

Milwich Action Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 11th October 2016 at Milwich Hall.

Persons Present

Paul Ritson (Chair)
Mark Burton
Philip Horton
Cllr. Hayley Walters
Cllr. Angela Elkin (PC Chair)
Cllr. Richard Hocknell

Apologies

Kevin Collier
Jennie Collier
Peter Anthony
Pat Wragg
Ruth Wearing

1. Opening comments

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and especially the three Parish Councillors. He thanked Phil Horton for hosting the meeting. The meeting was prompted by discussions of a Neighbourhood Plan for Milwich but it was also considered a good opportunity to review the Parish Plan and the future of MAC.

2. Apologies

Apologies have been received from Peter Anthony and Pat Wragg. Kevin and Jennie Collier have also apologised due to the very imminent arrival of their first baby. Ruth Wearing was also invited to attend due to her planning knowledge (and as a past member of MAC) but unfortunately had been unable to attend due to work commitments.

3. Review of Parish Plan Actions.

The Parish Plan was published in 2010. At that time a list of actions was produced and then subsequently monitored by the committee. Almost all of these actions have either been completed or, after further analysis, no action was considered possible. A short discussion took place regarding these, especially the possibility of a voluntary transport scheme. Richard Hocknell explained that there were some volunteers but there did not seem to be a need so no action was taken.

One of the outcomes of the Parish Plan had been the formation of the Footpath Maintenance Group (FMG) which has been in existence for 5 years under the auspices of MAC. In that time the group had obtained grants and donations in excess of £2,000 and had installed 36 stiles, 24 dog gates, 12 Finger Posts and numerous bridges, steps, gates and general clearing of Rights of Way. They have also published a booklet of circular walks around Milwich which was delivered free to residents and approximately 70 have been sold in the Green Man. It is planned that the work of this group will continue whilst volunteers to help are forthcoming.

4. Playground Refurbishment

One of the actions from the Plan was to investigate and consider the possibility of a refurbishment of the playground area. This has been underway for some time under the auspices of the Parish Council and a small sub-committee. Hayley

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Walters provided an update on the work: so far £5,524 has been raised by donations and fundraising at the Milwich Music Festival. It is estimated that approximately £30,000 - £35,000 will be required to provide new equipment, surfacing, pathways, seating and signage. To achieve this, grants would need to be obtained and these would only be forthcoming to the Parish Council if they owned or had a long term lease on the land, currently owned by Stafford Borough Council (SBC).

Therefore, discussions were underway with SBC in respect of an Asset Transfer to the Parish. Milwich PC is open to this and it is thought that SBC are in favour but a formal meeting has yet to be arranged to initiate this action. Once completed it will be possible to apply for grants to undertake the work. If grants are obtained, voluntary effort from parishioners will also be required to complete the refurbishment. At that stage a consultation would be undertaken on the final needs and design. Richard Hocknell suggested that consideration should be given to the retention of the existing swings and slide.

5. Neighbourhood Plan for Milwich

A full discussion then took place on the need and benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Neighbourhood Plans were introduced in 2012 and supersede Parish Plans in the national Planning Legislation. They have a higher legal status but require a much more rigorous development approach. Once completed to the satisfaction of SBC and a National Inspector they are put to a referendum of residents and if approved by at least 50% of those voting they become a legal framework for future development in the area covered by the Plan.

At present SBC consider Milwich as a “non-sustainable” village which has future consequences in respect of development and knock on effects to the transport infrastructure and the future of the school etc. A NP would have benefits in protecting the village against unwanted developments as well as indicating what development might be permitted. It would lay out a long term plan for the sustainability of the community including a vision and aims including economic and environmental issues. Concerns were raised about whether SBC were in support of Neighbourhood Plans for the “non-key villages” in the Local Plan.

Milwich PC have been considering producing a NP for some time, they have drafted a letter to residents for inclusion with Compass which calls for volunteers to form a working group. This draft was discussed; an e-mail from Pat Wragg was read out together with one from Brian and Norma Nicholls. These were generally against the development of such a plan on grounds of cost and value.

The meeting was in favour of producing a NP provided that this could be done with no increase on the precept to residents. It was considered that this may be possible by obtaining grants and carrying out as much of the work within the working group as possible; it was suggested that the letter to parishioners should reflect this. Three existing members of MAC offered to assist the PC as part of a working group once one was formed.

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It was also noted that a petition from 36 residents was presented to the last PC Meeting asking them to initiate development of a NP (which has to be under the control of the Parish Council where one exists).

The Parish Councillors present consider that a limited amount of future development is required in Milwich.

6. Future of MAC

MAC was formed in November 2008 with the sole purpose of developing a Parish Plan for Milwich. The meeting considered that, with the possible future development of a NP by the PC, the Playground refurbishment in the hands of a PC sub-committee and all other actions basically complete, there was no further need for the existence of MAC and it was proposed that it was closed down. The FMG would then continue as a separate entity.

The Chairman presented a financial report from the Treasurer which showed that the current funds held in the account and in cash amounted to £727.37p. Of this £303.92 was attributable to the FMG for their ongoing work and from the sale of walks booklets.

The Chairman stated that £303 was more than the FMG required and made a proposal that £550 be donated to the Playground Refurbishment fund held by the PC and the remainder be held by the FMG for future Rights of Way improvement work. This was approved unanimously by the meeting and the Chairman said he would formally wind up MAC once the financial aspects were sorted with the Treasurer.

Mark Burton and Phil Horton thanked Paul Ritson for his hard work as Chairman of MAC since it was formed. Richard Hocknell added his thanks and those of the PC and congratulated Paul and MAC on their achievements over the last 8 years.

The final meeting of MAC closed at 9.00pm.