

# ST PAUL MALMESBURY WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at Crudwell Village Hall

**Present:** Cllrs Budgen (Chair), Hatherell, Clogg, Hopkins, Ingham, Jones, Merriman, Payne, Stephens and Smith (WC)

**Apologies:** Cllrs Briggs and Maslin

**In Attendance:** Three members of the public

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose was to allow the Council to report on the work it has undertaken on behalf of parishioners over the past council year, May 2021 to April 2022.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Briggs and Maslin.

3. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 were adopted and signed as a true record.

4. PARISH COUNCIL REPORT FOR THE YEAR

Cllr Budgen reported the past year had again been very busy and successful for the Parish Council with a range of activities undertaken and some of their important projects either completed or advanced. The following are some of the main points from the last twelve months:

### Personnel & Administration

The Council agreed to increase the contracted hours of its Clerk as a result of the completion of a very successful probationary period and taking on all the duties of the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and administrator of the Council's website.

During the year the Council introduced revised Code of Conduct, Grant, and Staff & Councillor Training policies.

The Council deemed it unnecessary to increase its precept for the 2022/23 hence it will remain at the level of this year.

### Planning

The following are the main points of planning activity during the period

- In total 57 applications were reviewed and comments submitted to Wiltshire Council (WC).
- WC Enforcement, at the behest of the Council, has investigated a number of breaches to planning consent at various locations around the parish, some remain on-going.
- WC continue to be unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of land/sites for housing across the County which has resulted in all the adopted neighbourhood plans in Wiltshire that are more than two years old suffering considerably reduced planning weight.
- The Council has joined a working party of representatives from the three parishes that prepared and delivered the Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan (MNP) with an objective of updating the current plan to enable it to conform to the 2-year criteria. After an informal consultation in the autumn, a formal Regulation 14 consultation is presently in progress. It is anticipated that the amended plan will be adopted later this year.
- The Council, along with many other parish councils in the County, is participating in the revision of the Wiltshire Council Local Plan 2016 - 2036

## Highways

The Council continues to be an enthusiastic member of the Community Area Transport Group and has attended all the meetings in this council year. The CATG is to be reconfigured to include minor footpath improvement requests and will henceforth be known as the Local Highway & Footpath Improvement Group (LHFIG). An increased budget will accompany this change.

The Council in support of the present residents of Storey Mews, Burton Hill and the future residents of the soon to be constructed residential development behind, has managed to convince Wiltshire Highways (WH) of the hazardous highway environment of the existing speed restriction on the A429 and the junction with Storey Mews. WH have agreed to conduct a Traffic Order consultation with a view to moving the 30mph limit further south along the A429

## Projects

The Council has

- Introduced a new and improved website that is more 'user-friendly' and easier to use.
- Completed the installation of additional lighting along Foxley Road from its junction with Common Road down to Truckle Bridge.
- Agreed a specification and appointed a contractor to install a level, all-weather link to enable pedestrians, cyclists, pushchair, wheelchair & mobility scooter users, to travel safely and sustainably between Cowbridge and Malmesbury
- Agreed plans with WC to extend the Milbourne safety refuge; costings and timescales are awaited.
- The Council has formed a small working party to investigate other projects that the Council might consider taking forward.

## Finance

The Council has

- Successfully prepared and passed the External Audits of its accounts and processes for 2021.

## Playgrounds

- Both the Chippenham Road and Rodbourne Road playing fields have undergone a monthly internal inspection with no safety issues reported. Both facilities passed their annual RoSPA inspections with only minor observations reported.

## Community Governance Review

- The Council was informed in the autumn of last year that Malmesbury Town Council had requested a review of its joint boundaries with SPMW. There was no prior consultation with this Council. The benefits to residents of this MTC proposal are poorly set out and difficult to quantify.
- A virtual informal consultation was held at the end of October with both Councils and interested residents. An online survey was set up into which comments were invited on the proposals and counter-proposals from the two Councils.
- A substantial number of residents from this council expressed an objection to the MTC proposal and expressed support for the present arrangements and the performance of this Council.
- From these online comments the Governance Review Committee produced a revised proposal. A formal consultation on this proposal is underway at present. This Council continues to argue that change to the boundary structure is not necessary given the acknowledged good governance and level of service delivered.

5. WILTSHIRE UPDATE BY COUNCILLOR MARTIN SMITH, WILTSHIRE COUNCILLOR FOR THE SHERSTON DIVISION

Since May 2021, when I was elected to represent the wider Sherston area at Wiltshire Council, I have spent much of my time on case work, which is where residents seek help with accessing various services from Wiltshire Council or seek advice and/or lobby their local councillor on planning matters.

Planning:

Unfortunately, the planning team, particularly in the north of the county, have been struggling with turning around planning applications within the timescales they should be meeting. The initial problems started with a surge in applications during and after the Covid pandemic, the implementation of a new IT system early in 2021, lots of vacancies in the planning team, the changes in planning regulations by Government in undermining Neighbourhood Plans over two years old and the lack of a 5-year development land supply at Wiltshire Council. The latter two issues have meant an increase in speculative applications on green-field sites from large developers, which have further added to the planning workload, as developers go straight to appeal due to non-determination of their application by Wiltshire Council in the regulated timescales.

I have asked numerous questions of the Cabinet at Wiltshire Council about the above issues (as reported in the local press) but have only received assurances that all is well, when plainly it is not. There are still major delays in getting applications determined (42% of applications are not determined within the 13 week service level). We are still losing planning staff to the private sector and other authorities. I will keep reminding the cabinet that all is not well.

At the detailed level I was pleased to be of assistance to persuade the planning committee to reject a housing development adjacent to the Corston Quarry and Pond Local Nature Reserve.

Highways and Speeding:

The issue that I have had most complaints about after planning, are highways and speeding through many parts of the area. The state of the highways are in general not good. Since 2010, local authority support from central Government has been cut. The Local Government Association, in a study, says that this support has been reduced by 16% even over the last 4 years, whilst having their council tax increases capped at 2%. This accounts for the pressure on budgets and the reason for the number of potholes. However I continue to press for potholes to be fixed where I am aware of them. Please continue to use the MyWilts app to report issues and alert me if there are related safety issues.

With the support of the Parish Council, I have managed to get the repainting of white lines onto the list for this year in the areas of the pedestrian crossing on the Priory Roundabout at Burton Hill, at the roundabout by Dyson and the roundabout by Aldi. The budget for painting white lines is nowhere near enough to maintain the whole network to the required standard.

I have also obtained Highways agreement to move the 30 mph zone south on the A429 at Burton Hill following concerns from residents at Storey Mews.

I was also able to facilitate responses to the Parish on the street lighting scheme for Foxley Road.

I am also trying to reinstate a Community Speed Watch group in Sherston village as this scheme is being relaunched across Wiltshire on 1st June, by the new Police and Crime Commissioner, following pressure from myself and other councillors.

I am also hoping to set up a Lorry Watch group in Sherston that monitors the movements of HGVs trying to use the lanes in Sherston, with existing weight limits.

I would be happy to assist in similar schemes in the St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish.

Electric Vehicle Public Charging Points:

As the lead councillor on the Malmesbury Area Board for Climate Change, I set up a survey for the Town and Parish Councils in the Malmesbury Area to assess the need for public EV charging points, aimed at those residents who have no off-street parking. Following that I am working with officers at Wiltshire Council and as soon as they have set up a framework and process, I will be applying to get charging points installed around the wider community area.

Climate Change and Biodiversity:

My work on the steering committee of Sustainable Sherston, the School and Sherston Parish Council, does to some degree also impact this parish. For example I am progressing better signage to encourage more cycling on the Foxley Road as an alternative and sustainable route between Sherston and Malmesbury. Also looking to open up more footpaths and cycle routes in the wider Malmesbury Area to join up the town with the surrounding villages. I also supported the grant from the Area Board for a thermal imaging camera to enable residents to check on the insulation in their homes. This has been very popular given the increase in the cost of energy. Please contact Sustainable Sherston if you wish to hire it out.

Community Governance Review - Parish Boundary changes:

I have worked with Roger (the Chair) and other Parish Councillors in resisting the Committee's current proposal to separate Milbourne from St. Paul, through facilitating and preparing submissions to various meetings. This work continues.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

It was queried whether it had been advertised that the thermal imaging camera was available for hire for residents to check the insulation of their properties. Cllr Smith stated Sherston are just beginning to loan it out further afield. It costs £10 for 48 hours and is best used in cooler weather. It was agreed this information should be circulated.

A parishioner asked for clarification on calling in applications. Cllr Smith explained that very large applications tend to get called in to a planning committee of Wiltshire Council. Also if a lot of contentious comments are received, the application gets called in so all views get a proper airing. If a parish council asked Cllr Smith to call an application in, he would do so. It is a quasi-judicial process, planners make their recommendations, objectors make statements, so all the pros and cons are discussed. A decision is made on planning issues. In the event of an appeal an Inspector, appointed by central government, determines whether to uphold or reject the decision. It was queried whether the Chair votes and Cllr Smith said a Chair tends to judge the mood.

A parishioner commented that regarding improving connections between villages, there are landowners between A and B who need to be consulted. Cllr Smith said permissive path sections help to join up byways etc. A plan for improved walking and cycling routes exists. A parishioner commented that particularly with key bits of land the subject needs broaching with landowners and that the proposed battery storage development may impact a footpath. Cllr Smith pointed out that representatives from Lea & Cleverton Council were present at the meeting.

A parishioner asked if parish council minutes can be added to the website promptly. The clerk said in recent months draft minutes had been added to the website prior to the following Parish Council Meeting where minutes were formally approved.

Cllr Hatherell asked Cllr Smith if there was any word re improvements to the MyWilts system and offered to work with Wiltshire Council to try and improve it. Cllr Smith will chase this issue.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

To be agreed.

Cllr Budgen thanked Cllr Smith for his presentation and thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 19:05

..... Chair

..... Date