



**MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF ROMSLEY PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 13TH MAY 2019, 7.00PM**

PRESENT: Cllr. Arrowsmith, Cllr. Bolar, Cllr. Miss Gray, Cllr. Powell and Cllr. Shaw
ALSO PRESENT: Cllr. Mrs May, Cllr. Mrs Sherrey, Mr Williamson and Clerk

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 1.1 The Minutes of the previous meeting were read. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** by those able to vote that they were a true record and signed accordingly.

2. TO RECEIVE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Annual Chairperson's statement provides an opportunity to reflect on the past and to look forward towards new opportunities and challenges. However, as this is an election year the opportunity to look both backwards and forward is much greater, and we can consider the previous four year council period as well as set the strategic direction for the next four years.

The past four years have seen unprecedented political change and social division. Whether it is Brexit, austerity, immigration or religious based conflict, many people are angry, disillusioned frustrated and animated for change. Everyday seems to bring more finger-pointing and more blame which sadly involves verbal and physical attacks on individuals or groups in our society.

Despite this division, we must never forget that there is much more that brings us together than separates us. We all live together in communities, we interact, we share common space, and we share common standards. We are reliant on each other, and we must all recognise our responsibility to maintain respect, tolerance and civility to each other and ensure the place we live remains a pleasant and enjoyable place.

For Romsley Parish Council the last four years has represented growth and progress with the Parish Council playing a much more active role in making Romsley a better place to live.

We have introduced flower planters, planted trees, replaced and repaired dilapidated bins, sign posts, benches and bollards across the parish. The introduction and subsequent hard work of our Parish Maintenance person along with our Parish Lengthsman are making a noticeable difference to our built environment.

In the park, we have installed new equipment such as the gym and picnic tables, planted wildflowers and improved security in the car park. Whilst the community defibrillator not only offers our community an important benefit to their health, but it also secures the future of our much loved traditional phone box.

Through initiatives such as Smartwater, we have avoided the crime increases that have occurred in other areas despite the massive cuts to Police resources.

Whilst around planning we have challenged orthodoxy and given the community a focussed voice from which we achieved meaningful change to planning applications such as the Severn Trent Aqueduct and Rolling Hills development.

The many events we now organise throughout the year bring our community together to celebrate Romsley and strengthen the bonds between us. 2018 saw record numbers attend the St Kenelms Day celebration, the Christmas Carol Service and the centenary of the ending of the Great War.

Romstock goes from strength to strength, last year seeing nearly 2000 people attending. I am particularly pleased that the quality and organisation of Romstock has improved year on year and it now contributed significant funds to benefit our community.

Despite these many positives, all this has been done against a backdrop of diminishing support from the tiers of local government that sit above us.

District and County Councils face unprecedented challenges on their budgets and have had to make tough choices over the services they provide. However, time and again they fail to consider the needs of Romsley residents properly. Too many times decisions are done to us and not with us.

Throughout the past four years, the most challenging issues for the Parish Council have involved a lack of active dialogue and joined up thinking with the tiers above. From grass cutting and litter picking to highway maintenance and planning we expend far too much energy fighting to be heard and correcting the poor choices of council officers who all too often fail to engage and understand.

Early, meaningful and sustained engagement with the community, however challenging this may be, will reap the rewards in better and more effective services, reduction in bureaucracy and the avoidance of costly mistakes.

Going forward our society has many challenges to overcome. The political and societal upheavals are far from finished and whatever the outcome of Brexit the impacts will be felt for generations.

Regardless of the statements claiming the end of austerity, the pressure on District and County budgets will not reduce in the foreseeable future. Council budgets are unlikely to increase significantly, and the pressure to fund social care will take an ever-larger percentage of the available funding.

As a result, more and more responsibility will lie with local communities to protect, provide and improve where they live and the services on offer.

For this reason, I would like to propose six core areas that I believe the Parish Council must focus its efforts on during the next four year period.

- Sustainable planning that protects and directly benefits both the current and the future residents of Romsley.
- Safe and effective roads supported by efficient transport.
- Strengthened in-community provisions for health, educational and wellbeing.
- The protection and enhancement of our natural environment.
- Improving our civic amenities to make Romsley a better place to live.
- Maintaining a strong, active community that emphasises respect, tolerance and civility.

If accepted by the council, I would propose that in the coming months we develop a clear and transparent plan for residents and stakeholders that describes our ambitions for each of these areas during the next four years.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to the many people across the Council and the wider community who work tirelessly to make Romsley better for everyone.

I want to offer my thanks to the many community groups and volunteers such as the Guides, Scouts, pre-school groups, Art and History Society who give up their time to benefit their fellow residents. I would also like to thank the Friends of Romsley for their efforts to improve our community.

Despite the challenges we face from the tiers of Government above us we are fortunate to have the active support of our County Councillor and District Councillors and I would especially like to thank Karen May and Margaret Sherrey for their interest and support towards our community and its residents.

I would like to thank Ruth Mullett, the Council Clerk, for her advice and efforts throughout the year and I would also like to thank the members of the Parish Council for their active involvement and commitment.

Finally, I would like to offer since thanks to the departing councillors Louise Bestwick and Derek Tilt for all their hard work on behalf of Romsley during the past years.

Richard Arrowsmith
Chairperson
Romsley Parish Council

3. **TO RECEIVE REPORT OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE**

This has been a very challenging year for Worcestershire County Council. We started looking at a budget shortfall of £1.8m, this we are relieved to report has reduced to £2.8m. 70% of our county council budget is spent on 4% of our population, it is right and proper that we look after the most vulnerable in our communities, the young and the old but this does mean that we as a county council have to look closely at how we deliver our services.

We will now take you through some of the headlines from this year:-

Worcestershire has been successful in its bid for government funding to test and explore 5G connectivity. 5G is the next generation of mobile technology. When 5G becomes available in the UK, it is expected to have a profound impact on the way people live their lives. As many as 1.4 billion 5G connections are predicted by 2025, it is fantastic that Worcestershire is leading the way in this new technology.

The Worcestershire 5G Consortium, led by Worcestershire County Council and the LEP Board launched the first ever British 5G factory trials at the Worcester Bosch factory in the last month.

Electric trains were launched in Bromsgrove on 29th July, there are now up to five trains per hour travelling to and from Birmingham during peak times and between two and four during off-peak.

You may recall that Worcestershire County Council Cabinet approved recommendations for the development of a wholly owned council company as the alternative delivery model to deliver children's social care. The company is "Worcestershire Children First".

The authority is making significant improvements in its delivery of children's services and this has been recognised in the latest monitoring visits by OFSPED. For the new school term in September 2018, 91.4% of young people in Worcestershire were offered a place at their first choice secondary school. For primary school, 92.5% were given a place at their first choice school.

The NHS celebrated its 70th birthday this year and so too did our adult social care provision. A 70th birthday card signed by members at County Hall was handed over to the Health Secretary in December by Cllr. Hardman Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Richard Keble, the Assistant Director of Adult Social Services. The aim of the trip was to highlight that more needs to be done by Central Government to better fund adult social care in Worcestershire and across the country. Worcestershire County Council was crowned Council of the Year at the West Midlands Energy Efficiency Awards. Through the implementation of a 'spend to save' scheme and installing energy efficiency measures, the County Council reduced gas and electricity cost for their corporate sites by £125.00 compared to the previous year.

Summer resident shows were held across the county. These annual roadshows give councillors and officers the opportunity to meet and speak with residents, answer questions and raise awareness of the services that the council provides. We will provide the Clerk to the Parish Council with a list of this year's roadshow dates when it is published. Your views are most important.

Libraries within our County Council divisional area remain a priority to us both. We will continue to lobby hard on maintaining the current provision. We believe very strongly that libraries are about far more than just books, they offer the opportunity for people to interact and connect with the wider community.

Finally we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their continued support.

Cllr. Karen May
County Councillor, Worcestershire

4. **TO RECEIVE REPORT OF THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIVE**
 - Nothing to report
5. **TO REVIEW ANY ITEMS OF PAROCHIAL INTEREST**
 - Nothing to report
6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – Monday 10th June 2019, at 7.00pm to be held at St Kenelms Primary School