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| **The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Great Witley and Hillhampton Parish** |
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| **Held via Zoom on Thursday 20th May 2021 at 7.30pm** |
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| **Present: Chairman**, Cllr F Chapman (FC). | | | | | |
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| **In Attendance:** Clerk, J Evans, C Dermietzel (CD), A Goodman (AG), N Drew (ND), B Dallow (BD), A Symonds (AS),P Trow (PT) and C.Cllr D Chambers (DC).  **Apologies:** Cllr P Trow, C Jones, N Drew and D Cllr P Cumming  The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming those present and saying that due to the recent Lockdowns there have been no social events and sports venues closed. As they open up, new challenges will be faced. Charles Shaw has resigned from the Parish Council and a Notice of Vacancy will be published. It is hoped that a new resident from Great Witley may wish to join possibly from Fountain Court or Glendower Way as they would be central to the village. He greeted David Chambers, the newly elected County Councillor and it was sadly reported that District Councillor Paul Cumming had recently been taken seriously ill and our goods wishes for a speedy recovery are extended to him and his family. The coming year will be challenging, as mentioned above, as we start meeting face to face and hope to return to some sort of normality.  Reports were received from Frank Chapman Chairman, V Snape West Mercia Police Community Support Officer, P Van-Tongeren Village Hall, A Snow Great Witley Church, Quartergreen, K Ramsey Great Witley CE Primary School and Frank Chapman Neighbourhood Plan Working Party. These reports are attached to these Minutes.  David Chambers did not have a report as he is newly elected and attending 2 weeks induction. However, he confirmed that from a meeting held this morning Simon Gerrity is continuing to lead the Council. He has already been contacted by numerous residents and will provide a full report at the next meeting. FC said that some of the issues which are of a concern continue to be the speed of traffic through the village. DC is having a meeting on the following Monday and will discuss these issues then. | | | | | |
| The meeting closed at 20:10 | | | | | |
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| Signed …………………………………….. Date …………………………………….. | | | | | |
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**Reports:**

**West Mercia Police Community Support Officer : Great Witley Parish Council Report 2021**

It has been without doubt the strangest time for everyone in 2020 to 2021, including Policing.

We have seen many people ill with Covid symptoms, and thankfully recover, and sadly those who have passed from this dreadful disease. We have survived lockdowns, and tiers and are now free to begin to start returning to some sort of normality.

As far as Safer Neighbourhood Policing goes it has had its peaks and troughs of work flow last year and this, with a different type of work to actually police, that being Covid concerns, and enforcement. Many times it has been a case of explaining the Government Guidelines, sometimes sterner words of advice have been issued to those who have breached guidelines, and last case resort to issue fines.

We have worked with our community partners to provide reassurance and signpost people to services such as food banks, or food deliveries; dropping in on those who are isolated, and need more robust support.

As a result of the first lockdown, many of our highways were virtually empty, and Parishes eerily quiet. The criminal fraternity were scarce, never venturing out it seemed. When life resumed we did see a take up of crime, with criminal damage, and thefts. Also criminal types who tried to scam the elderly into paying for Covid tests.

Due to the lockdown and time spent at home many people have bought puppies/ dogs /cats / kittens into their homes. The cost of purchasing dogs has rocketed. As a result of the uptake, the criminal fraternity, never one to miss an opportunity, have taken to stealing dogs. This may be from gardens, outside shops, or actually snatching the dog leads from the owner. This is a very distressing type of Crime. People have reported wire wrapped around bars or iron work on their gates, or marks left to identify their address. We all need to be vigilant, and remove these items. Let your community know what is going on and tell the Police, otherwise we are unaware.

Crime in general has been low in our area, but we have seen a surge in catalytic convertor thefts recently. This is due to the Palladium metals inside the convertor. There is information on West Mercia Police Website on best practice on how to keep your vehicles safer from this type of theft.

There are also many more items of interest on the site in connection with security, internet safety, and lots more.

In Great Witley there have been approx. 6 break -ins with out buildings and sheds being targeted. Many members of the public following the lifting of the first lock down called to voice their concerns with the speed of traffic seen on the highways. We have worked with Parish Councils, Worcestershire County Council Highways team and Local authorities and the Safer Road Partnership to see what can be done. As I write this, I have not yet received any solid information as to what any outcome may be. As the team of two we try to patrol the parishes we cover and provide a visible speed deterrent.

Lastly the team here is PC Jack Sykes, and PCSO Ness Snape. We cover approx. 200plus square miles, and more than 27 Parish’s. With that in mind if you need to contact us, many calls can now be made by online reporting on the West Mercia Website. If you want to contact us, you can call, text, email, the details are below. If you do need an officer to attend however you do need to call 101.

[mt.snt@westmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:mt.snt@westmercia.pnn.police.uk)

Ness Snape 07814040307

Lastly here is a list of the scam calls , emails, cards etc, going around at the moment:

There have been many online telephone and email scams, all of which have looked very authentic doing the rounds too:-

**1. Hermes email scam**

Email stating that you have a missed delivery and in order for Hermes to deliver again, you are asked to provide bank details to pay for the £1.45 fees.

**2. Royal Mail email scam**

Email stating that Royal Mail has tried to deliver 3 times and ask you to pay £2.50 to arrange another delivery.

**3. D P D Couriers email scam**

Email stating that you have missed 2 attempted deliveries and you must pay £2.75 to arrange another delivery.

***None of the delivery services would ask you to pay for arranging a delivery under normal circumstances.  In the case where excess postage is required, the official Post Office Staff in his/her uniforms with Identifications would advise you what to do. If in doubt, please check with the company yourself before handing over any cash or personal and financial information.***

**4. National Insurance Telephone Scam**

An automated voice states that your National Insurance number has been compromised to carry out criminal activities.  You are asked to provide personal details to avoid arrests and prosecution.

**5. HMRC Telephone Scam**

An automated voice states that you have underpaid generally quite a large amount of tax like £2,000 and that you will be prosecuted if you do not pay the outstanding amount immediately.

**6. Amazon Telephone Scam**

An automated voice states that your Amazon account has been debited £349.95 incorrectly and if you provide the bank details, they will refund it to your account.

**7. BT Telephone Scam**

An automated voice says that if you do not provide the personal details, your line will be cut off.

***All government agencies do not use automated voice services to inform you of a problem. They generally would write to you.  If a person actually calls you in an unlikely event, you should always check carefully before divulging any personal information.  These scams calls are usually from a mobile number.***

**Scammers are getting more sophisticated and professional looking and sounding.  Please be very careful when providing any information to anyone you are not sure of.**

**Great Witley Village Hall : Village Hall report 20th May 2021**

The hall continues to be run by a small management committee who all play their part in keeping the hall fit for purpose and keeping up with the latest legislation.

I’d like to thank everyone on the committee for their input and time but especially like to highlight Matthew and Jeanette Walters, the booking clerk and treasurer who have streamlined the running of the hall and have had to deal with all the problems of Covid

Our income from room hire and fund raising has dropped by £12000 during the year but costs for repairs and expenses has also dropped by £10,000 We were eligible for a £10,000 grant from the business and leisure compensation fund in April 2020 and have also applied and received an £8,000 restart grant in May 2021 all administered by Malvern hills DC

We spent quite a bit of money making the hall Covid secure and were delighted when Pre School started again last summer and have been using the hall ever since

Bar nights have now restarted and film nights will return in September. Coffee mornings start again on June 1st thanks to Julia van Tongeren and Mary Bingham . They use it to help address isolation and loneliness issues, something that all village halls have been asked to be aware of.

Unfortunately we are sad to say that both Charlie Shaw and Matthew Walters are stepping down from the committee and they will be sorely missed. A huge thank you for all that they have done. I am pleased to say that Stephen Woodhouse has agreed to join us as treasurer.

Thank you Peter van Tongeren,, Chair Gt Witley Village Hall Committee.

**Great Witley Church : Great Witley Parish Church 2020**

2020 began well: regular Sunday worship, baptisms, 12 scheduled weddings and 12 concerts & recitals all booked. A new and effective contactless donation system was installed for visitors.

As covid loomed, it became obvious it would be useful to be able to livestream services and concerts – not least to provide some income for musicians – and we ordered broadband installation from BT who agreed to install. In the end, it arrived a full 12 months later in February 2021.

Lockdown closed the church completely. Concerts were cancelled and wedding couples postponed their big day repeatedly, then until 2021 or even 2022. Sunday worship was provided via zoom online from homes. As rules permitted, we held very popular outdoor communion services in the churchyard overlooking the Court and fields: sometimes several on a Sunday to comply with social distancing at each one. Later in the year, a few communion services were held inside the church (the 6’ wide aisle was helpful), and a socially-distanced Remembrance Day Service at the War Memorial. And there were two carol services in the churchyard as indoor singing was not permitted (it still isn’t for congregations).

A Christmas Day communion was the last worship service until Easter 2021.

We never stopped conducting funeral services, though they could never be the desired proper send-off for loved ones.

Regarding the building fabric: Storm Dennis punched a hole through our already fragile slate dial on the south side in February 2020. Fortunately, the subsequent water ingress was quickly spotted, and the Cumbria Clock Company ensured that temporary repairs prevented serious water damage. We still await a quote for a permanent repair.

To maintain social distancing for visitors upon reopening, a one-way system for visitors was required, and so, with permission, new steps were built outside the south east door to prevent accidents on the sloping grass. The portaloos were refurbished during closure.

Covid-safety meant (and still means) additional volunteers are required whenever the church is open to visitors. This proved demanding when older volunteers were self-isolating or ill. During September and October we opened for three hours on a Wednesday and this was well received by the visitors. At Christmas we opened for the weekend, having decorated the church and with carols playing to give visitors a little bit of a proper Christmas. Again, this was popular.

A successful bid to the Cultural Recovery Fund realised an award of £48,000. (Thank you for to warden Angela Snow for achieving this: no mean feat). As well as covering maintenance costs, the grant has helpful with various specific expenditure including the provision of a Recovery Manager who has helped with making the church more viable when we reopen. She has worked on volunteer recruitment and collated all the volunteer information into a handbook. She has worked on new interpretation boards which for the time being are in the form of pop-up banners so that they can be located in a safe place to be viewed. We also have new signage with our own distinct logos. New leaflets have been produced for distribution through tourist centres, libraries etc.

Some of the grant awarded is earmarked to help with an audio-visual system that we will be having in the church. (50% of the costs will be borne by money that has been previously fundraised for the church). Because of the special nature of the building we are being very careful that the equipment will not be detrimental to it and it will not be fixed to the walls. When it is in place it will enable us to stream and zoom from the church as well as enhance the facilities for concerts and lectures.

While the recovery grant has been very helpful, it is not allowed to be used to offset the church’s loss of income from visitors that we use to fund local ministry and mission. Like many other organisations, the loss of income due to covid has been catastrophic.

A new parish giving scheme makes it easier for people to give regularly to the church and we are encouraging local people to get on board with that. Even a relatively small regular donation accumulates over a period of time.

Some of the choir pews in front of the altar are an inferior later addition and they damage the tiled floor as well as interfere with the aesthetics. With permission, these have been temporarily removed to the crypt to provide more room for visitors, and we are hoping to make this removal permanent. We are also planning to remove four pews nearest to the main door so as to provide space for greater community use of the church building.

We have done some minor redecoration in the vestry and porch and the grounds have been kept under control. The lytch gate roof has been repaired as well as the dripping tap in the burial ground.

The church recently had its five-yearly inspection by the architect and we are awaiting her report. It is highly likely that the church will go back on the Heritage at Risk Register as there are many problems needing to be sorted, such as . . .

**Windows** *to be removed, cleaned and restored, and returned*, **Organ** *overhaul*, **external masonry** *repairs,* **Clock Dial** *replacements,* **Golden Dome and Cross** *regilding,* **security and access system** *upgrade*, **Outside Toilet Block** *replace with lovelier office/storage/toilet facility,* **Interior** *some redecoration due to inevitable deterioration during closure,*

The total cost is expected to be well in excess of £1,000,000. A mixture of grants and fundraising will be needed.

We would like to express our thanks to David and Susan Oliver for improving the drive over the dam, and we are grateful to the Pain family for filling the potholes as and when they can. Obviously, further improvement would be welcome, but is not in the gift of the church to achieve it.

The Garden Tearooms, which are owned by the Parochial Church Council, also benefitted from the Cultural Recovery Fund Grant. It enabled us to make improvements to facilitate outdoor dining and use of the toilets.

There is further works required for the Tearooms buildings going forward. Again, funding is an issue.

The Church is once again open for worship, though social distancing limits numbers. Weddings are starting again, as are Christenings. As mentioned earlier, we have never stopped funeral services (though most opted for the crematorium during lockdown and may have memorial services for loved ones when people can mingle fully).

The local Christian Church community are relatively small in number, but very active in the community. Individually, Church members are disproportionally represented in local voluntary (and political) organisations as well as carrying out a myriad of acts of kindness and help to others. Across our local-known 4Rivers Churches (Knighton-on-Teme, Lindridge, Stockton-on-Teme, Pensax, Abberley, Great & Little Witley, Shrawley) we have provided school governors, a professional schools worker, a parent & toddler group, café church. But we are eager that, as Church communities, we are organised to help and host community activities and contribute more to the wellbeing of our communities. To that end, as covid pressure eases we expect to be talking with local communities, not least Great Witley, as to how we can engage with people’s concerns and needs. (This won’t be easy as lockdown and covid have reduced our volunteer capacity).

But after all, Great Witley Church is the parishioners own Parish Church and we, the churchgoers, want people to be able to use it for their benefit.

**Quartergreen : Quartergreen Chairs report for 2020/2021**

This has obviously been an extraordinary time for everyone, unlike any other. The Quartergreen committee have not met since the 2 nd November last year but have kept in touch via social media and phone conversations.

We have obviously lost a lot in court revenue donations but Mandy very kindly gave a donation EIOO from pre-school and Mike has managed to raise money during the time the court was able to open. The court maintenance has been carried out at a cost of over €500 and new netball and football nets have been installed. Unfortunately there are two "dips" on the court area and the maintenance company have given a quote of E3,500 to carry out the remedial work. It has been agreed that it would be wise to have a geological survey carried out initially to ascertain the cause before going ahead with any work.

The saga with HMRC regarding being able to charge for court use is ongoing.

There have been a few incidents over lockdown where youths have actually climbed over the fence to get onto the court; luckily no damage has been sustained.

The committee will be meeting on the 1st June when we will be drawing up a schedule of work e.g. drying and cleaning the marquees, cleaning guttering and clearing rubbish behind the changing room. It is hoped, if all goes well, we will be able to hold a bonfire and firework display this year which should be good for community spirit and something for everyone to look forward to.

**Great Witley Primary School : Great Witley and Hillhampton Parish Council - School Update May 2021**

Dear All,

Thank you for inviting the school to submit a report for your Annual Parish Meeting. The last 14 months have been extremely challenging for all schools in these unprecedented times. However, we have successfully adapted to teaching and playing in bubbles, remote learning and online meetings. Despite the impact of Covid the school continues to thrive and increase in size, we have 203 pupils currently on roll and have seven single year classes. This means we can deliver excellent provision for each year group. For the first time, in September 2020, we were oversubscribed and had appeals for places. We have also had a number of requests for in year transfers which currently means we are at our capacity of 30 in a number of year groups. We continue to work very closely with the other schools in the Rivers CE Multi-Academy Trust as well as other local schools.

September 2020 brought a number of staffing changes to our team. Karen Banford who has been an inspirational Head Teacher at Great Witley since 2011 was seconded to Cherry Orchard School in Worcester as Headteacher. I was appointed Head of School at Great Witley having been Assistant Head teacher and Gemma Parker our other Assistant Head was seconded to the Rivers Multi Academy Trust to lead English. We were joined by a newly qualified member of staff which has further strengthened our team as well as seconding Assistant Head Teacher from another of our MAT schools. In April 2021 Karen was appointed permanent Head Teacher at Cherry Orchard and I was successful in being appointed the permanent Head of School at Great Witley. I feel very privileged to have been given the opportunity to lead a successful school in the heart of this supportive community.

During the Summer holiday of 2020, despite again not securing CIF Government funding, we were finally able to refurbish the main school toilets. During the Summer of 2021 we are planning to update our old staffroom to create a multi-purpose room which will serve as a kitchen for our wrap around provision, a DT room and a nurture space for lunchtimes. We will create a new staffroom with kitchenette in a multi-purpose room next to the school office. Support from the Parish Council with projects is always very welcome, and we would wish to be considered if there are any future ways we can work together to maximise our effectiveness.

This last year Covid has stopped us carrying out our usual afternoon tea events at Christmas and Harvest. However, we still managed to deliver Harvest hampers to local residents and support some of our vulnerable families with food parcels and vouchers as well as providing pastoral support. We hope that in the next few months we will be able to reinstate some of these community activities again and invite you in to our wonderful school.

Finally, if you have any further questions or queries regarding the school please feel free to contact me via the school office.

Kind Regards

Kate Ramsey Head of School

**Neighbourhood Plan Working Party : Neighbourhood Plan Working Part**

The plan drafted by the group was sent to Planners at MHDC who advised that it should be redrafted by an expert planner. viz. it was not in planning speak. This was disappointing because originally HMG had said that NPs could be drafted by local people to express their views. It looks as if experts have succeeded in creating more work because the cost of having this done by an expert is likely to be £10000. or more. We may be able to recover the cost of this retrospectively by a grant but there are no guarantees.

 HMG say they are going to change planning procedures to make them simpler and it could be that Neighbourhood plans become redundant so the Council is waiting to see what HMG actually proposes.

Meantime planning is still governed by the National Framework whereby HMG sets guidelines and building targets for each Local Authority and by the South Worcestershire Development Plan which applies the guidelines locally and which sets out how locally we are expected to meet Government targets. The general rule is that there should be no development in the countryside unless one of the exceptions arises and that development in the villages should be within a settlement plan. The settlement plan for Great Witley includes the land in the triangle as far as The Glebe and ribbon strips along the Worcester Road and Stourport Road covering existing houses. Hillhampton is classified as open countryside. The application to build 175 houses on Quartermans field failed mainly because the land was outside the settlement plan. Turnpike Close was granted because the developer relied on one of the exceptions to  SWDP  namely that there as a local need for affordable housing which was not being met by other building.

The SWDP is now being reviewed with a view to finding more land for building in the villages and the proposal from the planners is that the settlement plan for Great Witley should be enlarged to enable 44 houses to be built on Quartermans field at some stage in the next 20 years. We have opposed this and wait to hear the outcome. Since SWDP overrides a Neighbourhood Plan the existence of such a plan will make no difference to the outcome.

At the moment we cannot see a clear benefit to be gained by committing to the expense of paying an expert to create a new NP  so we are waiting to see how the wind blows.