

# **MATHON PARISH COUNCIL**

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING Held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> MAY 2024 at 7.30 pm in Mathon Parish Hall

**Present:-** Cllr S Harte, Cllr K Perkins, Cllr N Walker

**In attendance:** Mrs D Taylor (Clerk), Mr D Baldwin (Malvern Hills Trust), Deborah Fox CEO Malvern Hills Trust, Mr Chris Rouse Malvern Hills Trust .

1 member of the public attended the meeting

**Election of Chairman** – Cllr S Harte was elected Chairman. Proposed by Cllr N Walker and seconded by Cllr K Perkins. The Chairman signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office & Code of Conduct.

**Apologies for absence :** Cllr M Malsbury, Cllr C Green, Cllr P Davies, Ward Cllr Helen Heathfield.

**Election of Vice-Chairman** – to be deferred.

**DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPI) or other DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS falling within the terms of para 12(4)(b) of the Code of Conduct – No Declarations made.**

**Written Requests from Councillors for the Council to Grant a Dispensation (S33 of the Localism Act 2011) - No requests had been received by the Clerk relating to any items on the present Agenda**

**The Chairman adjourned the Meeting for Public Question Time/Participation.**

### **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

- (a) **Public questions** – none
- (b) **Malvern Hills Trust** – Mr Dave Baldwin (MHT) introduced Deborah Fox, the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Malvern Hills Trust, who spoke to the meeting regarding the proposed updates and changes to the Malvern Hills Acts dated 1884. She reminded the Council that 2024 was the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Trust. Since 1884 the world has changed dramatically and the ability to conserve the hills landscape has been stifled by the outdated governance arrangements. Because the Trust is governed by statute, changes to the governance have to be made by way of a Parliamentary Private Bill. The Charity Commission has given consent for the Trust to proceed with this course of action and has authorised the Trust to spend £306K on legal costs and fees associated with the Parliamentary process. Certain core principles for the governance of the hills will remain the same – protecting and preserving the hills as a public open space – keeping all decision making open to the public – the right of those who pay the levy to elect trustees to the Board. At the moment the Trust powers to raise funds are very limited and it needs to diversify its income streams and raise funds in the same way as other modern charities. The Acts are very out of date and the Trust needs to be able to deal with practical situations which were not envisaged when the Acts were passed. The Trust is seeking to reduce the size of the Board (at present 29 members) down to no more than 12 Trustees with the proportion of elected Board members increasing from 38% as at present to 50% with the proposed changes. The Trust plans to undertake a public consultation in the summer and wants to hear from as wide a range of users as possible. More detailed information will be made available on the Trust's website [www.malvernhills.org.uk](http://www.malvernhills.org.uk)

- (c) **Herefordshire Ward Councillor** - No Report
- (d) **CSO/West Mercia Police** – No Report

### **The Chairman re-opened the Meeting**

#### **20/24 FOOTPATHS**

Cllr K Perkins reported that since Herefordshire Council had taken back the running of the PROW from Balfour Beatty, she had received no response from them so there was nothing to report on the footpaths front.

#### **21/24 STANDING ORDERS**

The Council noted the Standing Orders 2018 (adopted 4th July 2018)

#### **22/24 CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Council noted the updated LGA Model Code of Conduct 2020 (adopted on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023)

#### **23/24 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Council noted the Financial Regulations 2019 (adopted in July 2020). New Financial Regulations had just been published and would be reviewed at the next meeting in July

#### **24/24 RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Council noted the Risk Assessment schedule prepared by the Clerk (which had been circulated to Cllrs). Included in this schedule was insurance cover due for renewal at the end of May 2024.

#### **25/24 ANNUAL INSURANCE REVIEW**

The Council approved the annual insurance renewal to be moved to Zurich Insurance for 2024/25 as the new quote was £264.00 (less than half of the quote from the current insurers). Proposed by Cllr N Walker and seconded by Cllr K Perkins.

#### **26/24 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

- (a) Parish Council Member – Mathon Parish Hall Committee. Cllr S Harte was proposed by Cllr N Walker and seconded by Cllr K Perkins.
- (b) Mathon Parish Council representative on the Malvern Hills Trust – Mr David Baldwin was appointed at the Council Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 for a further extension to run from November 2023 to November 2027.

#### **27/24 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were approved and signed. Proposed by Cllr S Harte and seconded by Cllr N Walker. The Minutes of the Planning Meeting of the Council held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were approved and signed. Proposed by Cllr S Harte and seconded by Cllr N Walker.

#### **28/24 MATHON PARISH HALL**

Cllr S Harte reported that a Quiz Night was planned for 7<sup>th</sup> June. The Council gave Cllr S Harte (as Treasurer of the Parish Hall Committee) a framed portrait of King Charles III to display in the hall.

#### **29/24 GRANTS/DONATIONS 2024/25**

The Council approved the first half payment of the graveyard maintenance grant of £700 to PCC Mathon. Proposed by Cllr S Harte and seconded by Cllr K Perkins.

**30/24 FINANCE**

The following payment of Accounts as per cheque list signed by the Chairman (attached to the Minutes) was approved. Proposed by Cllr S Harte and seconded by Cllr K Perkins :-

- (a) D W Taylor - Clerk’s Salary - April/May 2024 - (PAYE deducted) – £621.40 (new salary scale SCP 27)
- (b) The Business Supplies Group – website posting/updates - £192.00
- (c) Zurich Municipal – insurance premium 2024/25 - £264.00
- (d) Duffy Regan & Co – External Audit for 2023/24 - £60.00
- (e) PCC Mathon – first half of graveyard grant 2024/25 - £700.00
- (f) Consider & Approve Year End Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 - the Accounts as audited by Duffy Regan & Co had been circulated to Cllrs. These were approved. Proposed by Cllr K Perkins and seconded by Cllr N Walker. (These were signed and dated by the Clerk & Chairman).

**31/24 APPROVAL OF ANNUAL AUDIT RETURN FOR ACCOUNTS TO 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2024 (as an exempt authority)**

- (a) The Council resolved that as the income or expenditure of the Council was less than £25K p/a the Council met the criteria to be considered an “Exempt” Authority and did not have to forward a return to the External Auditors. Proposed by Cllr N Walker and seconded by Cllr K Perkins. However, the Certificate of Exemption to be sent to the External Auditors PFK Littlejohn LLP.
- (b) **Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24** (signed by Internal Auditor – Duffy Regan & Co)
- (c) **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement** (signed by Chairman & Clerk)  
Proposed by Cllr K Perkins and seconded by Cllr N Walker
- (d) **Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statement** (signed by the Chairman & Clerk)  
Proposed by Cllr N Walker and seconded by Cllr K Perkins

**32/24 HIGHWAYS**

- (a) Pot Hole outside Badgers where the hedge had been cut back Ref FS Case 595342545 – has now been filled
- (b) Pot Holes – Hackney Cross – Ref FS Case 595343953 and
- (c) Blocked Culvert along West Malvern Road – FS Case 595345623 - Cllr S Harte to have a look at both these problems and report back
- (d) Pot Holes – Rook Row Farm – reported again by the Clerk via phone to BB. These were scheduled to be dealt with by 1<sup>st</sup> May (weather permitting).
- (e) Other reports/complaints - the Chairman to liaise with the Clerk re reporting a deep pot hole near to the bridge close to Ferney Cottage.

**33/24 CLIFFE ARMS** - Nothing to report at the moment.

**34/24 CORRESPONDENCE** – all relevant correspondence had been e-mailed to Cllrs

**35/24 MATTERS FOR FUTURE AGENDA** - None raised

**36/24 NEXT MEETING DATE** - Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 at 7.30 pm in Mathon Parish Hall

..... Chairman Date .....





