

Brilley Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Parish Council meeting on
Monday 11 November 2024 at 19.30 in Brilley Village Hall

In attendance: Alasdair Stevenson (AS, Chair), Adrian Chapman (Vice Chair), Gareth Bufton (GB),
Liz Tucker (LT) and Amber Littleworth, Parish Clerk
2 members of the public and Ward Councillor Robert Highfield

Before the meeting commenced, the Parish Council and members of the public present held a minute silence for Armistice Day.

1. **To receive apologies of absence** – Steve Anning (SA)
2. **To receive declarations of interest and written applications for dispensation** – none received
3. **To adopt minutes of previous meeting** – 16 September 2024 – the Minutes were agreed by all present to be a true account of the meeting - AC proposed the minutes be adopted and GB seconded – the minutes were therefore ADOPTED and SIGNED by the Chair.
4. **Public Forum** – Local Residents – At Chairman's discretion, up to 10 mins will be allocated for the public to make representations, ask questions & give evidence in respect of any item on the agenda. Maximum of 2 mins per person is allowed. Item is not for comment on parish council discussions or decisions. Issues raised will be in public minutes and may be videoed or recorded.

4.1 Ward Councillor – Robert Highfield apologised for missing the last meeting. He went on to explain that the public rights of way correspondence from a member of the Public Rights of Way Department in Herefordshire Council only had good intentions and was simply to request information from Parish Councils. They are working hard on a new system in the Public Rights of Way Department and the Parish Council should be prepared to receive questionnaires for opinions and hopes for the future. The recent flood event has taken precedent as of late, and Herefordshire Council are in the process of creating a new, updated version of the Flood and Drainage Plan as they haven't been updated for 30+ years. The new Plan will enhance what already exists and will list drainage issues and high risk properties can be prioritised. Extra drainage works are hopeful for next year so Parish Councils can potentially achieve their own goals should they have any. AS discussed with Ward Councillor how great it is to receive Grants to benefit the community, for example footpaths and bridges in the area, but without expert help it is hard to decipher the issues and getting the most out of the Grant funds. Having a professional on hand to solve issues in the area would be beneficial for Parish Councils and Herefordshire Council itself. Ward Councillor reminded the Parish Council to lean on our chosen Lengthsman to identify issues and use his expert skill to confirm where the problems are.

4.2 Local Residents – A member of the public who has connections with the Church reminded the Parish Council of our offer to contribute towards the upkeep of the Church grounds. The Parish Council acknowledged this and explained our difficulty accessing our funds at present.

A second member of public expressed their concern regarding Chapel Lane. This is an ongoing issue which has lasted for years. However, water is continuing to erode the road and the drop into the ditch is hazardous and harmful should the unfortunate event of an accident occur. This has been brought to Balfour Beatty's attention a number of times and they advised that due to the small number of traffic fall through this lane they would simply close the road rather than solve the problem. Ward Councillor suggested obtaining a Traffic Regulation Order and he will liaise with AC regarding this. This member of the public also informed the Parish Council he will be attending the quarterly meeting of West Mercia Police and will express concerns of the little to none police presence in the parish.

LT discussed the missing verge section of Cwmmau Lane is causing issues for residents. The surface of the road is poor, the area is continuously wet even in the drier months and residents are fed up with the poor state. GB has volunteered to resolve this issue and with liaison with LT.

5. Planning –

- 5.1 P242641/ENF – Enforcement Appeal – Land at Mahollam Road, Huntington, Kington
(P240298/F – Planning Permission – Refused)

Councillors NOTED the current Enforcement Appeal and was reminded by Chair that all information, comments, objections and documents is available on the Planning website and updates will be accessible through the same portal.

- 5.2 Enforcement Action of Land East of Upper Bridge Court – update

No update to provide, Ward Councillor is chasing and will let Councillors know.

6. Financial Procedures –

Parish Councillors NOTED the bank balance as at 31st October 2024 was £3,097.97 in the UNITY TRUST account. Balance with NatWest is still unknown and a full bank reconciliation will take place once the transfer has been made.

6.1 The following payments were AGREED in accordance with the budget

- 6.1.1 Clerk salary for September as per Contract of Employment
- 6.1.2 Clerk salary for October as per the Contract of Employment
- 6.1.3 P G Watts Lengthsman B24.07 £385.00
- 6.1.4 Community First Insurance £152.62

6.2 Parish Councillors REAFFIRMED the payments made on the attached document “Appendix 1”.

6.3 Parish Councillors AGREED NALC’s national pay scale salary and agree back pay to 1st April 2024 and the Clerk will instruct Autela Payroll Services.

7. Parish Reports and Issues –

7.1 NatWest and Unity Trust Banking update – 10 months has passed with no access to our NatWest account which the Clerk and Parish Council have put in an extensive amount of time to rectify the issue. The agreed authorised signatories (AS, AC and LT) have signed numerous bank mandates, provided identification and made many trips to branches to solve the problem. NatWest are using an outdated bank mandate which needs to be changed in order to transfer the proceeds from that account to our new account with Unity Trust. Unity Trust is an online bank company, created with Parish Councils in mind and recommended by HALC. Clerk instructed Herefordshire Council to send our second half of the Precept due to our new bank account in order to settle many outstanding invoices. Invoices due have been prioritised and agreed by Parish Councillors in advance by email. As at 11th November 2024 Councillor LT was the outstanding party to sign the bank mandate for NatWest and agreed to sign the same after the Parish Council meeting. Brilley Parish Council have felt extremely neglected and disappointed with the services and support from NatWest and will seek advice from the Ombudsman, make a complaint and claim compensation.

7.2 Audit update – Clerk has received Public Interest Report Failure Notice from PKF Littlejohn on 7th November 2024 informing the Council of a final 42-day allowance to submit the AGAR before fines and further action will be taken. NatWest have put the Council in an impossible position having stopped and refused all access to our bank account. Brilley Parish Council are unable to receive bank statements from NatWest for the last financial year therefore we are unable to perform required bank reconciliations, budgeting and annual audits which PKF require.

7.3 Enforcement Plan update – As stated in Item 5.2 - No update to provide, Ward Councillor is chasing and will let Councillors know.

7.4 Budget – As explained in Item 7.2, we are unable to carry out annual budget reports but Clerk has asked Councillors to think of any out of the ordinary expenditure predictions for the next financial year which may affect the budget. Clerk reassured the Council we have until the end of January 2025 to submit our precept.

7.5 Website – AC is still reviewing the website and has found nothing so far requiring work.

7.6 Policies/Procedures – AS SIGNED and ADOPTED the revised Financial Procedures and Clerk will upload the same onto our website.

7.7 Verges update – AS confirmed he has made contact and complained to Herefordshire Council but has not heard anything back so far. Ward Councillor confirms he has complained too and will look into this further and let the Parish Council know. It is noted that some parishioners believe one cut a year is enough, and others prefer two cuts. The Council believes they should have a say when the cut/s will be.

7.8 Footpaths update – No further update for this meeting, it is an ongoing matter.

7.9 Correspondence – West Mercia Police officer emailed confirming there has been no problems or reports that they are aware of. Councillors have a different opinion and Clerk will check with the officer regarding this. Clerk confirmed a notification has been posted on Facebook reminding parishioners of upcoming meetings.

7.10 2025 meeting dates/publication of meeting dates – Parish Council confirmed second Monday of every alternate month at 7.30pm - 13.01.2025, 10.03.2025, 12.05.2025, 14.07.2025, 08.09.2025 and 10.11.2025

8. Items for next agenda (no discussion) – highways, budget, audit update, banking update

9. To consider date of next meeting Monday 13 January 2025 at 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 8.52pm