

WEBSITE: WWW.MATHONPARISHCOUNCIL.CO.UK

MATHON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

7.00 PM - 2ND MAY 2018

HELD AT MATHON PARISH HALL

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mr Duncan Bridges, CEO of Malvern Hills Trust and Simon Freeman the Chairman of the Trust. They had been invited to give a short presentation on proposals being put forward for the future size, shape and governance of the Trust.

Malvern Hills Conservators was established by Act of Parliament in 1884. It was registered as a Charity in 1984, and adopted the working name of "Malvern Hills Trust" in April 2017. The Trust now needed to update its administrative powers to facilitate better management and bring the governance into line with current good practice. However, as the Charity is governed by statute changes can only be made by another Act of Parliament or a Scheme under Section 73 of the Charities Act 2011. Under the Scheme proposals out of date provisions will be repealed, and new powers granted – e.g. providing additional fundraising options to enable better land management, changes in the way Board members are appointed/elected – creating a smaller Board of 12. The key additional fundraising powers would allow the Trust to set up a membership organisation and a trading subsidiary. Key new land management powers would enable MHT to purchase and look after its own livestock, allow temporary fenced areas for livestock, and make the grazed commons stockproof, thus encouraging property owners with commoners rights to graze their animals safely. Grazing is the key management tool to keep down the growth of scrub and trees. The current Board is made up of 29 Trustees, 11 elected by 10 wards & parishes, 8 Malvern Hills District Cllrs, and 10 by appointment. The proposal for improved governance arrangements would be to have a smaller board of 12 Trustees made up of 6 elected and 6 appointed Trustees with Board members to serve a maximum of 2 full consecutive terms (each of 4 years). Over the last 4 years the Board has considered the case for change and the available options and agreed a set of proposals. The Charity Commission agreed in principle in 2016 to settle a Scheme for MHT. However, there has to be a full public consultation and an opportunity for all stakeholders (such as Mathon Parish Council) and the public to have their say. All responses will be carefully considered and any amendments made before the final draft of the Scheme is prepared for the Charity Commission and Dept of Culture Media & Sport. It will then be laid before Parliament.

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

Chairman's Annual Report to 31st March 2018

The Council considered a variety of planning applications during the year – covering garages/stables; agricultural log cabin; conversion of outbuilding to dwelling; conversion of office to holiday let; demolition of a bungalow; highway access and a house with an agricultural tie/connection. The only one the Council had concerns over was the access onto the main road. However, this was granted by Herefordshire Council (with conditions).

In November the Council set the Precept for the 2018/19 year of £7,468. This covers the costs of running the Council and budgets for various projects the Council provides and supports. In 2017/18 the Council gave a grant of £850 to Mathon PCC towards the upkeep of the churchyard. We also paid for the mowing of the green and other small areas of green in the Parish. This has been done by Ron Hadley who does an excellent job at a very reasonable cost, and I would like to thank him for all his hard work in keeping the green spaces smart and tidy. The Council had allocated a grant for the Parish Hall, but in view of the excellent state of health of the Hall's finances, it was decided to ringfence this money for the conservation of the Parish Map.

This year we again signed up to the P3 Scheme for the Footpaths in the parish. However, the Council had to contribute to the scheme in order to obtain a grant. We therefore obtained a grant of £1,000 plus a £300 contribution from the Parish Council. The scheme was co-ordinated by Cllr Tom Ainscough and I thank him on behalf of the Council for all his work with the P3 scheme. The Council has a contract with Ted Stewart for all the maintenance and repair work needed on the footpaths within the Parish, and I would like to thank him for his excellent service.

Highways – again we have had a steady stream of pothole issues throughout the year, together with flooded roads and ditches and a blocked culvert. These complaints are logged via Herefordshire Council through to Balfour Beatty and the system seems to work quite well.

At our Annual Parish Meeting in 2017, Malvern Hills Trust spoke to us about the changes they were hoping to make – particularly in relation to reducing the number of Board members. Since then our Parish Council representative David Baldwin and Mathon's elected representative Chris Rouse have regularly attended our meetings and kept us up to date with progress throughout the year.

In February 2018 Cllr Tom Ainscough resigned from the Parish Council due to ill health. He did, however, remain as Footpaths Officer until the end of March. I would like to thank him for his work as Footpaths Officer and for his work on the conservation of the Parish Map.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for attending meetings and enabling the Council to continue. Thank you also to our Clerk - Diana Taylor – who keeps us up to date and in line with all current rules and regulations.

Public Question Time - No questions raised

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

