

# **MATHON PARISH COUNCIL**

Annual Parish Meeting held at Mathon Parish Hall  
On Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017 at 7.30 pm

Present: Cllr S Harte, Cllr R Lawrence, Cllr T Ainscough, Cllr P Davies.

In Attendance: Mrs D Taylor (Clerk) Mr Duncan Bridges (CEO) & Prof John Raine  
from Malvern Hills Conservators

Public attendance: none

Apologies: Cllr N Walker, Cllr C Green

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the CEO of Malvern Hills Conservators – Mr Duncan Bridges, together with Prof John Raine, Chair of the Governance Committee, who had been invited to give a short presentation on the future governance of the Conservators.

## **Malvern Hills Conservators - presentation re future governance.**

Mr Bridges and Prof John Raine explained the background to the consultation process which was being carried out prior to the proposed changes to the structure and governance of Malvern Hills Conservators. The Consultation was an essential step required by the Charity Commission, as any changes to the constitution would need to be laid before Parliament by the Commission. No updating to governance had been made since MHC was formed over 130 years ago. The Conservators have to (1) consider and consult, come up with draft proposals and consult again with stakeholders i.e. Parish Councils and others. Following this, (2) they have to reconsider proposals before going out to the public for their comments, and then (3) put the final proposals to the Charity Commission, who will then seek Parliamentary approval. At the moment, they were in stage (1). The Conservators were looking to update their powers, and needed to identify what additional powers would be helpful. (1) The organisation needed to engage more with the community possibly by setting up a membership scheme as a way of involving and raising money. (2) Using the assets of the Conservators in a more commercial way i.e. setting up a trading arm. (3) Securing the common land – the Conservators hold a lot of land but find it difficult to attract owners to graze their livestock on the commons due to traffic accidents with their livestock. Fencing the common land would not remove the commons rights, but would make the land more grazeable. (4) The Conservators have 29 Board members, which was far more than most similar organisations. This number needed to be reduced, together with a governance restructure. As yet this particular issue had not been resolved, with three model options to be considered. £100K had been set aside for this exercise, and using the Charity Commission to sponsor the Parliamentary process would save a huge amount of time and money. It was hoped that the sponsored proposals would be put before Parliament in 2019.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bridges and Prof Raine for taking the time to attend the Annual Parish Meeting and for answering questions put to them by Council members.

### **Chairman's Annual Report to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

There have been fewer planning applications this year, apart from garages and small extensions, and one for a tree house to be used as a holiday let, which the Council did not support. At our March meeting, Mr Mark Tansley from Herefordshire Council Planning Services came and gave us a very interesting and informative talk about planning, and in particular enforcement, which was what the Council had an issue with. Enforcement had now been given a higher prominence and he was attending Courts almost weekly over enforcement issues – previously these had only been five or six a year.

The Council is paid for by money raised from a precept paid by the householders of Mathon. This year 2016/17 the precept was £6,373. This pays for the Clerk's salary and expenses, insurance and other expenses the Council is obliged to pay such as the data protection fee and the website. The Council provides a grant to the PCC towards the upkeep of the churchyard, and also a grant to the Parish Hall. We pay for the green in the Centre of the village to be mowed and kept tidy. This has been done by Ron Hadley who has done an excellent job as usual, and does far more than he is paid for. I would like to thank him for his efforts.

This year is the last year we will have received a full grant from Herefordshire Council for the upkeep of the footpaths. In future, we will have to contribute to get a part grant, and in a couple of years time this will be totally phased out. With this in mind, we increased our precept for 2017/18 by an extra £300.00. In November we set our precept for 2017/18 at £7,289.00 – an increase of £516 which includes the £300 for footpaths.

Cllr Tom Ainscough agreed to be our Footpaths Officer and took over from Geoff Fielding who resigned the position in March. Along with a group of helpers who walk the paths and report back on any problems – this has worked well. Ted Stewart carries out repairs, mowing and strimming under Tom's direction, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tom and his helpers and Ted for all their hard work keeping the paths up together. This year we have had to purchase our own materials as they are no longer provided by Herefordshire Council. As previously mentioned, the footpaths grant scheme (P3) will be phased out, and we will then be required to fund all the footpath work we wish to carry out.

The Mathon Parish Map has been removed from the Hall and put into storage as it had slipped in its frame and was deteriorating. Cllr Tom Ainscough has been finalising an application for a grant towards a storage unit for it, and looking at any further restoration that might be required.

Highways issues, particularly potholes, have been on the Agenda over the year, with potholes being repaired with varying degrees of success.

The Cliffe still remains closed, but the Council keep a close eye on it, and writes periodically to the owner, but as yet we still do not have any information about future plans.

Finally, I would like to than our Clerk Diana Taylor for all her hard work and my fellow Councillors for attending meetings throughout the year to keep the Council viable.

**Public Question Time**

No questions raised.

**Close of Meeting** - the Chairman thanked all those present and closed the meeting.