



## **WOMBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL**

### Minutes of the **FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 7.00pm

This meeting was held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Gravel Hill, Wombourne, WV5 9HA.

**Present** - Councillors: Mike Davies, Ed Hughes, Elizabeth Keeling, Dan Kinsey BEM, Vince Merrick (Chairman), Alan Peace, Daisy Perry, Martin Perry (Vice-Chairman), Matt Powell, Mary Roberts, Ian Sadler

**Public** - 16 members of the public

**Clerk** - Rachael Wright

#### **01/25 - Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Barry Bond MBE and Mark Evans.

#### **02/25 - Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Daniel Kinsey BEM declared he was a Trustee of Wombourne and District Community Association, a member of Wombourne Cricket, Tennis and Bowling Club and Chairman Wombourne Best Kept Village Committee.

Councillor Daisy Perry noted she was a member of Wombourne and District Community Association.

Councillor Martin Perry noted he was a member of Wombourne and District Community Association.

Councillor Alan Peace noted he was a member of Wombourne Best Kept Village, Wombourne Carnival Committee, Wombourne and District Community Association and a Director of South Staffordshire Narrowboat Company.

#### **03/25 - Presentation of Certificates and Trophy**

The Chairman presented a certificate to Rosie in recognition of her assistance in switching on the Christmas lights. Rosie, an active member of her School Council, was delighted to receive her certificate.

A certificate was also presented to Nancy, the first child to use the newly redeveloped play equipment at Poolhouse Play Area. She was accompanied by her parents to receive the certificate from the Chairman.

The Chairman then presented a trophy to Jason Dorrington, former Police Sergeant, in recognition of his 28 years of dedicated service to the Wombourne community. Jason was commended for his unwavering commitment to public service, his efforts in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of residents and his positive engagement with the community throughout his career. The Chairman expressed its gratitude for his years of service, acknowledging the significant impact he has had on local policing and community relations.

The families of Rosie and Nancy left the meeting (6 people).

## 04/25 - Public Participation

Due to the number of residents in attendance, the Council agreed to suspend Standing Orders at 7.06pm to allow all residents to speak.

- a) A resident from Brookside Close expressed his disappointment regarding the marking of potholes by a Council employee, citing concerns regarding appropriate signage and markings being in place. The resident also stated he had been provided with incorrect information regarding funding opportunities through the Postcode Lottery for his idea of delivering Christmas parcels to those over 70 and living alone in the village. Finally, he stated he had overheard the Clerk make a comment perceived as dismissive of his proposal when he had attended the office last month, stating he found this unprofessional and raised concerns regarding the Clerk's qualifications and authority to make decisions on behalf of the Parish Council. He reported he would be updating the local press on the matter.

The resident left the meeting.

Councillor Elizabeth Keeling addressed the final concern raised by the resident, stating she found his comments towards the Clerk to be inappropriate. She clarified that the Parish Council had considered the idea put forward by the resident and did not deem it to be viable or suitable for financial support. Councillor Keeling further noted that if the resident chose to engage with the press regarding the matter, the Parish Council would like the opportunity to respond.

- b) A resident representing Wombourne Cricket, Tennis and Bowling Club attended to seek support from the Parish Council in renewing the lease with the Council. He stated the new lease should have started on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, almost one year had passed since and the matter was still outstanding. He expressed concern regarding the delay and lack of professionalism with the Council taking some 8 weeks to respond to correspondence.

Councillor Daniel Kinsey BEM expressed his sadness regarding the situation, noting the Council the resident was referring to was Staffordshire County Council and noting he would encourage the Parish Council to provide support in pursuing the matter.

Councillor Mike Davies agreed to take up the matter on behalf of the resident with the Chief Executive of Staffordshire County Council.

- c) A resident from Rushwater Close expressed his concern regarding flooding near his home, noting cars were stranded in the middle of flooded water and a neighbour had been forced to build a wall to prevent flood water getting into her home. He also expressed concern regarding the state of the footways on his estate, noting he was unable to take his daughter out on her scooter as they were so uneven. It caused a hazard to her.

Councillor Mike Davies agreed to pursue both the flooding and the state of the pavements with Staffordshire County Council. He noted he was due to submit his wish-list to them next month in relation to highway concerns and noted work had been completed on the A449 and Bridgnorth Road recently and work was due to be completed in School Road, Ounsdale Road, Poolhouse Road, Giggetty Lane and Brickbridge Lane, which were all areas previously on his wish-list.

- d) A resident from Orton Lane, who is employed by Dudley Building Society, attended to inform residents that whilst there are no longer any banks in Wombourne, they have branches in Kingswinford, Gornal, Dudley, Perton and Brierley Hill and she would be keen to see residents take advantage of their services. She noted that they had been established for 168 years and were very charitable, making £30,000 worth of donations to nine charities in the last year, including local charity, Hope House. She noted as a business

they enjoyed attending the Council's Small Business Saturday initiative and would like to become more involved in the local community.

- e) A resident from Apse Close noted he first raised concerns regarding the issue of buses in September 2024, not realising how quickly the matter would move. He noted he had sent Councillors a couple of emails regarding the Mayor of West Midlands proposal to review the way buses operate. The consultation has started on the plan for Transport for West Midlands to decide bus routes, fares and timetables. He noted concern for the longevity of bus services 15 and 16 currently running through Wombourne and neighbouring villages, Swindon and Himley.

He encouraged residents and the Parish, District and County Councils to be involved and to respond to the consultation running until the end of March. He asked that everyone present respond and that the Parish Council not only respond, but inform community groups, the Grapevine Magazine and neighbouring District and County Councillors. He noted a petition was given to the District Council with 591 signatures concerning buses in the area. Also noting the Head of Transport Operations at the County Council indicated a meeting was being held with Transport for West Midlands on 14<sup>th</sup> January and he asked Councillor Mike Davies for feedback. He also asked for consideration to be given to the proposed bus shelter in High Street, in light of the current consultation.

Councillor Daniel Kinsey BEM assured the resident the consultation had been shared via social media and to community groups and noted he did not believe the consultation was very user friendly.

Councillor Alan Peace noted the paper for the consultation for organisations, such as the Parish Council, was 150 pages long. He had attended a decent drop-in session at the Mander Centre in Wolverhampton and noted that there were two options for completing the consultation, one for individuals and one for authorities, such as the Parish Council. He suggested strong representations were made to ensure that we do not lose the existing services in the village.

Councillor Mike Davies agreed to seek feedback from the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January.

Standing Orders resumed at 7.37pm.

### **05/25 - Approval of Minutes**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

### **06/25 - Report from South Staffordshire Council**

Councillor Daniel Kinsey BEM informed members the footbridge over the Wombrook would shortly be reinstated and there was to be a ribbon cutting ceremony to mark its re-opening, after long delays caused by the volume of paperwork, which had to be completed with the Environment Agency.

He noted he would be hosting a fundraising evening as Chairman of South Staffordshire Council, for his Chairman's charities, at the Civic Centre on 28<sup>th</sup> February and encouraged everyone to support the event.

He also noted that South Staffordshire Council had submitted the Local Plan and two Inspectors had been appointed to review it. It had been submitted based on the old target of delivering 223 homes per year, despite the target now being 651. If the current plan is accepted, work will start immediately on how to deliver the shortfall from the new target.

A new waste contract was being explored at present by South Staffordshire Council and finally, the Council would be exploring options on the Government's plans for devolution, in short removing two tiers of Government locally. District and County Councils will fail to exist in their current state and will be replaced by Unitary Councils. This will, in his opinion, place a greater value on the role of Parish Councils in connecting with their communities.

### **07/25 - Reports from Members appointed to Outside Bodies**

- a) Wombourne and District Community Association – Councillor Daisy Perry informed members no meeting had taken place.

- b) Wolverhampton Business Airport Consultative Committee - Councillor Mary Roberts informed members that a meeting had taken place on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024 where four complaints regarding aircraft had been received. A development update had been provided on the major infrastructure upgrade, which started on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and will be completed by 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The airport is currently closed and restrictions in place.
- c) Wombourne Carnival Committee - Councillor Mary Roberts informed members a meeting had taken place on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025 and the theme for 2025 had been decided as Outer Space. Some enquiries had been received already for stalls and from food vendors. The Committee had been informed it was the intention once again of the Parish Council to open the bar on the day. Funds raised at the 2024 Carnival will be distributed at the Annual Parish Meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April.
- d) Wombourne Charity Trustees - Councillor Mike Davies informed members two applications had been received this week for the hardship fund and the Trustees would be meeting this week to decide upon the grant funding.
- e) Wombourne Best Kept Village Committee - Councillor Daniel Kinsey BEM informed members two meetings had now taken place and the Committee had appointed their Officers. Since he had been appointed Chairman of the Committee, he suggested Councillor Alan Peace take over his role as representative on behalf of the Parish Council. All members were in agreement.  
Councillor Alan Peace informed members the last meeting had taken place on 15<sup>th</sup> January and formal meeting agendas would be established for the future. Schools, Scout and Guide groups had been approached regarding the maintenance of outlying planters. A form would now be submitted to South Staffordshire Council indicating the number of hours, bag of litter and other work carried out by volunteers. The Committee were considering how they could commemorate the 80-year anniversary of VE Day and finally the constitution of the Committee will be checked and core values and strategies would be established.
- f) Wombourne Retailers Liaison - Councillor Elizabeth Keeling informed members despite the storm on Small Business Saturday the event was a success, in particular the craft fair showcasing local crafters. Businesses had donated prizes for the first time and those who took part in the trail had been awarded them. A new business would be opening on 1<sup>st</sup> February on Windmill Bank - Wombourne Handmade - and members were encouraged to visit. Councillor Daisy Perry informed members a follow up session to the High Street Boost Event had taken place on 7<sup>th</sup> January and she would seek feedback as to whether anyone attended.
- g) Police Liaison - Councillor Vince Merrick informed members Tim Norbury would provide an updated Police Report in due course, which he would share with members. He noted the importance of the appreciation shown to Jason Dorrington at the meeting for all his hard work for the community.
- h) Giggetty Action Group - Councillor Vince Merrick informed members no meeting had taken place.
- i) Friends of Wombrook - Councillor Ian Sadler informed members South Staffordshire Council had been working hard to remove debris from the brook following the recent storms. He asked that the group be invited to the re-opening of the footbridge referred to earlier by Councillor Daniel Kinsey BEM when it takes place.

#### **08/25 - Parish Council Finances and Administration**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the payments, bank reconciliations and petty cash for November and December 2024.

#### **09/25 - Planning Applications**

Members noted the submissions made to South Staffordshire Council in lieu of a meeting. Councillor Ed Hughes thanked the Clerk for her support to him in preparing the responses and noted the comments made earlier towards her during Public Participation were wholly inappropriate.

**10/25 - Budget and Precept**

Councillor Mary Roberts thanked the Clerk for the time and effort she had put into preparing the budget for 2025/26.

She noted the majority of the Finance and General Purposes Committee had agreed to propose a 5% increase to the precept for 2025/26, with a budget of £484,682.66 and a precept of £376,309.50.

With a base rate of £5,250.40, Band D properties in Wombourne would pay £71.67 per annum, which is a £3.18 increase from last year, or £1.38 per week which is 6p per week increase. Her proposal was therefore set out as discussed.

Councillor Daniel Kinsey BEM seconded the proposal noting the Council had made some difficult decisions in recent years, however they were now in a good place, financially stable and able to deliver on their priorities for the community.

All members were in favour of the proposal.

It was **RESOLVED** that a 5% increase to the precept for 2025/26 be applied, with a budget of £484,682.66 and a precept of £376,309.50. With a base rate of £5,250.40, Band D properties in Wombourne would pay £71.67 per annum which is a £3.18 increase from last year or £1.38 per week, which is 6p per week increase.

**11/25 - Correspondence**

The Clerk informed members Councillor Vince Merrick had received a thank you letter from a resident in Brook Close for assisting him in seeking support from Homes Plus.

**12/25 - Meeting Schedule**

Members noted the following upcoming meetings:

- a. Full Parish Council Meeting - Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025
- b. Civic Centre Management Committee Meeting – Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**13/25 - Chairman’s Closing Remarks**

The Chairman noted it was great to see everyone back in 2025 with a spring in their step and looked forward to year ahead.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.

**Signed:** .....

**Dated:** .....