

Hopton Wafers Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 11th April 2022 at Hopton Wafers Village Hall commencing at 7pm.

Present: Cllr Barry Buffery, Cllr Mark Humpage (Acting Clerk), Cllr Sue Turner, Cllr Maria Cook, Cllr Paul Blakeway, Cllr Tim Evans, Unitary Cllr Gwilym Butler, Chris Taylor, Connecting Shropshire Programme Manager

The Chair, Cllr Barry Buffery welcomed everyone to the meeting.

147/01 To receive and accept apologies and reasons for Absence from Members

Cllr Harold Deane, and Cllr Derek Bytheway – unwell

Cllr Linda Clayton – delayed in traffic

Unitary Cllr Simon Harris did not attend as Cllr Gwilym Butler attended.

Clerk Dorothy McBride - holiday

147/02 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

147/03 Public Participation Session

There was one member of the public present. No matters were raised.

147/04 To confirm the Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 14th March 2022

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 14th March 2022 were taken as read and signed.

147/05 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

Guest Speaker - Mr Chris Taylor, Connecting Shropshire Programme Manager

Chris Taylor attended and addressed the meeting as part of our follow up actions from the Parish Plan.

Significant comments and concerns were raised by residents in the plan about the lack of mobile phone signals particularly in the Hopton Wafers area of the Parish.

Chris gave the following information/discussion:

- Mobile Networks are not the councils responsibility
- The council has a lobbying role with the providers on our behalf which he is happy to assist with.
- Chris had done some initial investigation and confirmed that all providers had virtually no coverage in Hopton Wafers and this was confirmed in discussions with councillors, the Doddington area being at the top of the hill does not have the same issues and some networks are slightly better than others.
- Chris suggested that the starting point for trying to improve matters is for the Parish Council to conduct a survey which would provide evidence based figures to support a case/lobbying efforts. Cllr Mark Humpage volunteered to conduct the survey and Chris will liaise with Mark to facilitate this.
- Chris discussed the reasons for the quality of signal being so poor mainly related to topography with Hopton Wafers sitting in a dip. Also new build properties suffer more because of foil lined insulation.
- Once we have data supporting our issues then there are several potential solutions:
- These include: Microsites, Neutral Host solutions (These would probably have some cost to the parish), upgrades to Network masts, shared rural networks, emergency service networks and other solutions linked with Fibre/Gigabit project.
- Cllr Humpage asked about the potential to site masts on churches and Chris confirmed that the C of E have agreed to this in the past in other parts of the country but this has not been explored as a solution so far in Shropshire.
- There was also a discussion regards the migration of landline phones to digital and the impact this would have on rural areas with no mobile signal, Chris explained that whilst it was the intention for this to happen by 2025 a number of issues have been raised and the project is being paused for further discussion. Again this not a Shropshire Council area of responsibility but they will continue to lobby on behalf of residents.
- In summary Chris agreed to furnish us with the tools to collect evidence on the extent of the problem in Hopton Wafers and we can then look at solutions and avenues to lobby for improvements.

The Chair Cllr Barry Buffery thanked Chris for his presentation and attendance at the meeting.

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Initials.....

Hopton Wafers Parish Council

147/06 Clerk/Lengthsman and Councillor Reports

i) Clerk's Report

Bus Shelter at Crumpsbrook

The base will be installed shortly and after a period of time for the concrete to dry Cllr Sue Turner confirmed that the shelter will be erected

Highways

A reminder that the road closure for the A4117 surface dressing programme from Hopton Bank to Doddington is due to go ahead from Thursday 21st April to Wednesday 27th April with diversions in place between 09:30 and 16:00

Vehicle Activated Signs

Clerk has chased Nick Newton at Shropshire Council several times about installing the poles for the VAS signs and has also asked him for the diameter size of the poles as Coeval need to know for the brackets.

Doddington Village Hall

Clerk has now booked Doddington Village Hall for the May Parish Council and the May Parish Meeting but is waiting for Sonia to confirm for definite, Cllr Tim Evans has agreed to visit Sonia to confirm that these meetings can go ahead at Doddington.

147/07 Unitary Councillors' Reports

Unitary Cllrs Gwilym Butler and Simon Harris had sent their combined Annual Report prior to the meeting.

Cllr Gwilym Butler attended today and apologised for us not seeing as much of him at our meetings this year as he has taken on several new roles including as Portfolio holder for Finance and Corporate resources.

He discussed the main points from the Annual Report as follows:

- Boundary review - the process for Town and Parishes will be suspended between October 2022 and October 2023 due to the Boundary Commission's own review of the Unitary Council
- Ofsted's inspection of Children's Services has confirmed Shropshire as a good provider, there are now 608 children in care and the councils care provision now accounts for 85% of overall council budget.
- Budget's this year will be very tight as they have had to increase funding for care provision by 6% just to maintain the service in the current environment of rising costs.
- Cost of Living Crisis - The £150 grant is being rolled out via Council Tax rebates and the Hardship Fund will be available for struggling families and will be communicated and advertised through agencies dealing with those most in need.

147/08 Parish Plan

Cllr Humpage pointed to the work being undertaken with Speed Watch and Vehicle Activated signs and the progress in looking for solutions to the Mobile coverage as discussed earlier in the meeting, we will look again at outstanding Parish Plan action points in future meetings.

147/09 Parish Matters/Highways

i) Speed Watch continues in the Parish and the process for training new members is ongoing.

ii) New Parish Matters - Cllr Tim Evans brought to our attention that the gate post by the Doddington cattle grid is rotten, he agreed to contact the lengthsman Chris Bargman to arrange for this to be repaired.

147/10 Future Agenda Items

There were no further items raised.

147/11 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Monday 9th May 2022, 7pm at Doddington Village Hall.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.55pm.

It was agreed at the Parish Council Meeting (Minute Ref 148/06) that these minutes are a true record of the meeting, subject to the following corrections:-

S Turner

9th May 2022

Signed.....Chairman

Date.....