

Minutes of an Extra Ordinary meeting of Cradley Parish Council  
held on  
Tuesday 25th October 2016 in Cradley Village Hall commencing at 7pm

**Present** - Cllrs. C. Lowder (in the Chair) K. Nason, F. Beard, D. Scully, W. Harries and G. Fielding. It should be noted that the Council meeting was quorate.

**Apologies** were received and approved from all other Councillors who had advised that unfortunately they were unable to attend.

**Agenda item** - *“To consider the Government’s plan to bring in new rules forcing local councils to hold costly local referendums over increases to parish precepts. At the moment, this is only likely to affect larger Councils, but considered to be the thin end of the wedge and, once introduced, is likely to eventually cover all PCs. We are therefore urged to oppose such measures by responding to the Dept. of Communities and Local Government by the end of October 2016”.*

The matter was discussed and it was unanimously agreed that the Parish Council should respond to this action, particularly in view of the fact that Cllr. Fielding had been advised by Herefordshire Council/Balfour Beatty that as from April 2018, the grant towards both the Lengthsman and P3 Schemes would cease, leaving Parish Councils to meet the charges for these valuable services out of precept funds should they wish to continue with the schemes.

Although many other Councillors had been unable to attend the Extra Ordinary meeting, the Chairman had sought their **views** on this matter and the majority had considered that the Parish Council should make representations against such action.

**Resolved** - On a proposal by WH seconded by GF and carried, it was agreed that the Parish Council adopt HALCs points and issues document as per attached as a basis for our submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Signed..... Dated.....

Chairman.

The following was submitted online by Councillor K. Nason as the Parish Council’s submission to the consultation on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016

**LGSTC Cradley Parish Council response.**

Since early last century the parish council system has been one of the most crucial levels of local government. It is the sole medium for truly close interaction between, and involvement with, the community at large and local government. The measures

suggested in fact go a long way to destroying this ancient and important link between the community and local government.

Parish Councils rely on funding from Whitehall through (in our case) Hereford to best serve the community. Our annual Precept is crucial in this, to cover important duties and services that need to be paid for by the parish, as well as new services and possible projects that may arise.

The new Local Government measures we are asked to comment on clearly indicate Whitehall's need to save money, but in the worst possible way for good local government. Apart from anything else, no single formula can possibly cover all the many and huge variations to the parish council model.

It seems to us that Whitehall wishes to curtail parish council's sole power of raising money to pay for all the necessary business of the average parish. This is short-sighted. Already parish councils are having to take on work that previously our principle council (Hereford) carried out -- road repairs, lengthsman's crucial duties, etc., etc. -- and while, now, we can use council fiscal aid to finance this, in 2/3 years it is clear that this will have finished. The only way to pay for this is by increasing the Precept.

Essentially, Whitehall seeks to cap Precepts and referendise the population. It should be pointed out that we live in a parliamentary democracy NOT (like, say, Switzerland) a referenda democracy. This is important. And any referendum the Parish Council has to set up will cost around (in Cradley's case) £2K. This will not be paid for by Hereford, but will have to come out of parish funds/reserves, depleting them unnecessarily.

We believe Cradley Parish Council to be, fiscally, a conscientious and prudent Council, as can be seen from our Precept record. Over the past highly volatile financial years, we have managed, at one point, actually to lower the Precept and keep it level for a time, before raising it to cover crucial recent projects such as finance for our NDP.

We believe these measures to be a hugely retrograde step in local government terms and relations, and will inevitable make interfacing with the community at large far more difficult.

