

Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council, held at Sutton St. Nicholas Village Hall, Bayley Way, Sutton St. Nicholas, Hereford HR1 3SZ on Monday 3rd June 2024 at 7.15 pm. (no SPC/TF/2048)

Cllr Ron Gow
Cllr Richard Andrews
Cllr Ann Burke
Cllr Sharron Haworth
Cllr Ian Nicholas

In attendance

Tony Ford – Parish Clerk

Members of the Public. 2

1. Apologies

All Councillors were present.

2. Written requests for Dispensations

With reference to Agenda item Dispensation was given to Cllr Ron Gow, Cllr Ann Burke and Cllr Ian Nicholas to discuss the matter.

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of interest by members in respect of items on the agenda.

Councillor	Y e s	N o	Agenda Item		DPI or NPI
Cllr Ron Gow	√		9.1.3	Village Hall Trustee	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest
Cllr Richard Andrews		√			
Cllr Ann Burke	√		9.1.3	Village Hall Trustee	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest
Cllr Sharron Haworth		√			
Cllr Ian Nicholas	√		9.1.3	Volunteer - Treasurer	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

4. Receive approve and sign the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council (no SPC/TF/2047) held on Monday 20th May 2024

The minutes were signed by Councillor Ron Gow as a true record of the meeting.

5. Questions /Issues, from members of the public present

5.1 Ward Councillors Report

The Parish Council noted the Ward Councillors report (Appendix1 refers)

5.2 Questions from other members of the public

There were no questions from the public.

6. Traffic Plan

The Clerk updated the Parish Council on the outcome of the meeting with Gregg Speller (S106 Senior Projects Manager)- Herefordshire Council.

Herefordshire Council was happy with phase 1 subject to the following changes

- Remove surface dressing with red chipping

Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council

- The Speed Indicator would have to be located at the four entrances to the village
- Were width allowed Villages Gates to have planters

Progressing the Job- there were only two options as the Parish Council would not be allowed to carry out the work using their own contractor.

- Using the Community Commission Model, which would mean delivery through Balfour Beatty. or
- Waiting and use the Section 106 team with Gregg Spiller as Project Manager- at no cost to the Parish Council. This would be in early 2025.

The Parish Council was also informed that the Design Engineer would ensure that all safety/legal were met.

Having considered the matter. the Clerk was tasked with getting clarification from Herefordshire Council if one Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) could cover phase 2 and 3 of the plan with regards to Quiet Lanes and Home Zones it was agreed that a description of both would be added to the plan.

It was agreed that the updated Traffic Plan would be considered by the Parish Council at its next meeting before for consultation.

7. Traffic Regulation Order - Proposed Extension to the Existing 30MPH speed limit on C1125

Having considered the matter as a statutory consultee, the Parish Council resolved to support it.

Action Clerk to inform ADL of the Parish Councils decision.

8. Report from the Clerk on Actions from the last meeting.

There were eleven actions requiring completion, two were completed, eight were work in progress and one were closed. (Appendix 2 refers) – Noted.

9. Financial Report

- 9.1 Invoices for payment

Ref	Payee	Amount £	VAT	
1	Richard Morgan	363.00	N/a	Lengthsman/grass cutting invoice nos. 1926,1938,1942,1948,1947
2	Playdale Playgrounds Ltd	1510.69	251.78	29-05-24 (55623) Sutton Playground Equipment Repairs
3	Sutton St. Nicholas Village Hall	4,000.00	N/a	Donation

Authorised and cheques signed

- 9.2 Receipts - Nil
- 9.3 Confirmation of Balances as of 03-06-24 -£34,404.35 (Appendix 3 refers)

10. Internal Audit Report 2023/24

The Parish Council considered and noted the Internal Audit Report 2023/24 (Appendix 4 refers)

11. Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

Having considered the Annual Governance statement the Parish Council agreed yes to 1 to 8 and not applicable for 9 and that the Chairman and Clerk should sign the statement. (Appendix 5 refers)

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12. Section 2 Accounting Statement 2023/24

The Parish Council considered and approved the statement, and that the Chairman should sign it. (Appendix 6 refers)

Action- Clerk to submit relevant documentation to the External Auditors by the deadline

Action – Clerk to put on the Parish Council website the required documentation by the deadline.

13. Complaints Policy

Having completed its review, the Parish Council approved its Complaints Policy (Appendix 7 refers)

14. Dog poo

The Parish Council was informed that a number of complaints had been received regarding irresponsible dog owners not picking up their dog's poo, and using private gardens as dog toilets, the Parish Council tasked the Clerk to see what general guidance was available from leading dog charities and report back to the next meeting

15. Matters relayed to the Clerk for the Agenda of the next meeting.

- Traffic Plan
- Electricity Sub-station on Willow Rise/Millway Open Space.

16. Items for Information

Items for information noted.

17. Confirmation of the date, time, and venue of the next meeting,

Parish Council Monday 1st July 2024 at 7.15pm at Sutton St. Nicholas Village Hall.

18. Clerks' salary

The Parish Council approved the Clerks salary and authorised Cllr Ron Gow to sign the payments schedule.

Ward Report May 2024

Unfortunately the Spring sunshine has turned back to rain and although the forecast for the week ahead looks to be improving nothing is guaranteed so please do be careful when travelling as heavy showers often lead to slippery road surfaces. Excess rain also leads to muddy fields and with farmers needing to enter and exit fields at the moment it is not uncommon to see mud on the roads. The vast majority of farmers are very diligent and clear up any mud very quickly but where you do spot a problem please let me or the locality steward know so signage can be arranged.

The recent warm and wet weather has led to a surge in growth on the verges. This can cause visibility / safety issues at junctions and on narrow roads. The delay in cutting potentially dangerous junctions has been raised with Herefordshire Council / Balfour Beatty and if you are aware of any that haven't yet been cut then please do let me know. Equally Balfour Beatty have started the normal verge cutting programme and there is a list of verges which are not cut due to community wildflower planting, if you are aware of any which should be on that list and would like to check then please contact me as soon as possible so we can avoid any inadvertent cuts.

A new Public Rights of Way (PROW) scheme was due to be announced in May. I am pleased to confirm that details of this have been made available to all Parish councils via their Clerks – if you have been inadvertently missed off this list then please let me know and I will arrange for details to be sent to you. The scheme offers Parish councils the opportunity to apply for a fixed amount of funding to replace assets on PROW in their areas. The funding available for each asset is set at the rate Herefordshire Council would pay if they were to purchase the asset themselves. I would urge you to take up this funding opportunity as there is no guarantee it will be repeated but please do consult with the relevant landowner before applying so permission can be obtained for installation.

I have noticed that there has been an increase in pothole repairs over the last few weeks and although many areas require significantly more investment, it is a welcome step in the right direction. As always where you spot a repair completed by Balfour Beatty or a utility company that does not look to be of a sufficient standard please raise it with me and I will highlight it with the relevant team. Herefordshire Council does use its powers to force utility companies and Balfour Beatty to return and redo work where it does not meet the standards required however, if these issues are not flagged to them then they are unable to take action.

The third instalment of our additional funding to Parish councils (Aside from the increased Lengthsman Grant - £250k and the Prow Scheme - £250k) is the Local Drainage Fund - £445k. Expressions of interest were due in last month and I am told approximately 90 Parish councils registered their interest. Details of how to apply and the projects that can be funded will be published soon but please do not be concerned if your expression of interest has not been acknowledged. If you emailed the email address given in the initial invitation to express an interest (lengthsman@herefordshire.gov.uk) then you will have been included.

On a County level, you may be pleased to know that Herefordshire Council held its Annual Meeting last Friday and the current minority Conservative Administration retained control under our leader Cllr Jonathan Lester. The Chairman of Herefordshire Council remains Cllr Roger Phillips and the Vice-Chairperson is Cllr Steph Simmons.

Equally noteworthy was the publication of the Council's year end financials. When our administration took control of the council in May last year the predicted deficit was nearly £13.8m for this year and over £19 million for 24/25. I am pleased to say that through targeted action the deficit for 23/24 was reduced to £8.7m and a balanced budget set for the 24/25 financial year. We are delivering against this budget now and although I cannot provide exact figures at this stage all the signs point to our targets being met.

Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council

I would like to reassure residents and Councillors that although Government may grind to a halt throughout the election, Herefordshire Council is not subject to the same restrictions and will continue with business as usual. This includes the delivery of vital services, road investment and associated projects. Prior to the General Election and no matter who you choose to vote for, please do make sure you are registered and able to exercise your vote on 4th July.



At the Annual meeting of the council We agreed the Council's plan which sets out how we will work to increase prosperity, protect the environment and provide the services that people need.

The vision is:

Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do.

This falls in to four interconnected themes:

- **People** feeling healthy, safe and supported in their communities;
- **Place** - our local environment being protected and enhanced, supporting the right housing in the right place; helping to fund council phosphate mitigation measures to improve the health of our rivers;
- **Growth** - attracting inward investment, creating more jobs, enabling housing development and providing the right infrastructure to keep Herefordshire moving forward.
- **Transformation** - a council embracing best practice, delivering innovation through technology and demonstrating best value for money in the services we provide.

To deliver these outcomes we will focus on working with our residents, the voluntary, community and public sectors along with businesses; all of us have a vital role to play in Herefordshire's success.

We build of course on a strong foundation. Herefordshire is already a wonderful county and a great place to live. Better life expectancy, a thriving business base, entrepreneurialism and a growing educational sector are all factors underpinning the positive change we aspire to achieve for the county. The real impact of this is in delivery and working up the milestones and monitoring of progress will be critical.

Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council

Appendix 2

Status of Actions from last meeting 20-05-24

Meeting Ref	Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Reference	Action	Action Owner	Action Taken	Status
06/01	04/08/23	18	Annual Playground Inspection	Clerk to action improvements	Clerk		Work In Progress
06/02	06/11/23	11	Section 106 Monies – Lane Orchard Land South of Woodville Grove, HR1 3DL	Clerk to continue to see is grants are available	Clerk	Getting Quotes as part of submission	Work in progress
06/03	04/12/23	18	Clerks Salary – Pay Award 2023-24	Clerk to get clarification from HALC regarding the engagement of a payroll provider	Clerk	HALC has confirmed Good Practice/ Future Agenda item	Work In progress
06/04	19/03/24	16	Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC)	Clerk to consider and approve Councillor Training requests	Clerk		Work in progress
06/05	19/03/24		Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC)	Clerk to circulate training schedule to Councillors when received.	Clerk		Work in progress
06/06	02/04/24	5	Traffic Plan	Clerk to email the Chief Executive and the relevant Director at Herefordshire Council.	Clerk		Closed
06/07	02/04/24	8	Ward Councillors Report	The Clerk to submit an expression of interest when requested to do so.	Clerk		Work in progress
06/08	02/04/24	8	Ward Councillors Report	The Clerk liaise with the Lengthsman to develop a schedule of works relating to the Public Rights of Way for consideration by the Parish Council	Clerk		Work in progress
06/09	20/05-24	9	Traffic Plan	Clerk to confirm with Gregg Speller and send him the email addresses of the Working Group	Clerk		Completed
06/10	20/05-24	19	Sutton Walls	Clerk to inform Herefordshire Council.	Clerk		Completed

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Meeting Ref	Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Reference	Action	Action Owner	Action Taken	Status
06/11	20/05-24	20	Healthwatch Herefordshire	Clerk to put the Flyer on the Parish Council website.	Clerk		Work in progress

Completed	2
Work In progress	8
Closed	1
TOTAL	11

**Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council
Bank Reconciliation as at 03-06-24**

Opening 01/04/24	30,546.85
Receipts	16,750.00
	47,296.85
Expenditure	12,892.50
Balance	34,404.35

Bank balance **15/05/2024** 39,504.09

os cheques

1462	252.00	
1501	209.20	
1502	750.00	
1503	620.00	
1504	847.20	
1505	24.40	
1511	363.00	
1513	1,510.69	
1514	314.05	
1515	209.20	
		5,099.74

Balance as at 03-06-24 **34,404.35**

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council

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During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			✓
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

01/06/2024

02/06/2024

DD/MM/YYYY

HALC Internal Audit Services

AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

HALC Audit Services

Date

02/06/2024

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

03/06/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

03-06-24 (11)

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

Clerk

R. A. Forj

suttonstnicholasparishcouncil.gov.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	33,194	28,110	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	30,000	31,500	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	3,627	1,760	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	5,990	6,244	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	8,597	8,597	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	24,124	15,982	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	28,110	30,547	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	28,110	30,547	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	49,723	50,312	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	69,030	63,929	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

R.A. Ford

Date

21/05/2024

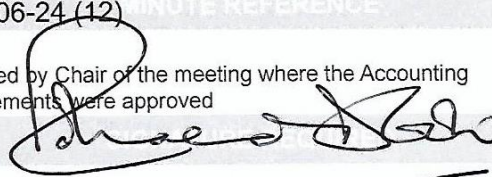
I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

03/06/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

03-06-24 (12)

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved



Complaints Procedure

1. This policy document sets out procedures for dealing with any complaints made about Sutton St Nicholas Parish Council's administration and procedures.
The conduct of Councillors is covered by the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 adopted by the Council on 15th May 2023. Complaints against policy decisions made by the Council shall be referred back to Council.
2. If a complaint about the Council's procedures or administration is notified orally to a Councillor or the Clerk, they should seek to satisfy the complaint fully. If that fails, the complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.
3. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk, he or she shall be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.
4. On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk or the Chairman (as the case may be) shall, *except where the complaint is about his/her own actions*, try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant within the existing policy of the Council, but shall not do so in respect of a complaint about the behaviour of the Clerk or a Councillor without notifying the person complained of and giving him/her an opportunity to comment on the manner in which it is intended to attempt to settle the complaint. Where the Clerk or Chairman receives a written complaint about his/her own actions, he/she shall immediately refer the complaint to the Council.
5. The Clerk or the Chairman shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
6. The Clerk or the Chairman shall bring any written complaint that has not been settled to the next meeting of the Council. The Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered, and the complainant shall be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint orally. (Unless such a matter may be related to Grievance, Disciplinary or Standards Board proceedings that are taking, or likely to take place when such a hearing may prejudice those hearings, when the complaint will have to be heard under Exempt Business to exclude any member of the public or the press or deferred on appropriate advice received).
7. The Council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which advice is necessary. The complaint shall be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.
8. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
9. As soon as may be practicable after the decision has been made, it and the nature of any action to be taken shall be communicated in writing to the complainant.
10. In the event of serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaints from a member of the public the Council shall consider taking legal advice before responding formally to the complainant [or] follow a course of action as outlined in **the council's policy for dealing with unreasonable complainant behaviour**.

Chairman Date

Considered and approved by the Parish Council on 3rd June 2024

Items For Information

- **NALC** - NALC newsletter 22-05-24
- **NALC** - Chief Executive's Bulletin 23-05-23
- **Balfour Beatty** - Locality briefing Weobley, Queenswood & Sutton Walls 23.05.24
- **NALC** - Chief Executive's Bulletin 30-05-23
- **PCC** - PCC newsletter - May 2024
- **Balfour Beatty** - Locality briefing Weobley, Queenswood & Sutton Walls 30.05.24
- **Balfour Beatty**- Herefordshire Street Works Report W/C 03.06.2024