

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for the Parish of Mayfield

Held at The Church Rooms on Tuesday 31st May 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllr. J. Watson – Chairwoman

Cllr. C. Allen

Cllr. S. Bridgett

Cllr. P. Boura

Cllr. J. Kennedy

Cllr. G. Moodie

Cllr. A. Golding – sitting as a member of the public, contrary to the Clerk's request that he joined the other councillors

Mrs A. Wilson – Locum Parish Clerk

PCSO Tim Leathers – Staffordshire Police

Andy Taylor-Smith – Community First Responder

10 Members of the public–

1. Welcome from the Chairwoman

The Chairwoman welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that she hoped that the meeting would be as community spirited and as good a meeting as the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting.

2. To receive apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Croll

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

RESOLVED to confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Saturday 4th May 2019. This resolution was passed by Cllrs and residents after some debate about the availability of the draft minutes, which the Clerk confirmed had been posted on the PC website for some weeks.

There was no Annual Parish Meeting in 2020 or 2021.

4. Any updates from the minutes of the 5th May 2021 Annual Parish Meeting and the activities of the Parish Council during the last year.

The Chairwoman said that although there was no Annual Parish Meeting in 2021 any update from 2019 was included in her report.

5. Report from the Chairman of Mayfield Parish Council, Cllr. Janet Watson

The Chairwoman set out her objectives after being voted in as Chairwoman in April 2021:

- To change and improve the efficiency and style of meetings, enabling all Councillors to participate fully in meetings rather than just being dominated by a few

- Encouraging all Councillors to have a special interest, and through working groups, to make recommendations to the Council on specific projects which would benefit the community.
- Involving the community more in decision making
- Responsibility for the effective support and supervision for the new Clerk

This different style and approach, following the first meeting, was welcomed by everyone.

The past year has been an unusually difficult one for MPC which has been beset by both internal and external challenges. Covid restrictions meant that meetings, previously conducted via Zoom, were held with social distancing measures in place and masks worn, and the meeting had to be cancelled in June. Five Councillors resigned and four new Councillors were co-opted but meetings were inquorate in November and December. This required special measures with two District Councillors attending meetings in January and February to maintain quoracy until March 2022.

Regrettably, following the July PC meeting, two contentious issues arose which divided the Councillors and are well known to certain sectors of the Mayfield community. Recordings showed several unpleasant and intimidating encounters in PC meetings. Several Councillors ultimately resigned and sought formal investigation of the issues under the Member Conduct Complaint Procedure. The Local Monitoring Officer referred these on to a London Barrister, experienced in local authority issues, for a formal investigation. He has completed an extensive confidential draft report which some Councillors have had sight of. When the process has been completed by the Borough Council, the main findings of the report will be published on the PC website. I am happy to report that these issues are now almost behind us, and the new Councillors are united in their desire to move forward, and properly serve the best interests of all our residents.

For 4 months, the excellent temporary Clerk RFO (Responsible Financial Officer), Nicky Taylor- Smith, who had not received a proper hand-over from the previous Clerk, discovered many issues that had not been previously dealt with. Her findings were reported to East Staffs Borough Council. Her well- deserved permanent appointment was approved in April and a close working and supportive relationship was maintained with the Chairwoman. She resigned in December with reasons cited in a Complaint to the Monitoring Officer concerning the behaviour of one Councillor.

Cllr Bridgett agreed to take on the extremely onerous role of acting as a temporary Clerk for minute- taking but was of necessity drawn in to undertaking far more duties, as the Council was unable to replace the Clerk. The former Clerk volunteered to act as 'post box' and send out received emails to Councillors. She has been contracted to undertake the legally required Annual Audit 2021-22 for MPC. We owe a great deal to these two people for their dedication, time and efforts to ensure that the MPC has been able to function over a protracted period. From the end of April 2022, their work will be handed- over to a temporary experienced Agency Clerk, Anne Wilson. The year 2021-22 had many positive outcomes despite the experience of some negative ones.

The Chairman went on to speak about the achievements of Mayfield Parish Council over the past year.

- Identification of traffic issues. Training and Undertaking Speed Watch in Mayfield.
- Negotiations with the Mill & East Staffs Highways for joint funding to obtain new signage,
- Initial investigations into needs and possibilities of allotments. This included raising again the re-use of the facilities used by the former Mayfield School.
- Ideas for improving the appearance of the Village.
- Establishment of protocols to encourage more interaction and involvement by Councillors & the community.
- New Guidance on Grant Aid to conform with financial guidelines and new simplified Application Form.
- Review of Statutory Documents including Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, Financial Regulations, Financial Reserves, Asset Register, Privacy Policy
- Formation of a Planning Group in which 2-3 Councillors with greater knowledge of planning laws could raise issues when assessing or approving applications. (Disbanded due to resignations in October)
- Challenging of East Staffs BC on certain planning decisions taken regarding work undertaken on listed buildings before consent was reached, closure of a local pub and breaches of planning consent and development outside the Settlement Boundary.
- Reporting to relevant Authorities concerns about river pollution, flooding and drainage issues, potholes, verge mowing, dog fouling, footpaths.
- Continuation of maintenance tasks by Graham Woodhouse with Jubilee Gardens now looking superb.
- Provision of litter bins and dog poo bags.
- Presentation of certificate to Jarad Clarke in recognition of his continued work in litter-picking.
- Major improvements and progression on development of MPC Website.
- The highlight and a major piece of work accomplished was the agreement for a Three-Year Plan based on community responses. Cllr Croll arranged a brain- storming planning session and took a lead role in the subsequent work which included the design and delivery of a survey to every household in Mayfield, analysis of the results and subsequent reporting. Four Consultation meetings were then held in St John the Baptist Church on the following themes: Village Amenities, Traffic Management, Outside/Activities for Children, Adult Activities.

These, together with the Survey findings, confirmed the initiatives that the public most wanted and enabled signposting of funding opportunities in the form of small grants and allocation of funding for future earmarked PC- led projects.

In conclusion the Chairman said that 2021-22 has been a very eventful year indeed but one which delivered many successes and much hope for the future. The new PC members are united in wanting to work together on a way forward for Mayfield.

Positive feedback has been received from parishioners about how their views can be made known at public meetings and work on the Three-Year Plan is now underway. The Parish Council will need Village Champions to work with them on PC-led projects.

Questions from the public:

- Margaret Wimbush stated that she had not had a consultation survey delivered to her house and thought that the PC was not aware that Calwich was part of Mayfield Parish and felt that other residents may also not have received a copy. The Chairwoman confirmed that the previous Clerk had posted surveys to households in Calwich.
- Jeff Harrison stated that other parts of the village including Upper and Middle Mayfield had not received them either and that a third of the village had been missed out. He also questioned the response rate of 126 out of 625, which the Clerk confirmed was an excellent response rate. The Chairwoman stated that she had hand delivered copies to every house in Upper Mayfield and Slack Lane, a number were posted to outlying areas and copies had also been available in other places including the church and shop.
- John Parker said that the survey had missed Middle and Upper Mayfield out of the survey demographic data and that the evidence for this was in an email that Cllr Moodie had sent him. Cllr Moodie expressed disappointment that, after considerable explanation of the demographic data produced, which were not part of the survey outcomes, such statements were still being made, meeting after meeting, and were a misrepresentation of the information provided. The Clerk brought an end to this part of the debate, indicating that it was getting out of hand. Cllr Moodie apologised for his exasperated tone.
- Cllr Golding questioned why four out of five grants awarded in April were not in line with the Grants Policy or Financial Regulations and no reason to do this had been given. He said he wanted to know what the ESBC position would be on this. The Clerk stated that it was perfectly acceptable not to adhere to Financial Regulations so long as there was a valid and minuted reason. Cllr. Bridgett said that the reasoning behind the awards was set out in the minutes of the April meeting. Cllr Golding also stated that the Development Plan contained incorrect information and the Chairwoman reminded him that this item of discussion was closed, and that Cllr Golding should not continue to interrupt and talk over people. The Clerk indicated that this issue had already been addressed and that Cllr Golding should set out his concerns in writing which she would consider and her response would be an end to the matter, after which there would be no further correspondence. Cllr Golding replied, no I'll email you and you'll reply. The Clerk then indicated that the meeting should calm down. The Chairwoman said that she was not prepared to have the meeting continue with a constant barrage from the same few people about issues that had been discussed repeatedly over recent months. Jeff Harrison said that they never got the chance to speak, only listen and this was the Parish Meeting. The Clerk stated it was a legal requirement that the public could only speak in the public participation session of PC meetings and not throughout.
- A. Blackwell felt that the grant application she had would like to have submitted could have been had she understood that there was flexibility. She

did not put it in because she thought that the group she represented did not meet the criteria for a grant and they had therefore missed out. The Clerk said that it had been perfectly possible for any resident to seek advice and consult a Cllr or the Clerk prior to any application.

- John Parker and Jeff Harrison introduced the issue of a potential application for funding by a Tug of War team. The Chairwoman said that this had been discussed at length and minuted at the April meeting. It had been the responsibility of Cllr Golding to ensure that the resident knew how to access the application form. Cllr Golding shouted down the Chairwoman saying “you took no action”. The Clerk repeated that there would be no further discussion about grants and that other comments made in relation to this issue were hearsay and not for the PC.
- Alex Blackwell said that the PC had changed the Standing Orders which meant that there was a limit on what residents could say in meetings. This was the third time he had raised the issue but it had not been minuted. It was agreed that his comments had been previously minuted. The Clerk stated that there was nothing unusual in the form of wording which the PC had adopted and that much of the way that PC meetings were conducted was the subject of statutory regulation. The Chairwoman reminded the meeting that the PC had in recent months provided other forums through which more open dialogue could be pursued and she was hopeful that other such themed sessions might be held in the future.

6. Report from our Staffordshire County Councillor, Cllr. Philip Atkins

There had been no response from Cllr. Atkins who did not attend the meeting.

7. Report from our East Staffordshire Borough Councillor, Cllr. Edward Barker

The Clerk read out the following from Cllr. Barker:

The majority of enquiries and concerns I am receiving at the moment are about our new recycling system.

The council has negotiated a new contract to recycle all fibre (paper and cardboard together) which will be both financially and environmentally beneficial.

If you require more capacity please ask and another bag will be provided, if that is still not enough any surplus stacked and packed will be collected from alongside the bin.

Further information is on the council’s website under FAQs.

There should be some leniency as the new scheme is introduced but bins will be rejected.

Please let me know if there are any problems.

8. Report from the Police, PCSO Tim Leathers

Tim said that PCSO Sean Elliott was not able to attend the meeting this evening and he had happily attended as he was on duty.

Tim said that there was a 7% decrease in crime overall in the area year on year. The top three reductions were in theft from motor vehicles, criminal damage and other offences. The biggest increase was the increase in reports of residential burglaries, but this must be put in the context of a very low base.

Regular patrols are out on the B5032 as this has been highlighted as a speeding hot spot as well as all of the country roads including Weaver Hills.

Tim went on to speak about Cyber Crime, how he had learnt a lot about it on a recent course and how serious Cyber Crime was. He spoke about the dangers of rural crime and how to try to prevent it and that there were a fair number of opportunist thefts.

He left the details, on the information he circulated to those present, of how to contact the Police although he did say that the Staffordshire Police website had a lot of information on too. If you need the Police ring 101. His report would be posted on the PC website.

The Chairman thanked Tim for coming to the meeting.

9. Community First Responder

Andy Taylor-Smith, representing the Community First Responders said that they had a limited number of responders in the area – only four - and although in theory they only covered an eight-mile area from Mayfield this could be eight miles from where they are called out to. The number of call outs varied on a weekly basis.

The policies of the WM Ambulance Service had changed, and he felt that this was detrimental to the role of a Community First Responder as they could no longer carry drugs or offer oxygen, or respond to blue light calls etc. The colour of the vehicles had also got to change so it was less obvious who they were.

The Community First Responders depend on sponsorship and there was a small committee who fundraised to keep them viable. During COVID they virtually stopped responding which also had a detrimental effect on their finances. It cost about £75k to buy and kit out a car.

Andy was asked who could be written to to express concern about the changes to the First Responder Service – it would be Staffordshire Ambulance Service. They were always on the lookout for new responders, and it was explained what the commitment would be. Ms. Blackwell asked about the time commitment per month and was told that a minimum of 20 hours per month was what was expected.

The Chairman expressed gratitude and thanks to the First Responders for all they do.

10. Open Agenda – to accept questions and items for discussion from residents

There were no further appropriate questions asked.

A comment was made by Alex Blackwell about how the Chairwoman had said she wanted to bring in change but he felt that the Councillors did not treat everyone with the same level of respect. He said that he had had an account of the March meeting where Cllr Croll had verbally attacked Cllr. Golding, and the Chair had done nothing about it. The Clerk said that comments and allegations about individual councillors would not be allowed. If a resident had an issue with a councillor's behaviour there was a formal process for complaints and to look at the ESBC website, but that this route was only open to someone who was actually present at the meeting. Otherwise, it was simply hearsay. Cllr Golding intervened and asked what the Chairwoman intended to do about this incident and the letter he had written to her about it. The Clerk repeated that behaviour of councillors at meetings was not the responsibility of the Chair and should be taken up with the Local Monitoring Officer. She said that Cllr Golding was well aware of the process since he'd complained already to the LMO. This was not a matter for the Parish Meeting. Cllr Golding continued to speak over the Clerk, and she asked the Chairwoman if she felt that Cllr Golding should be asked to leave. He challenged the authority to do this, the authority was confirmed by the Clerk. The Chairwoman said that whilst she would not wish to do this Cllr Golding's disrespectful behaviour left little option. She said that she would bring the meeting to a close and was disappointed that what had been a positive opportunity had proved to be such a negative experience.

Victor Bridgett said, as a positive, it would be good to see wildflower planting on grass verges.

The Chairwoman said she felt that the Parish Council did their best to be representative of the parish and worked hard and that Jeff Harrison's opinion that it was "a waste of space" was unfounded.

The meeting closed at 8.17 p.m.

Chairwoman **Date**