
Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council

Draft Minutes

of the ordinary Meeting of the Group Parish Council on Wednesday 18th September 2024 at 7.30pm in Stoke Prior Village Hall

Present:

Cllr. Tim Yair
Cllr. Derek Silk
Cllr. James Hinton
Cllr. Richard Thomas

Cllr. Hugh Fowler-Wright (Chairman)
Cllr. Ken Bemand
Cllr. Chris Marston
Cllr. Rob Pugh
Cllr. Sarah Sneyd (from item 90/24)

Clerk & RFO: Allan Drew

22 members of the public attended.

87/24 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. Janette Fulwood, Cllr. Anne Grace and Ward Councillor Bruce Baker

88/24 Declaration of interests and dispensations

Cllr. Bemand declared an interest in planning application 223610 and took no part in the voting on that application.

89/24 Co-option to the Humber Councillor vacancy

Two candidates had applied to fill the Humber vacancy, Ms Sarah Sneyd of Risbury and Mr Michael Wyldes from Stoke Prior. Both candidates were qualified to stand and after both had a chance to address Council a vote was taken. Ms Sneyd secured the majority of votes after the Chairman used his casting vote in her favour. The Chairman thanked Mr Wyldes for his application and hoped he would remain interested in applying for a future vacancy when that arose. He congratulated Ms Sneyd who then completed her Acceptance of Office form and received a Declaration of Interests for later completion and return to the Clerk. She then joined the Council.

90/24 Minutes of previous meetings

The draft minutes of the meetings held on 17 July 2024 and 14th August 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

91/24 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman announced that the Bromyard Community Police had recently asked the Council to name their top three priorities. Councillors named their top priorities as speeding, especially on the A44 and Bowley Lane, rural crime and increased visibility of Police, particularly with regard to litter. The Chairman then invited members of the public to contribute priorities. Litter was mentioned again although the particular problem with empty, discarded beer cans had now ceased. The right turn from the A49 towards the golf course was raised but is a National Highways matter and has been already lodged with Cllr. Baker. However, the Chairman reminded all present that data on Highways' matters is crucial so if anyone noted even a minor traffic issue it is worth reporting so that an accurate picture can be built.

Cllr. Marston reported that Cllr. Grace now had a contact in National Highways and is trying to secure a meeting to discuss this right turn issue on the A49 at Ford Bridge.

Cllr. Bemand asked about the extending the 50mph area past the Drum and Cllr Marston confirmed that was on the agenda for an imminent meeting with Herefordshire Council.

92/24 Public participation

On this occasion Public Participation had formed part of the Chairman's Announcements. No further matters were raised.

93/24 District Councillor's report

Cllr. Baker was on holiday and no report had been received.

94/24 Planning Committee and planning applications update

(a) *To consider for comment new applications to be determined by Herefordshire Council.*

Ford & Stoke Prior

241366 - Land at Lamb Inn, Stoke Prior, HR6 0NB: Proposed change of use of the Lamb Inn Public House to use as a single dwelling house and retention of external staircase, first floor terrace and railings.

The Chairman invited members of the public to contribute prior to the Council discussion. Matters raised by the public were-

Why is Herefordshire allowing an application when there had been three previous refusals? The Chairman replied that the applicants are able to apply, perhaps on the basis that new Government policies on housing might change the decision open to Herefordshire.

Members of the public can put in their own comments? Yes that is very important and demonstrates the community still wants to treat the pub as an asset of community value.

Why is the pub not on the list of community value? It was on the list but this listing expired in 2023. Also policy HFSP10 in the NDP is currently in force as is Herefordshire Local Plan policy SC1. These policies state that even if the Lamb is not viable as a pub, alternative community uses (such as a replacement village hall) still take precedence over its sale as a private house.

There are two parts to this application, the change of use and the external stairway. Are these to be treated as one or could there be separate decisions on each aspect? There could be a split decision, perhaps refusing change of use but granting consent for the stairway/balcony.

The stairway/balcony overlooks a number of neighbouring gardens with considerable loss of privacy. Over-looking is a material matter and could lead to refusal. However, planning enforcement often takes a long time to act if consent is refused so the balcony/stairway could linger for a while even if consent is refused.

The Chairman thanked the public for their comments and moved next to the Council discussion. Council felt that-

- Each assertion in the planning statement prepared by Berrys should be challenged since much was inaccurate.
- Previous refusal of change of use on appeal has not been mentioned in the application and must be emphasised in comments.
- The stairway/balcony must be challenged as a retrospective application which breaches the material matter of overlooking.
- The policies HFSP10 and SC1 are the key policy documents for refuting change of use.
- The pricing of the property is based on being a house not a pub. This explains why there has been no interest in purchasing the property because as a pub it is valued at only half the asking price.
- The question arose as to whether the stairway was actually a fire escape or simply a separate (owner) entrance to the building for the convenience/privacy of guests using the holiday let.

Again the Chairman emphasised the importance of individual residents submitting their own comments. Residents should note that they can both make their personal comments and additionally submit any comments on behalf of organisations where they play a leading role, e.g. On behalf of the village hall trustees.

After the meeting the Clerk prepared draft comments for Council which were finalised, agreed and submitted to Herefordshire as follows-

Parish Council comments on application no. 241366 The Lamb Inn, Stoke Prior, HR6 0NB

Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council discussed this application at its meeting on 18 September 2024. 22 residents were present at that meeting and although not all took the opportunity to address the Council, of the dozen or so who did speak did so against the application.

The Council decision is to STRONGLY OBJECT to the application for the following reasons-

1. The change of use application from A4 (public house) to C3 (dwelling) is a repeat of an earlier application 174653 which was refused on appeal. The key points made on 1ST February 2019 by the Planning Inspector in determining that appeal were-

"In summary, I consider that it has not been demonstrated that the property could not be used for an alternative community use, that it is unviable, and that there are other alternative comparable facilities to serve the community. As such the loss of this community facility has not been satisfactorily justified and therefore the proposal would fail to accord with policy SC1 and HFSP10 as detailed above."

Policies SC1 and HFSP10 both direct that important community facilities should be retained and not subject to re-development simply for profit without first exploring all other options for viability. As part of the Council's NDP, HFSP10 is specifically directed to preserving the Lamb Inn as an important community asset. Ideally the community would buy and run the Lamb as a pub, but should that turn out not to be viable, then the next step in HFSP10 is to consider alternative community uses. Moving from pub to dwelling without any intermediate steps clearly denies policies SC1 & HFSP10.

The planning statement accompanying this application was prepared by Berrys. It contains a number of statements resulting in the conclusion that a change of use to residential is fully justified. These statements do not stand scrutiny-

Assertion in planning statement	Actual documented facts
<p>5.1 Mr and Mrs Windmill, the owners of the Lamb Inn P.H have advertised the property for sale as a Public House and Holiday Let accommodation for the last six years and only received one offer, which wasn't acceptable.</p>	<p>The adverts seen by the Parish Council refer to the building as "a former pub" implying that it was already a dwelling. Council wrote to Chancellors of Leominster (who advertised the Lamb) first in September 2022 and again on March 2024 pointing out this incorrect description of the building. Along with Chancellors' attempts to sell the building the applicants also engaged the auctioneers, Pattinsons, to sell the property. Council wrote to Pattinsons and received a prompt reply saying their description had been immediately amended. The property did not sell because its valuation as a public house is only about 40% of the price being asked for the Lamb as a dwelling. The offer mentioned was made by the Council in March 2020. It was for £315,000 based on a valuation by Sidney Phillips Ltd of £300,000.</p>
<p>5.2 The Parish Council has not sought to have the Lamb Inn added to the Council's Community Asset list.</p>	<p>Incorrect. The Council successfully registered the Lamb Inn as an asset of Community Value on 20 June 2018. (Letter from Ms Deborah Walsh, Economy, Communities and Corporate Directorate, Herefordshire Council).</p>
<p>5.3 Given the length of time that the Lamb Inn P.H has been advertised for sale and available for the local community to try and acquire, find an alternative community use for it or have it added to the community asset list nothing has materialised.</p>	<p>Incorrect. The applicants insist on advertising the property as a dwelling with a value at times as high as £700,000. As a public house its value is less than half that. Council made an above market value offer for the pub which was summarily rejected. The large over valuation has meant there is no interest in buying the property. It can be concluded that such a valuation is a way of ensuring that there is no interest in purchasing the pub. Hence justifying its change of use.</p>
<p>5.3 Given this situation it is considered that all reasonable efforts and best endeavours have been made to sell the property as a Pub but nothing has materialised.</p>	<p>Council maintains there have been no reasonable efforts made to sell the pub only unreasonable efforts. Due to Council's involvement with the Lamb over many years a number of prospective purchasers have contacted the Council Clerk (most recently in November 2022) seeking more information. When that factual information is provided the prospective purchasers lose interest in The Lamb</p>
<p>5.4 It is therefore considered that it has been shown that the facility is no longer required, viable or no longer fit for purpose and therefore its change of use to a single dwelling house is appropriate.</p>	<p>The above responses show that this conclusion is completely false. The applicants are grossly overvaluing the property which makes it completely unattractive to any potential purchasers.</p>

As regards the change of use aspect of 241366 Council fully concurs with the Inspector's comments of 2019. The misrepresentation of events since then in an attempt to garner an inflated profit and the ongoing public interest in restoring the Lamb as a public house leaves Council with no option but to STRONGLY OBJECT to the change of use.

2. The second part of 241366 aims to regularise the retention of an external staircase and balcony built by the owner some years ago but without planning consent. Many residents present at the 18 September meeting are personally affected by the use the applicants make of the balcony and they made their views clear. The balcony overlooks a number of neighbouring properties and such overlooking is a material matter. Although the balcony is shown on the plans as having screening erected on its boundary the dimensions and transparency of that screening are not detailed. Noise from the balcony users was also raised as an issue by neighbours. It is doubtful such a balcony would have received initial consent and it should be refused now. By extension the only current use for the stairway is to access the balcony. (In a property of this size a fire escape is not required). Should consent be granted Council notes a proposed entrance to the balcony from the first floor so the staircase is not necessary. If consent is refused then the balcony goes and again there is no need for the staircase. Either way the staircase should be refused. So, also for this part of the application Council STRONGLY OBJECTS to granting retrospective consent.

Humber

There are no new applications

(b) To note: updates on current planning applications

Ford & Stoke Prior

221781 Highfield Cottage Stoke Prior HR6 0LW Appeal against refusal decision (the access track)

Appeal dismissed

241774 The Dingle Stoke Prior HR6 0NB Proposed demolition of lean-to's and construction of rear extension together with minor alterations.

Undecided

233094 Priory Farm Stoke Prior HR6 0ND. The construction and retention of a rural worker's dwelling, seminar room and a range of eight stables with ancillary tack and hay store.

Undecided

223610 Land north of Bowley Court farm Change of use from a water storage lagoon to a water and anaerobic digestate storage lagoon (retrospective).

Undecided.

This application was scheduled for the Planning Committee (Herefordshire) on 21 August 2024 but has been rescheduled for the 4 October 2024 meeting. Since Council last discussed this application on 1 February 2023 there have been significant developments in terms of more rigorous information and assessment of the application. Council Members also visited the site on 27 August 2024.

The current Council position is that there was insufficient information to either support or object to the application but the additional information (Habitat Regulations Assessment, Environment Agency comments and many objections by residents) now available requires that position to be updated.

The applicant was present at the meeting but had nothing to add to her previous statements. Members of the public raised the following points-

- *Mitigation of noise from pumps.* There are no pumps in the lagoon but some residents hear a low pitched droning noise continuing. Should consent be granted a condition that an acoustic is necessary (and had been suggested by the EA) should be applied.
- *Covering the lagoon.* This would be a requirement for an EA license.
- *Transport movements for shipping digestate to locations remote from the lagoon.* There are some tanker movements to ship digestate.
- *Why is more storage required when there has been no increase in the size of the digester?* Because of the change to spreading rules (now restricted to between March to October) there is a need to store digestate produced over the winter.
- *A survey has found evidence of great crested newts present at Wickton Court.* The statutory consultee has not mentioned such presence. However, Council will draw this to the attention of Planning and request the matter is conclusively settled.

Council then discussed the following points-

- Digesters contribute significantly to distributed energy generation and, although there are some caveats, on balance this application is not a problem so long as the applicant works closely with the regulator.
- Other factors such as the effect on listed buildings, possible noise and threat to SSSIs also need to be considered.
- The strong local feeling must be reflected in Council comments.

- The applicant informed Council that in fact a liner may not actually be required because soil testing showed that the ground was sufficiently impermeable to make a liner unnecessary.
- Conditions in the original consent for the water lagoon relating to storage (water only, no slurry or waste) and transport (no increase in traffic on country lanes). Both of these conditions have been breached.

A motion was then put that Council objects to this application. The motion was not carried with three votes in favour, five against and one abstention.

A further motion was then put that all the comments made should be presented to Herefordshire but as comments not as an objection. The vote was five in favour, three against and one abstention so this motion was carried.

The Clerk would draft comments on the application for Council approval. The following comments were later submitted to Herefordshire Planning-

Parish Council further comments on planning application 223610 Land north of Bowley Court farm.

Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council discussed this application at its meeting on 18 September 2024. 22 residents were present at that meeting. The applicant was also present.

A number of Parish Councillors made a site visit to the lagoon on 27 August. As a result of this visit understanding improved of the way the digester is operated and the issues raised by such a plant.

Council previously commented on this application in February 2023. At that stage no firm conclusion could be drawn because of the very limited information available. Since then, much more information has become available and Council now wishes to update its position by making further comments.

Council heard concerns from residents close to the site about noise and vibration. Others mentioned occasional smells. All considered the environmental risks to the Lugg SSSI as unacceptable. One resident reported that although the Habitats Regulation Assessment found no risk to any protected species great crested newts are present at Wickton Court. Again, this claim needs examination as part of the final determination.

Resulting from further discussion and increased knowledge of the site Council noted the following-

- The applicant is in a difficult position due to the change in rules concerning spreading of digestate. Previously spreading was possible all year round. Now spreading is only possible from late winter to late summer. As a result, digestate produced outside this spreading period must be stored. Although the original digester design had adequate short-term storage, that storage is no longer sufficient for the amount of digestate produced outside of the spreading period. So, more storage is needed and the amount required is considerable. The lagoon has an approximate surface area of 0.87 hectares.
- The applicant stated that the AD generates enough energy for the farm and that a small amount goes to the national grid. Farm waste makes up a significant part of the digester fuel.
- During the site visit it was clear that (and the applicant confirmed) there are no pumps, aerators or similar machinery permanently installed in the lagoon. There is a mechanical stirrer used occasionally but that is a portable machine.

Along with the above factual points Council also agreed (by way of a majority vote) serious concerns around a number of issues as follows-

- A cover for such a storage facility is mandatory and the applicant accepts that such a cover will be fitted should consent be granted. A suitable cover must be a condition of consent and any such cover must be sympathetic to the surroundings and especially as regards the setting of Wickton Court.
- The applicant confirmed that spreading is carried out on land remote to the main farm. Transport movements are necessary on the public highway but no transport plan is yet available in the planning application. Such a plan would seem to be essential before a final determination can be made.
- The north east edge of the lagoon is only 250m from the listed buildings at Wickton Court. As far as can be seen there has been no consultation with Historic England. Such consultations are mandatory and determination is specialised and often complex but there should be information from the consultee to help guide Council and decision takers.

- Despite the absence of permanent machinery in the lagoon there are still complaints of noise. The applicant has tried to minimise any problems by using a screen of straw bales during operations and also by restricting working hours to essentially established norms. However, an acoustic survey would seem essential given the proximity of residents to the site. Should the survey reveal excessive noise then a condition for mitigation (should consent be granted) will be necessary.
- There is still no enlarged permit to cover the lagoon. If consent should be granted Council would expect to see the proper permit required as a condition of that consent.
- Herefordshire planning colleagues will need to determine exactly the need and specification for the lagoon liner. A whole range of opinion has been expressed from, there is no need at all (low soil percolation makes it superfluous) to, the current liner is unsuitable for digestate. Council does not have the technical expertise to determine the answer but if consent is to be granted this issue must be fully resolved by competent persons.

Recognising all of the above points and the complexity of what is essentially an industrial operation, a motion to object to the application was not carried. Instead, Council confines itself to comments which it believes and hopes will play a useful part in the final determination of this application.

The level of public interest and Council's serious concerns surrounding this application makes it entirely appropriate for the determination to be made by the Herefordshire Planning Committee rather than using delegated powers. Council fully supports this position.

200705 Land adjoining Croft Gate Farm Stoke Prior. Proposed new dwelling and garage adjacent to Croft Gate farm. Pending S106 agreement **Undecided**

204437 Plot 1 Land at Old Hall Stoke Prior HR6 0LH Proposed construction of a new self-build custom home and garage **Undecided - on hold due to phosphates**

Humber.

241806 Oak Tree View Risbury HR6 0NQ Proposed Conversion of Building to a self-build dwelling House **Undecided**

241787 Workshop at The Woodlands Risbury HR6 0NN Proposed conversion of a redundant workshop to one self-build dwelling and associated works including the replacement of an existing septic tank serving The Woodlands. **Undecided**

212600 - Land adjacent to Risbury Cross Cottage, Risbury HR6 0NG
Approval of reserved matters following outline approval 181648 (residential development of 6 houses). **Undecided - on hold due to phosphates**

212473 Dev 1 Land adjacent to Risbury Cross Cottage Risbury HR6 0NG
Proposed permission for the siting of a caravan to provide accommodation on site during the construction of a dwelling on Plot 5 approved under application ref 181648. **Undecided- on hold due to phosphates.**

211802 - Land at Gob's Castle Risbury Leominster Herefordshire
Application for approval of details reserved by conditions 3 7 9 10 11 12 13 15 18 19 & 21 attached to planning permission 173687. **Undecided**

193259 New House Farm Risbury HR6 0NQ Outline planning for proposed housing development on land at New House Farm. **Undecided**

95/24 General Financial Matters

Report from the RFO.

Bank balance on 12 September 2024 is £10,687.10

Income received since last meeting -

No.	Name	Amount £	Details
1	Herefordshire Aero Club	67.50	TP65
2	Finnegan C	15.00	Hair by Cher
3	War & Son	20.00	TP68
4	Springfield Storage	200.00	TP66
	TOTAL	302.50	

The RFO also reported that the second part of the precept (£7661) had been received that day.

Payments made since last meeting

The following payments were agreed at the 27th July 2024 meeting (minute reference 74/24) and have been made.

No.	Name	Ex-VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	Barrington Print	603.00	0.00	603.00	June 2024 Pump (360 x 44 pages)
2	Barrington Print	460.00	0.00	460.00	July 2024. Pump (360 x 36 pages)
3	Clerk's salary	260.13	0.00	260.13	June 2024
4	Clerk's salary	259.73	0.00	259.73	July 2024. Pay 25 July 2024
5	HMRC PAYE	519.60	0.00	519.60	Q1 PAYE
6	Autela	68.22	13.64	81.86	Payroll April – July invoice
7	HALC	250.00	50.00	300.00	Internal Audit fee
8	Tree Warden network	30.00	0.00	30.00	Annual subscription for Ms J Ellerton
9	Barrington Print INV 13077	460.00	0.00	460.00	Pump
10	Barrington Print INV 12958	532.00	0.00	532.00	Pump + Risbury Show inserts
11	Whiffeld Ceilidh Band	330.00	0.00	330.00	Community Week
	TOTAL	3772.68	63.64	3836.32	

N.B. Items 8, 9 & 10 were made under delegated authority. Item 11 was made at the request of the CW Committee and has been agreed by the Chairman & vice Chair as ex-Officio members of the committee.

Payments for Authorisation

No.	Name	Ex VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	Clerk's August salary	260.13	0.00	260.13	
2	Clerk's September salary	553.33	0.00	553.33	Includes pay award arrears and hours increase arrears
3	Stoke Prior village hall	40.00	0.00	40.00	Two meetings 6 March (PIng Comm) & 26 June (Council)
4	Pencombe GPC	17.67	0.00	17.67	Shared cost of file folders
5	HMRC PAYE	173.20	0.00	173.20	August 2024 payment
6	HMRC PAYE	391.45	0.00	391.45	September 2024 payment
	TOTAL	1435.78	0.00	1435.78	

Council agreed these payments.

Budget Monitoring

With Q2 not yet actually completed it is possible to add in known payments etc and so forecast likely year end outturns. A full line by line report will be provided at the November meeting and was previously provided at the July meeting. For this meeting a summary position is provided as follows-

Summary heading	Budget £	Forecast Outturn £	Variance from Budget £
Income	23157	24633	1476
Day to day costs	8819	8902	-83
Project costs	11910	10925	985
Surplus (income – costs)	2428	2506	78

Notes

1. Income appears now almost certain with most line items well known. The positive variance of £1476 is mainly due to the likely increased income from grants now that the schemes are fully known.
2. Day to day costs are similarly very predictable and close to budget.
3. Project costs are lower than expected even with £2000 now included for Traffic Management. This variance is due to (currently) no forecast expenditure on any other new projects.
4. A surplus of £2506 is currently likely.

In summary the position is good. Given recent inflation since the last time the precept was raised it seems likely that a small rise in the precept will be considered at the January meeting.

External Audit report.

The RFO has been informed by the external auditor (PKF Littlejohn) that the Limited Assurance Review of the Council's 2023-24 AGAR has been approved with no observations. The final report and Auditor's letter has not yet arrived however. It has been urged with PKF.

96/24 Consultation on changes to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The general Council view was the proposals presented in the consultation were high level and very much national in nature and relevance. Cllr. Yair commented that Herefordshire had suspended work on the revised Local Plan while assessing the implications of these proposals for the NPPF. At this level of detail there is nothing relevant to the Parishes. There was general agreement that the targets presented for housebuilding would be very challenging given the amount of skilled labour required to achieve them. The Chairman commented that the proposals included measures to remove local character as a determining factor in decision taking. Cllr. Yair suggested that these (or similar) policies would eventually be agreed and trickle down to affect local communities. At that point it would be desirable that the Parish Council had developed a firm, well founded view on how to influence the shape of the (inevitable) development rather than contest that it happens. The NDP remains the ideal vehicle for this influence in design and siting.

The Chairman summarised the discussion in that Council would monitor policy developments, recognising that at some stage it would be necessary to take a firm decision on the way forward to preserve the best interests of the Parishes.

97/24 Lengthsman & PROW

The Clerk reported that-
Council's submission for PROW grant aided work has been approved.

The Lengthsman scheme is the same as last year consisting of a basic maintenance grant, (£2376). There is also grant available for an optional match funded Nominated Task (£1188 for each party).

The details of the drainage grant have now been issued-
Details received as follows-

We are pleased to be writing today to give a further update on the Local Drainage Fund and to confirm that Parish Council's will be invited to apply for funding for the following projects:

1. Ditching Works
2. Drainage Asset Survey
3. Minor Drainage Schemes
4. Gully Clearing and Cleansing

The table below sets out in more detail what is involved in each project, what Herefordshire Council will fund and, where applicable, the criteria that each application will be judged against.

Project	Description
Ditching Works	<p>Parish Councils who wish will be able to apply for funding for ditching works which must be completed by the Lengthsman or a suitably qualified alternative. Interested Parish Councils can apply for funding on a “day rate” basis up to a maximum of £2000.</p> <p>I.e. if your Lengthsman’s day rate for ditching work is £250 this would allow you to apply for eight days ditching work.</p> <p>The ditching work must be conducted using a digger and ditching bucket and the Parish Council may, at its discretion, use this funding for ditches which are in private ownership but contribute to flooding or standing water on the highway network.</p> <p>Funding Available: up to £2000</p>
Drainage Survey	<p>A resilient and effective drainage network requires us to have a complete picture of all drainage assets within a parish. Unfortunately as contractors and systems have changed knowledge may have been lost.</p> <p>We are therefore offering each Parish Council the opportunity to apply for funding on a “day rate basis” to allow their Lengthsman or a suitably qualified alternative, to review the existing drainage map of the Parish and log any assets which need adding to our system. You will be provided with the existing drainage asset map to review and update as part of this scheme.</p> <p>Funding Available: up to £1000</p>
Minor Drainage Scheme	<p>This section allows Parish Councils to submit proposals for minor schemes which reduce flooding of the highway network. This could be in the form of additional ditches, culverts, drains, pipes or similar. Parish Councils are requested to supply an outline proposal with estimated costings, photos and what3words locations. Please note that applications under this section will be reviewed and prioritised accordingly.</p> <p>Funding Available: Uncapped</p>
Gully Clearing and Cleansing	<p>This project allows Parish Councils to put forward drains / gullies for clearing and cleansing by Herefordshire Council’s contractors using their machinery.</p> <p>To access this option, Parish Council’s should use a day rate of £1,800, which will cover machinery, labour and temporary traffic management costs.</p> <p>Parish Council’s will need to complete the relevant section of the form, providing a what3words location for each gully / drain which requires work. These will then be passed to a Council contractor for the work to be completed within the days purchased. Unfortunately it is not possible to provide an exact number of drains/gullies that can be cleared per day, as it is dependent on the location and condition of each gully that is put forward for work.</p> <p>Funding Available: Uncapped</p>

Parish Councils should be aware that if they are successful in their requests for funding for Ditching Works and Drainage Surveys then this will be distributed through the Lengthsman Scheme. Under this scheme, a total funding cap exists of £25k, which applies to the entirety of funding across the Lengthsman Scheme, Public Rights of Way and Local Drainage Fund.

Please note for those projects where the funding is uncapped, Herefordshire Council may not be able to provide funding for all projects and will assess each application on its merits before prioritising accordingly.

At this stage only Parish Councils who are part of the Lengthsman Scheme will be eligible to apply for funding under this programme. Any Parish Council who is not part of the Lengthsman Scheme will still benefit from investment in their local drainage network however they will need to contact the Highways Team via Lengthsman@herefordshire.gov.uk to discuss their requirements separately to this scheme.

All completed submissions or queries should be sent to Lengthsman@herefordshire.gov.uk before the 27th September. If your Parish Council will not have time to meet and discuss this before then please do let us know.

Councillors had suggested a list of possible works as follows-

1. Due to the recent overflow (from an underground spring due to the water table levels) of thousands of gallons of water in centre of village, a drainage expert has informed that, the entire village drains (both sides of the road) from Trug Cottage to the Church need jetting. Simply sludge gulping each open drain cover is neither sufficient nor cost effective. To my knowledge this has not been done for at least 15 years. The water damage has extensively damaged both the inadequate pothole patching & the verges of the road.
2. The lengths-man should walk with a Parish Councillor in each area (just once) in order to clearly identify exactly where the 'problem areas' are located. This would prevent the Parish paying for work that is not always necessary. I have witnessed locations which have been worked on but are problem free.
3. It would be helpful if the Parish knew when the locality steward was visiting our areas as on site knowledge is more beneficial than his drive through.
4. Wheelbarrow Castle location has been improved extensively. The remaining problem is the level of water discharging following high rainfall episodes along the footpath alongside the Slough. There is a deep ditch between the Slough orchard and the cultivated field running parallel to the road, if this ditch was cleared and a series of leaky dams created the speed of the water would be slowed which in turn would relieve some of the flooding which still occurs on the Wheelbarrow Castle road.
5. Ditch on the west side of road to Ford Bridge just beyond the Church. This ditch is the end point for most of the drainage flowing SW from Stoke Prior. Last year it was noted that the ditch is congested and drainage in Stoke Prior centre might well be improved if the ditch was pulled out.

Humber

1. The drains in the main street of Risbury are choked and should be cleaned out. Neighbouring ditches would benefit from a clean out also
2. Drainage could be improved on the long, flat east approach to Risbury where there are some blocked cross-road drains

Additional to the above, in Humber a blocked drain in the vicinity of Low Brook would benefit from attention.

Cllr. Bemand commented that the ditch on the west side of the road to Ford Bridge (point 5 above) had been cleared earlier in the year.

There was also a cross-road pipe at the top end of Bowley lane which was blocked causing the ditch to overflow.

Footpath problems on HU3 in the Steensbridge area.

Cllr Thomas reported that he had walked the footpath with Valerie Tuffy. There is a fallen willow near the bridge but is not really causing a problem. If it was necessary to remove this tree a field maple and a hazel would have to be removed first to obtain access. In total this would be a large and costly task probably for a specialist.

It was agreed to keep the situation under review.

98/24 Current projects

To receive: any updates on current projects

Trails booklet Cllr Fowler-Wright

Cllr. Fowler-Wright reported that the Trails booklet was essentially completed once the photographs were received and added. Printing would cost £800.

Traffic Management Plan Cllrs. Grace & Marston

A44 traffic monitoring data has been received and early analysis suggests a fair amount of speeding taking place. Most happens between 4pm and 8am. Encouragingly there is no speeding problem around the school.

Environment Cllrs. Yair & Hinton

No update at this time.

99/24 Stoke Prior school

Cllr. Yair provided a report on Stoke Prior school-

Stoke Prior School and the Three Counties Academy Trust Update.

Stoke Prior Primary School became part of the Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) towards the end of last year. TCAT is a small, regional trust, based in the north of Herefordshire, and is currently comprised of Queen

Elizabeth High School, Bredembury Primary School, St Peter's Primary School and now Stoke Prior Primary School. TCAT's ethos is that schools retain their own unique values and history whilst taking advantage of the opportunities that being part of an academy can bring.

It is still early days, but the transition has gone smoothly. The day-to-day management of the school remains with the local team, but finances and some of the managerial work is now done by TCAT. To ensure that the school has a voice, the chair of the Stoke Prior Governors has become a full board member (Trustee) of TCAT. The school has joined TCAT at an exciting time as it continues to look to expand but only with schools who wish to join and match their values and ambitions.

Before and after – school provision.

The school is now providing childcare opportunities both before and after school. The school has an established a Breakfast club that is well used by parents. Breakfast club starts at 8.00am until classes start for the day. A new after-school club, called "Stay and Play" is now available until 4.30pm every day that the school is open. "Stay and Play" and "Breakfast club" provide a safe and engaging environment for children, before and after school hours, allowing parents the flexibility to juggle work and family commitments. Both clubs are run by the school's existing Teaching Assistants.

Parking and Transport

The school recognises that parking outside the school remains an ongoing issue. With increased use of breakfast club, stay and play and the usual after school club provision, it is hoped that this may ease the situation slightly. However, the school will work with the Parish Council on any other solutions that come forward.

Environment

In October 2023, the school installed a 4.25kW solar array and battery at the school. This has already generated 1MWh of energy, almost all of which has been used by the school. The school has already incorporated some of the data it receives into its lessons.

One of the benefits of being part of the Multi Academy Trust is the access it gives to pots of Government money that we did not have before. One of those pots is the Capital Improvement Fund (CIF). TCAT has recently been awarded funds to replace the old gas boiler at the school. TCAT was the only trust in the county to be successful in this round of applications.

The School's Eco Council is running a recycling scheme to collect a range of items that are sometimes more difficult to recycle. Parishioners can also use the coloured bins, which are located just inside the school gate:

Green – Cheese wrappers and tin or aluminium foil (washed)

Blue – Books, CDs and DVDs

Red – Pringle tubes

Yellow – Electrical wires, cables (no plugs) and bread wrappers

Cllr. Marston asked about the recent boiler replacement and Cllr. Yair replied that the cost of providing a new supply cable to run a heat pump was prohibitive.

The new academy arrangements had meant a reduction in workload at the school due to finance and management work being now centralised in Bromyard.

100/24 Clerk's salary

Council discussed the information provided on comparable Clerks within Herefordshire and also further afield through job adverts. Council quickly decided that the Clerk's salary should be raised to scale point 26 in line with other qualified Herefordshire Clerks and that this award would be backdated to 1 April 2024.

The Clerk thanked the Council for dealing with this matter so quickly and fairly.

101/24 Matters for discussion at the next meeting

Traffic survey data & analysis.

Date of next meeting

To note: the next scheduled meeting will be on Wednesday 20th November 2024 at 7.30pm in Risbury village hall

The meeting closed at 10.20pm.