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Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Church Aston Parish Council held at the Memorial Office (Lilleshall) at 1pm on Thursday 24th July 2024.

Present: S Stacey (Chairman), P Sansom, R Wynn, B Knight and J Pay.

In attendance: Wendy Tonge (Clerk).
(24/07/24)

Item 1 - Apologies: P Evans (indisposed), F McKeown (approved absence), N Collier (approved absence), A Stokes (personal commitment), B Richards (personal commitment) and A Eade (Holiday).

Item 2 – Declarations of Interest: there were no declarations of interest.

Item 3 - That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

Item 4 –Telford & Wrekin Council Community Governance Review:

Cllr Simon Stacey (Chairman) provided members with a summary of the recent communications received from T&WC Community Governance Review Committee, including the original proposal to merge Church Aston PC with both Lilleshall and Muxton. The Clerk shared with members the very latest communication received from T&WC, proposing a 'No Change' submission to the current Town & Parish Councils structure.

Members of the Parish Council were unanimous in expressing their unequivocal opposition to the recent Community Governance Review proposal suggesting the merger of the parish with Lilleshall and Muxton. The proposal was met with significant anger and frustration among both council members and residents, with members firmly believing that it does not serve the best interests of the community and were relieved the Committee had done a complete U-turn on this proposal. The main objections were raised and based on the following critical points:

1. Loss of Local Identity

Church Aston Parish Council has a unique historical and cultural identity that distinguishes it from the neighbouring parishes. Merging with Lilleshall and Church Aston would erode this identity, leading to a loss of heritage and local character that residents deeply cherish.

2. Community Cohesion and Representation

The sense of community in Church Aston is strong and cohesive. Residents feel connected and well-represented by the local parish council. A merger would dilute this representation, making it harder for residents to have their voices heard and their needs met.

3. Practical Implications and Increased Bureaucracy

Merging three distinct parishes into a single entity would result in increased bureaucracy and administrative complexity. This change would likely lead to inefficiencies and delays in addressing local issues, ultimately harming the quality of service provided to residents.

4. Lack of Consultation and Transparency

Members expressed how deeply concerned they were about the lack of meaningful consultation and transparency throughout this review process. Members agreed that the views of residents and the parish council have not been adequately sought or considered, leading to a proposal that felt imposed rather than collaboratively developed.

5. Financial Implications

The proposed merger could have significant financial implications for the parish. There are concerns about how resources would be allocated and whether Church Aston would receive a fair share of funding and support. This could potentially lead to increased costs to residents without corresponding benefits.

Resolved: that the Council submit a 'No Change' response to the CGR proposal.

Meeting ended 1.40pm

Signed Chairman:

Date