

Chair's Statement to Annual Parish Meeting

11th of April 2024.

Precept

I will commence this report by commenting on the matter of the increase in the Precept. A small number of parishioners raised queries on this subject via the medium of Facebook. I would advise parishioners that should you have queries relating to matters in the Parish the way to contact the Parish Council is either by email to the Clerk, or via the parish council website.

The process that the PC are obliged to undertake is set out by Local Government Finance Act 1992, s49A. This process and guidance were strictly followed, and Worcestershire CALC (our advisory body) confirmed that we had conformed with lawful requirements.

A more detailed explanation is available for perusal this evening, but in principle,

The Precept was on the agenda and advertised as such for November 2023, PC web site, notice board and Parish magazine.

The precept was advertised in the November / December and January parish magazine.

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The precept was discussed agreed and minuted at the meeting in January 2024

The Precept decision was published on the PC web site, notice board and Parish magazine.

Flooding

The increased levels of rainfall mean that flooding we have lived with over the years is now causing more severe problems.

A report summarising the work that the PC are undertaking in association with the CC, RBC and NWWM, is available to you to peruse this evening. Hopefully, the proposed works will at least, alleviate the problem.

We have a new lengthsman Chris who is very conscientious and has been out when the floods have been particularly bad in Feckenham trying to clear the drains.

Bimonthly meetings are now being held with the CC, RBC, NWWM and the PC to carry this and other highway matters forward.

Proposed Battery Station applications off Astwood Lane

The PC have been strongly objecting to planning applications for the battery storage of power in some two hundred metal containers on the entrance to the village.

Meetings with the chief fire Officer and National Grid have proved most useful and informative. In fact, because of our lobbying and new legislation the requirements of the Fire Department have been significantly tightened up.

Unfortunately, parishioners did not create a substantial number of objections to the planning application.

Do not be fooled the storage of energy in Lithium batteries in metal storage containers is not "GREEN" technology. It does however create a significant risk to health and safety in the Parish.

At the time of writing there are no further updates relating to progress of these applications

Planning

The PC is dealing with many issues with the planning team at Redditch in the hope illegal applications may reduce, and the view that "I don't need planning consent, I'll do it as the planners will never ask me to remove it," can be eradicated.

Highways

As parishioners were unhappy with, they were not able to join community speed watch it was agreed a Highways group would be formed. Some excellent suggestions have been made which the PC are chipping away to achieve.

These include speed restriction and pedestrian safety, at the time of writing costed at £70K.

The PC spent considerable time working on applications for grants for highways along with the Highways working party of volunteers. We were successful despite competition with a grant for two new VAS machines which have already been ordered.

The white gates at each entrance will also be replaced thanks to divisional funds from County Councillors. It is hoped these two new measures will be effective.

Feckenham in Bloom

Feckenham in Bloom another working party secured £2700 in grants. In addition to planting schemes around the village, there will soon be a bench at the top of the recreation grounds thanks to a grant from Feckenham Charity. Another mission will be to improve the look of the path from the square to the church gates thanks to a grant from Redditch Renew.

Resignation

The PC currently has a vacancy due to Councillor Cary resigning. The PC would like to thank him for his work since 2015.

Alan Smith,

Chair of Feckenham Parish Council

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