



E-mail: fownhopeclerk@hotmail.com

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held via Zoom on 4th May 2021

Present:

Cllr Mike Cohn (in the Chair) and Cllrs Kevin Braybrook, Dorothy Quayle, Mike Simmons, Frank Hemming, Gareth Williams, Paul McGuire, Dan Teague and Stuart Eames

Also Present:

20 members of the public; Clerk Helen Tinson; Ward Councillor John Hardwick; Superintendent Edd Williams.

1) **Chairman's Welcome:**

Cllr Mike Cohn welcomed members of the public and thanked everyone for attending.

2) **Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies were received for Cllrs Tim Jones and Ed White, and, Reverend Chris Moore.

3) **Minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting:**

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Meeting on 18th May 2019 and RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting. They were duly signed by the Chairman.

4) **Speaker: Superintendent Edd Williams, West Mercia Police:**

Superintendent Williams introduced himself and the initiatives he will be promoting to work alongside parishes and communities:

1) The Local Policing Charter: the Parish was asked to identify the top three areas for concern for the Community Policing Team to address. The team would then draw up a Contact Contract which sets out expectations for contact, when, by whom and how frequently, and agrees how much time will be allocated.

2) The 'We Don't Buy Crime' Initiative: which works with residents to deter criminals and prevent crime. Superintendent Williams spoke about his investment in the prevention of crime and of West Mercia's commitment to deliver sustainable protection. He assured the meeting of West Mercia's priorities of Safer Roads, Safer Homes and Safer People.

Accordingly, the Community Policing Teams are being encouraged to build relationships with Parish Councils, Residents and Community Groups. PC Josh Kitchin was identified as our local Officer.

3) Independent Advisory Group: they are a team who scrutinize West Mercia's use of Stop and Search, use of force and reviewing bod cams and are currently looking to recruit volunteers. Anyone interested should contact Superintendent Williams. Email: Edward.williams@westmercia.pnn.police.uk. Tel: 07742 604121.

The overall message was one of 'Stronger Together' with an emphasis on renewing working collaborations to deliver effective services to Herefordshire.

Superintendent Williams took questions from Councillors and members of the public, and encouraged residents to sign up to Neighbourhood Matters, the digital Neighbourhood Watch

system.

The Chairman thanked Superintendent Williams for joining the meeting, and he left.

5) **Chairman's Report:**

Cllr Mike Cohn delivered his report firstly praising the community for pulling together during the long period of the B4224 closure, which had been dominant in PC actions during the year. He thanked members of the council, in particular Cllr Kevin Braybrook and Clerk Helen Tinson, for their efforts moving matters forward and keeping communications flowing.

The Christmas Singalong was very much welcomed by parishioners and had a good community feeling. The Chairman thanked everyone involved, with particular thanks to Ian Quayle and Morrison Sellar.

The new website is live and an excellent example of a good Parish Council website. The Chairman thanked Caplor Horizons and Cllr Gareth Williams and Clerk Helen Tinson for getting it up and running.

The new Fownhope Walks are about to be launched and thanks were given to Cllr Stuart Eames and Nick Kingsford. Further thanks to Nick Kingsford for his work renovating the Milestone and Tom Spring Memorial.

The resignation of Cllr Ed White was announced, and Ed was thanked for his dedication and tireless work on behalf of the FRFA and the PC. The Chairman wished to record how much we owe Ed for the last few years.

Cllr Cohn presented a brief finance report, noting healthy balances and thanking Robin Peers for his thorough audits. Please refer to Appendix A for the full report.

Finally, Cllr Cohn thanked all Councillors for their support and dedication, and announced he would be standing down as Chair at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

Highways Working Group Report:

Cllr Kevin Braybrook presented the report on behalf of the Highways Working Group. The Chairmanship of the HWG will pass to Cllr Stuart Eames as Cllr Braybrook will replace Cllr Cohn as Chair of the Parish Council at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. Particular thanks were given to Cllr Eames and Cllr Quayle, for taking on the role of Litter Pick Co-Ordinator.

The road closure had dominated HWG actions this year and Cllr Braybrook went on to present a Powerpoint presentation summarising the key points. BBLP have offered a Social Value Project to Fownhope and Woolhope Parish Councils, which is funded by BBLP and is not any form of compensation from HC. However, HC held an independent scrutiny committee review and agreed to undertake an independent external review.

The Lengthsman, Suzi Bruce, has been contracted for a further 12-month period.

Drainage works to improve flooding carried out in 2020 have so far proven successful. The pipe leading to Tan Brook has been fixed and has (so far) not flooded again. However, BBLP are now only pumping gullies on a reactive basis and Councillors and members of the public were encouraged to report any blocked drains to HC via the website as quickly as possible.

The two new Speed Indicator Devices have been installed, purchased with a combination of donations and Parish Council funds. There have been no Community Speed Watch sessions during the road closure, but Helen Phillips has taken on the role of Co-ordinator and will shortly begin a new schedule of sessions. Cllr Braybrook thanked Helen for taking this on. The new gateways have been purchased, and will be installed once suitable locations can be agreed. The TRO process was interrupted when the road collapsed but the HWG will be pushing for this to be

re-started as soon as possible.

The B4224 Strategy Group, involving parishes from Lea to Hampton Bishop, have been working on a Memorandum of Understanding with Herefordshire Council. The aim of the group is to use speed limits and weight restrictions along the length of the B4224 to reduce traffic.

6) **Planning Working Group Report, to include Annual Report on Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring:**

Cllr Dorothy Quayle presented a report on behalf of the Planning Working Group. Please refer to Appendix B.

7) **Environment Working Group Report:**

The Environment Group has continued to work towards meaningful actions following the declaration of a climate emergency in June 2019. The action plan has been amended and will be presented to full council for approval at the next meeting. The EG has also written an Impact Report and members were invited to read it. Cllr Williams posted a link to the report in the chat function.

Emissions are reported to have dropped by 6-8% across the planet last year, but will increase again if actions are not taken. The Government will be hosting COP26 in Glasgow in November and presenting their 10-point plan.

The Parish Council are members of Herefordshire Green Network. The Clerk regularly shares their weekly newsletters, which often feature events, and everyone was encouraged to attend as many as possible.

Cllr Williams gave an update on The Great Collaboration, encouraging everyone to share within their circle of friends and family. The Environment Group will be revisiting plans to set up a car club to help support some transport actions. It was reported that NALC are interested in using Five for Fownhope (The Great Collaboration) as a case study for their climate work.

During the year, more trees have been planted, donated by the Woodland Trust; The Parish Council gave a donation to support Herefordshire Wildlife Trust purchase land on Common Hill; textiles recycling bins are available at both St. Mary's School and at Faulkner House; Cllr Quayle has set up a Hedgehog Highway along Woolhope Road; the Clerk submitted a climate related article to the SLCC Clerk Magazine which was shortlisted for an award; a community skip is being provided by the Parish Council at the community event on 26th June; and Cllr Williams announced that he is to be involved in the Energy part of HC's County Plan.

8) **Footpaths Working Group Report:**

The Footpaths team are slowly but surely improving the network of paths. A programme of replacing stiles and gates has been identified, stiles are being repaired and a steady development of footpaths is underway.

Cllr Eames has been working on updating the five Fownhope walks, last carried out in 2004, and wished to thank Claire Jenkins, Suzanne Parr and Ed White for walking them and suggesting changes to text and layout, and to Nick Kingsford for his design skills. The Shop @ Coe Corner and the West End Stores will stock a supply of printed maps (free of charge), and all will be available to download on the website.

9) **Investment Strategy Group Report:**

The meeting received a report prepared by Peter Davis on the Investment Advisory Group. Please refer to Appendix C. Cllrs Cohn and Simmons wished to thank Peter for his guidance on the IAG.

10) **Report from Fownhope Recreation Field Association (FRFA):**

Cllr Mike Simmons presented the report on behalf of the FRFA who manage the 11.5 acre Recreation Field and the Pavilion on behalf of the people of Fownhope and the Parish Council.

Please refer to Appendix D for the full report. Cllr Simmons wished to thank Dan Teague for his assistance with the machinery, and the FRFA Committee for their work. The Chairman thanked Cllr Simmons and repeated earlier thanks to the FRFA Committee.

11) **Report from Fownhope Libraries:**

Cllr Dorothy Quayle presented the report on behalf of the Fownhope Libraries. The library has been closed since March 2020 because of the vulnerability of Faulkner House residents and the risk presented by COVID. It is anticipated that the library will open for one day per week from June. Until then, the telephone box at Court Orchard will be used as a book exchange.

12) **Report from Fownhope United Charities:**

Christopher Whitmey presented the report from Fownhope United Charities. Please refer to Appendix E for the full report. It was clarified that most payments are made to Fownhope students with student loans, names withheld for confidentiality.

13) **Report from Fownhope Community Land Trust:**

Cllr Frank Hemming presented the report from Fownhope Community Land Trust. Please refer to Appendix F for the full report. Cllr Hemming noted the difficulty of finding sites for affordable homes within an AONB but expressed the group's hope that sites will become available at some point.

14) **To consider any need for allotments:**

There were none.

15) **Comments and Questions from any Elector of Fownhope Parish:**

A resident asked that a link to the Memorial Hall and Pavilion webpage is added to the new website. The Clerk undertook to carry out this action.

16) No other questions or comments were raised. The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 8.11pm.

Signed Dated

Chairman

Appendix A: Finance Working Group Report

The Finance Working Group have met 4 times in the last twelve-month period, and 8 times since the last Annual Parish Meeting.

We reviewed our safeguarding procedures and made a few adjustments to ensure all invoices, payments and bank reconciliations continue to be checked during this period of remote working. The online banking facility with Lloyds Bank has worked very well and has proven to be an efficient way of banking. At the next meeting of full council, we shall be proposing that we transition from Excel to an accounting software package specifically designed for local councils to further improve the efficiency of our accounting practices.

We met in September 2020 to review the 6 months accounts passed and discuss the budget for the Financial Year from April 21 to March 22 (the financial year we are now in). It was decided to raise the precept from £30,000 to £32,000.

Setting the budget for the next financial year is the most important role of the Finance Working Group as well as ensuring our compliance with our Financial Regulations, assessing and maintaining our risk and asset registers, and fulfilling the requirements of the External Audit. Robin Peers has continued to carry out the internal audit of the accounts, and we would like to thank him for his valuable assessment and suggestions. PKF Littlejohn will continue to carry out the external audit.

The draft accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021 are showing a surplus over expenditure for the year, undoubtedly because of the restrictions we faced as a result of the pandemic. The surplus will be transferred to earmarked reserves for future Fownhope Parish Council projects.

However, during the year we did purchase a new mower for the Recreation Field and have progressed the approved traffic calming scheme, having ordered two Speed Indicator Devices which are due to be installed any day now, and the installation of the Village Gateways which should be completed in the next few weeks. We received donations of £2,200 towards the purchase of the new SIDs, and are soon to receive a further donation of £2000 towards the maintenance of the playground.

We received a drainage grant of £870 from Herefordshire Council which was used to clear the ditches along Common Hill Lane and Capler Lane; and have carried out various other maintenance activities throughout the parish, including our Lengthsman and P3 work, tree work and general maintenance, which amounted to £6561. We supplied a number of sandbags for residents to use in an emergency and topped up our grit bins.

The dividend income generated by the stocks and shares held by Fownhope Parish Council was £1,314 which, although lower than forecast as a result of COVID-19 and BREXIT, is still a better return than the income received from the original Treasury Bond and, very probably, better than the banks are currently offering in the form of interest. The portfolio is conservatively based, with investments held in six companies. The portfolio has been assessed for providing a reasonable dividend and preserving capital, and for compliance with our Climate Emergency Declaration and no changes have been proposed.

Helen Tinson
Responsible Financial Officer

Appendix B: Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring May 2020/May 21 and Planning Report

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan an annual implementation and monitoring review is done and progress is reported at each Annual Parish meeting. This year sees the end of the fourth year of the life of our Neighbourhood Plan. This report gives an update on progress.

We participated in Neighbourhood Plan Review in January 2020 when we discussed in detail whether or not we needed to review our plan with either small changes, or more major ones put in place. The group felt that the Fownhope Neighbourhood Plan (FNP) offers all we are able in terms of land offered at present, and proposed some minor amendments in order to clarify some points.

On the advice from the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) and in consultation with the Hereford Council Neighbourhood planning team we chose to await the outcome of the County Planning Strategy when we may be better informed about housing needs and how we may need to respond. We need to review our Plan anyway in about 2027/28 to ensure longevity as the current plan ends in 2031.

Update

- The main site continues to be Mill Field which has planning permission in place and where work has started in preparation for the build whilst final amendments are put forward. We await the actual start of work. This will provide 5 affordable homes.
- The Potato Barn site has put forward a plan which has been going through a review resulting in some changes – this will be for ten dwellings with no affordable homes. The fact that the FNP states that there was to be a joint application with neighbouring land to include some affordable homes has not been respected. Outline planning has been granted without the Parish Council's knowledge.
- The site adjacent to the Medical Centre has achieved an Outline Planning Permission and the land is now for sale. According to the Estate Agent permission has been given for 10 houses with no affordable homes, which is very disappointing. I do not expect work to start for quite some time on this site. Once again the Parish Council was not informed of the outline permission being approved.
- Two new homes have been completed, two houses are going through the process of being changed radically and several houses have had extensions done.
- We also do our best to monitor progress on new builds and extensions to ensure compliance and respond to parishioner's concerns as appropriate.

The Planning Working Group is disappointed that once again there has been scant consideration of the needs of the village as stated in the plan. Whilst we appreciate that the County rules changed so that developments offering fewer than 10 would not be required to offer any affordable homes, this is contrary to our neighbourhood plan in which we asked for all multiple developments **to contribute to affordable housing** needs.

Sadly, whilst it is a legal document as it stands, we do not feel that we have had as much support from the Planning Officers, Architects or Planning Committee as we might expect.

However, on the brighter side, new laws already in force requiring quality build and sustainable materials and water, heat conservation systems etc are very welcome.

What have we learned/decided.

- We felt that when responding to planning applications, sent on our behalf by the clerk to Hereford Council, they should be accompanied by an FNP Policy Compliance Sheet when appropriate. To relieve

the Clerk of the task a member of the Planning Group will complete the form and send it to her. We need to be very clear about the main reasons for objection and fight hard to maintain the importance of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- We strongly advise that parishioners putting in planning applications inform their architects or agents that we have the Neighbourhood Plan in place. They are welcome to download a copy from the website or indeed request one from the Clerk.

Looking Forward – two matters.

Firstly, we were involved in responding to the proposed National Planning Laws, with wide ranging changes including the relaxation of quite a lot of rules regarding planning applications. Few of which will NOT apply to (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) AONBs.

Terms in the opening letter from the Prime Minister like “all houses must be beautiful”, are a slight puzzle as there is not an actual description and some ideas were interesting!

And lastly - We have been invited to participate in a Design Code Pilot to consider what we mean by ‘design’ and how do we define the needs of rural areas versus urban areas. What do we want our village to look like? This project will help to develop templates for future use for those doing Neighbourhood Plans or those updating them. There will be a requirement to include Design Policies in the future (we have one in our FNP)

There are 14 Counties involved in this national exercise and there are only two Counties that are in the rural category, Devon and Herefordshire. The remainder are very city/urban concentric. The Pilot will be managed by the Neighbourhood Planning offices in Hereford with specialist staff to help guide us through the process.

We shall be working alongside three other Parishes in Herefordshire and we are the only one responding as an AONB/ (Site of Special Scientific Interest) SSSI area. This has to be completed within six months and will certainly have quite an effect on planning requirements in the future both Nationally and locally.

Dorothy Quayle

May 2021

Appendix C: Investment Advisory Group Report

Preamble.

The Investment Advisory Group was set up in April 2014 to administer the investment of £27620 – the proceeds from the sale of a Treasury bond with the twin objectives of at least generating the income provided by the bond (£1127 p.a.) while preserving the level of the capital employed.

Investment Strategy.

The Strategy, which may be found on the Parish Council's website, was amended during the last three financial years to afford more flexibility to the Group particularly when considering the sale of investments and to take into account environmental as well as ethical considerations. No further changes are recommended at this time.

Valuation.

As at 1100 hours on 19th April 2021 the portfolio was valued at £25853 against £23816 in May 2020 and £22504 at the time of the special interim report on 2nd October 2020. This of course reflects the universal improvement in stock values over the last year and justifies the decision not to succumb to panic selling.

Dividends received and anticipated.

For the year ended 31st March 2021 these totalled £1314. Income projected for 2021/2022 amounts to £1668. This anticipates a modest contribution from HSBC which suspended its dividend last year and the restoration of the dividend of Central Asia Minerals (CAML).

Comments and outlook.

There is a lot of optimism and a great deal of speculation in the markets at the moment which has meant that the more aggressive portfolio has done extremely well over the past year. Our portfolio is conservatively based with an emphasis on preserving capital and maintaining a healthy dividend. HSBC and especially CAML have done quite well. HSBC provides the portfolio with its Far East interest which is where the future for wealth creation lies although geo-political risk is for ever present. My recommendation is to stay with HSBC for the time being although I will be keeping a close watch on it. My faith in CAML has been fully justified and is even now one of the best plays in the copper market. Commodities will benefit from inflation which is now anticipated to feature in financial planning. Copper is very much a "green" commodity.

SWEF, Skipton and RGL are all good dividend payers and I recommend their retention. GSK is a disappointment and until recently was bouncing along at a five year low. Although a major vaccine producer it has not featured in the Covid 19 race and its vaccine sales have suffered as a consequence of the pandemic. Next year GSK will hive off its consumer business into a separate company and shareholders will receive shares in the new company. Last week it emerged that an aggressive private venture firm had taken a sizeable stake in GSK and we can expect to see some pressure on the Company to change its strategy. Generally an occurrence such as this is good news for the long-suffering shareholders and reinforces my previous view that this is an outstanding recovery opportunity. So, in short, no changes to the portfolio are recommended.

Peter Davis

On behalf of the IG, 19th April 2021

Appendix D: Fownhope Recreation Field Association Report

For the most part the pavilion has been closed for business for the best part of a year. There were times, acting within the government guidelines, when we were able to let out the facilities to a yoga class and to art classes but otherwise the pavilion has been standing empty and our income has been next to nothing. Our outgoings have remained pretty much as the always are and to that end we are very grateful to have received the best part of £17K support from Herefordshire Council over this time.

Though there have been very few lettings over the last year this doesn't mean that the FRFA has been inactive and there a number of highlights worth mentioning.

- The kitchen has been completely re-equipped and refurbished, and we have Derek Colley to thank for this. We now have a kitchen in which it will be possible to do significant catering work and we look forward to enjoying people's responses when they finally get to see it – so far I don't think anyone has even made a cup of tea there!
- Ed White has stood down from the FRFA both as a trustee and grounds man – we're very grateful to him for all the work he's done over the years and wish him well for the future.
- The Strollers cricket team have changed their name to the Fownhope Strollers and have now very much identified themselves as Fownhope's cricket team. A new agreement has been signed between the PC, the FRFA and the Fownhope Strollers that ensures that cricket will be played here for the next 20 years at least.
- Mary Pearce has stood down from the role of secretary and we're very grateful to her for her contributions – she'll be missed – but I'm happy to report that Nic Kinch, who has recently moved into the village and attended her first FRFA meeting last week, has now taken on that role.
- William Dereham has taken on responsibility for developing a mowing team and is developing a programme of recruitment, training and management.
- William's first task was to review the mowing equipment and, as a result of his inspection, the tractor is currently off site undergoing works that will make it compliant with the requirements of Health and Safety regulations.

Jacqui Nicholls, our booking secretary, reports that bookings for the pavilion are now coming in strongly as people look towards mid June and some degree of normality. We look forward to welcoming people back into our facilities.

I should like to thank the trustees who have adapted to short but vital meetings over Zoom over the last year – their contributions, as always, have been hugely valuable.

Finally, I find myself thinking about the future of the pavilion and the field. When I first joined the FRFA we had the benefit of a document which had been written by Gareth Williams and Mel Preedy, and which outlined how the pavilion could be developed into a more useful building for the community. This proved to be a particularly valuable piece of work and I think it's true to say that we've put pretty much every proposal into practice, making the pavilion a very different building to the one it was ten years ago. I'm now thinking about the next ten years and though I haven't yet spoken to the committee about this it strikes me that we need to be thinking about how we can best develop our facilities to meet the needs of the community over the next ten years. It will be all too easy for us to grow in a piecemeal manner without too much thought about an integrated whole. With more than eleven acres of land we would appear to be a natural home for any project that anyone has in mind – in many ways I like the idea of that but, nevertheless, I suspect that without an eye to the future we may not be able to make the best use of the facilities we have.

Mike Simmons

Appendix E: United Charities Report

Please see separate attachment.

Appendix F: Community Land Trust Report

FCLT Board:

Christopher Whitmey	Chair
Ian Quayle	Treasurer
Bryn Caless	Secretary
Frank Hemming	PC Representative (appointed)
Colin Dickerson	Board Member
Catherine Stubbings	Board Member

FCLT Membership:

Membership stands at 34 Life Members, and 4 Associate Members. The Board is actively encouraging a drive for new members. Membership of Fownhope CLT is open to any person over the age of 18 who lives and/or works (or to any organisation which is based), in the civil parish of Fownhope, or in the civil parishes of Mordiford, Woolhope, Brockhampton or Holme Lacy.

Notes

Because of 'lockdown', the Board has met by Zoom during the course of the year. The Annual General Meeting will be in September 2021 (date to be confirmed).

The FCLT has agreed on behalf of both the Diocese and Fownhope Parish Council to monitor whether the occupancy terms of the Old School site are being met for local people.

The Board held a helpful (virtual) meeting about affordable homes with M F Freeman developers of Mill Field.

Bryn Caless

Hon Secretary FCLT