

Minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 29th March 2021

Following the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020 (c.7), Councils were unable to meet in person during the COVID emergency. This meeting was therefore held via a Zoom link, with Councillors connecting remotely. The meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Cllr S Ward (Chairman) Cllr J Roberts (Vice Chairman)
Cllr M Barnes Cllr C Blackmore
Cllr P Godwin Cllr P Mackenzie
Cllr E MacTiernan Cllr E Phennah
Cllr G Shelton (from: C/51/21) Cllr S Terry
Cllr T Treacy

In Attendance: Mrs C Woodward, Clerk of the Council
Tony Davies, Ashchurch Rural PC
David Garnett, Ashchurch Rural PC

Cllr Ward advised that the meeting was being recorded.

C/75/21 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence had been received.

C/76/21 Declarations of Interest

Cllr MacTiernan declared her interest as she was a Tewkesbury Borough Councillor and stood on the Garden Town Working Group and Planning Committee. Cllr Godwin declared her interest as she was a Tewkesbury Borough Councillor and stood on the Garden Town Working Group. Cllr MacTiernan pointed out that the Garden Town Working Group was not a decision-making forum. No further declarations of interest were made as required by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Parish Council on 11th July 2012 (Minute Ref C/159/12), including paragraph 12(2).

C/77/21 Parish Council Association

Northway Parish Council had previously considered being part of a Parish Council association/action group along with Ashchurch Rural, Bredon and other parish councils with the aim of fighting the Garden Town process (Min Ref: C/244/20 refers). Representatives from Ashchurch Rural Parish Council were in attendance to provide further details relating to this.

Mr Davies explained that he had been attending the Garden Town consultation meetings along with members of Northway Parish Council and Bredon Parish Council, he had also been in correspondence with Jonathan Dibble, Programme Director of the Garden Town project, and these emails had been shared with neighbouring parish councils. Following discussions with Bredon Parish Council, the idea arose for forming of an 'association' so that the collective strength of the parishes could be combined. Ultimately, Mr Davies explained, the parishes did not feel that they were being listened to, or understood, and the last Garden Town meeting was a perfect example of this.

Mr Davies went on to add that all of the neighbouring parishes, including Wychavon, would be adversely affected by the Garden Town and its implications – 10,000 homes would equate to approx. 22,000 residents – doubling the size of the population of Tewkesbury and the surrounding districts. The amount of people in these neighbouring parishes amounted to around 20,000 which was significant to make local MP's sit up and think.

From a South Worcestershire point of view, there were a number of Wychavon parish councils that were keen to get involved and participate in an action group; Bredon, Kemerton, Overbury, possibly Beckford, and others as far as Eckington, because they all knew they would be affected. The extra housing would create more traffic which would cause rat runs through the villages in Worcestershire, as well as Northway which already had a huge number of vehicles travelling through it.

Mr Davies explained how an action group would work. Firstly, it was up to each parish council whether or not it wanted to be associated with the group. It was up to members of the group to decide how it would move forward (i.e. terms of reference, objectives, etc.) and a meeting would have to take place to determine these things. He also pointed out that, since some parish councils were smaller than others, they may not want to have much of an active role in the group whilst still wanting to be a part of it and so it was up to each council to decide how involved it wanted to be and who would represent it within the association.

With regard to funding, Mr Davies said that Ashchurch Rural Parish Council had set aside some funds to pay for planning consultants to fight the Garden Town application, however, there was the option of crowd funding and, perhaps, some Councils could contribute a nominal amount to start things off. He explained that the group would then look to put someone on PR to publicise the association so that residents were aware of what it was trying to achieve. Looking at Facebook comments relating to development of the bridge, there were a lot of angry residents who would surely chip in something towards the cause, there might also be some who could donate their skills or professional expertise. There had already been a planning expert and a lawyer get in touch to offer their services. The group would also need a Clerk to organise it, act as RFO and keep things under control. There were a lot of possibilities, however, it would be for the collective of the group – not just any one Council - to decide how to move forwards.

Cllr MacTiernan asked what the group would aim to achieve. Mr Davies felt that it would be good if they could stop the Garden Town from progressing. The reality was, this might not be possible as there was already too much behind it, however, perhaps there was some way that they could help shape it. The areas that were going to be impacted deserved to be respected and protected. Northway had grown immensely over the years and would probably have been joined up with Newtown if it were not for the motorway – Mr Davies felt it was important to stop the same thing happening everywhere else. If they could not stop the Garden Town, they must try and do what they could to make it as acceptable as possible for the residents.

Cllr Ward agreed that there had been a lack of communication between the Borough Council and parish councils at the Garden Town consultation meetings, it felt like they were only being included as part of a tick-box exercise.

Mr Davies pointed out that the Garden Town application had been full of untruths, for example, it claimed there were 3,000 houses in Ashchurch which was totally inaccurate, so a false picture had been, and was still being, painted.

Cllr Ward expressed his concern about the number of extra vehicles that would be using the A46 with no firm plans in place for a relief road.

Cllr Mackenzie asked what could be done to ensure something was done about the infrastructure in the area (Ashchurch, Bredon, Northway, etc.). Cllr Ward hoped that conversations were taking place between Tewkesbury Borough Council and Highways England about working together on this. Highways England had made it quite clear that they did not intend to put another M5 junction in south of junction 9 unless junction 9 would then be closed. Cllr MacTiernan did not believe this to be the case, she also pointed out that the 3,000 Ashchurch houses referred to in the application related to the proposal to build North of the MOD and North of Northway.

Cllr MacTiernan went on to explain that most of these issues had stemmed from the Regional Spatial Strategy, which she had been involved with many years before. Her issue was, if there was going to be development, it should be controlled, which was the object of the Garden Town. However, after the Ashchurch/Northway bridge had been built there would be a situation where land was opened up for development and there would be no way of enforcing Garden Town principals on developers when the Garden Town would still be many years away. With this in mind, she felt that if the area had to have more

development she would rather not see more of the same. When it came to the Ashchurch/Northway bridge application she had tried to remind them that it was being considered on its own merits, not what might happen in the future. When construction began she imagined an absolute nightmare with large HGV vehicles travelling over the Hardwick Bank Road motorway bridge gain access to the site. This would involve very large vehicles having to go onto the opposite side of the road to enable them to turn onto the construction side, this was something she had raised with Atkins.

Cllr Roberts felt that, although the bridge development had been approved, negotiations would be stronger if coming from a group of councils, rather than each parish individually, which made the idea of an association seem a good way going forward.

Mr Davies pointed out that it was not actually a bridge that had been approved for development but a platform and two posts. He believed they had not brought the roads forward as it could not be agreed with landowners where they would go. The Garden Town prospectus itself said 800+ houses could not be built without a relief road. During the Garden Town meeting it had been let slip that the relief road might go north of Fiddington village or South of Fiddington village. He did not believe Highways England would close junction 9, nor would they sanction a new junction whilst this was all still a concept. As such, there was no solution, and he did not see how they could build a southern relief road before phase one was due to commence as it would take a lot of investment and agreement with landowners.

Cllr MacTiernan explained that the reason the roads for the bridge had not been brought forward yet was because the Borough Council did not have enough money for their construction, the Borough was hoping that they could eventually be funded by developer contributions – which may or may not happen. Regarding infrastructure, Cllr MacTiernan felt that Northway would suffer badly because there was no way that any infrastructure could be put in place before construction work was set to begin. She went on to say that, as a concept, a Garden Town was a good concept as there was control. The problem was the Garden Town would not come into being before 2031, meanwhile, the bridge would be built, the haul roads would be built – the land would be opened up for developers who would build something completely different to the Garden Town principles.

Cllr MacTiernan added that, as she understood, Highways England had changed its opinion on the need to remove junction 9 if adding a new junction, however, everything changed on a daily basis. She said that she did now know what could be achieved, even as a large group of councils and she also doubted that local MP's would support the cause.

Mr Garnett felt that the main issue was in that Tewkesbury Borough Council did not have its five-year housing supply and, as long as they were in that situation, they were vulnerable to developers coming in. One of the main impacts of an association, he felt, would be in naming and shaming elected representatives and affecting how residents voted.

Cllr Roberts said that, although he fully accepted Cllr MacTiernan's concern that it would not make a difference, however, he wanted to make a point that doing something like this could not make any less of an impact than not doing it.

Cllr MacTiernan agreed with Mr Garnett about the five-year housing supply being a huge issue, the Garden Town would not help this as it was too far into the future which was extremely frustrating. Regarding the elections, County Council elections were in May but the Borough ones were not for another two years. She did not yet know if she would re-stand when the time came but, until then, she had a responsibility to do her best for Northway. She re-iterated that she did not know what an association of parish councils could achieve.

Mr Davies said it staggered him that Mitton was considered Phase 0 and the traffic implications of this on Northway were horrendous. He said that, although he heard Cllr MacTiernan's comments and knew there was the chance that the association might not make a difference, they would certainly try.

Cllr MacTiernan asked Mr Davies if Tewkesbury Town Council had been approached, he said that they had not yet been. Mr Davies explained that, although it he believed it was important to get the neighbouring

NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

C/77/21 **Parish Council Association** (continued)

parishes involved, Northway and Ashchurch were the parishes that would be directly affected as they would be part of the Garden Town. The other areas that he thought might like to get involved (aside from Northway, Ashchurch and Bredon) were – Kemerton, Beckford, Overbury, Tewkesbury Town, Wheatpieces, Teddington and Alstone, Oxenton and possibly Stoke Orchard, Mr Davies said that he had put together a draft letter to send to these parishes inviting them to be a part of the association. Although he did not know if it would go anywhere or have any success in changing things, he felt it was important to try.

Cllr Phennah said he was in favour of the parishes banding together and therefore, PROPOSED that Northway Parish Council joined with the association.

Cllr MacTiernan explained that she was not against the association, she was in a difficult situation being on the Borough Council and so would not be directly involved with it. She did have concerns about any costs to the parish and, as a point of order, felt that if there was a discussion on Cllr Phennah's proposal, Mr Davies and Mr Garnett should be asked to leave the meeting.

Mr Davies thanked the Council for taking the time to listen.

8.00pm – Mr Davies and Mr Garnett left the meeting.

Cllr Ward said that he saw pros and cons in Northway getting involved in an association. His biggest concern was the developments that would come before the Garden Town, without Garden Town principles, but included in the final numbers.

Cllr Ward asked whether there was a seconder vote for Cllr Phennah's proposal. Cllr Mackenzie SECONDED.

Cllr MacTiernan raised the point that there had been no mention of how much money the Parish Council might be expected to contribute - she could not imagine crowdfunding would be very successful in Northway. Cllr Ward said that, during previous discussions, Ashchurch Rural had been made aware that any costs would need to be approved at a Council meeting. Discussions were still at an early stage and it was unknown what other parishes would be getting involved, Northway also had the option to pull out of the association at any time. Cllr Ward reminded Members that there was a proposal on the table.

Cllr Terry asked for clarification as to whether the vote was for Northway Parish Council to take an active or supportive role in the association. Cllr Phennah clarified that his proposal was for the Council to join the association and explore the opportunities with a mind to taking it forward.

The Clerk reminded members that the Council had already agreed, in principle, to progress being part of an association and the purpose of the meeting was to ask questions. Once it had been established which parishes wanted to get involved, the association would put together its terms of reference, if Northway Parish Council decided, at that point, that it did not agree with the principles of the group it could choose to step away from it.

Cllr Blackmore said she thought the purpose of the meeting was to agree whether or not Northway Parish Council should put its name to the letter that Ashchurch Rural was sending to other parishes. It was noted that the agenda item allowed the Council to consider progressing with the association as well as adding its signature to the letter.

Cllr Phennah re-clarified that the proposal he had made was for the Council to join with the association and actively progress.

FOR:	Cllr Phennah	Cllr Mackenzie
	Cllr Barnes	Cllr Blackmore
	Cllr Roberts	Cllr Shelton
	Cllr Terry	Cllr Treacy
	Cllr Ward	

ABSTENTIONS:	Cllr Godwin	Cllr MacTiernan
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NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

C/77/21 Parish Council Association (continued)

Cllr Ward PROPOSED that the Council was agreeable to having its name on the letter that was being sent to neighbouring parishes, subject to review of the final content.

FOR:

Cllr Barnes	Cllr Blackmore
Cllr Mackenzie	Cllr Phennah
Cllr Roberts	Cllr Shelton
Cllr Terry	Cllr Treacy
Cllr Ward	

ABSTENTIONS: Cllr Godwin Cllr MacTiernan

Cllr Ward thanked Cllr MacTiernan for her honest views and she was again thanked for her proactive stance at the Tewkesbury Borough Council Planning Committee meeting where she spoke against approving the bridge. Cllr MacTiernan wanted it noted that John Evets, the Planning Committee Chairman at the Borough Council, was an extremely good Chairman.

C/78/21 Correspondence Received After 23rd March 2021

- i. **Young Gloucestershire** – The Clerk advised that Young Gloucestershire would be holding sessions at Northway Playing Field over the easter half-term. The Football Club had agreed to allow use of the toilets in the Changing Rooms and Young Gloucestershire had assured that children entering the building would be supervised and it would be locked between uses. The sessions were being funded by Gloucestershire County Council and, as it was a youth activity, covid rules allowed mixing as a group outdoors. Food was being provided for children who were entitled to free school meals, but further information was being awaited with regards to this. Young Gloucestershire had also confirmed, in writing, that any food wrappers or rubbish would be taken away with them.

Cllr Ward also mentioned that the Football Club would be using the building a lot more over the coming weeks.

- ii. **Crime** – Cllr Terry had heard reports of tyres being slashed in Oak Drive. Cllr Ward added that there had also been youths spotted on the roof of the Village Hall and so CCTV was being assessed.

Cllr MacTiernan mentioned that the Council might soon have to take on maintenance of the hedge at the entrance to the Playing Field (due to a property being sold). The Clerk advised that if the new residents wanted to hand over the land to the Parish Council they would need to contact the Council directly.

- iii. **Gloucestershire County Council** – Cllr Roberts mentioned that Gloucestershire County Council had approved a further £5 million to progress the M5 Junction 9 and A46 Transport Scheme.

As there was no other business the meeting concluded at 8.20 p.m.