

SOUTH LENCHES ANNUAL PARISH MEETING.

<u>Draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 4th May 2021 at 7.00 pm in Church Lench Village Hall, Church Lench.</u>
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Present:	Cllr. Mr. Shore (Chair of the Parish Council), Mrs. N. Holland (Clerk), County Cllr. Mr Hopkins, Dist. Cllr. Mr. Wilkinson, Mrs Hall (Village Hall), Mr. Burns (Community Grant Legacy Project), Jonathan Hazelwood (School/Tree Warden) and 5 members of the public.
1.	Welcome: Apologies received from Dr. Morgan Murray.
2.	Minutes of the meeting held on the 8th April 2019. Resolved that the minutes were of a correct record, duly signed by the Chairman.
3.	Matters arising from minutes - Nil.
4.	<p>Report from Chairman of the Parish Council: Mel Shore.</p> <p>Covid has impacted on the Council most notably all meetings have been held virtually via Zoom and as result there was no Annual Parish Meeting in 2020 as a consequence this report covers two years.</p> <p>Last Wednesday (21st April) the High Court sat to discuss a legal challenge to allow virtual meetings for Local Government. A judgement has been passed down and Town and Parish Councils will have to meet face to face beyond the 6th May.</p> <p>During this period there have been changes to Council, Liz Harwood and Jen Fletcher have left us and we welcomed Morgan Murray, Carolyn Hodges and Julia Tyrrell to the Council. I will be leaving the Council after this meeting which will mean a new Chairman will be elected and leave two vacancies on the Council.</p> <p>Considerations for the years included:</p> <p><u>Planning:</u> There have been few new builds during this time and the focus has been on change of use on lettings and conversions of agricultural buildings particularly in and around Ab Lench.</p> <p><u>New Homes Bonus:</u> In the past we have enjoyed substantial grants following new developments within the Parish. This has now been ended and Wychavon District Council now invites Councils to bid for grants from a legacy fund. The Lenches Sport and Recreation Club submitted a bid for a grant to develop an open air amphitheatre supported by the Council. This was successful and Chris will give details later.</p> <p><u>Parish Assets:</u> The principle asset is the playground. Because of the age, various elements were in need of renewing/refurbishment. This included replacement of the perimeter fence in a style matching the Boules area. The play area was closed due to lockdown but now is open subject to Covid regulations.</p> <p>The responsibility for maintaining the Village Pool/Play area is the Parish Council who has recently contracted A & R grass and hedge cutting services to maintain the areas on our behalf.</p> <p><u>Neighbourhood Plan:</u> The plan is progressing an update will follow.</p>
5.	<p><u>Community Grant legacy project.</u></p> <p>Point of information. I am reporting as the Chair of the Steering Group, and am not a member of the LSRC.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Initial project budget was for very basic seating area and metal building. The £106k Project budget was intended to cover this.2. The project captured the imagination of many professionals, and FOC offers of services were received from a firm of architects, a planning consultant, a quantity surveyor and a

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	<p>structural engineer. In addition, other services have been obtained at preferential prices. It's hard to evaluate the cash contribution of these free service provisions, but it runs into many thousands of pounds worth of value to the community. In this respect the Steering Group have done extremely well.</p> <p>3. Jewson at a very early stage offered to help. This translated into the following: 80,000 50mm bricks FOC to build the risers on the Amphitheatre seating. 12000 65mm Bricks FOC to build a proper building rather than a steel frame. 2700 Spanish roofing slates FOC to allow matching roofing to the pavilion. They are also prepared to supply anything on their inventory that they sell at less than trade price. Additionally, two firms have offered to supply and fit decking and flooring FOC, and another will supply out concrete needs at cost price plus delivery. The value to the community of these contributions alone runs into tens of thousands of pounds.</p> <p>4. As a result of these offers, the Steering Committee took the decision to upgrade the project to produce a facility more in keeping with the existing pavilion and the area. This has had some affect on the original timetable, but it was felt that it was worthwhile to take the time and produce a quality outcome. Currently we are expecting to break ground in early June. In some respects, this is a bonus, as we will avoid ground works in the wet season.</p> <p>5. The tender documents went out on 27th April. Until the tender documents are returned, we will not know the overall project costs, as most of the material will be supplied through the LSRC the tender will mainly be for labour and machinery. We will know more by early June.</p> <p>6. Despite the generosity of donors the LSRC have been asked to consider a shortfall of about £20k and are taking steps to raise funds to cover this.</p> <p>So, what does the community get from the completed project?</p> <p>If all goes to plan we will have a high spec 250 seated terraced Amphitheatre with brick risers and with a good quality artificial grass seating area. There will be a wheelchair friendly track on a level which will allow access to the disabled toilet with no need for a ramp. A charging point for electric cars will be available on the south wall of the pavilion. The two story building will be brick built to match the existing pavilion, and the slated roof will do the same. The ground floor will provide space for maintenance equipment on the ground floor, and on the first floor a storage area, a shower and toilet, and flexible public open space with a finished floor and large sliding door opening out onto a veranda on the west and north side of the building, which will allow viewing of the sports field, and stage and seating area.</p> <p>There will inevitably be problems to solve during the construction phase, but I am confident that this time next year the community will have a facility to be proud of (and although with luck Covid will be a distant memory), a facility designed with the future in mind.</p> <p>I would like to take this chance to thank the Parish Council, and District and County Councillors for their support.</p>
6.	<p>Report from County Cllr. Mr. Hopkins:</p> <p>Although members lobbied for virtual meetings to continue as concerns over meeting in person the Government has withdrawn the virtual meeting legislation.</p> <p><u>Highways:</u> Once COVID 19 has reduced and Officers back in the Office hopefully routine work will commence. At present Officers are only attending to urgent matters.</p> <p>With regard to COVID numbers have dropped to 11 cases per 100,000 in the County. There are still cases in hospital.</p> <p>Would like to thank Mel Shore for being such an excellent Chair and to Martin Davey for all his assistance with issues related to highways matters along Low Road.</p>

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7.	<p>Dist. Cllr. Mr. Wilkinson reported:</p> <p>At this time of year I would normally be advising the Parish of annual progress with the day-to-day business of the District Council, including its financial situation, council tax, and performance in core activities including refuse collection/recycling, grass cutting, etc. But for the second year running the year's activities have been hugely overshadowed by one issue - Covid-19.</p> <p>The Council has been able to maintain vital activities such as refuse collection, but a large part of its resources has inevitably been concentrated on the response to the pandemic, with various support measures available to individuals and to businesses.</p> <p>Many Council staff have been working from home, Council meetings have been held by video link, and site visits for planning and enforcement purposes have largely been suspended except for urgent cases.</p> <p>That situation changes from this week, with public Council meetings reverting to 'in person' meetings. From 21st June, Council staff will be permitted no more than 60% of their time working from home.</p> <p>The 7-day rolling rate of Covid-19 cases recorded in Wychavon is currently in the Inkberrow Ward 6, which is well below the national average and is the lowest rate in the County. It is also the lowest level since August 2020.</p> <p>Data released last Friday showed that 78,000 people in Wychavon have received at least one vaccination dose, which is 61% of the overall population, or 66% of over-16s.</p> <p>There is hope that we are nearing the end of the lock-down; I am sure everyone is aware of the further relaxations of restrictions, due to take place on 17th May and 21st June.</p> <p>As always, if any Parish member has any issues or problems, particularly at this difficult time, I will be pleased to help where possible.</p>
8.	Neighbourhood Watch Co-Ordinator report: No report received.
9.	Police report: No report received.
10.	<p>Neighbourhood Plan: Mrs. Hodges reported that the Group has had a busy year. Visions/Objectives document and policies have been updated. Valued Landscapes have been relooked at with assistance from the Planning Consultant and photographs retaken. Both Dr. Murray and Mrs. Hodges have attended virtual training sessions on the subject along with meetings with the District Council Officers. The last Parish Survey which included a Housing Needs Survey as well was done a few years ago. A new Survey has been compiled and is due to be delivered to households shortly. The Group has taken on board input from the South Worcestershire Development Plan; revised the Evidence & Justification Document. The new document has been shortened to 10 questions, will be delivered to the 350 households through the letter box to be posted back to the company who will compile the results.</p>
11.	<p>Church Lench Village Hall, Celia Hall, Chairman:</p> <p>Covid affected the village hall severely. All regular and ad hoc bookings had to be cancelled or refused. At one point the 100 Club was our only source of income. Fortunately Pre-School returned for two weeks in July and then resumed in September. For the safety of the children and staff we undertook to give Pre-School the sole use of the hall.</p> <p>I would like, here, to thank to Jacky and Tony Waghorn and their company who provided, free of charge, two complete "foggings" of the hall before Pre-School returned in the summer and again in the autumn.</p> <p><u>Improvements</u></p> <p>Fortunately we were in receipt of substantial grants from Wychavon (approx £20,000) Given our sound financial footing before the pandemic, we found ourselves in a good position to use the time to improve the hall and carry out quite costly repairs. The floor has been</p>

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	<p>resurfaced. The roof has been repaired and pointing replaced. We have refurbished the kitchen and bought a new cooker. It all looks really splendid and we are looking forward to using it. It is possible that in the future we may be able to hire out the kitchen for village events. Craig MacDonald and his company have resurfaced and gravelled the car park as a gift. We thank him sincerely. It now looks good and enhances the area, not just the hall.</p> <p><u>Fundraising</u> With our usual money raising activities abandoned we looked at ways of bringing in some cash and produced mugs and sets of notelets to sell before Christmas - and afterwards.</p> <p><u>Pre-School</u> We have a good relationship with Pre-School and its new management and committee. We hope the new car park surface will go a long way to resolving the problem of the path flooding which made their life difficult and resulted in some complaints from parents. Pre-School had an enormous clear-out and got rid of unsightly plastic play furniture from the garden. We have given permission for them to put up a small wooden play station in the garden similar to the furniture in the village play area. Preschool is now open on Mondays - at least for an experimental period. We so look forward to returning the hall to full use from May 17 (following guidelines) and to welcoming again all our faithful supporters in the villages and we hope to see everyone again before too long.</p>
12.	<p>Lenches Social Club: No report received.</p>
13.	<p>School, Tree Warden and Lenches Sports & Recreation Club reports.</p> <p><u>School:</u> Church Lench CE VC First School has 77 children currently on roll. Our capacity is 90 with a PAN of 15. There are certain year groups which are over-subscribed. Our last OFSTED report in 2012 judged the school as outstanding and in 2017 the Church SIAMS inspection also judged the school as outstanding. Currently our financial situation is stable and we hope this will remain for the future. We have no plans to join a multi academy trust at present. We have plans this year to spend some of our budget on developing our outdoor Early Years provision and spiritual garden (pond area). We have three full time teaching staff including myself and two part time teachers. We also employ seven teaching assistants; two of whom are full time. We have a very effective team who work collaboratively and strategically to ensure the very best for all our children. We also have an office manager, assistant administrator, site manager and three lunch time supervisors. We have an effective and supportive governing body with 3 new governors recently appointed. We also have an active parent committee who plan and host events to raise money for resources and experiences for the children. Our annual school summer fete is our largest fundraising event in the calendar. With the help of our parent committee we are hoping to purchase a fixed piece of playground equipment very soon to replace our old well- loved pirate ship! We work in close partnership with the Lenches Pre-School and St Egwin's Middle School to ensure smooth transitions for Reception and Year 6 pupils. We also liaise closely with other nurseries/ pre-school settings and middle schools. We have an excellent relationship with All Saints Church and Reverend Canon Richard Thorniley visits the school and children regularly. Every two weeks our 'Open the Book' team visit the children to perform short plays based on Biblical stories. We also hold Easter and Christmas services in the church for parents and community members.</p> <p><u>Tree Warden:</u> 1. Flowering cherries at back of Croft have been pruned</p>

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2. Mountain Ash at the corner of Main Street and Low Road is in poor condition and will need to be removed later this year. It could be replaced with two smaller flowering trees in the Autumn.

3. The Lenches Sports Club will plant trees on the steep bank alongside the footpath. Brambles have been cut back in Yates orchard and two new trees planted

4. The trees alongside the footpath from Evesham Road to the end of the Tuer need some work. Fallen trees removed and scrub cleared. Responsibility for this area is being clarified as it borders the school boundary.

5. Ash Die Back. ADB is present in the parish and will have an increasing impact on the local environment. Current evidence is that at least 85% of our ash trees will die over the next 5 - 10 years. Home and land owners who have ash trees on their properties will have to plan for their removal if they become infected. This will be particularly important where those trees border roads or footpaths. Professional advice should be sought before any action is taken and as the disease is progressive there is time to decide on the best option for each location. Within the conservation area of the parish planning permission is needed even to remove diseased trees. There is no restriction on the disposal of branches or firewood.

Mature ash trees do provide homes for birds, bats and insects many of which are protected from disturbance. In some situations removing the branches while leaving the trunk can remove the risk of falling limbs whilst retaining the wildlife benefits. Where possible trees that have been removed should be replaced with ones that enhance the character of the villages and benefit wildlife. More details are available from a number of websites including the Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust.

Lenches Sports and Recreation Club LSRC.

The LSRC has enjoyed another successful year.

The infilling of the playing field extension was completed and the area leveled and seeded. Despite the very dry summer the grass has established well and it is hoped that it will be playable for the 2019/20 football season.

Work continues to maintain the facilities with further improvements including boundary fencing, tree planting and a machinery store and work shop planned.

The LSRC in conjunction with the tennis club installed artificial grass surfaces on the two tennis courts and the multi-use games area MUGA.

The facilities are used for cricket, football, tennis and netball on a regular basis while the Yates community orchard is used for beekeeping and for Forest School lessons by both the Pre and 1st schools. The Boules court is available free of charge and the installation of the refurbished phone box as a book exchange should be completed by early May.

Finance

The LSRC is financially sound. Income from users covers day to day running expenses and fundraising events are used to rebuild the clubs capital reserves. The club is very grateful to the community for supporting these events.

We are currently building a new website

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/TheLenchesSportsClub> which should help the club promote its facilities and increase rental income from the muga.

The club is hoping to benefit from money allocated from new housing developments within the area to further improve its facilities.

Matters raised by parishioners: Nil.

Meeting closed at 7.45 pm.

No meeting held in 2020 due to COVID 19 pandemic.