

BISHOPSTONE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
*Minutes meeting of the Parish Council held on
Thursday 10th September 2020 at 7.30pm*

**Due to present Government restrictions this meeting was held as
a 'virtual 'meeting held via Zoom.**

Minutes

PRESENT: Councillor John Macklin (Chairman), Cllr S Hubbard; Cllr Lesley Handscomb; Cllr R Morgan; Cllr M Holmes; Cllr N Newton

PRESENT: Mrs Lesley Hay (Parish Clerk; Ward Cllr David Hitchiner

The Chairman welcomed those present to the September Zoom meeting.

1. Apologies: Cllr, Sarah Keefe; Cllr L Goldwater; Cllr Serena Crump; Cllr Sharon Knights and Cllr C Draper.
2. To receive declarations of interest or written requests for dispensations. None received.
3. The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 18th June 2020 were approved as a true record and unanimously agreed that these should be signed by the Chairman.
4. Chairman's report

A re-arranged meeting was held on June 20th with Ward Councillor David Hitchiner when we visited the site of planning application 201512 land at White Roses Bishopstone, where we held a social distanced meeting on the road outside the site with the immediate neighbours who voiced their concerns over the proposed development. After the meeting Councillor Hitchiner emailed the Planning Officer to pass on the neighbour's comments and asked if the applicant could change the design and reduce the size to address the concerns of the neighbours.

On July 1st I reported that the new gate the Lengthsman had fitted to the start of footpath KT9 in Kenchester had been stolen, leaving open access to the field, after consulting with Lesley and the Lengthsman it was agreed we should fit one of the two kissing gates we have in stock, this was carried out the following week, I went down the day after to hacksaw

the stud and opened it up to stop someone from easily undoing the nut and stealing the gate again.

A local parishioner reported to me that the hanging post of footpath gate on BN4 in Bishopstone just off Bunshill Lane had broken and that he was worried the gate could fall on someone. I went along the next day and secured the post with rope as a temporary measure until the Lengthsman can replace it.

Councillor Rosemary Morgan reported that a handrail on a bridge in Bridge Sollars on footpath BS2 needed attention so through Lesley I have made the Lengthsman aware of the situation along with the slam post broken on BN4. The Councillors will need to formally approve these repairs at the September PC meeting.

The clerk was asked by the Election office to check our Bishopstone group Parish Councillors where correctly listed, by some clerical error they had a Samuel Sayce down as a councillor for Bishopstone instead of Rosemary Morgan this has now been rectified.

Stephen Price the farmer from Magna Castra Farm Kenchester rang me to see if the Parish Council could help, the new Faster shire fibre optic broad band service coming to our area soon had not been programmed to go as far as his farm. I registered to take part in the internet meeting on 11th August when I asked as Chairman of the Parish Council if the program could be extended to include his farm, they replied that they would seriously look at extending it. The meeting confirmed that the system is entirely independent of BT, all cables will be underground so there will be some disruption in Bishopstone and Kenchester.

Our Clerk Lesley has informed us that we were successful in obtaining the Drainage Grant, I hope that the Lengthsman can before winter start sorting out some of our reoccurring drainage problems blocked ditch pipes in Bishopstone and Kenchester, drainage and water problems in Byford by the Church and down on Byford Common.

5. Ward Councillor's report – please see full report at the end of these minutes.
6. Finance: Accounts sheet/schedule of payment sheet circulated.

(6.1) The Clerk confirmed submission of end of year 2019-20 account. These had been acknowledged by the external auditor and no further action necessary.

(6.2) The Clerk confirmed that the Notice of Public Rights is displayed on the Notice Boards – this Notice issues an invitation to residents to make an appointment to view the accounts if they so wish.

(6.3) Finance: Accounts sheet/schedule of payment sheet circulated.

(6.4). It was unanimously agreed to pay all outstanding invoices as per the schedule of payments that had been circulated.

7 Highways and Environmental Matters:

(7.1) The Clerk confirmed that Bishopstone P C had been fortunate in being allocated the full lengthsman Drainage Funding Grant D C Gardening will begin work when the grass cutting season comes to an end in October.

Cllr Muriel Holmes requested that any drainage work be delayed until after the apple harvesting and the Chairman agreed to reply this request to D C Gardening.

(7.2.) Footpath Officers' Reports

The Chairman confirmed that the two posts highlighted for repair at the last meeting have now been fixed.

D C Gardening has requested the chairman visit BS2 and take some photographs – this will help him to bring the necessary/correct equipment for the repair. It was established that it is the first footbridge that needs attention.

8. Planning matters:

(8.1) Planning Consultation: 201512 - Land at White Roses – the Ward Councillor reported that the agent was in discussion with the Planning Officer discussing possible ways of reduction regarding the mass of building.

9. Cllr Rosemary Morgan gave a brief update. A report by Cllr Sarah Keefe had been circulated - 'Making space for Nature in our Parish'

Main focus is the Kenchester Triangle. Now the Lengthsman has cut the grass for the second time this year, we'll removing the grass and planting various nectar-rich wild flowers which should compete against the grass - foxgloves, red campion, purple toadflax etc. Yellow rattle seeds have already been sown which should reduce the vigour of the grass. Need to monitor whether the new residents of School House will cut the main area of grass in the centre, an area which has been well maintained.

Re Bridge Sollars crossroads, waiting to hear from Paul Hunter at BBLP so a plan for management of that area can be agreed. Special verges which can be flagged by parish councils to BBLP (with a grid reference and species of note) and may be considered for change to cutting regime, either single later or single early and would be where Bridge Sollars junction might fall.

Re Byford and other areas of the parish, are there green spaces we can convert to nectar-rich areas for insects? Any other thoughts on what we can do to help the environment?

10. Clerk confirmed that Web site had been upgraded and now met the required legislation set out by the Government that had to be in place for Sept.

Date of next meeting 12th November 2020 – 7.30 p.m.

It was agreed that this meeting to be again via Zoom as the Community Centre will not be re-opened until the New Year and again this decision will depend on the Government guidelines in place at that time.

Signed

Date

Chairman closed the meeting at 20.07 pm

As of 1st September 2020

Leader's newsletter Welcome to my Newsletter.

I hope you had the opportunity to do something different in August. It has been a little quieter in the Council with officers being encouraged to take time off. But there has still been lots happening which you will see from this letter.

You continue to receive weekly briefings on Covid 19 related issues direct from the Chief Executive and once again I do not propose increasing reading matter by repeating what he has said.

Council focus remains to keep as many people as safe as possible and ensuring that our vital front line services are supported. The gradual release of the lock down is to be welcomed, but the Cabinet and Council remain concerned that this does not result in a worsening position. I urge people to continue to comply with the latest guidelines on social distancing, washing hands etc.

The introduction of emergency active travel measures in connection with the Covid pandemic was not as smooth as the Council would have wished. As set out in Cllr Harrington's section below, we have listened to public concern and made changes. Some see making changes as a weakness. That's inevitable but I hope that many will also see it as a willingness to listen. Consultation did take place before the initial plans were put in place, but for a variety of reasons not everyone participates in such consultation, nor is it done perfectly.

The County continues to be blessed with a low level of Covid infections, an effective Public Health team and officers who are flexible in turning their hands to the latest pressure point. The most pressing pressure point is now the school return. There are so many aspects to this – school transport, concern for the health of teachers, the more elderly relatives of children returning to home from school, lost time in school especially for those in years 10,11, 12 and 13, and the wellbeing of the younger ones who have not been in a school environment for 6 months. There are no easy answers for dealing with this. National guidelines are being followed as a minimum.

As reported by Cllr Harrington there were some flooding issues last month. As ward councillors we are all aware that we could do with more investment in the clearing and repair of gullies and culverts.

I'm told that estate agents have been busy with people wanting to move to Herefordshire. Presumably they feel safe here and it is now much more acceptable to work from home.

Telephone Kiosk consultation; I would be grateful if you could draw to your Parish Council's attention another consultation on phone kiosks and if your community has particular views about keeping phone boxes please email these to Philippa Lydford in the Council. Philippa.Lydford@herefordshire.gov.uk Any evidence/anecdotal comments on the need to continue these kiosks will be helpful

This is the seventh similar consultations from BT over the last 12 years and they are now getting closer together. Are they trying to wear us down? If we are to keep these kiosks as phone boxes we will need to make representations.

Evidence that people have been 'cut off' by the removal of phone boxes would be helpful.

Children and families – Cllr Felicity Norman

We had our monthly performance meeting with Team Managers across Children's Services which provides support and challenge on how we drive up performance and quality of practice. Each Team Manager reports against their teams' performance (what's going well, what are they worried or concerned about and what in response to the concerns, are they are going to do to do make more of a difference for children and families). Overall the scorecard data reveals sustained progress over the last rolling year in relation to activity measures such as contact with children and the timeliness of

assessments; also some positive outcomes for children leaving our care e.g. in suitable accommodation and in education, employment and training.

We facilitated a successful interactive session with Cabinet on our single practice approach which is Signs of Safety that allowed members to better understand the approach and our implementation plans across the whole workforce. Members completed an exercise focussed on assessing the strengths and needs of children and families.

We are preparing for the return to school in September, and our Back to School communications are aimed at both pupils and their families to reassure them that the return to school or college is safe, and to encourage compliance with Public Health Guidelines.

Hilary Jones, head of Herefordshire's Virtual School, has been nominated in the Children's category of the Hereford Times Health and Social Care awards. Hilary heads up a team of 15 staff whose job it is to make sure each of the 300 children in care that they deal with achieve the best educational outcome they can.

You can read more at <https://www.herefordtimes.com/news/18648909.woman-whose-job-make-childrens-dreams-come-true/> Environment, economy and skills – Cllr Ellie Chowns

Discretionary Grant Scheme. I've written to all businesses we have contact details for in the county (8300) to promote the scheme. We've set up an Exceptional Circumstances Fund to support those facing significant hardship who haven't yet been able to get a grant.

Visitor economy promotion. We've appointed two local Herefordshire businesses to lead the marketing (Orphans who are working partnership with Rural Media) and PR (Travel Tonic) campaigns. Very exciting!

I spent a week cycling around Herefordshire for my holiday in August and am very enthusiastic about our potential to develop tourism in our 'green and delicious' county!

'Getting Building' funding. Herefordshire has secured £5.6m of govt 'Getting Building' funding to aid Covid recovery: £1m towards the Integrated Wetlands project aimed at utilising wetlands to reduce phosphates in the river Lugg which has led to a moratorium on all local developments in the area, and £3m towards the Hereford City Centre Improvements project. NMITE have separately secured £1.6m to accelerate the delivery of their Centre for Automated Manufacturing on the Hereford Enterprise Zone.

Hereford and the Market Town Economic Development Investment Plans – all making good progress. Town-specific meetings have happened with 4 of the 5 market towns in the last couple of weeks and consultants & officers will support plan development over the coming months to identify priorities for investment. Hereford City's 'Stronger Hereford' Board is meeting regularly; people can feed in initial ideas here <https://mytown.communities.gov.uk/town/hereford/> and there will be wide consultation through the autumn.

As a result of the all-councillor briefing on environmental building standards I have requested work to develop 1) a policy on such standards for all council-owned buildings, and 2) a supplementary planning document to support raising standards across the county as a whole.

In adult and community learning, 130 learners have gained qualifications in subjects including English, maths, ESOL and ICT – testament to the extraordinary efforts of learners and their tutors over the past few challenging months.

I want to ensure that major capital investment programmes in the county create more opportunities for skills development and local job creation. Work is currently

being done to develop plans for this with regard to both broadband installation and energy efficiency retrofitting. I'll keep you posted.

Finance and corporate services – Cllr Liz Harvey

Corporate Services – Project Management. It will be no surprise to most of you that we came into office last May inheriting a number of issues which had been clearly developing, but which had not been addressed by the last administration. One of these was the need to properly manage large or strategically critical revenue and capital projects. In order to bring greater rigour to this process we have invested in a programme to design, implement and embed professional project management as a Corporate Service delivered across all directorates.

A team of professional project managers is being recruited to lead major bids and projects and to support existing staff who have an interest in developing project delivery as a career choice. The position of team leader was advertised over the summer and will be appointed into very shortly.

In conjunction with building a strong in-house project management capability, a much more rigorous approach to the entire end-to-end process from business case development through approval, start-up, delivery and close down. This approach will involve our crosscutting Legal, Contracts, and Communications professionals at all key decision-points and stage-gates.

Those of you familiar with project management in your professional lives might be surprised to hear that this is not 'business as normal' for this council. It is now!

Finance – Covid Impact. Our exceptional costs in supporting service delivery through Covid continue to outpace the level of additional support funding provided by central government. MHCLG have requested a fourth round of financial returns over the summer from all second and third tier authorities. These are aimed at assessing the level of the widening gap in local government finances and the extent to which government funding will support the spend that has been necessary on the ground.

Rather like the 'just get on with it' comments we received from our local MP over the promise of funds for flood repairs, the early rejoinders to local government to do what was judged necessary are now being combed through for any expenses which government retrospectively consider to be unnecessary. We do not believe that any of the costs incurred by Herefordshire Council fall into that category. However, central funding for the increased cost of delivering core services during Covid – particularly the huge expense created by the very necessary PPE measures – falls considerably short of the local reality.

We are still assessing the gap in our finances, but it will be many millions – possibly as much as £5.5m. We are waiting to hear what the possible ‘freedoms’ will be that we are offered by central government to plug this gap with income generated locally, but you all know the Herefordshire business and council tax base is a very limited pool in which to generate local tax revenue.

We have a budget working group in operation which is looking at all options for cost savings, service redesign and income growth. As ever, there is no such thing as a monopoly on good ideas and helpful suggestions in any and all of these areas are most welcome from councillors, staff and local residents.

Health and adult wellbeing – Cllr Pauline Crockett The Housing Solutions and Home Point teams continue with business as usual whilst managing the implementation of the new allocations scheme and IT system upgrade. The Temporary Accommodation Team continues to provide accommodation for those to whom we have a statutory duty under housing legislation and are assisting move on into secure accommodation whilst the Outreach Team are continuing to support all occupants of Covid-19 accommodation placements.

A bid has been submitted to MHCLG for funding from the Rough Sleepers Next Steps Accommodation Programme to further support our Project Brave partnership programme designed to ensure that those we have housed under covid-19 guidance do not return to rough sleeping and that in the future rough sleeping is rare, brief, infrequent and non-recurring.

Charging for care: changes to the hospital discharge process from 1st Sep 2020 will mean that free care will be limited to up to 6 weeks, so processes are being put in place to undertake care and financial assessments before the free period ends. We have identified 159 people that have gone through the Covid19 pathway that will now require a full financial assessment before we can commence charging for care post 1st September. Guidance on hospital discharge processes was published on Friday 21 August and includes information on finance support and funding flows.

Following the fantastic community response that we have seen during the lockdown and the relationships that have been established through the link workers with community groups/organisations across Herefordshire those connections are being further developed by the talk community team and conversations are being taken forward in relation to talk community hubs.

Adults and communities Commissioning and Operational departments are working closely with health partners to prepare for the change in the Hospital discharge and Hospital admission avoidance which commenced with the covid 19 legislation meaning health ceased from undertaking CHC assessments, the latest addition of the guidance was released over the weekend. We now have an agreed plan for this

programme of work which commences on Sept 1st (Subject to final guidance being released by DoH). This programme is called the restorative programme where we will undertake a range of assessments as necessary of everyone who is provided with a care package and funded currently through the NHS and government covid funding.

The second part of the discharge guidance related to care and support of individuals is that from September the first people receiving a service post hospital discharge will have up to 6 weeks to be assessed/ provided with reablement or care in a nursing or residential home during which time appropriate health and care assessments must be undertaken. The Covid fund will not be extended to individuals beyond the point of the new care plan being arranged.

Hillside and Home First is central to the current discharge and hospital avoidance process as is the need for follow on services, talk community and a stable nursing and residential offer from the market. Commissioners are working closely with operations, talk community and system leaders and the market to this end.

Infrastructure and transport – Cllr John Harrington

School Transport Arrangements for September: The transport team have been working closely with the children's directorate and schools across the county planning for the reopening of schools in September to determine school transport requirements. Guidance on school transport was issued this week to all suppliers, operators and parent this week. This included information about additional school bus services that will be available from September. There will be an additional 16 buses arranged to increase capacity for September which will be funded by additional DfE funding. Free issue hand sanitiser for school transport is being issued for September. There are some inconsistencies in advice given by DfT and DfE which we have had to better understand. It seems that schoolchildren travelling on scheduled commercial services (Yeomans routes out to Kingstone etc.) have to abide by national guidance rules (mandatory masks, 2 metres distance where possible) but if travelling by contracted dedicated school transport they do not. So we have sought confirmation and been given a reply that that is indeed the case. We are encouraging all pupils, whichever form of public or dedicated transport they travel on to wash their hands regularly, use the sanitiser provided, travel in their 'bubble' (try and sit with the same person everyday) and wear mask from aged 11 if possible.

Emergency Active Travel Measures: Following their implementation and feedback from the public, businesses and organisations I have listened to the feedback Cllrs, individuals, businesses and organisations gave and as a result I asked officers to make the following revisions:

- The prohibition of vehicles on the Old Wye Bridge is to be adjusted to permit Hackney Carriages to travel northbound to support this alternatives to private car use. This adjustment will take place from Saturday 22 August.

- Parking bays on the west side of Broad street have been reintroduced as parallel bays (with the existing mix of disabled and pay and display bays) in front of the widened footway. This is to address the reduction of disabled parking in Broad Street and the temporary advisory bays

on the north side of King Street across the closed junction of Aubrey Street have been designated as temporary advisory pickup bays. This is to provide additional facilities for pickup which traders have identified as important in current conditions.

- The existing temporary barriers utilised to define the widened footways on Bridge St, King St and Broad St are to be supplemented with planters on Friday 21 and Monday 24 August. This is to enhance the appearance of the measures within these historic streets.

- The proposed bus and cycle lane on Newmarket St and cycle lanes on Blueschool St are not to be implemented. Discussions are ongoing with Highways England regarding measures on the A49 to improve the safety for cyclists crossing from and to Newmarket St to the west of the city including introducing a possible 20mph speed limit. These measures on the A49 are not sufficiently advanced to support the connection that the lanes on Newmarket St and Blueschool St would create.

- The scheme on Commercial Lane will be removed as feedback from users and cycling groups indicated low confidence in using the lanes

- I will continue to liaise with ward and parish Cllrs, businesses and residents as we consider adjustments to Tranche 1 and suggestions for Tranche 2

Flooding – August 2020: Significant flooding was experienced in Ewyas Harold during the past week where some residents flooded three times following torrential rain. Herefordshire Council and BBLP provided emergency response and assistance to homeowners who properties flood and officers have since met on site with the ward member to discuss the event and are escalating initial findings both internally and with other organisations including Welsh Water, Connexus and the Environment Agency. A multi-agency response is needed to look at the issues here. Initial conversations have been held with Welsh Water and the housing company Connexus and both have set out their commitment to work with us to address these problems.

Housing, regulatory services and community safety – Cllr Ange Tyler

You will have seen that the outbreak at the farm in Mathon has been successfully contained- thanks to a lot of hard work by many Herefordshire Council and Public Health England teams. I have received feedback that the communications throughout the outbreak were very well managed to ensure that work on the farm was able to take place with limited intrusion by the Press and also achieved positive coverage of the council's outbreak response. It was extremely important that the outbreak had a strategic communications approach which supported community cohesion on the farm as well as across the county, and provided public reassurance.

The Ward Member expressed his satisfaction with the response communications at a recent Outbreak Engagement Group meeting and our partners have also been expressing their support for the communications in relation to the outbreak. We have been sharing our 'communications lessons learned' with the Government through the Local Resilience Forum and also with other councils who are experiencing similar outbreaks.

The Communications Team has been working hard with prevention messaging alongside emergency reactive messaging throughout the outbreak, and the global pandemic and individual outbreaks have concentrated the focus of both the local and national media. The team took part in an LGA pilot for COVID-19 recovery communications and the resources and Herefordshire case study can be found online in the LGA Recovery Communications resources

Please do share the messages on Herefordshire Council's social media channels and the press releases published on the council website. If you haven't yet signed up to receive press releases by email, you can do this by signing up for news on the council website.

Strategic Housing; Despite the restrictions still enforced through Covid 19 all affordable housing developments are back on site and are at full capacity. However, there is still a national shortage on some building materials which is causing delays. Notwithstanding all of that 31 affordable dwellings have been delivered through June and July. There has been a mixture of 1, 2 and 3 bed dwellings all delivered in rural locations and offered to those with a local connection in the first instance. The numbers are a slightly behind schedule due to the halt of sites for the first quarter but good progress is being made to achieve the 220 delivery target.

In response to the continued dialogue with Cabinet members ARK consultancy have recently been commissioned to undertake a review of the options available for the Council to deliver Council-owned housing. The findings will be presented to Cabinet in September for a decision to be made on how to proceed.

Commissioning, procurement and assets – Cllr Gemma Davies

I hope that you have all managed to get a break from work during the summer break. I'll keep it short but sweet with regards to my update highlighting some of the issues you will be asked by residents:

Waste – Firstly, some of you may have heard that Kenton Vigus is now leaving Herefordshire Council, I hope you will join me in thanking Kenton for all of the hard work he has done for Herefordshire Council and wishing him all the success in his future. Secondly, we are still having issues with both the Leominster and Herefordshire recycling centre and queuing. This is especially bad in Hereford where we have been contacted by businesses who have complained that the queues are damaging their trade. As such, given the incredibly positive feedback we have had reference the booking system in the other sites, the decision has been made to introduce the booking system across all the sites in Herefordshire. We are still confirming the date but it is likely to be from the 14th September. Though I appreciate some residents may be disappointed by this, the feedback we have had is that residents enjoy knowing that they have a guaranteed slot which takes a lot less time than queuing up at both Hereford and Leominster. Coupled with this big change for residents using these two sites, I have increased the amount of slots that residents can use ALL of the sites within Herefordshire from twice a fortnight to four times a fortnight. The booking system also prepares us for any increase or second wave of Covid as we are already set up for sufficient social distancing.

Halo – I know that a number of you will have been contacted by residents regarding Halo not opening the swimming pools. It is incredibly unfortunate especially as swimming appeals to people of all ages and abilities. We do however appreciate the financial difficulty that Halo are under with regards to their finances. I can assure you that both Richard Ball, Andrew Lovegrove and I have been having frequent meetings with Halo since lockdown to identify ways in which we can support them. Our relationship with Halo is very different than many of the other leisure services in councils and as such Halo have been unable to apply for the types of loss funding that others have. As such the Leader wrote to Jesse Norman who has arranged a meeting with Nigel Huddleston MP, a Minister in the DCMS, Scott Rolfe (CEO of Halo), myself and Richard Ball for Wednesday 2nd September. I will report back in the next newsletter but if any of you would like to know before that then please just send me an email.

Cultural services – I'm really happy to say that the museums service is now open, we have the incredible Ice Age exhibition on at the moment and I am so pleased that we have been able to open to visitors whilst we have it. We've had great feedback from visitors and it's been gathering some social media attention, it really is a not to miss given that we have a woolly mammoth replica upstairs in the Hereford Library and Museum on Broad Street. Likewise, we have had an incredible response to our initial libraries re-opening. I understand that there is frustration from residents, especially those in locations where we have very little

say on when they re-open but please be assured that the team are working tirelessly to get us back to as near a normal service throughout the County.