

YARPOLE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19 CROFT WITH YARPOLE.

The Council convened for ten ordinary and two extraordinary meeting in 2018/19.

We welcomed Andrew Davies in May , who filled a vacancy pending from 2017/18. Sadly Julian Stokes, who had been a valuable contributor, resigned for personal reasons. Ian Salmon was welcomed and co-opted in September. The Group Parish now has a full complement of councillors.

West Mercia Police assigned Steph Annette as our new PCS officer. Surgeries are held every five weeks in the Gallery Café. There was a well attended meeting on Cyber scams.

Our finances are well ordered and healthy with considerable reserves allocated for community projects. An informal working finance group met and drafted a budget for 2019/20. Precept was agreed at £22,000.

Annual grants were given towards maintenance of St. Leonard and Lucton burial grounds , two war memorials, footpath furniture, Wigmore School Prize and Hereford Tree warden network. Grant applications from local community groups are welcomed provided they meet eligibility criteria.

The NDP was approved by the local referendum and adopted, although few developments have begun. We have actively engaged in planning matters and given a fair appraisal of each application. We strenuously objected to removal of hedgerows for no compelling reasons and referred to our adopted NDP.

Draft contract for transfer of gifted land from Mr and Mrs Woodfield received in March was agreed in principle. Lucy Rea of Lloyds Cooper instructed to act on behalf of the council.

Again our sincere thanks to Peter Greer for his continual dedication to maintaining and improving access to our many Parish footpaths. Two volunteers have come forward to assist him. We fully support the PROW plan for 2019/20.

Lengthsman Scheme is fully operational. We note that there will be no grant from Hereford Council. A sum has been set aside in our budget for this scheme to continue.

Many thanks to Ian Ramsay, our Tree Officer, who carries out his assignments with alacrity.

Traffic calming has been a big issue with proposals begun last year. There have been many meetings with traffic engineers from BBLP. Speed surveys in Bircher and Yarpole undertaken to justify use of Speed Indicator Devices. As a result a scheme was set up for Bircher, partly funded by Herfordshire Council. Remaining costs were paid by our council as had been agreed. The road signage has been implemented and bases due to be installed. Cllr. Daniels has taken responsibility for erecting SIDs and for storage.

We hope this will improve safety for Bircher villagers.

There is a continual dialogue with BT to solve the problem with mobile signal in the parish, but installing a new tower at considerable cost was not the solution. On going small scale trialling may include Yarpole. Booster boxes are available for residents. There has been correspondence with our MP, Bill Wiggins for his support.

On advice from HALC the council had no legally defined power to purchase the Bell Inn which had been put up for sale. However we did apply for a six months moratorium as a restricted village amenity. This delay enabled a hard working professional group of parishioners to set up a legally constituted Mortimer Community Beneficial Society. With support of the parish as shareholders, a successful bid was made. It reopened under a tenancy in Feb 2019. The council fully supports this community project and thanks all those involved in reviving the building and gardens.

After work patterns were presented we agreed to increase the Clerk's time to ten hours. She has kept us up to the mark with many and varied policies required by law. We agreed the new Data Protection Law after briefing us. She runs our website linked to Yarpole .com and produces a monthly report on our activities for the Parish newsletter. She has excellent working relations with outside sources, particularly BT, BBLP and W. Water. She uses tact and diplomacy to state our position, often with rewarding outcomes. In Nov. she passed her certificate for Local Administration. We were delighted at her achievement and agreed to raise her grade to Scale Point 27 immediately. This will be reviewed annually. In view of the clerk's new qualification in Nov., the council having met the conditions of eligibility defined in the Localism Act 2011 agreed to adopt the General Power of Competence. The council thank Emma for her dedication, professionalism, tenacity and not least her cheerfulness.

Sebastian continues as our hard working District Councillor. Keeping us fully informed of decisions by Herefordshire council. He is always well versed with planning applications and frequently gives us much needed guidance. He regularly attends and continues to participate in community activities. He also offers his services as a Washerwoman. Congratulations on his being elected again, with a thumping majority for Bircher Ward. A reflection of the esteem with which he is held.

For the next Parish Council here are some suggestions for the agenda.

Decisions relating to the use of the Community field. Possibility of adopting footpath between Green Lane and Stoney Brook. Improving safety of parking by church. Safety and preservation of Knoll Cottage. Supporting Parish hall plans for new carpark and redesign of hall staging.

I personally thank all the councillors for their attendance and participation in the issues raised on the agendas, and particularly those representing the Parish council on various groups. We are well informed before any meeting, thanks to the clerk and serious discussion flows easily, with the occasional conviviality. The Council are well aware of all volunteers, many unsung, who contribute to the running of the Community Shop, Gallery Café, The Good neighbourhood Scheme, Parish Hall MCBS, Living History, Parish newsletter and many other smaller, but no less important groups. We thank them and in particular this latter year, the thoughtful Armistice celebrations organised by Ron and Rita Shaw.

This present Council concludes its four year term of office and a new council will convene at the AGM May 2019. All present councillors have stood, been nominated and validated. There being no other nominations all were elected to serve for the Yarpole Croup Parish 2019/20.

Audrey Bott.

Madam Chairman 2018/19.