

## Alderminster Parish Council

### Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Alderminster Village Hall 7.30 pm

Present: Cllr Karen Jones

Cllr John Melville

Cllr Mark Meadows

Cllr Lesley Casley

Cllr David Curtis

Mrs M Norman (Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer)

Also present: Cllr Izzi Seccombe and eight members of the public

1	<b>Apologies:</b> Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dominic Skinner.
2	<b>Declaration of interests:</b> Cllr Meadows declared an interest in respect of item 10 i) and 10 iv).
3	<b>Questions from the public:</b> A resident asked whether the gully pots on the main road could be cleared so that water could flow freely down to the river. Cllr Seccombe said that the gullies should be cleaned on an annual basis. She would contact the Highways team to request that this be done.
4	<b>Minutes of the previous meetings:</b> The minutes of the meeting of the 29 <sup>th</sup> March and the 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2023 were unanimously agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.
5	<b>Grant application:</b> It was agreed to grant the sum of £220 to Alderminster Parochial Church Council towards the cost of maintaining the church clock.
6	<b>Parochial Church Council:</b> A representative from the Parochial Church Council explained that the riverside walk at the back of the church had been closed for safety reasons. A recent inspection of the trees in the churchyard identified five trees which gave cause for concern. Three trees in particular presented a safety concern. These are the two horse chestnuts on the road side of the church, and a Scots pine on the corner beside Alderminster Lodge at the start of the riverside walk. The horse chestnuts need to be lowered by 30% in order to safeguard the public and the Scots pine needs to be felled. Until this is done the riverside walk cannot be opened again.

	<p>Another issue is the steps leading down to the footpath from the churchyard which have degraded over time, making them unsafe to use. The cost of the materials to repair the path would be low, and grant funding may be available. If volunteers were prepared to give their labour for a day's work it would be possible to repair the steps and facilitate the re-opening of the footpath. The Churchwarden requested the assistance of the Parish Council in helping to fund the tree surgery. The cost would be in the region of £5,500 for all five trees, but between £3,000 and £4,000 for the three trees in need of urgent attention.</p> <p>The Council agreed that the funding request would be put on the agenda for the next meeting.</p>	
7	<p><b>Broadband pledges:</b> The Council understood that pledges had reached 59% of the target figure, with a month to go before the closing date. The clerk was asked to contact Openreach to see if they would like a further leaflet drop carried out.</p>	
8	<p><b>Councillors' reports:</b> There were no reports to be made.</p>	
9	<p><b>District and County Councillors' reports:</b> Cllr Seccombe said that a Cabinet meeting would take place on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July where Cabinet would consider whether to explore the option of becoming a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority. At present, Warwickshire County Council is a non - constituent member of the WMCA and has reduced voting rights. The original concept of the WMCA was set up on a 3 LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) geography. These were the Black Country, Birmingham and Solihull, and Coventry and Warwickshire. In the past the LEPs were the vehicle for funding streams and inward investment but these have now ceased. As a non-constituent member, Warwickshire will not have access to the funding streams of the WMCA. If Warwickshire decides it would like to become a constituent member, the decision must be taken before the Mayoral elections in May 2024 otherwise the matter cannot be considered until the next Mayoral elections in a further four years' time. There will be a public consultation if Cabinet decides to progress the option.</p>	
10	<p><b>Planning applications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) APP/J3720/W/22/3310085: appeal against Stratford District Council's refusal to grant planning permission for 17 self-build/custom build houses on land north of Shipston Road, Alderminster. An objection was made to this appeal.</li> <li>ii) APP/J3720/W/23/3321817 Old Worcester House: appeal against Stratford District Council's refusal to grant planning permission for a carport. No representation was made to this appeal.</li> </ul> <p>And to note the results of the following planning applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) 23/00968/LBP Orchard Barn, Alderminster Farm: Certificate of lawfulness of proposed works allowed.</li> <li>ii) 23/00867/FUL The Lodge, Goldicote House: permission granted for proposed single storey rear extension.</li> <li>iii) 23/01250/FUL Churchill House, Alderminster: permission granted for erection of outbuilding to form ancillary accommodation and games room.</li> <li>iv) APP/J3720/W/22/3310085: appeal allowed against Stratford District Council's refusal to grant planning permission for 17 self build/custom build houses on land north of Shipston Road, Alderminster.</li> </ul>	

11	<p><b>Accounts for payment and finance matters:</b>  The following payments were approved and authorised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Zurich plc (insurance) - £300.00</li> <li>ii) Clerk's salary (May) - £**</li> <li>iii) HMRC (income tax) - £**</li> <li>iv) HSBC (bank charges) - £8.00</li> <li>v) HSBC (bank charges) - £8.00</li> <li>vi) Clerk's salary (June) - £**</li> <li>vii) ICO (data protection) - £35.00</li> <li>viii) Village Hall (Coronation event) - £366.06</li> </ul> <p>The Chairman signed the supporting documentation.</p>	
12	<p><b>Correspondence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Invitation to join the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. Agreed that membership should be on an individual level.</li> <li>ii) Freedom of Information Requests: information in the possession of the Council was supplied to the applicant.</li> </ul>	
13	<p><b>Items for future agenda:</b>  Grant funding for the trees in the churchyard.</p>	
14	<p><b>Clerk's resignation:</b>  The clerk had submitted her resignation but was willing to stay on for a few months until a replacement could be found.</p>	
15	<p><b>Chairman's report:</b>  The Chairman said as follows:  "Maria has been an employee of Alderminster Parish Council since July 2016. She performs the statutory roles of Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. As Chairman, I received her written resignation on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Maria's contractual notice period is one month, but she has graciously offered to remain employed until a new Clerk is in post.  I have been a councillor for the duration of Maria's employment and I am sorry that she has decided to leave. Maria performed her role with aplomb and I believe her replacement will not be easy to find. Her knowledge of local government administration, legislation and accounting practices commands the respect of Councillors. We rely on her advice and guidance. Her legal background, coupled with a high degree of literacy, means her contact with residents, local authorities and third parties is always to the highest professional standard.  The problems associated with the Public Open Space at The Old Stour development continue to require a lot of the Clerk's time. Whilst the problems remain, we are losing Maria's experience of the issues and a new Clerk will need time to get up to speed.  With the outline planning permission granted for 17 self-build/custom build homes we should expect residents and prospective residents to seek a dialogue with the Parish Council via its Clerk. Councillors may need to consider leading the communication with individuals, local groups and authorities until a new Clerk has a firm grasp of the issues. This is a lot to ask of a dwindling number of councillors.</p>	

A change of Clerk and RFO is always disruptive to a Parish Council, but – in my opinion, Maria’s resignation is a real loss to this Parish and is the trigger to my own decision to now stand down as Councillor.”

Cllr Seccombe expressed her regrets at the resignation of the Clerk and Chairman. She paid particular tribute to the Chairman who had exerted the utmost efforts to help the residents of The Old Stour. She felt it a great pity that some residents were unable to accept unpalatable facts or appreciate the work done by others on their behalf. She thanked both Clerk and Chairman for the work they had done for the village.

16 The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

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