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| **The Minutes of the Meeting of the Great Witley and Hillhampton Parish Council** |
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| **Held via Zoom Wednesday 13th January 2021 at 7.30pm** |
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| **Present: Chairman**, Cllr F Chapman (FC). |
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| **In Attendance:** Clerk, J Evans, Cllrs C Shaw (CS), C Dermietzel (CD), A Goodman (AG), N Drew (ND), C Jones (CJ), B Dallow (BD), A Symonds (AS),P Trow (PT) and C.Cllr K Pollock (KP) and D.Cllr P Cumming (PC). |

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| **1.** | **Apologies:** None. | | | | | |
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| **2.** | **Declarations of Interest:** None. | | | | | |
| **3.** | **To consider any Application for a dispensation:** None. | | | | | |
| **4.** | **Minutes:** Approved and signed once face to face meetings can be held again. | | | | | |
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| **5.** | **Progress reports:**   1. FC: After spending the best part of 2 days on the telephone with HSBC, they have confirmed all four signatories on the account and their security update has been satisfied. A tree which was in danger of falling at Abberley Hall School was dealt with in December. There have been several water leaks and Severn Trent have been present on the Stourport Road. 2. CS: Confirmed that due to the third lockdown, all facilities are closed until further notice. 3. CJ: No problems reported. The Lengthsman is working within the current COVID guidelines. FC said the drain at Home Farm Lane at the Martley end needs clearing. CJ has reported this drain. 4. NPWP: FC covers elements of this under section 8. | | | | | |
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| **6.** | **CALC:** All updates and invitations were circulated before the meeting. | | | | | |
| **7.** | **District and County Councillors’ Reports:** Reports are attached to these Minutes.  [..\REPORTS\1.13.01.21 report K Pollock.docx](../REPORTS/1.13.01.21%20report%20K%20Pollock.docx)  [..\REPORTS\District Councillor Report January 2021.pdf](../REPORTS/District%20Councillor%20Report%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20January%202021.pdf) | | | | | |
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| **8.** | **Planning:** 20/01917/FUL – Brook House, demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 6 detached dwelling houses.  FC summarised the application. The dwellings will be large, detached houses densely packed into a small area.  ND has looked in depth at the application and thinks it does require consideration. He sees nothing wrong with the application.  CJ agrees with PT comments that the parish residents do not want the village to grow any further. Therefore, both councillors are against the application.  CS has no objection and says it is within the settlement boundary.  AS also has no objection to the proposal to demolish Brook House and having another house built on the plot. The problem with this application is the number of houses, making it a dense development.  BD also agrees that the 6 dwellings are too many for the site and that 2 or 3 would be better. However, it is too close to the waterway and would be an eyesore if not sympathetically done. It is also very close to listed buildings. Another consideration would be the increase in vehicles at the junction.  CD is in two minds but agrees with AS. She is not happy that one demolished property would be replaced with 6 new ones.  FC said this type of development happens more in suburbia. Although the plans show a good design of house the site is on a steep bank down to a stream. It is very tight on space and so echoed other views that the development would be very dense. It is the first view of the village and considers the 6 dwellings would look like a wall. Its proximity to the junction is also a cause for concern.  AG passionately said the village does not need a further 6 houses. The development is unnecessary and comes from greed. The impact on the road with the junction at busy times, such as school times along with extra vehicles from the old village hall would be too great. He cannot see the point of the development other than to make money. If this is allowed, it may set a precedent for future further similar applications.  FC will draft a comment for our response to the application which will say that the majority of the parish council are against this application.  PT echoed that it must be stressed that the majority decision would be to object to the application.  AG said that the only advantage to this development is that the hedge that is in constant dispute may be cut. | | | | | |
| **9.** | **Finance:** All finances were circulated prior to the meeting and approved. | | | | | |
| **10.** | **Correspondence for Information:** None. | | | | | |
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| **11.** | **Clerk’s report on Urgent Decisions made under delegation since the last meeting:** None. | | | | | |
| **12.** | **Councillors’ reports and items for future agenda:** FC followed up on rumours that there will be no bar at the Hundred House and that they will apply for Change of Use. MHDC Planning Department have confirmed that only when there is 50% occupancy will work on the bar need to be started. The developer, Sundip Shihn, HCT Homes Ltd, is adamant that a bar will be built, and a wall has already been erected for an outside smoking area. No Change of Use Application will be applied for. BD reported that he knows of two parties who have approached Connells, the agents, showing interest in running a pub/restaurant there, but have had no response. ***ACTION:*** FC will draft a letter to Connells asking them what is going on and why they have not responded to bar enquiries. He will also pass on the developers email to BD (   [Sundip@Bramhamhall.com](mailto:Sundip@Bramhamhall.com) ) CD confirmed that there is nothing we can do at present as it is just ‘hearsay’.  PC said he still had some Ward Grant available for any worthwhile village projects.  AG said that there is a flood on the Stourport Road from Severn Trent Sewage Works to Branks’ entrance. FC is aware of this and has reported it ***ACTION:***  but has asked the clerk to also put in a report.  BD said at the last meeting he was asked to provide a price for replacing Kissing Gates on public footpaths. These work out at around £300 each plus any timbre posts and concrete. One is required by the Post Office by Paul Owens field and a few others. CS said one is also required by Paul Owens house. SW, public member pointed out that where the path has been altered here a metal bar gate has been left in the grass which could cause injury. ***ACTION:*** The Clerk will investigate who is responsible for replacing and paying for these gates. Highways will replace broken ones. PT asked who is responsible for bridal paths as there are lots of people using them in Hillhampton and complaints regarding their state have been made to her. AG confirmed that the landowner should keep footpaths clear. SW said that the landowner is responsible for any vegetation that grows into the path but the path itself is under Highways responsibility.  AS brought up the matter of the missing VAS solar panel and what is going to be done about it. ***ACTION:*** FC asked the Clerk to contact Jon Frazer to ask what can be done about this. | | | | | |
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| **13.** | **Date of next meeting:** It was agreed by a show of hands that the next meeting will be at Great Witley Village Hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday 10th March 2021. | | | | | |
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| The meeting was adjourned for **Public Question Time**, notes of which are appended to these minutes. | | | | | | |
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| The meeting closed at 20:47pm | | | | | | |
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| **Notes of Public Question Time** | | | |
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| 3 Members of the public were in attendance and raised the following concerns during Public Question Time:  **SUPERFAST BROADBAND**  Stephen Woodhouse, (SW), accompanied by Gill Edmunds, (GE) and Charles Hamer, (CH), presented on ‘Why is faster internet speed desirable?’  Superfast fibre has reached the cabinet in the village but not the houses! SW showed the Parish Council a map which highlighted the areas where Superfast Broadband, (SB), has reached properties but unfortunately hardly any were to be found in Great Witley. The Government made a manifest pledge that it would cover 95% by 2025 but this has now been moved to 2033. Great Witley falls into the 5% who will not benefit from SB.  FC agreed that the parish council will support efforts to remedy this situation.  SW said there is an enormous cost to this, and that BT have agreed to take on the scheme at a cost to themselves. 50% of residents have agreed to this plan but we need to get nearer to 70% to be successful. Residents can say yes without having to make any commitment. It was seen how dense the cluster of houses without SB were and how bad their speed is.  ***ACTION:*** FC agreed to support a group which would be set up to enable this plan to operate and would email councillors after the meeting to see who may be able to volunteer time to help with discission making.  KP WCC started with FTTC, i.e. fibre to the cabinet. We have about 97% coverage of that now, and that offers Superfast Broadband which the UK defines as over 24 Mbps. The EU use 30 Mbps as their definition. The alternative is to have Fibre to the Premises, i.e. FTTP. This is about 10 times as expensive to install as the other scheme, and hence we were slow at getting in to it. FTTP gives up to 1 Gigabit or 1,000Mbps, while 300 is normal. It would be wrong to call this “Superfast” – better “Ultrafast” or some such…2033 was the original aim for everyone to have FTTP. Boris brought it forward to 2025 but that has been delayed by dumping Huawei (WCC now work with Eriksson) and the aim is now 85% coverage. But the idea of “outside in” still stands – do the worst first…This would not mean that Great Witley was put to the back of the queue. More that remoter rural areas that never got Superfast would be first in line for help to get FTTP. Note, Worcestershire is unusual in always including businesses as well as residences in the provision of SFFB. Simon Geraghty started the work 10 years or so ago and the county is well up in the league table. 10Mbps was the threshold that HMG set for 2020, when the Universal Service Obligation came in, meaning if your speed was 10Mbps or less you could request (insist?) on help to increase it.  SW thanked KP for the facts and said he has found KP’s colleague, Rob Stepniewski very helpful and although it was suggested by KP that Rob might attend a parish council meeting, SW wasn’t sure what more Rob could add.  CS brought the attention to the document produced by SW and GE. ***ACTION:*** It was agreed that the Clerk would print off enough of the document which could be posted to residents who are affected by poor broadband speeds.  \*\*\*\*\*  **Why is faster internet speed desirable?**  You may have heard about the local campaign to bring faster broadband to Great Witley but may not know whether you need it. Below are a few interesting points to ponder.  Think about how much you use the internet compared to a few years ago and look ahead to how much more we’ll all be using it next year, the year after and beyond.  Some people won’t need faster broadband today.  It’s like the road into Worcester; if you only need to use it occasionally then it doesn’t really impact on you whether it has the odd pothole and your journey takes a few minutes longer because of the state of it. It **does** matter to those who use it more often and it’s vital to those who rely on it for work.  Looking forward, our needs will only increase. Simple web pages are getting ever more detailed and contain pictures with higher and higher resolution.  The connection speed that we had a few years ago would not be adequate today.  Similarly, today’s speed won’t be good enough in the future.  If you watch internet TV or video, over time the quality and bandwidth needs will increase: for example, BBC is now trialling Ultra HD quality on the BBC iPlayer for wildlife programmes, and this will become the norm in future.  More than half of the residents in Great Witley have already expressed an interest in a scheme which would bring the fastest broadband to the village. Under the Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme the government is offering grants towards the cost and currently the county council is matching the grant. If enough residents express interest there may be enough money to cover the whole village.  “A good broadband speed depends on how you use the web – you can generally sort internet usage into three categories:   * Light users: People only using the internet for day-to-day tasks like online banking and emails * Medium users: People who use the internet regularly for social media, surfing the internet and catching up on the latest episode of their favourite show * Heavy users: Individuals who use the internet for a significant amount of time. This could be peer-to-peer file sharing, streaming films and music, playing games online“ ([moneysavingexpert.com](http://moneysavingexpert.com))   From The Guardian, Nov 2019. In answer to a question about whether light users needs fibre broadband:  “A few things drive the need for fast broadband. Today, the main one is usually a desire to stream movies from Netflix and similar services in good quality without lots of annoying pauses for buffering. It’s almost essential if you want to watch 4K or ultra high definition (UHD) video instead of HD (720p) or Full HD (1080p).  **Families** also need faster broadband when they are competing for bandwidth. It’s quite common to have people streaming different movies or TV programmes, watching YouTube videos and playing games at the same time. **Gamers** usually prefer fibre-style connections because they are more responsive: there’s less latency or lagging. People who still download large files will obviously prefer high-speed connections, too.  **People who work from home** definitely benefit from having responsive, fibre-style broadband. Aside from the advantages of much faster upload speeds – handy when you are sending files back to the office – the connections are more consistent and more reliable... It’s very frustrating if your broadband connection drops just when you absolutely need it to work.  **Copper switch off**  Sooner or later, the analogue phone network will be [switched off](https://www.ftthcouncil.eu/documents/Reports/2019/Copper_switch-off_analysis_27022019.pdf), much as the old analogue TV signal was switched off in 2012. You will then have to (have) a fibre-based service, on a date that will probably depend on exactly where you live.  Some countries are well ahead of us. For example, Estonia has already closed most if not all of its copper exchanges, and many Australian users have been given 18 months to switch to the country’s national broadband network (NBN). In the UK, telecoms companies have been [discussing a 2027 switch-off date](https://news.sky.com/story/bt-leads-30bn-push-for-copper-broadband-switchover-deadline-11813294). The £30bn plan will need government support, but **fibre will become as important economically as canals, railways and motorways were in their day.**  Speed matters  One of the problems with delivering broadband over copper cables is that internet service providers (ISPs) cannot guarantee any particular speed. It depends on too many variables, including the distance from the telephone exchange, the quality of the wiring, the number of joints in the wiring, the faceplate in the home, the quality of the router, and the time of day. [Broadband](https://www.theguardian.com/money/broadband) is a finite resource, so services are slower during peak times.  \*\*\*\*\*\*  Comparing Fibre to the Cabinet FTTC (which most in Great Witley village have now) and Fibre to the Premises FTTP which is what the Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme offers.  **From the website broadbandgenie.co.uk**  What is FTTP? Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) is a broadband technology which can provide very fast internet speeds.  Fibre to the Premises means that the fibre broadband internet connection from the local exchange is connected to the router in your home, which is much faster than the old copper telephone line used by many other broadband services.  The result is you can enjoy very high speeds of 1Gbps (gigabits per second) or more. Though FTTP can also deliver lower speeds, *which is useful if very fast fibre is beyond your budget, or not required, but might be something you'll use later.*  What is FTTC? Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) is an alternative technology that provides slower broadband speeds compared to FTTP.  The reason FTTC is slower than FTTP is that the fibre cables from the local exchange (or data centre) stop at the street cabinet. From here, traditional copper cabling is used to pipe the data to your router.  You may have noticed the installation of the new local cabinets, and the laying of cabling to them, over the past few years. These cabinets route data to your home, for voice and internet, via existing copper telephone wires.  **FTTP vs FTTC**  Which is the best broadband between FTTP and FTTC?  FTTP pros   * Very fast broadband - up to 1Gbps download speed, with the capacity to go even faster. * Much faster upload speeds, often the same speed for both download and upload. * Despite the fast speeds, it is surprisingly affordable. * Doesn't require phone line rental.   FTTP cons   * Availability is currently very limited. * If you won't benefit from the speed then standard ADSL and fibre are probably cheaper.   FTTC pros   * Excellent coverage - more than 90% of premises can get some kind of FTTC service. * Reasonably good download speeds that are usually sufficient for typical home use. * Very affordable - FTTC broadband deals are available from under £30 per month. * Openreach FTTC uses existing telephone lines so engineering work is not usually required.   FTTC cons   * Top speeds pale in comparison to FTTP. * Upload speeds are limited. * Speed impacted by the length of the copper line from the cabinet.   **More than half of Great Witley residents have already expressed an interest in the scheme which offers grants to pay for the infrastructure. If more do the same we stand a chance of allowing everyone to have faster broadband if they want it but we need a higher percentage of the village on board.**  **If you believe you have signed up but haven’t received/responded to an email to confirm your address then please email again.**  **If you’d like to express interest please send an email to local resident Steve Woodhouse:** [**stephenwoodhouse01@gmail.com**](mailto:stephenwoodhouse01@gmail.com)  **GREAT WITLEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**  **13.01.21**  **COUNTY COUNCILLOR’S REPORT**   1. **Corona Virus effects**   No doubt like everyone else, you are seeking to adjust to the third lockdown that started last week. The new variant of the coronavirus has clearly caused revision of most of the plans across the country as to how to react to the infection, and this latest lockdown needs to be taken very seriously.  The watchword is to stay at home, if at all possible. Some people will need to work away from home, and we are grateful for all their efforts to bring us services, food, newspapers and all sorts of deliveries for goods bought online. You will all realise that for every one person you see in those contexts there are as many as 20 to 100 others working behind the scenes, seeking to keep our lives as stable as possible.  There is hope in the distribution of vaccines and these will go to the most vulnerable first. While this is being organised by the NHS and not local councils, we are aware that there are anomalies in the ordering of vulnerable people. It would appear that the local surgeries will be administering the vaccines and in consequence some will seem to be doing better than their neighbours.  In all these considerations, it is crucial to follow the national guidance and recognise the rapidly changing situation, which means that government advice and orders appear to change without reason or much notice. It would be foolish to imagine this is happening through incompetence or carelessness.   1. **County matters**   At last month’s Cabinet meeting, Marcus Hart presented the details of the schools funding settlement. It is important to note that he refuted the requests by three members of the public who asked that the County should ensure there was teaching about climate change in the county’s schools.  We only pass on the Dedicated Schools Gants, the DSG, and do not intervene in deciding how schools should spend their allocation. It would be inappropriate for the county to seek to dictate to schools on matters of curriculum of this nature. Naturally this applies as much to the current situation with all schools closed as it does in normal times.  You may have seen the comments from Cllr Peter McDonald, claiming that more laptops should be made available to disadvantaged children. My colleague, Cllr Marcus Hart, has challenged this strongly, giving details of the variety of provision for such children to assist in home schooling.  The recently published results of the viewpoint survey show that traffic congestion is still one of the most important problems for residents and we need to re-emphasise that we are spending a lot of capital sums in seeking to improve our road system.  You will not need reminding that the coronavirus situation has played havoc with the state’s finances, nationally and locally. We will aim to keep our council tax as low as possible but recognise the need to respond to the changed needs and priorities at this difficult time.  The budget for 2021/22 was discussed at the Cabinet meeting last Thursday. The 56 pages of the agenda can be read on-line and you can listen to the webcast.  We hope to be able to balance the budget, despite the difficult financial situation we are in, bearing in mind some £9.5 million being made available in special one-off grants from the government. The Cabinet are proposing a 1.5% increase in basic Council Tax, plus a 1% surcharge for Adult Social Services. This is below the maximum we are permitted to raise but is in anticipation of continuing financial constraints in the coming years.  There will be a council meeting tomorrow, the 14th January, where there will be a full discussion of the performance of the Council in annual reports from the Leader, Simon Geraghty, and the Chief executive, Paul Robinson.  This will include reference to the budgetary situation as well as all the activities of the council over the last year. It may not include as much attention to the current concern about the climate, as desired by the five public participants at last Thursday’s Cabinet meeting, as written up in Monday’s Worcester News.  We are grateful for the Chancellor’s help in getting money to our business community, in order to keep these businesses afloat during this difficult period and also to help those who may want to start or expand their enterprises. The County’s Here2Help Business programme is the channel for some of this assistance, with the help of the district councils as well.   1. **Local Matters**   There is natural concern about the revision of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) as under consideration at present. I represent the county Council on the Joint Advisory Panel, which is chaired by my colleague Lucy Hodgson, in her role as a Worcester City councillor.  The revised SWDP is suggesting building 50 houses on the field alongside The Glebe. It is my understanding that the Local Plan drawn up by the parish council would not include this provision. In my opinion, you as a parish council should proceed with the Local Plan, as you believe it reflects local attitudes, and argue with the district planners, should it be necessary. Ideally this will happen after extensive local consultation which will demonstrate that your belief is widely shared (or not!).  Please take the chance to look at the Environment Agency website, to see what is planned to protect Tenbury from flooding. You may take part in the consultation this month, to seek to ensure the best possible solutions are found to the problems the town faces.  If you have any local concerns, please let Hannah Davies know in the first instance, but let me know if the response seems inadequate.  Apart from all of the above, much of which is rather negative, I would like to wish you all a very Happy and Prosperous New Year. Better times lie ahead…  **Cllr Ken Pollock**  **Cheltenham,**  **Gloucestershire,**  **GL50 2BZ**  **13.01.21**  **District Councillor Report January 2021**  There is currently little happening with new initiatives at Malvern although normal services are being maintained and preparations made for distributing government grants once the criteria are established. I still have some funding remaining in my ward grant for the current year if there are any worthwhile local projects that need some support. The ten year census will take place on Sunday 21st March. It is expected that most people will complete online but the option of using a paper form will be available. It is a legal requirement for everyone to participate in what is an important exercise to plan for allocation of future resources. | | | |
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