



WOMBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

held on **Wednesday 28th April 2021** at 7.30pm

This meeting was held using Zoom Video Conferencing.

Present -

Councillors: Cheryl Davies, Mike Davies, Elizabeth Keeling (left at 20.09pm), Dan Kinsey (Chairman), Claire McIlvenna, Vince Merrick, Alan Peace, John Pike, Mary Roberts, Daisy Tait, Ken Upton (left at 20.40pm).

Clerk: Rachael Wright.

Public: 15 members of the public.

01/21 – Welcome from Chairman of the Parish Council – Councillor Daniel Kinsey

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting how fantastic it was to see so many members of the public present. He asked for a minutes silence in recognition of the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh and for all those who lost their lives during the Coronavirus pandemic.

02/21 – Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Barry Bond, Alan Hinton, Robert Reade, and Reg Williams.

03/21 – To approve minutes of the last meeting held on 24th April 2019

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 24th April 2019 were approved, adopted, and will be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

04/21 – To receive the Annual Accounts of Wombourne Parish Council for the year ended 31st March 2019 and 31st March 2020

It was noted that the Annual Accounts of Wombourne Parish Council were available on the website for public inspection.

05/21 – Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman described how 2020 had been a rollercoaster ride of a year, with huge amounts of uncertainty both in this country and worldwide, where certainties did not exist, and nature did not play ball. However, during what was a harrowing year for so many, there had been amazing contributions from many residents in Wombourne who had supported neighbours, friends, and family throughout the pandemic. He commented that he had never seen such an amazing sense of community spirit and he hoped it would continue for many years to come.

06/21 – A report from Wombourne Community Association Group on their formation, work and experiences supporting residents throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

Marlene Longman, Chairman of Wombourne and District Community Association explained how Councillor Dan Kinsey had asked her to be involved in the meeting to talk about working as a

community. She explained there was no better example of working as a community and community spirit than that of the newly formed Wombourne Community Assistance Group. When the group was formed most people barely knew each other; many had volunteered for groups within the village, such as Wombourne BKV or the Carnival Committee, but had not worked together, however, they formed one of the strongest teams she had ever had the pleasure of working with.

She explained various members of the Group would be sharing their experiences of working with the group and to explain what their contribution was, and first up was Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Dan Kinsey, who Marlene described as the face of the group.

Councillor Dan Kinsey explained Marlene had described him as the face of the group, when in fact every single volunteer had acted in that role when out and about in the community helping others. He explained how it was clear early doors that a message had to go out to every household in the village letting residents know how they could seek help if they needed it. The message was clear, no one should be left behind in this pandemic. This resulted in the first newsletter being born, which with the help of volunteers, was delivered to every single house in the village. The newsletter contained useful information about how to seek help via the Parish Council Office number and had a page with red and green cards for residents to put in their windows and a form for neighbours to complete to pass on their contact information. Thankfully, Councillor Kinsey explained there ended up being very few red cards which was evidence of how everyone in the community had pulled together to assist one another. He handed over to Rachael Wright, Clerk to the Council, to talk about the co-ordination of the group.

Rachael Wright, Clerk to the Council, explained how she became involved in the group the day after it was formed and a couple of days before the National lockdown was announced. She had shared examples with the Parish Council of newsletters other Parish Councils were producing and had put measures in place to ensure the Council could continue to run virtually. She became the central hub for phone calls asking for assistance, with a few coming in before the newsletter had been issued. She explained how her home became a central point for deliveries and pick ups, and how she set up and hosted most Zoom calls the group had. She liaised with social services where the group had concerns over residents' needs, toured the village to get content for the VE Day at Home, organised Christmas lunch deliveries for those residents who would be on their own, sorted through hundreds of Christmas cards and packaged up plants to be delivered to the elderly as well as keeping in touch with volunteers via email, WhatsApp groups and social media. Rachael handed over to Councillor Mary Roberts to talk about the distribution of newsletters.

Councillor Mary Roberts explained there are approximately 6500 homes in the village, and the group managed to recruit 119 volunteers to assist with the delivery of newsletters to every home. A lot of volunteers were people who were already involved in several of our community groups such as Wombourne BKV, the Carnival Committee and local churches, such as Rev. Preb Paul Brown, but some had not volunteered before and just wanted to make a difference. She described how her, and Vicky Bratt looked after the North Ward which had 2587 homes which was split across 48 volunteers and explained how many individuals did large streets by themselves, volunteers such as Lee Hartshorne and Ann Bradley who did Orton Lane single handily. South West Ward was looked after by Councillor Mike Davies with 1958 homes split across 28 volunteers, and South East Ward looked after by Richard and Jane Wherton which had 1963 homes across 43 volunteers. There were many more volunteers who did not sign up officially to assist, but during the pandemic looked after neighbours, friends, and family shopping, collecting prescriptions, and topping up mobile phone credit, for which the group were very grateful. The group dealt with queries from as far as New Zealand from concerned relatives, as well as more practical tasks such as dog walking carried out by Councillor Alan Peace. Councillor Mary Roberts handed over to Richard Wherton to talk about how the group were financed.

Richard Wherton, treasurer for Wombourne and District Community Association explained to begin with, the group were looking for finance to establish some sort of bank of essential supplies but that

plan quickly changed when the group realised some items, such as toilet rolls were difficult to come by. He explained that whilst the Parish Council were supportive of the Wombourne Community Assistance Group, they were not permitted to provide funding from the 'public purse', so Wombourne and District Community Association quickly agreed to underwrite initial spending plans and, as the Treasurer, he was charged with the job of filling in the forms as the group sought other sources of finance.

The grants received helped to empower the Community Assistance Group to commit to residents and local organisations both the help and assistance they required. To begin with, the group were successful in an approach to "The Community Foundation for Staffordshire" and received £1,000. Hot on the heels was a grant from Staffordshire County Council, supported by Councillor Mike Davies, which brought in another £1,500 and, in the months that followed a further £1,250 from Staffordshire County Council with the applications again being supported by Councillor Davies. The funding allowed the groups to

- Make direct grants to Wombourne based organisations incurring additional costs due to Covid – for example, additional costs posting out activity materials where groups could not meet in person;
- Newsletters and related posters printed for delivery, by a very willing army of volunteers, to all of our 6,700 residents in Wombourne in April, May, June and, finally, prior to Christmas;
- Emergency assistance to specific residents needing help;
- In conjunction with the Guides and Brownies, Positivity Packs for children in our village to help improve their mental state whilst in lockdown;
- Follow on Positivity packs of 'goodies' for the elderly;
- 18 Blood pressure machines for home use because of patients difficulty in getting into doctors' surgeries; and
- Small grants to organisations to help them with the additional costs of being compliant with the Covid guidelines and getting back up and running.

Richard introduced Debbie Peace and Jane Wherton to explain befriending and shopping for elderly residents.

Jane Wherton, a volunteer for Wombourne and District Community Association, explained there were 7 dedicated volunteers allocated to phone calls to the elderly, they provided a listening ear and became a point of contact for requests for shopping, medication as well as some more unusual queries such as assistance with plumbing and electrical problems. The 7 volunteers were matched up to residents via a spreadsheet set up and co-ordinated by Rachael and sent through orders for shopping to Vicky Bratt who headed up the shopping team. On several occasions they also put in orders for fish and chips which Vicky ordered, purchased, and delivered herself. Debbie Peace, a volunteer for Wombourne and District Community Association, and Jane's colleague explained how vital medication for the elderly was delivered with assistance from a team of pharmacy runners, with Rowena Cameron and Matt Allsebrook completing most themselves assisted later by Peter Colbourne, Vicky Bratt and Dan Kinsey. As lockdown measures started to ease and residents became more confident about going out, the group found most were about to shop for themselves or had built up other support networks to assist them. Debbie introduced Alison to explain how VE Day at Home was organised and carried out.

Alison Brasier Creagh, a volunteer for Wombourne Best Kept village and Wombourne Online, explained how the BKV social media pages were taken over to become BKVE in the run up to the day, as the group felt it was important that the important anniversary was not forgotten. A newsletter went out explaining the idea of the VE Day at Home and the group approached local businesses who agreed to put on afternoon teas and residents were asked to decorate their homes. Bunting was put up around

the village, and children who were not in school got involved by making posters which were displayed around the cricket green. Poppies were displayed at St Benedict Biscop Church, and some streets, such as The Croft went all out with soldiers being displayed in gardens. Alison explained how she organised a questionnaire for the elderly to ensure that they were not left out, with 40 being completed sharing their memories from VE Day. The memories have been compiled into a folder which the group hope to publish into a book. The long-term goal is to bring all those elderly together to share the memories in person with them. Alison handed over to Vicky Bratt to talk about the Carnival at Home and the Santa Sleigh.

Vicky Bratt, Chairman of Wombourne Carnival Committee, explained it was her 6th year as Chairman of the Committee and despite the challenges of 2020, she felt passionate about not missing a carnival. Following the success of the VE Day at Home, residents were encouraged to have a Carnival at Home. This turned out to be a great success with many streets forming bonds like never before and going on to regularly sit in their front gardens throughout the summer. Vicky explained how her and Councillor Dan Kinsey toured Wombourne on the day visiting every street in the village to show support to people were celebrating, and in total £3421 was raised which would be distributed locally.

Giving an update on the Santa Sleigh, Vicky explained it has been a long tradition for Wombourne and Sedgley Rotary Club to take their Santa Sleigh around the village in December. However, due to the age of most of the volunteers it looked as though it would not take place in 2020, that was until 3rd Wombourne Scout Group agreed to get involved with Henry and James Cleaver taking the lead on project Santa Sleigh. With the help of various members of the Community Assistance Club and Wombourne and Sedgley Rotary Club, the Santa Sleigh toured the village over 3 nights in December, including to some streets such as on the Giggetty estate where it had never been before. In total £2600 was raised, of which £1000 went to the Rotary Club and £1600 went to Wombourne and District Community Association to fund some computers for schools. Vicky introduced Donna Eccleston to talk about how residents stayed fit and active during lockdown.

Donna Eccleston, a Wombourne Best Kept Village Volunteer explained she is a community fitness instructor, so her job is to keep people fit. A group of community fitness instructors came together via WhatsApp during lockdown to discuss how they could keep their activities running despite the situation. Fitness DVDs were delivered to those residents who were shielding, with one 92 year old requesting the routine on VHS since she did not own a DVD player. Undeterred, Donna arranged for a VHS to be delivered to the lady who is now one stone lighter and has never been fitter. Donna explained how she saw an increase in residents exercising outdoors and commented how blessed we were to live in a place with so many beautiful walks, including the Railway Walk and the canal towpaths. Donna handed over to Alison Brasier Creagh to talk about Wombourne Best Kept Village and how villagers and their children have been keeping active and clearing litter in recent months.

Alison Brasier Creagh explained the annual Best Kept Village Competition was cancelled because of the pandemic, however, Wombourne Best Kept Village had a strong team of volunteers who continued to work outside in a socially distanced manner where possible. The group felt the mental health of local children needed addressing, and overnight the Litter Patrol was set up. They now have 95 children registered to the program who can be seen litter picking around the village in their high vis vests. The children have been presented with stickers, badges and Easter Eggs, and local businesses such as GM Home Discounts and Berriman Eaton had got involved to support the scheme.

Marlene Longman concluded the update from the Community Assistance Group by thanking everyone for their contributions and suggesting it had reminded everyone why Wombourne was such a fantastic place to live.

07/21 – Parishioners Questions – A chance for members of the Parish to ask questions or raise matters of local interest

Mark Rabone of Pesticide free Wombourne explained he moved to the village 20 years ago and began volunteering for the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. He noted how the number of bees were declining rapidly due to the use of pesticides. He set up Pesticide Free Wombourne and launched a campaign on Facebook and Instagram to raise awareness. He has spoken to Staffordshire County Council who do use pesticides who have agreed to work with him and promote alternatives to householders. Mark explained how he would like the whole of South Staffordshire to become pesticide free, with Wombourne being the first village to declare themselves a pesticide free area.

Councillors Daniel Kinsey, Claire McIlvenna, Mike Davies, and Vince Merrick, all agreed it was a positive step forward and asked Mark to get in touch with them after the meeting so that they could continue the discussion with him.

Amanda Griss attended to thank the volunteers for all their hard work throughout the pandemic. She explained she had personally received some help from them due to the fact she had been shielding since March 2020. She explained the difference having someone at the end of the phone made to her in what had been a difficult year, and how she still felt concerned about the future.

Councillor Mike Davies reassured Amanda, she could contact him for assistance any time, and Alison Brasier Creagh agreed to get in touch with her through Wombourne Best Kept Village to provide her with some assistance with her garden.

The meeting concluded at 20.50pm.