

WOLVERLEY & COOKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 2nd September 2025, 7.00pm, Wolverley Church Hall, Wolverley

Present:

Mr B Brookes (Chairman)
Mr G Connolly
Mr D Cox
Mr R Drew
Mr J Hart
Mr M Hart
Mrs M Huselbee
Ms J Hicks
Mr D Jones
Mr C Sherrey
Mr W Southam
Mr A Webber
Mr J Wood

West Mercia Police:	Apologies
County Councillors:	Councillor M Hart, Councillor J Shaw
District Councillors:	Councillors R Drew, M Hart, I Hardiman

68. **Apologies**

Cllr Mrs V Bordewich due to holiday.

69. **Declarations of Councillors Interests**

- a) Register of Interests: Councillors are reminded to complete and need to regularly update their register of interests.
- b) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature. None declared.
- c) To declare any Other Registerable Interests or Non-Registerable Interests in items on the agenda and their nature. Cllr Drew in Agenda Item 7 - Recommendations from Staffing Committee as married to Clerk. Cllr Sherrey in Agenda Item 9 - Appointment of representative to Sebright's Educational Foundation as he is Deputy Chair and Cllr Wood in Agenda Item 11 - Proposed provision of a disabled person's parking space, Castle Road as he lives in a neighbouring property.

Public Question Time

No Public Questions

70. **To consider the adoption of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 5th August 2025 at 7.00pm**

These having previously been circulated it was proposed Cllr Drew seconded Cllr John Hart and unanimously resolved to receive and adopt the minutes as a true record of the meeting and these were signed by the Chairman.

Matters for Discussion / Decision:

71. **Police Report**

Report circulated.

Speed enforcement has taken place on Castle Road, Cookley - No offences.

Cllr Webber expressed disappointment that although residents had reported multiple damage to vehicles following an after-Prom party and there was DNA on some of the cars no action has been taken.

Cllr Huselbee advised of reports that there is drug dealing taking place on Lea Castle Village. This will be reported to the Police.

Priorities to remain the same - Speeding / ASB / Burglaries.

72. **To receive Councillors Reports;**
County Councillor Report;

Cookley, Wolverley, Wribbenhall Division - Cllr J Shaw reported.

County news

Cllr Rob Wharton cabinet member for Finance and Efficiency has stepped into the role of Deputy Leader following Cllr David Taylors resignation.

Operation raising the colours

WWC does not want to see or encourage people putting their lives or that of others in danger by adorning public furniture in St Georges and Union flags. We do of course love to see the flags raised in people's front gardens in a show of patriotism as can be seen in many other countries.

Questions raised at the last parish meeting in my absence

In relation to the repair of the landslip in Lea Lane and Safer routes to school project I have been given the following statement from Cllr Rob Wharton.

"The Council is facing significant financial challenges - a legacy of the previous administration. We are carrying out a full review of the Capital Programme to make sure future investment is affordable and sustainable, and this review will be led by people with real life experience of such situations. No final decisions have been made on individual projects. Our priority is to reduce borrowing and protect the Council's fragile financial resilience for the long term."

I have been advised that the alley way between Evans Close and Sebright Close has now been cleared.

Following a meeting last week with Cllr Drew I have raised issues for the following.

9936 - Siding out of Pavement on Wolverley Road between the island and the Primary school carpark Entrance.

9943 - Damaged barriers and railings surrounding the bridge over the canal at Caunsall.

9934 - Damaged and missing curb stone off the island between Wolverley Road and Church Bank

9935 - Overgrown hedges down church bank a request for the green team to send letters out to land-owners.

9941 - Pothole repair on Blakeshall lane that is not holding up.

I have asked my liaison officer to look at the possibility of extending the pavement outside the old animal pound in Wolverley, Initial thoughts are it is unlikely as the pavement would be very narrow and would not be accessible for all.

Cllr Drew also asked for a permanent VAS sign to replace the temporary one on the Wolverley Road. The County council is no longer issuing permanent signs due to

ongoing maintenance issues. If a sign was to be broken for a week or more and there was an accident it would open the council up to liability issues as it is a permanent road safety feature. I am not closed to supporting the instillation of VAS signs and I am happy to ask for accident speed data and request a speed surveys to be done if you have places that are particularly a speeding hot spots, As signs are only meant to be temporary we would need more than one spot to be considered so that the signs could be rotated.

Existing Issues

9837 Obstruction of pavement on the A449 between The Crescent and the Island Pool, the green team have been given a lengthy list of landowners to write to in relation to cutting the hedges back, my liaison officer has also reported some blocked drains along here that he noticed while walking the stretch.

Lea Lane siding out is being chased up with ringway, we have new road closed signs, but the access signs are bespoke and are on order, the new fencing is also on order. The barriers on Lea Lane I am being told are in the most suitable place, so it would be useful to know when ever there is a fly tipping incidence and where so I can continue to press this issue.

9958 The bridge over the River Stour in Caunsall, I am waiting to be briefed on this issue, but temporary traffic lights have been installed to ensure only traffic from one direction is on the bridge at any given time.

Cllr Shaw gave updates on items received after the report had been written;

Extending the pavement outside the Animal Pound will not be supported but she is happy to try and do something at this historic location,

The bridge over the River Stour in Caunsall - works are due to take place on 22nd September pending consent from the Environment Agency for scaffolding to be erected. She is also pushing to get the railings done so there is only one road closure,

Blocked gully Shatterford Lane has been cleared,

Raised drain by Cookley Primary School - a new lid has been ordered.

Cllr Webber thanked Mrs Shaw for dealing with the alleyway between Evans Close and Sebright Road and is pleased with the items Cllr Drew has raised but he expressed concerns over the capital expenditure programmes and the possibility that projects may not go ahead. Whilst not opposed to reviews Cllr Webber feels very strongly that the Safer Routes to School project needs to be done. Highlow Bank has a very narrow footpath and is used by lots of children and is a very dangerous route.

Cllr M Hart had three issues to raise with Cllr Shaw;

He is very disappointed at Cllr Rob Wharton's response in relation to the repair of the landslip in Lea Lane and the Safer Routes to School Project. The wording to say the review will be led by people with real life experience of such situations is very condescending. The Parish Council worked hard with the previous County Councillor and secured £1.5 million capital funding to undertake this project which is the number one scheme in the whole of the County Council and this sum was approved as an allocation. Cllr M Hart asked when final decisions are being made.

Flags - Cllr M Hart is unclear on what Worcestershire County Council policy is on flags on Highway street furniture and requests clarification.

The statement that the County Council is no longer issuing permanent VAS signs is news to him and he asked will the County Council allow if the Parish Council pay.

Cllr Shaw will get clarification on these three issues.

Chaddesley Division – Cllr M Hart reported.

Lea Castle Issues

As reported back in May and in subsequent reports, the main issue pertaining to this area is highways. The road and highway network for the development of the 600 houses is not yet adopted. At the time of typing this report I have chased an update with a senior highways officer at WCC. I have chased this again, given that the planning application for additional 800 houses has now been approved on 15th July.

Regarding an update as to when the highway infrastructure work will commence at the main traffic light junction at the A449/Park Gate Drive for the installation of the pedestrian link, pelican crossing and amending the junction to allow for a right turn, the redevelopment of the footpath linking Lea Castle Drive to the A449, together with the pelican crossing and refuge for the A449 between The Crescent and Castle Road, this is anticipated over the next 18 months.

Regarding the recently approved planning application for phase 2, the 800 houses, there is scheduled to be a temporary speed reduction on the A449 Wolverhampton Road which commences on 25th August and is to last 18 months. There is planned as part of the development to be a permanent speed reduction on the A449 as you approach The Crescent from the Wolverhampton direction right through to the traffic lights at Park Gate Road. This is in both directions.

I am receiving speeding complaints, but the police will not carry out enforcement until the TRO is in place.

I have asked for the pavement between Lea Castle Drive and the A448 Wolverhampton Road along Park Gate Road to be inspected for potential siding out. I have received an enquiry from the parish council regarding land at The Crescent and a resident wanting to plant trees on a parcel of land. I have asked WCC to advise me if they own this parcel of land and if not, who does. WCC have previously confirmed that they do not. It appears the land is owned by the Homes and Communities Agency now Homes England however the Land Registry have not updated the register since 10th May 2022. As a result of assistance from WFDC's legal dept. I am just asking WCC to double check it hasn't been transferred to WCC since this date. I suspect it hasn't and unless the HCA now HE have transferred it to local residents, it remains in their ownership. Watch this space....

I have asked for information on how many school age children there are on the Lea Castle Village and which primary schools they are attending and which secondary schools they are attending and for home to school transport numbers.

I have also asked for information regarding the coach for Wolverley Secondary School that is to be used to pick up children from Lea Castle Village going to Wolverley as I am told it is to be parked overnight on Lea Castle Drive.

Wyre Forest Issues

Bewdley Bridge is now open to two-way traffic. This happened over the summer holidays.

Strategic Issues County Wide

In respect of local government reorganisation WCC and the six districts worked together to put in their initial proposals by 21st March and final proposals by 28th November.

There was not total agreement across the seven authorities as some are supporting a unitary in the north and a unitary in the south and some support a unitary for the whole of Worcestershire.

Given that the Leader has appointed a Cabinet Member for 'One Worcestershire' I had assumed they supported a one unitary authority for Worcestershire. However, their position is still not clear and we are advised it will be confirmed in September.

As it presently stands the Government are scheduled to make a decision in April 2026 albeit I can see this being delayed until after the local elections in May 2026. Between 28 th November and their decision they need to undertake statutory consultation.

There appears to be a complete lack of clarity on the new administration's capital programme as to what commitments they are going to continue with and which ones they will scrap.

Regarding county hall, they appear to have deemed this surplus but it's future proposed use appears unclear. Car parks have been rented out for use by the neighbouring hospital. This is something that was planned pre-May.

Cllr Hart updated the following;

4th Sept - drop-in session for road closures which is starting, at The Crescent,

Chasing WCC for adoption of roads for the first part of the development,

Green at The Crescent, Cllr M Hart has had all the solicitors look at this and it is owned by Homes England, not WCC, WFDC or the Parish Council.

School transport - there are 32 pupils eligible so they will fill a coach, driver of the coach is proposing to park on Lea castle drive, it is entirely a matter for the operator where they park.

District Councillor Report - Cllr I Hardiman reported.

Local Issues

We have been dealing with the usual routine casework, reporting litter and fly tipping on the main A roads and along the country lanes and continue to monitor all enforcement issues. In particular, we have reported two recent fly tipping incidents on the B4189.

Wyre Forest Issues

The Piano Building project should be completed during September. The Connectivity Project work should complete in December. The Old Court is attracting further tenancy interest.

Work on the £2.4m HLF project at Brinton Park: The artificial badgers sett has been constructed.. The Old Pals shelter has been demolished and a planning application for its replacement will be considered soon. Work has commenced to dig out where the duck pond will be. Work is due to complete next year. There will be a new café and toilet facilities and a changing places toilet.

WFDC commissioned a feasibility study for Worcester Street, Market Street, the former Crown House site and Lionfields (former Glades site) and cabinet has in principle agreed for there to be residential development on this site and at its September cabinet meeting it will further consider this subject with a view to circa 150 residential units here.

By way of a brief devolution and unitary update, the Government has now formally written to the County Council and the six district Councils with its initial feedback from our initial submission.

WCC and the six districts worked together to put in their initial proposals by 21st March and final proposals by 28th November.

There was not total agreement across the seven authorities as some are supporting a unitary in the north and a unitary in the south and some support a unitary for the whole of Worcestershire.

Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet met on 20th March to agree to support a Worcestershire Unitary Council and agree the interim plan.

Given that the Leader has appointed a Cabinet Member for 'One Worcestershire' we had assumed they supported a one unitary authority for Worcestershire. However, Worcestershire County Council's leader has yet to confirm their position.

The seven councils have recently conducted a public engagement survey and the results were mixed but a majority of residents in Wyre Forest just supported a one unitary model as opposed to two.

As it presently stands the Government are scheduled to make a decision in April 2026 albeit we can see this being delayed until after the local elections in May 2026.

Cllr Jones advised that a camera has appeared by Cookley Club which says WFDC on it and questioned who monitors this. The Clerk is aware of this and was approached by WFDC and the Police for permission for the camera to try and combat antisocial behaviour. The Clerk will ascertain who monitors the footage.

Cllr Huselbee raised that the old court play area has no barriers and asked are there any plans to install these. Cllr M Hart responded that full planning consent had been granted with support from all statutory bodies.

Cllr Cox reported that there are many problems on the Lea Castle estate with anti-social behaviour and a lot of the houses are being given over to Citizen by the builders as they cannot sell them. Cllr M Hart advised that Citizen originally had 20% affordable houses, but BOVIS did have a commercial agreement with Citizen to sell off houses so there are more social housing than was originally approved.

Cllr Hardiman reported that he had a walkabout with a representative from Citizen who said they have 263 units.

73. **Financial Matters. To agree the schedule of accounts to be paid.**

It was proposed Cllr Sherrey, seconded Cllr Drew and unanimously approved the schedule of payments be paid.

Mr Sherrey reported that annual grants are in line with budget, donation to Church Hall is for the second half of 2025 and the grass cutting payment is reduced as only half a cut was done.

74. **To receive recommendations from Staffing Committee.**

Cllr Drew and the Clerk left the room.

Cllr M Hart spoke on this item on behalf of the staffing committee.

Cllr M Hart stated that the staffing committee met on 19th August with Cllr B Brookes and Cllr Bordewich present, Cllr D Cox was unable to be there.

Cllr M Hart stated that the last major review on the clerk's pay scale was conducted in August 2020, when she was significantly moved up the pay scales to SCP 24.

Cllr M Hart stated at that time the Parish Council agreed that it would pay the clerk in accordance with the nationally agreed pay scales and back date to 1st April of that year and that in each and every annual pay review since that is what the staffing committee have recommended, and the Parish Council has agreed.

Cllr M Hart said that the staffing committee felt that they should now look at the actual pay scale as they felt that the work is becoming more complex, especially with the community governance

review (CGR) and dissolution of the Parish Council and establishment of three new Parish Councils. The staffing committee recommended that the clerk therefore be moved up to SCP 25.

Cllr M Hart reported that the staffing committee felt that the workload was increasing directly as a result of the CGR and was likely to continue and indeed increase overtime.

The clerk was currently employed on a .5 FTE contract of 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours per week. Cllr M Hart stated that the staffing committee felt that this should be increased to 21 hours with effect from 1st September on a temporary basis but as the workload increases further that it is increased to 24 hours as of 1st April 2026 and this can be budgeted for accordingly. On this basis 8 hours each can be attributed to the new 3 Parish Councils from their inception and when they come into being they can consider whether this is sufficient or whether it needs to be increased.

Cllr M Hart confirmed that he had discussed this with Cllr Sherrey who said this was affordable.

Cllr M Hart therefore formally proposed:-

1. The clerk's salary be increased from SCP 24 to SCP 25 and back date to 1st April 2025.
2. The clerk's hours be increased to 21 hours from 1st September 2025 - 31st March 2026.
3. The clerk's hours be permanently increased to 24 hours from 1st April 2026.

This was seconded by Cllr Cox who spoke in favour of the proposals.

Cllr Sherrey confirmed that he was happy and would notify our payroll.

This was unanimously agreed by the Parish Council.

The Clerk and Cllr Drew then returned to the meeting.

75. Community Governance Review (CGR) Wolverley & Cookley.

- i) To receive recommendations from subcommittee

Cllr Drew reported that the subcommittee met on 21st August, V2 of the report had been circulated.

Item 1 was to consider the transfer of assets proposed by Wyre Forest District Council, namely woodland at Lea Lane to Cookley Parish Council and woodland at Drakelow Lane to Wolverley Parish Council.

Cllr Jones reported that Cookley Councillors are divided over this, he would like the woodland at Lea Lane but other Councillors have some reservations. Cllr M Hart stated that serious consideration should be given to taking on these parcels of land now as if we don't, they will go to Worcestershire County Council and ultimately the Unitary Authority and could be lost. They will need insuring and managing but if transferred they will be kept under the control of the two Parish Councils.

There was various discussion on this and it was proposed Cllr Southam to defer a decision on this until we have some idea of costs for insurance and management. This was seconded by Cllr Jones. Cllr Drew asked for an amendment that this proposal covers both parcels of land. Cllr Southam was happy with this and the proposal was agreed.

Cllr M Hart suggested the Clerk contact Zurich Municipal for an idea of what the costs will be. Cllr Drew advised he has requested maps from Wyre Forest District Council and also any inspections done on the woodlands.

Item 2 - to approve Schedule a detailing the additional expenditure expected to be incurred to set up the three new Parish Councils totalling £24,787. This was proposed Cllr Drew, seconded Cllr Webber and unanimously approved.

Item 3 - to approve Schedule b detailing the outstanding costs pertaining the street lighting column upgrades totalling £102,900. This was proposed Cllr Drew, seconded Cllr J Hart and unanimously approved.

Item 4 - to approve Schedule e detailing the miscellaneous administrative assets to be transferred from Wolverley & Cookley Parish Council to Wolverley Parish Council. This was proposed Cllr Drew, seconded Cllr M Hart, who reserved his right to speak and unanimously approved.

Item 5 - to note the forecasted final balance on 31st March 2027 at £62,417 and to note this amount would be split between the three new Parish Councils. Appendix ci and cii.

Item 6 - to note the concerns of the Parish Clerk communicated to the Chief Executive Officer of Wyre Forest District Council on 20th August 2025 (Appendix di) and Ian Millers response. (Appendix dii). A further response has been received from Ian Miller (Appendix diii) after the subcommittee met.

Cllr Drew commented that the proposed draft re-organisation order has the split to come into force on 1st September 2026. This would create numerous difficulties with contracts, finances etc having to split mid-year. Ian Millers response (Appendix diii) did state that all things are possible, and we could ask to change the date to 1st April 2027.

Cllr M Hart proposed that the subcommittee consider the timing of the split and report back to the October meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Connolly and unanimously agreed.

ii) To review draft re-organisation order

Cllr M Hart recommended that the subcommittee consider the draft re-organisation order and report back to the October meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Jones and unanimously agreed. Cllr M Hart expressed thanks to the subcommittee and Clerk for the work done so far.

As Cllr Southam is unable to attend the next subcommittee meeting Cllr Jones will attend in his place.

76. **To appoint representative to Sebright's Educational Foundation (Cookley Ward).**

Cllr Sherrey advised that the appointment will only last as long as Wolverley & Cookley Parish Council exist, when they split new appointments will be made by the separate Parish Councils.

Cllr Huselbee proposed Cllr Jones, this was seconded by Cllr Southam and unanimously agreed.

77. **Consultations:**

- i) Draft Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Proposed Cllr Drew, seconded Cllr Jones and agreed Parish Council write in support. Cllr Wood commented that the maps were not very detailed.
- ii) Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan
Proposed Cllr Drew, seconded Cllr Jones and agreed Parish Council write in support.

78. **To discuss correspondence received regarding proposed provision of a disabled person's parking space, Castle Road, Cookley.**

Cllr Huselbee commented that her understanding was that Worcestershire County Council only provide disabled parking places if applicants meet the criteria, which is holding a blue badge, vehicle registered to address and applicants' property has no off-road parking. Cllr Huselbee stated that this property does have off road parking in the form of a garage.

Cllr Brookes read the email from the traffic management engineer which stated the applicant's property has no off-street parking and no scope for creating such a facility and has satisfied the Worcestershire County Council criteria for the provision of such a space.

Cllr Connolly questioned if Worcestershire County Council are satisfied then how can the Parish Council oppose this. Cllr Huselbee replied that they may not be aware of the garages around the back of the properties.

Cllr Wood, will not vote on this but confirmed that the property does have off road parking and a garage.

After much discussion it was proposed Cllr M Huselbee, seconded Cllr Jones and agreed to refuse the application. With nine votes in favour, three against and one abstention this was carried. Clerk to send map of garages with response.

79. **To discuss Wolverley Animal Pound.**

Cllr Sherrey stated this is a historical monument that needs to be maintained for future generations. He would like to get quotes to get it up to scratch again and proposed this be done in this financial year. This was seconded by Cllr Huselbee and unanimously agreed.

80. **To discuss maintenance / upkeep of Parish Council benches.**

Cllr Webber expressed concern about the condition of the bench at the top of Sebright Road, Wolverley and proposed quotes be obtained for repair and repainting of the bench. This was seconded by Cllr J Hart and unanimously agreed.

81. **To discuss emptying of new litterbins, Cookley Playing Fields.**

Cllr Jones advised that the three new bins at Cookley Playing Fields are not being emptied. These will need to be included in next years contract for Bin Emptying.

82. Planning Applications for Consideration: -

WFDC No/Details

25/0466/PNH For Information Only: Proposed single storey rear extension at 108 Lea Castle Drive, Lea Castle.

25/0557/AG For Information Only: Steel frame agricultural storage building for fodder and machinery at farmyard at Highlow Nurseries, Franche Road, Wolverley.

Clerk to request detailed plans showing proposed elevations.

25/0600/HOU Demolition of existing garage, construction of residential annexe with link and pergola / car port at Solcum House, Drakelow Lane, Wolverley,

Recommend Approval, proposed Cllr J Hart, seconded Cllr Webber and unanimously agreed.

25/0619/HOU Single storey rear extension at 47 Castle Road, Cookley.

Recommend Deferral as the website was unavailable and plans could not be accessed, proposed Cllr Southam, seconded Cllr Jones and agreed.

Cllr Drew advised the website is now operational. Application to be dealt with under delegated powers.

Planning Appeal Decisions. None Received

Planning Decision Notices.

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| 25/0489/HOU | Permit, Construction of residential annex for disable relative, 4 Gaymore Rd |
| 25/0520/CLP | Refusal of certificate of lawfulness for single storey side extension at Crossways, Sladd Lane |

Parish Matters for Update Only – no decisions required.

- 83. Clerks Report. (Clerk) Withdrawal of the My Parish Web Portal, Charitable Musical Evening, Friday 10th October 2025, 7pm at St. Georges Social Club, Wyre Forest Area CALC Monday 8th September, 6.30pm via Zoom.
- 84. Lengthsman/Bin Emptying/Grass Cutting. (All)
- 85. New Issues / Items for Next Meeting. (All)
- 86. Date of Next Meeting - to confirm the date of the next meeting which is scheduled for Tuesday 7th October 2025.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.35pm