



## **ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL**

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### **Minutes of meeting**

Minutes of the Albrighton Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February at 7.15 pm in the Red House.

### **Present**

Cllrs. D Beechey, B Hickson, T Maguire, M Medlyn, M Pate, J Pledger, P Woodman, R Rudman, M Pitchford, S Pledger, R Smith, M Pate, A Straney.

In attendance:

S Reynolds Clerk to Albrighton Parish Council.

#### **19126 Apologies**

To receive and approve apologies for absence. Members are asked to give their apologies direct to the Clerk.

Cllr P Illes (family commitment), P Collins (business commitment)

#### **19127. Declarations of Interest**

To receive declarations under consideration on this agenda in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 s32 and The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012. Members must fill out the declarations of Interests Forms for submission. Where a member indicates that they have a prejudicial interest but wish to make representation regarding the item before leaving the meeting, they must do so under item 4(D) of Public Participation.

Cllr Medlyn declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 19134b and Cllrs Pitchford, and Medlyn declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 19136b.

#### **19128. Public Participation**

Members of the public are invited to ask questions, make representations or submit comments on any item on the agenda. This is LIMITED TO THREE MINUTES PER PERSON – at the sole discretion of the Chairman.

There were 15 members of the public present.

Questions were asked by 2 members of the public, the first asked by JW regarding the summer activities that Albrighton Parish Council support financially at the Red House, it was felt that it would be helpful if there could be a more strategic approach working with other organisations in the village to ensure that the activities were not competing with each other. It was agreed to include this item on the March agenda and JW was asked to bring forward a report for the Parish Council to consider, JW agreed and would liaise with the Clerk over this.

The second question was from DS who asked Cllr James Pledger what he felt was his contribution to the parish council since his election in May 2017. Cllr Pledger asked the Clerk if he was allowed to speak during public session and was advised he could either answer or provide a written response. Cllr J Pledger said he was there to represent residents who elected him and to ensure the process of the council was followed. DS pressed further asking what Cllr J Pledger did for the village, and added that he had attended several meetings and his impression was that a lot of council time was being taken up dealing with issues surrounding Cllr J Pledger. Cllr J Pledger replied that he felt there was a lot of misunderstanding regarding that. DS again said Cllr J Pledger I am interested in what you have delivered and what you have accomplished on the council. Cllr J Pledger replied that he had been on the Crime Prevention Panel and indicated to the Clerk that he believed he had attended two meetings, the Clerk said she was unable to confirm this as he had not attended any during the last 18 months since she became Clerk to the Council.

**19129. Report by the Shropshire Council member, Cllr. M Pate, with regard to items of business likely to affect the community.**

Cllr Pate informed members that he had sent a lot of correspondence to Shropshire Council on behalf of residents complaining about the poor state of the roads and that recent repairs were seen to breakdown shortly afterwards, he informed members that he felt that there was now to be action taken by Shropshire Council to address this. He said that there was to be a review in the highways department and that reserves had been allocated to improve the condition of the highways. A discussion followed on the inadequate repairs that had been carried out with potholes reappearing in a matter of weeks.

Cllr Pate also informed members that the major planning developments across the county were being discussed, both Ironbridge and Turnhill going to the February Cabinet meeting. The M54 Tong development was going to the Cabinet meeting in March and he felt it was likely that this would not receive Shropshire Council backing and he was hopeful it would not be approved by the planning committee.

Cllr Smith queried whether the new technique for filling potholes which Shropshire Council had recently employed was working, Shropshire Council had said this would be six times quicker and they would be able to repair all the potholes in a timelier manner. Cllr Pate was unaware of any issues over this but said there were only two machines available for road repairs across the whole of the county.

**19130. Parish Councillors' reports with regard to any items of council business they have recently conducted likely to affect the community.**

Cllr Illes had provided the Clerk with an update on the Nature reserve which she shared with members.

Cllr S Pledger asked Cllr Woodman if he had done anything about the decision which had been taken at the last meeting regarding the approbation and if Donington with Boscobel Parish Council were unhappy with the decision. Cllr Woodman informed her he had written to the Chairman of DBPC and that DBPC were happy with the decision and had written back saying they felt the approbation should only be held every 4 or 5 years.

**19131. Minutes of previous meetings:**

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the Albrighton Parish Council minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020 were true and accurate records.**

**19132. Matters arising**

To consider any issues arising from the minutes that are not included on the agenda. Meeting actions points to be noted where appropriate.

None

**19133. Planning:**

**Planning applications:**

Reference: 20/00099/FUL

Address: Land Behind Greensleeves, High Street, Albrighton, Wolverhampton, Shropshire.

Proposal: Erection of 1 bungalow and creation of new access

Applicant: Mr. & Mrs. Ashcroft

Members agreed that there were no grounds to object to this application but it was felt that it would be helpful if the Parish Council developed a policy on the use of back garden land which could be used for future developments.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the Place Plan Working Party should develop a policy on the use of back garden land.** **Action – Place Plan Working Party**

Reference: 19/02785/REM

Address: Land to The East Of, Garridge Close, Albrighton, Shropshire.

Proposal: Approval of reserved matters (appearance, landscaping, layout, scale) pursuant to 14/03657/OUT for the erection of three residential properties

Applicant: Shropshire Council

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED by a majority that council recommend this application for approval.** **Action – Clerk**

Reference: 20/00476/TCA

Proposal: Fell 1no Hawthorn (T1), remove two lowest limbs of 1no Beech (T2), 20% overall reduction of 1no Horse Chestnut (T3) & 25% overall reduction of 1no Sycamore tree (T4) within Donington and Albrighton Conservation Area

Address: Trees Around War Memorial, Newport Road, Albrighton, Shropshire.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that council recommend this application for approval.** **Action – Clerk**

**Planning decisions:**

Reference: 19/05472/CPB (validated: 17/12/2019)

Address: Albrighton Railway Station, Station Road, Albrighton, Shropshire, WV7 3DR

Proposal: Application for lawful development certificate for the proposed erection of 2no 4m columns with 3no CCTV cameras on each column

Decision: Certificate - Not Lawful

Reference: 19/05592/TPO (validated: 06/01/2020)

Address: 24 Delaware Avenue, Albrighton, WV7 3BW

Proposal: Reduce canopy volume by 25% of 1no Beech protected by the Shropshire Council (Land at and to the West of Church Lane, Albrighton) TPO 2010 (Ref: SC/00020/10)

Decision: Grant Permission

**Planning enforcement:**

None

**19134. Finance & Personnel:**

- a) To receive a report by the Chairman of Finance & Personnel Committee to also include receipts and payments up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, (enclosed) – Cllr. Maguire.**

Cllr Maguire asked members if there were any questions on the month end figures, Cllr Smith enquired whether the Flyer figures on the extract were showing all the expenditure items as this seemed to show an improved financial position for the Flyer. Cllr Maguire informed him that the extract does not include the expenditure for salaries, pensions, NI or PAYE. He explained that this was confidential information and could not be included under data protection guidelines and that when these figures were included it would show the full cost of running the Flyer and that the council were currently running this service at a loss.

- b) To receive recommendation from Finance & Personnel Committee regarding complaint received from an employee.**

The Chairman of Finance & Personnel, Cllr Maguire, explained that the Council had received a complaint from the driver of the Albrighton Flyer, Mr Ken West, which the Clerk had put to the Finance & Personnel Committee.

(See documents sent to Cllrs before the meeting: - extract of Finance & Personnel meeting, letter from Mr West, letter from Chairman, email from Cllr S Pledger, Statements from Flyer Volunteer, Flyer Driver, Cllr Medlyn, Chairman and Vice Chairman).

Cllr Maguire outlined the circumstances surrounding this affair: -

As those who were present at the January PC meeting will recall there were raised voices after the end of that meeting when Cllr Medlyn confronted Cllr S Pledger on some matter which then drew in Cllr J Pledger. Cllr Maguire said although he disapproved of Cllr Medlyn's approach on that occasion and wish she had dealt with the matter in a more measured way, now that he was aware of the events leading up to that confrontation, he fully understood her anger.

Nothing can be said to justify the actions of Cllr S Pledger in visiting the Rhodes Pharmacy to advise the pharmacist that our Flyer driver should not be allowed to collect prescriptions on behalf of his passengers.

The pharmacist had said to KW and subsequently to the Chairman that Cllr S Pledger had identified herself as the leader of Albrighton Parish Council. Cllr S Pledger says she was merely representing the Patients Group of Albrighton Medical practice in a meeting of which the matter of misdelivered prescriptions was raised. Apparently, no minutes of that Patients Group meeting were recorded so it is not possible to confirm or otherwise the veracity of that statement.

The pharmacist had also told several people including the Flyer driver and Flyer volunteer that Cllr Pledger had told him that he should no longer hand prepared prescriptions to the Flyer driver suggesting so because of his inability to read; an untrue statement in itself and even if true she had no right to divulge such personal information about one of the Council's employees.

She also implied that medicines had been misplaced or misdirected in the past by the driver and this accusation is also completely without foundation. Apart from the very unlikely possibility of this happening aboard the Flyer there is absolutely no record to back it up.

The Finance & Personnel Committee's unanimous view was that Mr West had a valid complaint and Cllr Maguire said that Cllr S Pledger was completely and utterly in the wrong as she had: -

1. Masqueraded as representing the Parish Council without authority.
2. Wrongly implied the Driver had misdirected medication in the past to one of his passengers
3. Divulged incorrect or privileged information about one of the Council's employees.
4. Caused extreme hurt and embarrassment to the Council's employee.

Despite this gross misconduct Cllr S Pledger does not admit to, nor accept having done anything wrong and has refused to apologise. This therefore is an impasse that we cannot resolve here. It is the conclusion of the Finance & Personnel Committee that Cllr Sylvia Pledger has breached Albrighton Parish Councils Code of Conduct and Standing Orders and she should therefore be reported to the Monitoring Officer Claire Porter at Shire Hall.

That is the proposal.

Cllr J Pledger said he objected to the process, he said why was Cllr Woodman's letter to Cllr S Pledger sent 6 days before the written complaint had been received, Cllr Woodman informed him he had been made aware of the verbal complaint and he had then interviewed the pharmacist (which was before the written complaint was received) and that this convinced him the allegation was true.

Cllr J Pledger again commented that the letter was written before the January council meeting and before the written complaint had been received. The Clerk informed members that she had received a verbal complaint from Mr. West and had asked him to put it in writing. On receiving the verbal complaint, she had informed the Chairman of the Council Cllr Woodman. Cllr Woodman said that both himself and the Vice Chairman Cllr Smith had been to see the pharmacist and had satisfied themselves that the events described by Mr. West were true. Cllr Maguire said are you saying it is not correct, Cllr J Pledger said I'm not saying that.

Cllr Pate stated that he was absolutely fed up with the continued actions of these two Councillors (Cllrs S and P Pledger); the council had previously had to take action against them to protect the Clerk and now we are having to take action regarding an issue against our driver. Cllr Pate said that we should be here for the community, working to provide services for them and not having to waste council time and money with this type of nonsense from these two councillors' every meeting.

Cllr Medlyn stated that her dialogue with Cllr S Pledger had taken place after the meeting had finished and warned council that if this situation was not resolved then the driver had grounds to take the council to tribunal, unfortunately Mr. West was on holiday so was not able to attend and inform council of this himself.

Cllr Straney expressed his belief that Albrighton Parish Council could not resolve this issue and he believed the only action for the council to take was to report Cllr S Pledger to the Monitoring Officer for breach of the Code of Conduct and he wished to second the proposal.

Cllr S Pledger then asked if she could read a statement, her statement was as follows:

Firstly, this matter arises from circumstances which have nothing to do with the parish council. The issue I discussed with the pharmacist arose from a confidential matter raised at the medical practice patients' group and I am not commenting on that in a public meeting. A letter dated 8th January 2020 from the Chairman alerted me to allegations made against me. My response to the chairman was made in an email which he has seen fit to reproduce in the papers for this meeting and I refer you to that. Unsurprisingly, this counted for nothing given subsequent actions by the chairman and others.

My subsequent conversation with the pharmacist has confirmed that he may have mistaken my position, but given that he has only just started in the village this is understandable. He confirmed to me the propriety of my response to the chairman. I stand by that response.

When the alleged remarks were made two people were present; the pharmacist and myself. As to what was said between us, the statements are without value as none of the makers was present. What is now reported comes from councillors with a history of hostility towards me and the probity of what is reported by any of the makers is open to challenge on the basis that they can hardly be called objective and/or neutral.

No one has asked me what I said and from the papers I have seen as to the council's subsequent actions the decision has already been made, before I have been able to say anything (other than my initial response to the Chairman), that I have behaved improperly. I have not. This is simply yet another example of bullying and harassment of me by the Chairman, willingly assisted by others. Reporting me to the Monitoring Officer will merely confirm that to be the case.

I am handing a copy of this response to the Clerk so there can be no misrepresentation as to what I have said in council.

Cllr J Pledger then said that he did not wish to address the subject of the matter but did question the procedure for dealing with it. He proposed that before the matter was reported to the monitoring officer a conciliation process should be enacted. Cllr S Pledger said that she had not presented herself as from the Council but as from the Patient's Group and she denied any wrong doing. Cllr Pate interjected on a point of order explaining that an amendment to a proposal should relate to the substantive motion which he did not and also it would need to be voted on and get the agreement of council to proceed.

The Clerk explained that the council had a duty of care towards its member of staff and read out extracts from the Governance Toolkit for Parish Councils (NALC) and Albrighton Parish Councils own Bullying & Harassment Policy which stated that:

Bullying may be characterized as a pattern of offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour; an abuse of this use of power or authority which tends to undermine an individual or a group of individuals, gradually eroding their confidence and capability, which may cause them to suffer stress."

Members are bullying or harassing employees, contractors, fellow councillors, others then a referral as a contravention of the Member's Code of Conduct could be an appropriate measure. If an employee is experiencing bullying or harassment from a third party, the Council will act reasonably in upholding its duty of care towards its employees.

Bullying is specifically prohibited in the Member Code of Conduct (paragraph 3(2)(b) of the Model Code). Councillors must not bully any person, including other Councillors, Officers, (employees) or members of the public.

Members were reminded by the Chairman that a proposal had been put before the council by Cllr Maguire which had been seconded by Cllr Straney and should be put to the vote.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED by a majority (10 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions) that Cllr Sylvia Pledger has breached Albrighton Parish Councils Code of Conduct and Standing Orders and she should therefore be reported to the Monitoring Officer Claire Porter at Shirehall.**

**c) To confirm the Financial Regulations - (enclosed)**

The Clerk had previously circulated a copy of the new NALC model Financial Regulations. She informed Councillors that Financial Regulations need to be reviewed by Council on a regular basis, she pointed out that the new Financial Regulations included regulations regarding PWLB loans. Approval was sort to adopt the new Financial Regulations to comply with NALC regulations.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the new Financial Regulations be adopted.**

**d) To consider income & expenditure in January 2020 details below:**

Date	Cheque	To Whom Payable	Reason	Amount
17/01/20	4577	Turnock	Call out & replace timer clock in Red House	120.00
17/01/20	4578	ACP Architecture Ltd	Feasibility study for swimming pool	3600.00
21/01/20	4579	SALC	Training 10/01/20	70.00
27/01/20	4580	Smith of Derby	Service of millennium clock until 31/12/25	1503.60
27/01/20	4581	UK Safety Management	Replacement 5 extinguishers, warning notices etc.	1068.60
27/01/20	4582	Turnock	Clean, test, store Xmas Lights	4316.40
27/01/20	4583	Brettells	Valuation of mace	240.00
27/01/20	4584	e-on power solutions	Repair o/s 5 Fairlawn	82.63
27/01/20	4585	Amazon	Emergency lighting test key	2.50
28/01/20	4586	Safe I S	Fire safety assessment	210.60

**Income Received:**

Date	Payment Type	Payer	Reason	Amount
07/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Flyer cash 24/12 - 3/01/20	62.00
07/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Library cash 16-21 Dec 2019	56.01
07/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Library cash 4 Jan 2020	4.62
07/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Flyer cash 21 Dec 2019	25.00
16/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Flyer cash 7-10 Jan 2020	153.50
16/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Library cash 6-11 Jan 2020	56.99
20/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Flyer cash 14-17 Jan 2020	174.00
20/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Library cash 13-18 Jan 2020	32.13
20/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	LAH usage for Dec 2019	147.00
27/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Flyer cash 21-24 Jan 2020	172.50
27/01/20	Cash	Albrighton Parish Council	Library cash 20-25 Jan 2020	61.82

The Clerk invited questions on the income and expenditure figures. Cllr Straney asked what the expenditure for the swimming pool feasibility was for. Cllr Woodman explained that this had been agreed by the council many months ago and that there was money set aside in the budget for this cost. Cllr Straney queried whether this cost should be borne by Shropshire Council but Cllr Pate stated that this was a community feasibility study for a local community asset, and Albrighton Parish Council had agreed a few years ago to cover this cost. He explained that the feasibility study covered many issues and was instrumental in deciding the future of the swimming pool. Cllr Woodman as added that Donington with Boscobel Parish Council would pay their 28% contribution to the cost.

Cllr S Pledger queried the £4,316 expenditure on Christmas lights, the Clerk informed members that this was well within the budget, Cllr Maguire then provided council with the costs for both 18/19 and 19/20. These costs included

the purchase of some new displays and repairs to some of the old equipment which was starting to fail. Cllr Pate moved that the figures be approved.

**19135 To receive an update on the Melville Club (Cllr Pitchford)**

Cllr Pitchford presented a report on the Melville Club. Prior to their AGM in April 2019 membership was declining and the Club was starting to make a weekly loss although the Club was still holding good financial reserves. He explained that the former committee had been looking at various options to stop the haemorrhaging of funds, one of which was to investigate the sale of the building and land and to consider moving the Club to the Red House.

Since the April 2019 AGM a new committee had been elected and a plan of action was drawn up – new carpet laid, interior redecorated and the heating system replaced. The toilet area has been re-designed and completely refurbished, creating 1 large unisex disabled toilet, with further improvements are being planned.

Thanks to the new committee, but in particular to Mandy Medlyn who has worked tirelessly for the benefit of the Club, and the improvements made the membership has greatly increased.

Cllr Pitchford on behalf of the Melville Club expressed thanks to the Parish Council for its continued support. Cllr Smith reminded members that the Parish Council had recently shown support by agreeing to double its yearly support grant to the Melville Club, which was an asset to the village and greatly appreciated by elderly residents.

**19136 Correspondence**

**For action:**

None

**To note:**

None

**19137 Date of next meeting:**

- a) Albrighton Parish Council meeting – Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 7.15 pm in The Red House.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed..... Date.....