes.

Clerk to ask HALC about the footpath officer form.

11. Discussion about the regularity of the PC meetings.

There was a discussion as to whether or not to continue monthly or revert to bimonthly meetings. The chair wanted to continue monthly and this was backed up by all councillors. It was resolved to continue with monthly, but not having a meeting in August, and to see if we need a meeting in December nearer the time.

Clerk to book room accordingly.

12. To note the contents of the information sheet.

No comments noted

13.i Finance: including financial report and payments to be made

Bank Totals: HSBC account: £3,453.32

Clerks Salary	£ 167.47
Clerks expenses	£ 26.73
PAYE	£ 7.40
Insurance (depending on who the PC decide to go with)	£ TBC
Grant Thornton (last years audit)	£ 120.00

Clerk to make payments

ii **Payments to be made** proposed: Seconded:

iii **Payments Received:**

Precept (1st half) £2750.00

iv **Requests for financial aid:**

None

14. **To receive agenda items for next meeting**

Castle Inn – to look at the form for listing it as a community asset,

Clerk to add them to the agenda and circulate the castle forms to all cllrs,

15. **Next meeting Wednesday 6th June 2017 at 7.30pm**

Meeting closed at 8.40pm

SIGNED:..... CHAIRMAN

Dated:.....

Future Meetings

NDP steering group	Wednesday May 16 th	7pm
	Wednesday June 6 th	7.30pm
	Wednesday July 11 th	7.30pm
	Wednesday September 5 th	7.30pm
	Wednesday October 3 rd	7.30pm
	Wednesday Nov 7 th	7.30pm
	Wednesday Dec 5 th	7.30pm
	Wednesday Jan 9 th	7.30pm

Little Birch Parish Council

Chairman's Annual Report May 2018

Cllr Ben Roberts – LBPC Chairman

Meetings and Attendance

Monthly meetings have continued over the last 12 months and have allowed us to stay current with planning, other local issues and the developing NDP.

9 routine parish council meetings and one extraordinary PC meeting were held during the year. Councillor attendance was a very good averaging out at 80%. The ward councillor David Harlow, was present at 3 of the meetings (30%), the Police at one (10%) and David Atkinson the localities steward at none this year, although we do get his reports by e mail each week.

In September we welcomed West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion for a public meeting at the village hall where he told us about his role and plans for policing in our area, we had a good turnout of parishioners and an enjoyable and informative evening was had by all.

In January after moving out of the area, Vice Chair Cllr Elaine Godding resigned from the council. Elaine had been a Councillor for over ten years and has been a valuable asset to the council and the local community. After following the official process required to fill a casual vacancy, we welcomed our newest councillor Janet Gwinnett in March and I have no doubt she will be an excellent addition to the parish council.

Angela Middleton has been extremely proactive as our voluntary footpath officer, working on a number of projects including registering new footpaths and becoming a tree warden. Angela also started leading parish walks the first was in February which attracted 15 walkers plus dogs on a 5 mile walk, the 2nd walk at the end of April saw 18 of us walk 6 miles along the footpaths which border the parish. Thank you to Angela for all of your hard work, we really do appreciate it.

Parish Clerk

Sophie has continued to be our clerk, and as always has done a fantastic job of keeping us informed, organised and up to date. Sophie has also continued to do a great job supporting the NDP, liaising with Dr David Nicholson our planning consultant and successfully applying for the NDP funding.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

The joint Neighbourhood Development Plan with Aconbury has continued to make progress over the last 12 months and working with our planning consultant Dr David Nicholson we have now reached the regulation 14 stage and a draft plan was produced and put out for consultation in January. The feedback from the consultation is currently being processed by Dr Nicholson and we hope to move on to the next stage in the near future.

After leading the NDP group from the start, John Jones stepped down in November and I was voted in to lead the NDP steering group going forward. John has put a great deal of effort in and I would like to thank him again for all of his hard work.

The 5 meetings held over the last year have continued to be extremely well attended by representatives from both parishes, averaging 10 people at each meeting.

Website and Newsletter

Traffic to the website continues to grow with 5305 visits over the last 12 months and a grand total of 9727 since the site was launched in August 2016. Parish council agendas, minutes and planning applications are routinely included as is local news and events and information about the NDP. I will also shortly be contacting everyone who is subscribed to the website for email updates asking them to confirm their subscription to ensure that we are compliant with the new GDPR rules that come into force on 25th May.

A Little Birch parish Facebook group was launched in January and although not specifically a parish council endeavour it has become quite active and more of a community-based communication channel allowing people to promote local events, news, ask for advice and recommendations, advertise local businesses etc. The Facebook group also drives traffic to the parish council website. The group has 161 members and continues to grow.

The King's Thorn, the Birches and Aconbury newsletter is still the main source of information for the area. It is financed by Little Birch and Much Birch parish councils, Aconbury parish meeting and advertising and is entirely produced and circulated by volunteers. It is edited by Liz Hall and managed by the Little Birch village hall committee.

Village Hall

As custodian trustee LBPC has some responsibilities for the village hall. I am a member of the Little Birch Village Hall Committee and administrator to the Charity Commission. I make reports on activities at parish council meetings. The hall continues to be used regularly by local and outside groups and finances are in good order.

CPR and defibrillator training was held as planned after the defibrillator was installed and Janet and Murray Gwinnett have kindly agreed to regularly check the defibrillator to ensure that it is ready to be used if it is ever needed.

The drama group continue to produce fantastic performances such as the pantomime and summer show and are a real asset to the community.

The book exchange has settled well into its new home at the Methodist chapel and continues to be a popular monthly event.

Precept

The precept was again increased from £4,500 to £5,500 (22%). The Parish Council felt that this was necessary mainly because of the complete withdrawal of Lengthsman grant payments by Balfour Beatty. There is still money for the P3 or footpath maintenance grants, but this has been reduced, and as before, the PC still has to spend its % first, and then the grant can be utilised if it is needed. If parishioners want us to continue providing the services of the lengthsman (clearing drains and gullies, cutting splays and verges where signs or visibility are compromised etc) we have to pay for it out of the precept.

Castle Inn

The Castle Inn appears to be being well supported with Seb and Emma now running the pub since they took over in September.

It was agreed the asset of community value should be renewed and this is currently being processed.

Winter gritting

The joint scheme with Much Birch and operated voluntarily Merrivale Farm was put to the test during the recent hard winter, a large amount of gritting was required and I would like to extend my thanks to the Mason family for all of their hard work. The road through Aconbury, Barrack Hill and the Thorn were well gritted which was extremely helpful in keeping traffic moving, the roads around the village weren't gritted which would have been a big help. The parish council hope to arrange a meeting with the Mason's over the summer to discuss replenishing grit stocks and the gritting scheme going forward.

HALC

The Council continued its membership of the Hereford Association of Local Councils (HALC). Councillor Godding continued as a member of the executive until her departure from the council. The Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chair attended the annual HALC meeting in the autumn. HALC provides excellent training courses for Councillors and clerks as well as valuable legal advice not available from the Herefordshire Council. LBPC should continue to monitor the need for membership of HALC but in the midst of doing our NDP, I would suggest that it would be potentially dangerous to leave now.