**DIDDLEBURY PARISH COUNCIL**

**Chairman: Cllr D Hedgley**

Clerk/RFO: Mrs Jean de Rusett , The Grange, Leinthall Earls, Leominster,

Herefordshire HR6 9TS

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**MINUTES**

**of the**

 **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**held on Wednesday 18th May 2016, 7.30pm at Diddlebury Village Hall**

**053/16 - Present**

Cllr. D Hedgley – Chairman

Cllr. K Worthington

Cllr. Selina Thomas

Cllr. Mervyn Thomas

Cllr. Stephen. Povall

Cllr Robert. Povall

Cllr. T O'Boyle

Cllr. A Watson

**Apologies for absence**

Apologies were accepted from Cllr. M Fowler

**In attendance**

Unitary Cllr. C Motley, Mrs J de Rusett - Clerk and three members of the public

**054/16 – Notice Convening the meeting**

In accordance with statute, the Notice convening the meeting has been duly published on the Parish Council’s Notice Boards throughout the Parish and on the Parish Council's website.

**055/16 – Annual Report of the Parish Council and other groups/committees for the year 2015/2016.**

**055/16/1 -– Chairman of the Parish Council's Report**

This year saw the sad loss in June 2015 of Cllr Patrick Linton who had served on the council since July 2000 both as a councillor and chairman. Patrick brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the meetings as well as rigorous debate. There was only one applicant to replace him and Cllr Amie Watson was invited to join the council in September 2015. There will be Parish Council election in May 2017. Our thoughts and best wishes went out to Chris Jackson from the Highways division who has always been such a good friend to the council during his recent illness. We hope to see him back with us in the future.

**Main Issues**

1. Planning applications again formed the consistent part of our work. SAMDEv was finally approved but unfortunately in rationalising the criteria for development the planning department managed to lose much of what our place plan advocated for our area. This has proved particularly annoying in dealing with planning applications for our area in support of local views and cannot be changed for at least a year. There is also an ongoing debate with planning over their interpretation of community cluster boundaries and sustainability. The problem is not restricted to our parish but is generic in the south of the county. Cllr C. Motley is aware of this and is coordinating a unified parish wide approach to solve this issue.
2. The Broadband roll out and its failure to address the needs of hard to reach areas has again occupied a lot of our time. Cllr R. Povall is monitoring and pursuing our case with Connecting Shropshire but as yet we still have no firm promises regarding meeting our needs.
3. The issue of the empty properties in the parish has not yet been addressed but the council is now working more actively with the Shropshire Councils Empty Homes Officer who has taken the lead and hopefully can reach a satisfactory outcome for all involved.
4. The council has been involved very heavily in working closely with the DVH Committee (involved 2 Extraordinary General meetings) to try and ensure the success of its Big Lottery Bid both at the planning stage and in the transfer of the Land Registry title documents of the site held by the Parish Council as custodian trustees to the Official Custodian of Charities, an arm of the Charity Commission. The latter was particularly hard as the council was acting on a 70 year old document and felt that it had to uphold the spirit of it as well as looking after the future possible needs of the parish if something was to go wrong, but at the same time not jeopardising the lottery bid. After lengthy legal advice this will now be done but there is an unavoidable risk that if something did go wrong either now or during the 20 year duration of the lottery grant's legal charge over the village hall, the future of the site would, after a parish consultation, lie with the Official Custodian in London.
5. The High ways Maintenance Officer grant has now become a wider Environmental Maintenance Officer grant. The grant has risen from £750 to £3,000 but changes in Shropshire Councils Highways organisation will mean that the Parish Councils will become as they state, the “guardians of the lanes”. We are also entering into a pooled scheme with Culmington and possibly Munslow Councils to fund one joint officer for all 3 parishes to hopefully coordinate our approaches.

**Precept**

At a meeting on the 20th January 2016 the council decided to increase the precept for 2016-17 from its present level of £4,449.00 to £5,149. This will see an actual increase in contributions from Council Tax payers in Band D from £17.54 to £20.27. The council's projected running costs for next year are £3,960 which will give us a surplus of £1,189.00. This along with a carry-over figure of £4,761 will, less a contingency figure, go along with any contributions from Corvedale School and Diddlebury Village Hall Committee towards renewing the community parking area outside Diddlebury Village Hall. No substantial work will take place until the building work on the village hall is completed. The precept has risen by £700 which is the figure needed to cover the increased administrative costs the council faced in 2016/2017 which were incurred in raising the clerk's salary in line with the NALC pay scale and with increasing her weekly hours from 4 to 4.5 hours . A figure was also built in to cover the cost of replacing the present web site due to Shropshire council withdrawing its support of Shropnet . Thankfully the Clerk and Sara Thompson successfully obtained a grant to cover this. Assets within the parish are being maintained through the work of volunteers. Thanks particularly to Sara Thompson who has worked very hard to transfer the website to its new home and Geoff Neden for his work with the Flood Action Group. The Parish Plan Steering Group continues to effectively monitor the progress of the Place Plan.

**Planning**

18 planning applications have been made all of which bar 1 were supported. (18 last year)

2 inquiries were investigated for possible planning breaches. (3 last year)

**Responses to Consultations**

Future Fit Health, Crime Commissioner Survey

**Courses/meetings attended.**

The Big Conversation (Shropshire Councils future strategic plan to meet its revenue shortfalls), Cllr Motleys Parish Chairs Group Meetings, Craven Arms and surrounding Parishes Local Joint Committee Meetings.

**Letters sent out in response to council concerns**

Objection to Shropshire Council over: raising student travel costs, proposed reduction in full planning meetings.

**Sample of other topics arising**

Highways-consultation over road closures, damaged verges, land slips, fallen trees, speeding. Flood support. Charity donations. Footpaths.

Unfortunately financial demands on DPC continue to increase and with no Council Infrastructure Levy funding coming in from any new builds it falls upon the precept to cover the increased costs.

**055/16/2 – Report by Unitary Cllr. C Motley**

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Unitary Councillor Motley spoke about the difficult year Shropshire Council has experienced, with the sudden departure of one Leader, who was replaced by Cllr. M Pate, the previous Leader of the Council prior to unification. Under his leadership she has received a additional portfolio - that of Rural Services and Local Communities.

The biggest challenge Shropshire Council faced in the past year was dealing with additional budget cuts of £61 million, in addition to the £146 million already made since 2009. This has led to reconfiguring all council budgets, whilst coping with the ever spiralling costs of caring for Shropshire's increasingly large elderly population, safeguarding children and dealing with children with special needs. Services have had to be slashed: the population of Shropshire was invited to join in the discussion of what services should be cut and which retained, via a process called The Big Conversation. This revealed support for Shropshire Council's emphasis on the care of the elderly and children.

The looming problem is cuts to discretionary services such as libraries, leisure centres and museums. Many town and parish councils are involved in discussions about taking over the provision of such services. This is does not affect the Apedale and Corvedale so much as issues about the lack of public transport, keeping rural schools filled, upkeep of village halls and churches, the state of the roads, inadequate Broadband and poor mobile telephone provision. Planning has become less of an issue since SAMDEV was finally adopted and we have a five year land supply in place.

Parish Councils are finding a increasing administrative load is being placed on them, at a time when it is becoming more difficult to recruit councillors and parish clerks. She has set up a series of Chair's meetings, to discuss shared parish council problems and to seek resolutions by collaborative efforts. There are some good results already, with some councils sharing a parish clerk, others are pooling their environmental maintenance grants to get better value for money, others have set up flood action groups which are supported by neighbouring parishes.

So it has been a busy year and is likely to get busier. Despite all the grand Government talk about economic powerhouses and devolved councils, I am convinced that at the local level it will be the small, solid gains and combined efforts which will keep our Apedale and Corvedale communities thriving and I will do all I can to work with our parishes and residents to achieve that.

On behalf of all members of the Parish Council and the parishioners, the Chairman thanked Unitary Cllr. Motley for all her help, advice and support during the past year.

**055/16/3 – Diddlebury Village Hall Committee Report.**

 Cllr O’Boyle on behalf of the Diddlebury Village Hall Committee thanked the Parish Council for its support with the issues surrounding the Lottery Bid.

The DVHC's AGM had been held recently and officers were appointed. Income for the past year was below that forecast and big efforts are now being made to secure funding for Stage III of the Lottery Bid. The DVHC is at present tendering for contractors to carry out the refurbishment. It is hoped work will start on the 19th June.

**055/16/4 – Local Joint Committee**

 Cllr. Fowler, the Parish Council's LJC representative, was unable to attend this meeting.

**055/16/5 – Parish Plan Steering Group**.

Cllr. Selina Thomas read to the meeting the report prepared by the PPSG's chairman,

 Mr Ian Davies, on the activities of the PPSG. The Parish Plan was reviewed in 2013 and the PPSG has monitored progress. The eight areas where actions had been completed were listed. Two areas remain to be fulfilled: agreement between DVHC and the Corvedale School on parking issues, and improved mobile phone reception for the parish. Five long term aspirations - flashing speed signs, Good Neighbours type car scheme, increased local activities once the village hall has been renovated, development of a Design Plan (requires professional funding and professional lead) and finding an acceptable means of publishing local service and employment opportunities, continue to be pursued.

The PPSG retains funding of £778.

**055/16/6 – Website manager's Report -** [**www.2shrop.net/Diddlebury**](http://www.2shrop.net/Diddlebury)**. & www.diddleburypc.co.uk**

Mrs Sara Thompson, honorary website administrator, reported that the new Diddlebury Parish website has been up and running for just over a month now. The Parish Council commissioned the new website from a professional firm of web designers and the funding was made possible by the clerk successfully applying for a grant to cover the set up and training and 5 years annual hosting fees.

The revamped website has a much more modern look and feel and is user friendly on mobile devices. News articles, up-coming events and Parish Council meetings are all easily and readily accessible from home page.

There is still a bit of work to be done on the new website to get it exactly how we want.

We have received a number of (unsolicited) complimentary comments.

We are in the process of setting up Google analytics on the new website which will enable us to monitor performance and usage.

The old shrop.net site will be withdrawn with effect from June.

The ‘Google Group’ which was set up to run alongside the website and is run by Geoff Neden now has 61 members.

**055/16/7 – Diddlebury Charities**.

This is a small charity which makes donations to the needy within the parish. A statement of accounts had been prepared by Mr David Francis and was read to the meeting by the Chairman. The Charity had made grants of £188 to parishioners and £100 to the Louisa Powell Almshouses. It carried forward a balance of £619.56.

**055/16/8 - Diddlebury Stream Management/Flood Action Group**

Cllr. O'Boyle on behalf of the Group reported that the Group has expanded to include Corfton, Bouldon and Peaton: it also works closely with the Culmington Group. The Diddle Brook is now included in that group, but not yet the Pie Brook, although it is hoped Pie Brook will be included. Cllr. O'Boyle thanked the Culmington Group for all the help and advice they had given Diddlebury.

The Steering Committee of the Council has decided that the Diddle Brook catchment will be next in line for a survey by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust as part of the Slow the Flow programme, once the survey in Culmington has been completed later this year.

Cllr. O'Boyle wished to put on record his thanks to Mr. Geoff Neden for all his work in leading the group.

Cllr. M Thomas was of the view that if there was a serious cloudburst, nothing would stop water coursing down the hillside, causing flooding in Peaton and Bouldon.

**055/16/9 - the Buzzard**

Cllr. Worthington advised that the Buzzard is still successfully operating: it is usually full to Craven Arms on Thursdays and to Ludlow on Fridays. However, funding is being withdrawn from the service and if the Parish Council is minded to make a donation, it would be welcomed.

The Chairman thanked all of those who had prepared and presented reports.

**056/16 – Open Forum**

No members of the public raised any matters. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.00pm. and was followed by the Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council.

**MINUTES SIGNED BY Vice Chair Councillor T O’Boyle**

**DATED 22 June 2016**