

MINUTES of a meeting of Cradley Parish Council held on Tuesday 13th August 2013
in Cradley Village Hall commencing at 7.30pm.

Present – Cllrs. K. Nason (in the Chair – KN) T.Lloyd Jones (TLJ) A. Eldridge (AE) C. Lambert (CL) W. Harries (WH) F. Beard (FB) G. Fielding (GF) B. Gordon (BG) A. Symondson (AS) S. Davies (SD) D. Woodward (DW) and E. Moseley (EM).

Also attending - Cllrs. T. Johnson (TJ), C. Attwood (CA) T.Woods (TW – Herefordshire Council) K. La Tzar (KLT – West Mercia Housing Association), three members of the public and the Clerk.

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received and approved from C. Lowder and L. Gamble.

No Declarations of Interest were received.

Minutes – The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2013 were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman subject to one change concerning Cradley Post Office which had inadvertently been written as Colwall Post Office!

County Councillor Reports –

- 1) TJ advised that a complaint had been lodged regarding the Government's intention to retain 50% of the homes bonus and he agreed to report back to us in due course. He also advised many enquiries received concerning "fracking" but advised no licences had been issued and no requests received anywhere in the County. Some mineral extraction does exist but thought unlikely anyone will apply regarding fracking, but in the unlikely event that this did occur, the application would be subject to a full planning application.
- 2) CA apologised for inability to attend the special meeting on the 7th August concerning the old Post Office. He advised he had spoken with Nigel Banning, the planning officer dealing with this but that he would like to comment on this after the Parish Council had discussed the matter. Nigel Banning wanted to ensure that the legal requirements from his side had been met but that he was aware that it is a bigger issue for the community.

Item for consideration –

The old Post Office/shop – KN reported on the meeting on the 7th August which had been attended by about 125 local residents, approximately 96% of which were of the opinion that a post office presence was vital for a Parish of this size. Regarding the requested "change of use" planning application for the premises, at the meeting on 7th August almost 100% of those attending the meeting had asked the Parish Council to fight the planning application for change of use and use their best endeavours for the shop premises to be retained. It was again confirmed that the shop part of the property was a self contained unit but almost all of the shop fixtures and fittings had now been removed and when the Chairman had asked the present owners about leasing the shop, they had indicated they were not interested. The property had been on the market for some considerable time, but at a highly inflated asking price, and it was suggested the Council ask the planners to ensure that it is marketed at a sensible asking price, and if necessary an independent valuation could be requested. The owner has indicated what he thought someone could achieve with the shop premises, but none of these suggestions had been auctioned by him. Although it was thought his turnover was approximately £167K., he did not have the necessary three year accounts to submit to the planning department.

Numerous comments were made but CA advised that the Parish Council need to provide the Planning Dept. with their own proposals for the property when applying for the change of use of the property to be refused.

The terms of reply to the Planning were to be agreed, and it was also proposed to ask for an extension of time for the reply to enable the Parish Council to put forward their ideas to save the shop premises as it is considered a vital support for the Village.

Guest Speakers –

Affordable Housing - Attending the meeting with Tina Woods and Kat a Tzar in connection with a proposed Affordable Housing project in the Parish. Further information had been supplied and TW stated she was pressing the PC to come to a decision whether they wished to pursue this idea, adding that even if the Parish Council decided not to go ahead, it was Herefordshire Council's policy to pursue the matter given the results of the Housing Needs Survey and Consultation which had been carried out in the Parish. KN commented on the problem with some of the flats at The Leys and TW said that as she was meeting with Housing Officers from Festival Housing she would raise these problems but in the meantime felt it might be beneficial if the Parish Council invited a Representative from Festival to attend one of their meetings.

Whilst it was agreed the new figures did indicate some need, the Parish Council felt that this might be met from the properties under construction in the Parish at both Finchers Corner and Dragonwyck. TLJ advised that the Parish were now working towards a Neighbourhood Development Plan and KLT offered to help with this, if required. TW advised that a NDP does not necessarily stop a Developer applying for and building a development under the five year land supply which has recently occurred in both Lugwardine and Bartestree. It was agreed the Parish remain vulnerable until the Core Strategy is finally approved and KLT explained the criteria how they work with obtaining and developing a site. TW recommended asking Festival Housing to impose a local letting policy on the properties and agreed to speak with them about this at her forthcoming meeting.

Both TW and KLT left the meeting and the Council agreed to keep them informed how matters were progressing with the NDP and if felt necessary, to take up their offer to help with this project.

Progress Reports –

- (a) Cluster Group – BG advised nothing to report but another meeting would be taking place soon.
- (b) Rectory Lane – KN advised that we were still waiting to hear from Herefordshire Council that they have accepted this on to their Streets Register and agreed to see if this could be pushed forward to enable some consideration to be given to offering a post office facility from within the Village Hall, but advised that no repairs would be carried out until Rectory Lane has been officially adopted.
- (c) Refurbishment of Notice Boards – Two Quotations had been sought but they had amalgamated to come up with one price of £990. He advised he was obtaining two further Quotations and it was suggested to use the open notice board at Buryfields now that it was not possible to display Agendas at The Post Office. The Clerk advised that the Butchers shop now offered to hold the file of Minutes, previously held at the Post Office shop.

Items for consideration –

- a) Community Shop/Heart of the Community – see above.
- b) Notice board facility in area of Post office shop – see above.

Finance matters – The following Accounts had been received for payment

• Inland Revenue, PAYE	£157.55
• Black Mountain Quarries Ltd boulders	£912.00.
• Cradley Village Hall, hire fees	£15.00.
• Nova Sport, safety surfacing	£6,488.40.
• Wicksteed, inspection report	£108.00.
• Wicksteed, poly pull through tunnel	£1,248.66.
• Viking, ink jets	£127.14.
• Cluster Group contribution	£55.00.
• Arrow Plant & Tool Hire Ltd.	£455.40.

RESOLVED – On a proposal by EM seconded by SD and carried, the above payments were approved and cheques signed accordingly. In addition, it was agreed to pay Mark Philpotts for his services as digger driver at Chapel Lane as this had previously been agreed, but the Clerk had not received the actual Invoice and paper work prior to the meeting. Additional cheque signed.

The Clerk produced a spreadsheet document listing details of the Sec. 106 payments and expenses and the level of funds remaining available for both Buryfields and Chapel Lane.

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Reports –

Planning – TLJ reported that the following applications had been received and considered –
Application No. 131800/FH – 2 Brook Cottage, Hereford Road, Cradley - construction of two storey extension – We are aware of the access problems and the plans do not show any application for access off the main road. We are also concerned about construction traffic off this extremely busy road and in addition, we raise concern that the main culvert runs underneath these houses.

Application No. 131673/FH – 8 Old School Close, Cradley – two storey side extension and single storey rear extension – no objections raised.

Application No. 132103/J – Thistledown, 7 Pixiefields, Cradley – proposed crown reduction of 50% of two oak trees and cut ash tree back by 50% - no objections raised.

Application No. 130689/FH – Westfields Cottage, Westfields – two bay timber framed garage – no objections raise.

Application No. 131731 – Broom Farm, Bromyard Road, Cradley – proposed carport and ancillary living accommodation to replace existing garage and outbuildings – No objections raised but would wish a covenant imposed that this building could never be sold off as a separate dwelling/unit from Broom Farm.

Application No. 131832/FH – The Garth, Westfields – demolition of existing garage and construction of a new garage in a different location – no objections raised but query raised regarding the proposed use of the roof space and would wish a covenant imposed that this building could never be sold off as a separate dwelling/unit from The Garth.

Application No. 131498/F – Post Office, Cradley – change of use from shop to residential unit – objections – The PC is committed to ensuring that the village of Cradley should continue to have a stores at this location and consider a change of use application wholly inappropriate.

In the UDP the following policy is in place – TCR14 village commercial facilities – applications for change of use leading to the loss of such facilities will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable and unlikely to become so, and that all means of retaining the facility have been explored taking into account the importance of the facility to the local community. This sentiment is reiterated in the draft Core Strategy at RA6 where there is support for protecting the vitality and viability of commercial facilities.....such as village shops.

The Cradley village stores has been a viable concern for over 100 years and with proactive management there is no reason why this should not continue to be the case. The applicant's premise that it is not viable is based only on two years operation where the commitment and capital has not been invested to fully promote the facility. The sale particulars describe the shop as offering "tremendous scope to build both sales and profit" and discusses such opportunities but the current owner has chosen not to realise this potential. Reference to the Butchers as a viable alternative is accurate to the extent that it exists and is successful, but the two shops have been complementary to each other for a number of years and the value of the village stores is in its locational proximity to Brookside, Buryfields and The Leys which are where the older and less mobile members of the village live and for which the village stores was a lifeline. The Butchers is a considerable walking distance from the older part of the village and certainly not appropriate for the current demographic.

It is a requirement for the change of use to be considered that the village stores should have been effectively marketed. Although it has been advertised, it is the contention of the Parish Council that the advertised price of £575,000 is way in excess not only of the original asking price in 2011 of £429,000 but also not a true reflection of its market value.

For this reason we object to the proposed change of use and request that the Parish Council and the wider community are allowed time to develop viable alternative proposals for the retention of the shop premises.

Environmental & Footpaths – nothing to report.

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) – further meeting taking place next week.

Churchyards Committee – In the absence of the Chairman, nothing to report.

Recreation Area – Lot of work carried out at Chapel Lane, landscaping now to take place but in the meantime it was agreed to ask the Church to cut back overhanging trees as this was already causing problems with the recently installed safety surfacing.

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Editorial Group- nothing to report.

Newsletter items – It was noted WH has now taken over this task for the time being. Items to include County Councillor report on fracking, re-assurance that both the County Councillors and the Parish Council are fighting the requested “change of use” for the shop and post office and that the Parish Council proposed asking parishioners to put forward some proposals if a refusal for change of use can be achieved, affordable housing visit and their offer of help with the NDP if required and a progress report on Chapel Lane

Correspondence –

- Letter from Bill Wiggin requesting PC to consider means of marking next year’s special anniversary of the First World War and note that funding may be available.
- E-mail – numerous about closure of post Office.
- E-mail from Jane Wormald that the PCs application to designate Cradley as a ND area has been approved and issuing a copy of the decision document.
- Numerous e-mails about generator noise during hot weather.

Literature –

- Clerks & Council’s Direct magazine.
- Newsletter from Community Action.

Councillor Reports and items for future Agenda - CL reported that during their site inspection, Wicksteed commented that some signage at Buryfields would be beneficial including a “no camping” sign and the Clerk reported that numerous requests about HGVs coming through Village had gone unanswered and she agreed to forward this on to our local County Councillors to see if they could get some response/action particularly in view of the recommended development of some 600 houses north of the viaduct in Ledbury which would no doubt involve numerous HGVs driving through both Cradley and Bosbury, whereas a more suitable alternative route is available off the main A4103 at the Hereford side of the Fromes Hill cross roads with Bromyard.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.45pm

Signed..... Dated.....
Chairman