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# Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council

Council Meeting, September 2019

## Report from the Clerk

### 1. ***We Don't Buy Crime Smartwater initiative***

- 1.1 Following Council's approval of joining this scheme, and funding up to £2000 towards provision of Smartwater packs to all parish households, an application has been made to the Police and Crime Commissioner, and accepted. There are 288 known residences in the Group Parish to receive a Smartwater kit (at the special price of £8.90 plus VAT). The PCC will fund 25% of these, leaving the Parish Council to fund the other 75% (216 x £8.90 = £1992.40). These will then be distributed free-of-charge to residents, and once 70% of the kits are registered, the PCC will designate the parishes a "WDBC area" and provide signage for this, to the value of £681.60. The 70% take-up has to be reached by 31 March 2020.
- 1.2 The Clerk has discussed the publicity and launch of the initiative with the PCC WDBC liaison officer, and a proposal has been agreed for distribution of the Smartwater kits. The initiative would be launched in the week of 11 November 2019, with events in the two village halls at which residents are invited to come and collect their kit and have this registered on-line with the police. The WDBC liaison officer would be present to assist with this. The events are scheduled for 4pm to 7pm on Wednesday 13 (Stoke Prior) and Thursday 14 November (Risbury). This timing is to allow residents to come early before dark if they wish, and the end time could be extended if there are queues to collect and register the kits. Following these events, remaining households would be covered by door-to-door visits by volunteers delivering the kits, based on the areas and list of volunteers used for the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Volunteers would require some briefing/training in the simple process, which includes downloading an app onto a mobile device to record the registration of the kit (the data can be uploaded to the database later when an internet connection is available). Kits could also be made available at other community events over later weeks. The scheme and these arrangements would be publicised to residents extensively before November, using all available means.
- 1.3 Council is asked to consider and approve the above arrangements for the launch and continuation of the initiative.

### 2. **Accident at Humber Close, and petition concerning road safety on the A44 at Steens Bridge**

- 2.1 There have been several serious accidents on the A44 at Steens Bridge in recent years, often associated with excess speed and often with dangerous overtaking outside Humber Close. In 2017 the Parish Council successfully lobbied Herefordshire Council to extend the double-white no-overtaking lines, and in 2018 also succeeded in extending the 50mph speed limit both eastwards and westwards (this Order has been publicised but not yet formally made).
- 2.2 The latest serious accident occurred in the early evening of Friday 23 August 2019: a vehicle attempted to overtake across the white lines, and to avoid oncoming traffic it crossed the entrance to Humber Close and crashed into the fence and a telephone pole, finishing

upside-down near the noticeboard. Emergency services were called by residents: the driver was apparently charged with dangerous driving. The vehicle crashed at speed into an area of ground which is often played on by children from Humber Close. The Clerk inspected the scene later that evening and has photographs taken by residents shortly after the accident.

- 2.3 This incident has prompted residents of Steens Bridge to gather a petition, which will be tabled at the Council meeting. It is reported that at least 106 signatures have been obtained to this petition. The petition reads: *"We, the undersigned residents and users of the A44/Humber Close Junction, Herefordshire HR6 present this petition to formally request the installation of appropriate traffic calming procedures on or near this junction as traffic calming will increase the safety of the residents and other road users at this junction. This is following the most recent accident Friday 23 August 2019 at 5.00pm that involved an overtaking car that ended up upside down in the children's play area in Humber Close. There have been a number of near misses at this junction, almost a daily occurrence and even on Tuesday 23 August at 7.20pm 2 witnesses saw a car over taking at this junction at speed narrowly missing a car coming from the opposite direction."*
- 2.4 The petition is accompanied by comments from some signatories about previous incidents, and suggestions for measures such as barriers to protect the children's play area and a speed-indicator device. The petition is made initially to the Parish Council, although of course responsibility for highways safety rests with the Highways Authority, Herefordshire Council. Council is asked to consider this petition and its forwarding to the Highways Authority with any comments Council wishes to make.

### **3. Appointment of Parish Paths Officers**

- 3.1 Since the retirement of the previous Parish Paths Officer in 2017, the Clerk has been acting in this capacity as no volunteer came forward to fill this role. Several people volunteered to act as deputies, however, and one in particular makes regular reports about bridleways including a comprehensive Annual Report. The Clerk has surveyed nearly all the PROWs and made detailed maps of each, and has been working through the list of defects to remedy these (liaising with landowners where necessary, or ordering work through the Lengthsman or Balfour Beatty).
- 3.2 However, with other commitments, the Clerk is unable to walk regularly all of the PROWs to check on defects, and has again appealed for volunteers to take on the Parish Paths Officer role. Two volunteers have come forward from Stoke Prior, and following discussions with these people, the Clerk proposes that one of them, Vicky Fraser, be designated as Footpaths Officer for Ford & Stoke Prior Parish, and the other, Chris Blum, as a deputy reporting to her (there is already another deputy appointed, Tim Yair). No person has yet come forward for Humber Parish, so the Clerk would remain in the role of Footpaths Officer for the time being, with Margaret Brown as a deputy. Bridleways are already reported on directly to the Clerk by Iain Cholerton, who would be designated Bridleways Officer. The Officers would be responsible for walking/riding all of the PROWs at least twice a year and reporting any defects to the Clerk, who will liaise with landowners or Balfour Beatty or arrange remedial work with the Lengthsman.

### **4. Correspondence**

#### **4.1 Normans Lane traffic**

Two residents of Normans Lane have written to the Clerk concerning the state of this lane, the speed of some traffic on the lane, and responsibility for its upkeep. The Clerk has

confirmed that as an unregistered and unadopted lane, Herefordshire Council take no responsibility for it, except that they will maintain it to bridleway status (despite its omission from the Definitive Map). In practice, no work is actually done by Herefordshire Council. Following Herefordshire Council's proposal to designate Normans Lane as a Restricted Byway, this will mean there is a legal responsibility on them as the Highways Authority to maintain the surface as such, but this will not be to a standard for motor vehicles.

One of the residents has written to ask the Council to discuss the issues around use of Norman's Lane, noting that *"no-one has accepted ownership of the lane and Herefordshire Council will only maintain it to bridleway status. Therefore all owners of vehicles using the lane share the responsibility to maintain it for their own use or access and must respect all users from a safety point of view including pedestrians and horse riders. This situation will remain exactly the same when Normans Lane is added to the definitive map as a 'Restricted Byway'. Complete Utilities are currently carrying out repairs following their recent Broadband related work and therefore future maintenance required for vehicles will be down only to users of the lane."*

#### 4.2 Volka Bridge repairs

Council noted earlier this year that Herefordshire Council had written to adjacent landowners about repairs needed to the handrails on the Volka Bridge (over which footpath SP6 passes), stating that it was their responsibility. A nearby resident has made several complaints both to the Clerk and to Herefordshire Council about the dangerous state of the handrails. The Clerk contacted Herefordshire Council to suggest a site-meeting with landowners to discuss the issue of responsibility, but they have responded that:

*"..the Council does not consider Volka Bridge to be a bridge which is maintainable at public expense. It was clearly set out in the Enclosure Award for Volka Common Meadow, Stoke Prior dated January 1858 as a private bridge for the use of the landowners and maintainable by the same. A letter from the County Surveyor from 1958 confirms the position at the time that it was considered to be a privately owned bridge. The Authority gave a contribution of less than 10% towards the cost of repairs at the time as a gesture for the right of way. I wrote to all the affected landowners in March of this year, to date I have not received any response which rather suggests that they are not willing to take on the responsibility of it. With this in mind I would be grateful if the Parish Council could contact the landowners and try to persuade them to maintain their asset. If any member of the public were to hurt themselves as a consequence of the broken handrails in the meantime I consider it to be the landowners' liability and have advised them of this."*

#### 4.3 Dog noise in Stoke Prior

A resident in Stoke Prior contacted the Clerk twice in recent months concerning the nuisance of dogs barking at all hours from a property. At the suggestion of the resident, an article was placed in the Parish Pump, but the situation has not improved. The Clerk has advised the resident that to take the matter further with Environmental Health, information is needed as to the exact location of the dog or dogs.

#### 4.4 30mph speed limit in Stoke Prior

A resident in Stoke Prior contacted the Clerk recently to ask that the 30mph speed limit from Stoke Prior towards Leominster be extended beyond Wheelbarrow Castle and Prior Cottage, because of children living in the houses between there and the village.

## **5. Lengthsman Work**

- 5.1 £380 has been spent so far on minor highways maintenance, including clearing drain tops and some ditches, and strimming around signs, benches and salt-grit bins. £1920 remains in the budget for 2019-20.
- 5.2 £307.58 has been spent so far on PROW maintenance, including repairing gates and strimming. £192.42 remains in the budget for 2019-20.

## **6. Public Access Defibrillator and phone kiosk**

- 6.1 A new battery and pads have been obtained and fitted to the public access defibrillator outside Risbury Village Hall at a cost of £61.50 ex VAT.
- 6.2 A working party commenced refurbishment of the phone kiosk outside Risbury Village Hall on 31 August, with work still continuing. The exterior has been completed, with a further working party on the weekend of 14 September to complete refurbishment of the interior. Materials, including paints, glazing and signage has cost £194.33 ex VAT.

## **7. War Memorial Working Group proposals**

- 7.1 A second site meeting of some members of the Working Group was held on 14 August to discuss detailed plans for the design and siting of the memorial on the traffic roundabout in Stoke Prior. Draft sketch plans have been circulated to the group's members, and enquiries are being made concerning a Highways licence. Once detailed drawings from a stonemason have been received, a costed proposal will be prepared for Council.

Philip Brown

Clerk to the Council

12 September 2019