

GREAT WYRLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF GREAT WYRLEY PARISH COUNCIL held at Great Wyrley Community Centre, Landywood Lane, Great Wyrley which commenced at 7.00 p.m. on Wednesday 1ST February, 2023.

Present:

**(Chairman)
Cllr. J. C. Jones**

Cllr. Mrs. O. Brazier Cllr. M. Dabbs Cllr. Mrs. J. A. Johnson Cllr. A. J. Kelsey Cllr. M. McKenzie	Cllr. A. Newell Cllr. R. J. Perry Cllr. A. Smith Cllr. Mrs. S. Toddington Cllr. Mrs. S. M. Wood
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Also in attendance were the Parish Clerk (Mrs. S. McGlue) and the Parish Council Administrator (Ms. D. May).

107/2023 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Cllr. R. Myatt, Cllr. Mrs. K. M. Perry MBE, Cllr. C. Whiston-Taylor and Cllr. A. Pearson

The Chairman requested Cllr. R. J. Perry to wish Cllr. Mrs. K. M. Perry MBE all the very best for the following day. These wishes were supported by all Members.

108/2022 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Mrs. K. M. Perry MBE has a standing interest in any items relating to planning applications on the basis that she represents Locality 3 at South Staffordshire Council's Planning Committee meetings, and would, therefore, not vote on any planning matters brought before the Parish Council. Cllr. Mrs. Perry was not present on this occasion.

109/2023 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Dabbs and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. O. Brazier that the minutes be accepted, approved and signed by the Chairman. It was carried.

Cllr. Mrs. S. M. Wood referred Members back to the one minute's silence which the Parish Council had held in memory of the late Alan Jones.

Cllr. Mrs. Wood advised the meeting that the funeral had been extremely well attended and that it had been estimated that there were over 300 people there with standing room only at the Wesleyan Church on the day. This was noted by Members.

110/2023 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Councillors to the meeting and advised all present that he did not have any specific announcements to make on this occasion.

111/2023 STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE SERVICE

The Chairman advised the meeting that a copy of the monthly report from Staffordshire Police Service had been circulated to all Members for their information.

112/2023 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders to allow the Parish Council to be addressed by Members of the public.

There were two members of the public present in the Public Gallery on this occasion neither party had any issues to raise.

The Chairman reinstated Standing Orders and the business to be transacted at the meeting was recommenced.

113/2023 CLERK'S REPORTS TO COUNCIL

(a) Projected Income and Expenditure Budgets for the forthcoming Financial Year

A summary of the budget which gave full details of all income and expenditure covering a ten month period had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting.

The Annual Audit and Governance Committee had **resolved**, at its meeting on 2nd November, 2022, that there was a need for a percentage increase in the normal day to day running costs of the Parish Council. For ease of reference the Parish Council **resolved** that any increase applied on normal running costs was to take the form of a percentage increase across the board, rather than individual itemisation. This was noted by Members.

It then fell to the Parish Council to review the figures shown on the detailed budget summary and set its budget for the forthcoming financial year. The Parish Council **resolved** to increase its budget across the board by 5%. It was carried.

(b) Review of Fees and Charges

As Members were aware the Parish Council had for some time levied a small increase in its fees and charges each year; normally, the increase would be in line with inflation. However, Members felt that as the current rate of inflation was running at 10.5% that it may not be ideal to continue to use this figure as its guideline.

The Chairman advised the meeting that, in his view, the Parish Council had a responsibility to ensure that everything in its power was done to ensure that the facilities it managed were run to the best of its ability. At the present time the Community Centre was not making a profit and was currently not at the point where it was actually breaking even. Members accepted the fact that there was no onus on the Parish Council to be profitable, however, agreed that to make every attempt to break even at least was the right course of action.

Following in depth discussion, it was proposed by Cllr. A. J. Kelsey and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. O. Brazier that an increase of 10% be applied to both Community Centre and Cemetery charges from 1st April, 2023. Any such increase to be applied to the nearest appropriate round figure in both cases. It was carried unanimously.

(c) Review of Eligibility for Cemetery Services

Members recalled that the Cemeteries for both Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay had always had a reciprocal arrangement in terms of treating residents of both Parishes equally. In short, residents of Cheslyn Hay had always been able to receive the services of Great Wyrley Cemetery for the same fees as a resident of Great Wyrley and vice-versa. However, it had recently come to light that Cheslyn Hay Parish

Council was no longer able to be part of this reciprocal arrangement and any resident of Great Wyrley was being treated as a non-resident with the appropriate multiplication in Cemetery fees.

In these circumstances, as residents of Cheslyn Hay did not make any contribution to the maintenance of Great Wyrley Cemetery, the Parish Council **resolved** that as an embargo applied to non-residents from any other Parish in terms of allowing interment of ashes that Cheslyn Hay residents should also be subject to a surcharge. It was carried.

(d) Earmarked Items for consideration for Financial Year 2023/24

As Members were aware, each year the Parish Council earmarked funds to cover projects which it wished to pursue in the future.

An explanation of the progress for each project was laid out in the following table which was circulated to all Members prior to the meeting:-

ONGOING PROJECTS		
Memorial Wall at Great Wyrley Cemetery	<p>This project was now very well under way, the foundations were in and the brick work had commenced. Unfortunately, the inclement weather had held things up, however, this was now starting to improve and fast progress was now on the horizon.</p> <p>The Parish Council had now already utilised £2,897.98 of the £5,000.00 budget. Members envisaged that as there had been quite a substantial change in circumstances with regard to the construction of the wall the Parish Council would now need to factor in, not only a labour charge, but also the massive increase in the cost of building materials involved with this project. Accordingly, an additional £3000 was added to the remaining budget.</p>	£5,100.00 Remaining in budget.
Olympic Torch Commemoration	<p>This project was also very well under way and was expected to come to fruition shortly thanks to the ministrations of Cllr. Mrs. K. M. Perry MBE and Cllr. R. Perry. This project may come in considerably under the £2000.00 budget and accordingly, once the project has been completed any remaining monies will return to general fund.</p>	£2000.00
Roof to the Community Centre	<p>The roof to the Community Centre was not presenting a problem, however, Members still felt it prudent to continue to earmark an amount per year towards its eventual replacement in the future. The £4,000 already in the budget represented two years of earmarking. Members did not wish to earmark a further £2000 for the forthcoming</p>	£3,000.00

	<p>year and resolved to decrease the present budgeted figure to £3000 with the remaining £1000.00 being returned to general fund.</p>	
<p>Changes to the configuration of the Community Centre garage.</p>	<p>This project was already in the pipeline and was not expected to be overly costly on the basis that the main expense would have been the new door.</p> <p>The new door was to be provided, free of charge, by the builder who had agreed to carry out the works on behalf of the Parish Council. The Parish Council was no longer intending to re-site the entrance to the garage to the open side of the structure for security reasons, and also intended to review the future of the trailer in use by the Parish Council Ground staff.</p>	<p>£2000.00</p>
<p>Wyrley Brook Project</p>	<p>£5,000 of this budget item was originally included in earmarked funds as it was expected to go towards the funding of a joint contract with DEFRA, Severn Trent and Staffordshire County Council. The additional £2000 had been earmarked to be allocated to the more localised Wyrley Brook Project.</p> <p>Confirmation was still required as to whether the £5000 funding was going to be required, as the project had now become one of a far larger scale and was expected to be financed by DEFRA. In the event that the funding was no longer required the Parish Council agreed that it should be put towards the Great Wyrley Brook Project and expended on a much more localised function which is why it being held under this heading. To be confirmed by DEFRA.</p>	<p>£7000.00</p>
<p>Replacement Boiler to the Community Centre</p>	<p>It would appear that the problem with the central heating boiler to the Community Centre may have been resolved due to the diligent works of a different central heating engineer. Members may wish to consider whether they would still wish an amount to be earmarked for this purpose in the future. £12,900 including VAT.</p> <p>However, the Parish Council had now received yet more conflicting advice from another Heating Engineer who did not agree that the Boiler was defective and believed it was perfectly fit for the purpose. Following discussion Members agreed that an independent assessment should be carried out of the boiler itself prior to any decision</p>	<p>£12,900.00</p>

	being made. The earmarked figure was to remain in this category until confirmation had been received of the efficacy of the existing boiler.	
Unforeseen Expenses	Bearing in mind the percentage of the Parish Council's funds which had been expended on unforeseen legal expenses, insurance claims and increased level of staff working hours over the last two years Members felt it prudent to ensure that a sum was earmarked for unforeseen circumstances.	£10,000.00
Emergency Tree Works	The Parish Council had now made it policy that all the trees in its ownership were subject to an annual inspection to ensure their stability and the safety of the public. Accordingly, the Parish Council felt that based on the expenditure incurred for this purpose during the last two years an amount of £7,000 should remain in earmarked funds.	£7,000.00
Donations received from Covid vaccination Visitors	This amount represented the portion of the donations which were made by people visiting the Community Centre to have their Covid vaccinations. The donations were split between a number of charities. The £800 represents the Parish Council's allocation and was included in the earmarked figures as it was yet to be donated by the Parish Council to a worthy cause of its choice.	£800.00
<p>For Members information the Clerk had also set out earmarked funds for annual donations and expected expenditure other than normal running costs. There had been little change in the allocated funds. Please see below:-</p>		
Annual Bonfire Event	<p>Members resolved that this event needed to be discussed, reviewed and decided upon. This needed to be done sooner rather than later in order to have the necessary services in place to allow the event to happen. The Parish Council had already discussed the fact that the event should no longer include a Bonfire.</p> <p>Members also recalled that in the view of Inspector Cotton of Staffordshire Police the Parish Council had made the right decision in no longer hosting this event on the basis that it had much outgrown the Parish Council.</p> <p>In addition to this Staffordshire Police would not be in a position to offer any form of security to the event for the reasons already stated. This was not based on a financial decision, this was based on what Inspector Cotton felt would be misuse of already</p>	£5,500.00

	<p>stretched resources.</p> <p>However, Members felt that this matter still warranted full discussion and would make arrangements for a meeting to decide the way forward as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>On this basis the Parish Council resolved to retain this figure in earmarked funds for the present time.</p>	
	Councillor A. J. Kelsey declared an interest in the next three items and did not take any part in the discussion or the decision making process.	
Great Wyrley Scouts and Guide Movement	Contribution towards refreshments etc. for the New Year's Day Walk	£100.00
Great Wyrley Carnival Committee	Donation towards Great Wyrley Carnival Event.	£400.00
Senior Citizens Welfare Committee	Annual donation towards to the running of the Senior Citizens Welfare organisation.	£1100.00

The Chairman advised the Parish Council that in previous years the Parish Council had earmarked £1000 to pay for the annual tree assessment. As this costing did not sit comfortably in the earmarked funds for a specific year it should now be reallocated to normal year on year maintenance. Following discussion the Parish Council **resolved** to transfer this item to year on year maintenance. It was carried.

The Parish Council also gave consideration to the following items which also fell to be included in the list of earmarked funds:-

Potential cost of Parish Council Elections	<p>The Local Government Elections were scheduled to take place in May of the forthcoming financial year. Members felt it would be prudent to include at least the sum of £5,000.00 to cover the eventuality that the Parish Council would have more candidates than vacancies and automatically trigger an election.</p> <p>Following discussion the Parish Council resolved to earmark £5000.00 for this purpose.</p>	£5,000.00
Commemoration of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth II	The Parish Council had already agreed in principle that it would like to commemorate the reign of the Late Queen Elizabeth II and	£1,600.00

	<p>proposed designs were available for Members observations during the meeting.</p> <p>This project now needed to be added to the earmarked funds for the forthcoming financial year and Members needed to make a decision as to the amount the Parish Council wished to expend on the commemoration. The Parish Council resolved to authorise its inclusion into earmarked funds in the sum of £1,600.00. It was carried.</p>	
Celebration of the Coronation of Kings Charles III	The Parish Council resolved that it wished to set a budget to cover any celebrations it decided to host to commemorate the Coronation of Kings Charles III. The sum of £2000 was earmarked for this purpose.	£2000.00

The Chairman advised the Parish Council that the foregoing list of earmarked funds was by no means exhaustive and Members were, of course, able to add any project that they wished to, or, of course, delete any item where they did not support its inclusion in the list.

Following discussion the Parish Council **resolved** to complete the projects already programmed for the future prior to adding any further projects. It was carried.

(e) Precept Requirement for Financial Year 2023/24

The Clerk's report had set out a number of factors which Members felt should be taken into account whilst setting the Parish Council's budget for 2023/2024. As ever the Clerk took the opportunity to remind all Members that each and every Councillor had an individual responsibility for the financial soundness of the Parish Council not just as a body. This was noted by Members.

All Members had been made aware of the financial position of Great Wyrley Parish Council and were also abreast of any changes which may come to fruition in the future. The Parish Council had been advised that it needed to be recognised that any changes cascading down to the Parish Council i.e. Parish Council elections or other unforeseen events which were out of its direct control would still have the potential to result in a significant increase in both expenditure and responsibility. This was noted by Members.

The Clerk had advised the Parish Council that Great Wyrley's tax base for 2023/2024 had decreased from **3374.92 to 3373.70** this represented a percentage decrease of 0.36% which was minimal in real terms but, nevertheless, still affected the precepted income of the Parish Council. The decrease was due to the fact that there had not been any element of new housing development within the Parish during the last year and accordingly, no new eligible Council Tax payers. This was noted by Members.

The Clerk had provided the Parish Council with the following information in order to assist with its decision making process:-

PRINCIPAL COUNCILS LEVY

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

At the time of the meeting there was no published indication of Staffordshire County

Council budget proposals for 2023/24 as it was awaiting a decision from the Government to confirm that local authorities could raise its Council Tax to 4.99% without a referendum – the expected figure comprised 2.99% for general purposes and 2% ring fenced for social care. This was noted by Members.

DISTRICT COUNCIL LEVY - SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

South Staffordshire Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy included an assumption that Council Tax would increase by £5 for a Band D equivalent property. This was the maximum allowable increase in Council Tax without triggering a referendum by principal authorities. This decision was yet to be ratified.

GREAT WYRLEY PARISH COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION

The Clerk advised the meeting, that at the present time, the financial position of Great Wyrley Parish Council could be considered as reasonably robust.

Following a challenging couple of years the Parish Council's finances had now stabilised and the current balance at bank was £138,410.33. This figure would of course, decrease following ratification of the cheques to be drawn on the account following authorisation at this meeting. The Clerk explained for clarification purposes that the figure referred to above did not include the £10,000 presently held in the Capital Account or the reimbursement of VAT which would be payable shortly (this stood at approximately £5,000 at the date of the meeting). This was noted.

The Parish Council was advised that it may soon be in a position where it may be liable to have to make increased pension contributions in line with automatic enrolment; the new Clerk was likely to be eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Parish Council was also advised that it needed to take into account that there was no longer an embargo on Local Government salary increases and Parish Council Staff should have a salary review on an annual basis. This should be carried out for all staff to keep in line with recognised guidelines.

The Parish Council also needed to take into account the fact that there may well be an election held this year and should ensure that it could support the £5000 earmarked in the budget to cover such an expense.

Albeit, there were still a number of issues to be resolved, the Parish Council's financial situation was relatively healthy. However, whereas in the past, an end of year balance of this size would probably have provided a stable platform upon which the Parish Council could exercise its option to either not change its precept requirement or levy a small percentage increase; this was not a course of action being recommended by Principal Authorities for the forthcoming financial year.

Parish Councils were presently being openly encouraged to raise their precept requirements for this year on the basis of a number of factors one of which was the extremely unstable utility market and exceptionally high level of inflation.

These were clearly factors which needed to be taken into account and to assist in the decision making process the Clerk had set out a table showing the increase which would be generated by a graduating percentage increase from 1.5% up to a 5% increase on the existing precept (£196,361.00) as a guide.

Following discussion the Parish Council **unanimously resolved** to increase its precept requirement by 5% which would generate additional funds of £9818.05.

This increase would represent the sum of approximately 0.50p per week per household. This was noted by Members.

As at 31st January, 2023 the Parish Council's Balance at bank totalled £138,410.33. This figure did not include the £10,018.83 held in the Capital Account or the projected VAT reimbursement of £5000. The Parish Council's earmarked funds stands at £57,800 following the ratification of the changes made to the budget at the meeting.

(e) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

The Clerk advised the Parish Council that South Staffordshire District Council had applied to use the Community Centre as a Polling Station. However, the Community Centre had been used as a Polling Station on many other occasions when it had had only involved the Main Hall. The new format of the forthcoming elections would require the entire Community Centre to operate efficiently and accordingly, will impact on the hiring out of the Centre to regular hirers on that particular Thursday.

On this basis the Parish Council **resolved** to increase the hire charges payable for the Local Government Elections to £360.00 as not only was a far larger portion of the Centre being hired out, the Centre would be in use for an 18 hour period, several of which were classed as unsociable hours and the staffing of the event would incur considerable charges.

114/2023 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Councillor Mrs. K. M. Perry MBE was unable to attend on this occasion.

115/2023 DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Cllr. Mrs. J. A. Johnson advised the Parish Council that she did not have a great deal to report on this occasion, other than to say that South Staffordshire Council still managed to be one of the cheapest Local Authorities in the Country in terms of Council Tax. Cllr. Mrs. Johnson also advised the meeting that use of the Hub at Codsall was going extremely well. This was noted.

Cllr. J. C. Jones enquired of Cllr. Mrs. Johnson the current position with regard to the Local Plan and whether it had been abandoned. Cllr. Mrs. Johnson responded that the Local Plan had not been abandoned it had been suspended for the moment awaiting further government information. This was noted by Members.

116/2023 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCILLORS

Cllr. Mrs. O. Brazier advised the meeting that she was very concerned at the increasing level of intimidating behaviour being experienced in the Parish of late and asked Members if they had any suggestions to make with regard to the protection of young people who appeared to have become something of a target in recent weeks. This was noted by Members.

117/2023 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from outside bodies.

118/2023 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

22/01106/FUL – DETACHED NEW BUILD HOUSE AT GARAGE SITE AT COTSWOLD AVENUE, GREAT WYRLEY – THE PARISH COUNCIL HAD NO OBJECTION TO THIS APPLICATION.

22/01915/FUL - AMENDED PLANS RECEIVED - RETENTION OF AN EXISTING MULTI -USE GAMES AREA (MUGA) WITH ASSOCIATED PERIMETER FENCING ON SITE OF A FORMER HARD COURT FACILITY, AND THE PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF A NEW SPORTS LIGHTING SYSTEM AT GREAT WYRLEY ACADEMY, HALL LANE, GREAT WYRLEY - THE PARISH COUNCIL HAD NO OBJECTION TO THIS PROPOSAL BUT RESERVED THE RIGHT TO SUPPORT NEIGHBOUR OBJECTIONS SHOULD THIS PROVE NECESSARY.

22/00712/FUL – AMENDED DESCRIPTION AND AMENDED PLANS RECEIVED - ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO DWELLING INCLUDING FIRST FLOOR SIDE EXTENSION, SINGLE STOREY FRONT EXTENSION, INCLUDING NEW PORCH, SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION AND DETACHED GARAGE AT THE DINGLE, STREETS LANE, CHESLYN HAY – THE PARISH COUNCIL HAD NO OBJECTION TO THIS PROPOSAL.

23/00038/VAR – APPLICATION REFERENCE NUMBER 22/00763/FUL – DATE OF DECISION 8/12/2022 CONDITION 3 - THE PROPOSAL WAS TO VARY THE OPERATION TIME OF LIGHTS TO 0700-2100 AT LITTLE ACRES, JACOBS HALL LANE, GREAT WYRLEY - MEMBERS ASSUMED THAT THESE TIMES WOULD ONLY APPLY DURING THE WINTER PERIOD.

23/00059/FULHH – DOUBLE STOREY SIDE AND REAR EXTENSION, SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION AND PORCH EXTENSION WITH FRONT CANOPY AT 22A WALSALL ROAD, CHURCHBRIDGE – THE PARISH COUNCIL HAD NO OBJECTION TO THIS APPLICATION BUT RESERVED THE RIGHT TO SUPPORT NEIGHBOUR OBJECTIONS SHOULD THIS BE REQUIRED.

119/2023 REPORT OF OUTSTANDING ACCOUNTS

A report on the outstanding accounts for authorisation for payment was presented to Council and it was **resolved** that the report be accepted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

120/2023 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted that the public and press be excluded and that they are instructed to withdraw in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Section 12.

121/2023 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Following discussion the Parish Council unanimously **resolved to** support the recommendations made under this item.

The Chairman thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

Chairman.....Date.....