

COUND PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Cllr T J W Roberts
Quay House
Upper Cound
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Clerk: Lisa Harris

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Held at 7.30pm on 26 May 2022 at Cound Moor Village Hall

Present: Parish Councillors T Roberts (Chair), S James (Vice Chair), J Hall, R Sartain, R Davies, K Symonds and Shropshire Councillor C Wild

Clerk: Lisa Harris

One member of the public was present

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors S Scott and S Green

2. Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20 May 2021 were proposed as a true record by Councillor Roberts, seconded by Councillor Symonds and unanimously agreed by all those present as a correct record and duly signed by the Chair.

3. Any items arising from previous minutes

Nothing to report

4. Annual report from the Chairman

The past year has been a busy year for the Council and our Clerk.

In February 2021 we appointed Lisa Harris as our Clerk shortly before the elections. Lisa was replacing Kathy Symonds who stood down at the start of the year. Prior to the elections in May last year, two councillors Linda Clutterbuck and Mervyn Smith retired from the Parish Council both after many years of reliable service. Subsequently, Kathy Symonds and Bill Howarth were elected and joined the Parish Council in May.

In early May 2021, the power for local councils to hold public meetings remotely was withdrawn, so the May meeting of Cound Parish Council was the first one to take place in person in over a year. Social distancing and the wearing of masks was however still in place. Zoom meetings had proved to be very successful locally and nationally and the National Association of Local Councils continues to press to have the power re-instated.

Building on Kathy's earlier work as Clerk, Lisa has further developed and reviewed our policies and protocols. With an increasing workload, our Clerk's contracted hours were reviewed and increased to 6 hours per week.

Regarding parish business it has been an active year. There has been significant progress made by Shropshire Council regarding the realignment of the approach to the Cound Arbour Bridge and the work is due to commence imminently.

It was brought to the attention of the Parish Council that there is a group of people very keen to utilise the former route of the Severn Valley Railway as a footpath and bridleway. The Parish Council has asked to be kept informed of The Severn Valley Rail Trail project and its progress.

There have been several useful discussions and presentations regarding the speed of traffic on the A458, particularly in the area of Cound Park. On behalf of the Parish Council our clerk wrote to Highways at Shropshire Council and received a definitive response regarding their policy and the criteria necessary to introduce any speed reduction. This was circulated to the interested parties and at present the A458 running through the parish does not meet the criteria.

Using their experience and business skills, several councillors worked together with the Clerk to put together a robust and transparent quotation process for for the environmental maintenance work to be done within the Parish. Payment for this work is equally shared between Cound Parish Council and an Environmental Maintenance Grant from Shropshire Council. Quotations were invited in January and a contractor was awarded the contract in February.

The longstanding consideration of Church Lane as a footpath and for it to be identified as such on the definitive map has been pursued. Thanks to the efforts of Councillors Symonds and Howarth, it is hoped that after 13 years the matter will be determined in the near future.

In the spring it became apparent that one of the commemorative trees adjacent to the War Memorial had died. With the agreement of the Parish Council, Councillor Scott replaced the tree with one of a similar size and species. On behalf of the Parish Council and parishioners, I would like to thank Councillor Scott for supplying and planting the tree.

Finally, when Lisa Harris commenced in the role of Parish Clerk, she was assured that there would be some quiet months to counteract the busy ones. Regrettably this has not been the case this year and she has diligently confronted and resolved the continuous demands of parish business. In addition, a few weeks ago she was awarded her CiLCA qualification. This is a impressive achievement to gain CiLCA in six months so my congratulations to Lisa and my thanks for her reliable work this year as Clerk .

Tim Roberts

5. Annual report from the Ward Councillor

Last May we promised three things:

1. Local housing for local people - when our housing company (Cornovii) build houses they're offered to local people first. Cornovii are delivering on this promise.
2. Secondly, we promised that we would put £40 million into the Highways Capital Programme, we've now increased that to £60 million and
3. We promised a third wheelie bin which will take all your plastics, cans and glass and stop it blowing all over the road. For those of you that have registered they will be delivered over

the summer months. If you haven't already registered for your third bin, then you can still do so but it won't be delivered until the autumn.

Covid and Ukraine

I am extremely grateful to the staff at Shropshire Council who continue to manage our Covid situation. Many officers were doing one job one day and doing something completely different the next, some staff have not yet returned to their original roles.

However, the last two years has taken its toll on the staff and for some staff they've had no break whatsoever because as Covid has become more manageable unfortunately we find ourselves in the middle of a humanitarian crisis. We are trying to arrange for as many Ukrainian people and families to come to Shropshire as possible. I am sure you can imagine that there is a lot of pressure on our staff to ensure that all the safety checks are put in place, it's a responsibility we must take incredibly seriously.

Shropshire has 100+ individual hosts registered on the Foundry system which make up 155 offers of accommodation, we have started DBS checks and we have also started the triaging of the property offers. The schools team continue to liaise with head teachers. The setting up of community hubs is well and truly up and running now and is being led by Amanda Jones from Shropshire Supports Refugees and Chris Childs from Energize.

Further information can be found on the Council's website here [Homes for Ukraine | Shropshire Council](#) and key links can also be found at

['Homes for Ukraine' scheme launches - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Homes for Ukraine scheme: frequently asked questions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Apply for a visa under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The Budget

I think it's fair to say that most of the Council's time over the last year was spent trying to ensure we produced a balanced budget for the 2022/23 financial year. This work also included looking ahead to 23/24. It is worth repeating the issues, we spend over 75% of our net budget on social care, i.e., Adult's or Children's Services and yet only 3% of the population actually benefit from these services. On average, each year our adult social care bill goes up by £12M. This year our care providers (residential and domiciliary care) are also in financial difficulties, and we are having to increase their payments. Therefore, our already high costs will be even higher.

The Government's social care scheme, which they launched last year and came into effect last week, whereby extra national insurance payments go towards social care will not help us. For the first three years only a fraction of this money will come to local government, the majority will go to the NHS.

Over Covid we also saw a significant increase in the number of looked after children coming into our system. Despite our current financial circumstances, we have invested further in prevention measures. Preventing children coming into our system has to be the best thing, it's better for the child, it's better for families and ultimately it is more cost effective. We have an excellent record with fostering and adoption, this leaves us with the very complex cases. These young people can be extremely expensive to place, very often out of county. We have one young person whose placement costs are over £1M per year. For local government this is unsustainable.

Shropshire Council's net budget for 21/22 was £208M of which £163,500M was for Social Care leaving £44.5M for everything else. At least half of the £44.5M is spent on the Waste Contract. So, the remaining £22.5M covers everything from Libraries to Pest Control, Highways to Environmental Health and it is this area that gets squeezed every time to social care costs increase.

You have also heard me talking about fair funding. Providing services in a rural area is far more expensive than providing them in urban areas. You will be aware that we did not receive a Bus Back Better grant, we don't deny that it will be more difficult to deliver services in rural areas but that is exactly why we needed that money because it does cost more to deliver bus services in the rural area and for many of our residents it is not about improving a service it is about keeping or initiating a service.

Council Tax Rebate

Earlier this year the government announced that all Council Taxpayers living in properties Band A to D will be eligible for a £150.00 Council Tax Rebate. If you already pay for your council tax via direct debit you do not need to do anything the £150.00 will be credited to your bank. If you do not pay by direct debit, you will be written to with further instructions as to how to claim the rebate.

It's Not All Depressing News

It's not all doom and gloom, Shropshire Council has some extremely high performing service areas and Adult Social Care is one of those services. We regularly receive visits from other Councils keen to learn from us.

Recently our Children's Services retained its Good OFSTED rating. Bearing in mind that this is two years of which we have been in a pandemic, we were absolutely delighted, and I pay tribute to how hard the staff, especially our social workers, worked throughout the pandemic.

We have also won many awards, we've had more awards for our housing services, we had awards for our children services and we had awards for adult social services it will shock you but we have even won awards for highways especially the work that we are doing to try and make our highways repair programme carbon neutral.

Climate Change

In terms of climate change there has been good progress made this year. The Cabinet and Executive Management team have undertaken and passed carbon literacy training, and this will be rolled out to more members and staff over the coming months and all cabinet and council reports have to make a significant effort to look at how our policies impact on climate change. We are one of the top councils for producing our own green energy and this year we will be opening another solar farm and extending another. Shropshire Council is only directly responsible for a very small percentage of Shropshire's overall carbon footprint, but we can certainly do what we can to encourage others and currently there is work being undertaken on our procurement policies and procedures.

Local Matters

Airband

Over the last year Airband have been looking for infrastructure solutions to complete the installation of Airband for households in the Parish. There have been a few teething problems but, in the main, residents have been pleased with the increase in broadband speeds.

Speeding on the A458

There have been a number of serious accidents on the A458, many but not all are attributed to speed. The parishes along the A458 are getting together with the Police to discuss a way forward.

Cound Bridge

The improvements to the access onto the bridge from Cound harbour end are due to be undertaken in the next financial year. In the meantime, a signage and road marking scheme is being put in place to try and stop further damage to the bridge. Sadly, the bridge was recently damaged again. It has been inspected by the Bridge Team and thankfully, the damage is cosmetic. The repairs and the road markings should be carried out over the summer.

If you have any issues please don't hesitate to contact me.

Claire Wild

6. Parish Matters

None notified.

The meeting closed at 7.46pm.

Signed:
Chairman

Date: