

**Minutes of the Eastham Parish Council meeting held on
Tuesday 21 January 2025 in Eastham Memorial Hall at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr P Arnold, Cllr M Adams, Cllr I Matrovers, Cllr A Worsley, Cllr B Lewis, Cllr C Austin & Cllr L Arnold
In attendance: Clerk, District Councillor A Willmott, PCSO Durrant, 7 Parishioners

1. Apologies by Parish Councillors:- none

Other Apologies District Councillor Bruton

2. Declarations of Interest:

a. Register of Interests: Councillors are reminded of the need to update their Register of Interests as required.

b. To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature.

c. To declare any Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda and their nature.

Councillors who have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, or an Other Disclosable Interest which falls within the terms of paragraph 12(4) (b) of the Code of Conduct, must leave the room for the relevant items.

Failure to register or declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest may result in the commission of a criminal offence.

3. Dispensations –

a. To consider written requests from councillors for the council to grant a dispensation (S33 of the Localism Act 2011) – written requests to be with the clerk prior to a meeting.

- **Dispensations requested – none**

The Meeting was adjourned for Public Question Time

Brief notes will be appended to the minutes

The Meeting reopened

4. Eastham Village Green – Public Question Time opened

Brief notes appended to end of minutes

5. Reports from County Councillor and District Councillor(s) – appended at the end of the minutes.

DC Willmott spoke on the White Paper for Local re-organisation.

6. Minutes: Minutes of the meeting held on the 26 November 2024 were agreed by all as a true record and signed .

7. a. Eastham Parish Village Green – agreed by all, to write to the Parish Hall Committee request for further information.

Sketch drawing of the planned area for the kerbing and /or grass matting showing the length and depth proposed

Costings of proposals

Details of the funding – Type being either Grant or Bequest; From whom grant/bequest originates; limits on funding

b. VAS Signs - cost of £3581.06 inc VAT for 1 sign and 2 solar panels plus fixings. Agreed by all to not go ahead with purchase at present time

c. Welcome to Village Sign – Rhyse Lane - Received quote of £1374.18 exc. VAT if the verge has the requisite clearance. Agreed by all not to pursue.

8. Finances

a. i Regular Payments as detailed below since last meeting – all agreed

ii To consider payments, Including urgent payments since last meeting, to be made as on list presented at meeting and detailed below – Agreed by All.

Cheque number	Payee	notes	£	
856	Salary Clerk	Salary Dec 24	345.71	reg.payment
857	MTM Contracting	Mowing	1382.40	reg.payment
		Regular Payments since last meeting	1728.11	
	Payments at meeting			
858	Chris Bunn	LM Dec 24 & Jan 25	391.87	reg.payment

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859	Salary Clerk	Salary Jan 25	345.71	reg.payment
859	Worcestershire CC	Grit Salt	158.12	
		To be paid this meeting	895.70	
		Total PAYMENTS	£ 2623.81	

- b. Receipts - Receipts received since WCC LM reimbursements £ 416.63
- c. Bank Reconciliations - Reviewed reconciliation as of 5 January 2025, Balance £ 19,201.36
- all agreed and signed
- d. Budget Reports - To review and agree Budget Report as at 31 December 2024 – Agreed by All
- e. Change of Payroll provider from April 2025 to Kendal Wadey – Agreed by All
- f. Budget setting for precept – considered divisions of budget and sourcing new Mowing contract of the updated budget for a precept of £ 9941, Agreed by All

9. Clerks report on any Urgent Decisions since last meeting – regular payments of Clerks Salary and Mowing Contract invoice.

10. Planning:

- a. Plans received since last meeting
- b. Decisions received since last meeting –
- c. Plans for consideration at this meeting -
M/24/01793/RM – Land at Eastham (Os 6745 6818) reserved matter application for a permanent rural worker dwelling and new access – consider and all agreed

11. Eastham Bridge –

- i. Visibility from junction – update received 4 Dec 24 with photos. “Inspector checked this and no safety issues were found at the bridge junction”

12. Progress Reports/ updates

- a. Roads – Pipers Brook Gravel and damaged kerb at Astley Orchard.

13. Bus Shelter/ use of covered area at Parish Hall? – use of covered area would need be considered in conjunction with Bus Company and a request to Parish Hall Committee

14. Volunteer appointment to role of Footpath officer – Parishioner has been in touch and considering. Cllr Austin expressed an interest.

15. Reports on any Meetings attended by Clerk or Councillors – Clerk has attended Worcestershire CALC Clerks Gathering

16. Correspondence for Information: as circulated to Councillors from
RSN Weekly & Monthly Digest; Worcestershire CALC newsletter, WCC Highways, MHDC Draft Pavement Licensing Policy consultation and Planning Applications; WMP Parish Contract. M Griffiths Payroll

17. Correspondence for discussion

- a. WMP Parish Charters renewal confirmation – agreed to continue with notes on previous 3-month contract

18. Councillors reports and items for the next agenda

Mowing Contract

19. Confirm Date for next meeting –

25 March 2025

20. Closure of meeting - - 8:50 pm

Signed

Date

Notes from Public Question Time –

Proposal (by Memorial Hall Committee) for dropped kerbing (distance of 50m) approximate cost £8920 incl.VAT ; and / or Grass matting on edge of Village Green owned by the Parish Council

Various questions were raised by the Public

- i. where has the money raised been derived from, details of the funding, and limitations ;
- ii sketch plan of proposed kerbing and matting

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iii quotes received

comments on the green space in village for children, grass care to grow through matting,

Lindridge School – school lunches and use of a kitchen – School/FOLS to approach Eastham Village hall Committee

PCSO Lee Durrant – introduced himself to all.

County Councillor's Report – January 2025

I hope everyone had a very enjoyable Christmas and wish you all a very happy New Year.

1. I will continue to urge the construction of a replacement wall/permanent defence wall in Market Street, Tenbury, following the collapse of the original wall last year. WCC are obliged to liaise with the EA regarding its replacement.

I am concerned that the EA has not been entirely honest with us regarding progress of the Tenbury Flood Defence Scheme. I am working closely with the Cabinet Member for the Environment at WCC, who I hope will be able to give me a more detailed assessment of the actual situation, following a meeting due to take place this month. I will update you in next month's report, of any information I receive.

There appears to be a number of anomalies in terms of what we have been led to believe is the current situation and quite frankly, enough is enough. It is time we had the facts, good or bad.

2. ** see note at end of report*

Prior to Christmas the government announced major changes to how local government will operate in the years to come, following the publication of its White Paper. Nothing has been decided but the government's intent seems to be clear, and I would suggest these changes will happen.

I will try to outline the proposed changes and how these changes are likely to affect Worcestershire.

- a. The government wants to abolish District Councils and County Councils and replace them with one Unitary Council. This would mean that the six District Councils and the County Council in Worcestershire would all disappear to be replaced with one Unitary Council. Town Councils and Parish Councils will not be affected.
- b. The timeline for this is very short. The government want "letters of interest" by interested parties by 10th January 2025. It is my understanding that the government will make its decision early in March as to which counties will proceed in "the first tranche". If Worcestershire was in "the first tranche", it is likely that elections in May 2025 to the County Council will be cancelled and elections to the new Unitary Council may be held in May 2026.
- c. The above is further complicated because this is the first phase of the government's proposed changes. Once the counties have become Unitary Councils, the government then wishes to create Strategic Authorities. It is proposed that each Unitary Council will represent approximately 500,000 people; Worcestershire has 600,000. Strategic Authorities will be made up of a number of Unitary Councils (2 or 3), headed by an elected Mayor.

It is clear that there will be mixed views as to whether this is a positive change or a negative change. The government are not seeking any consultation period, at this stage, they are simply asking for "letters of interest" by 10th January. I cannot tell you what the views of the six District Council are or those of other Parties, but I am happy to share with you, the view of the Conservative Members of the County Council.

- a. The Cabinet met to discuss the government's proposals and we decided it was clear that these were not really proposals, they were changes which the government intends to implement. With the "majority" which the government has, then of course, any legislation would pass through Parliament with ease.
- b. We decided that if Worcestershire was to have any say in shaping its future, it is imperative that Worcestershire is in "the first tranche".
- c. The Conservatives then held a Group meeting immediately prior to the Christmas break where the Group agreed with the views of the Cabinet.
- d. As a consequence, (I am writing this on 6th January), "a letter of interest" will be submitted to the government by the Conservative Group on or before 10th January.
- e. I am not aware if any other Groups within the County Council will do the same.

I hope you find the above helpful because I am conscious that any changes will affect us all.

The information above is impartial and as I understand the facts to be. My own personal view however, regarding Unitary Councils is a positive one. I have advocated for a number of years that Worcestershire would be better served by its excellent

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Town and Parish Councils at a local level, and by one Unitary Council (rather than 7 councils), at a more strategic level.

David Chambers

County Councillor for the Tenbury Division

Email from D Chambers 15 January 2025

I have received an update since I wrote my report. It would appear that the government will make its decision within the next two weeks as to which councils will proceed in the first tranche, and confirm whether elections in Worcestershire will proceed or be cancelled in May this year.

Andrew Willmott District Councillor Tenbury Ward

Report on Items of Interest January 2025

Flood Defences, Tenbury Wells

The Market Street wall is down, and the Town is open to flooding from Kyre Brook. I have urged the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council at MHDC, again, to act urgently, with whatever agencies are necessary, to allow a replacement wall to be built now to prevent the further evisceration of our Town by traders being forced to leave. We continue to press Government to come clean on their intent for the Environment Agency Flood Relief Scheme.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government White Paper, technically a proposal before an Act, was published just before Christmas and is drafted, I suggest, as an instruction, without an Impact Assessment, to delete District Councils. A reply stating intent by County was required by January 10th. Worcestershire County's intent is to be unitary in the "First Tranche". At the time of writing, the stance of MHDC councillors and indeed Worcestershire District Councils generally are divided. However, I believe that the writing is clearly on the wall.

Neighbourhood Planning

The White Paper leaves parish councils in place, including towns. My view is that our towns and parishes need all the statutory protection they can get for when Government Devolution, described in the White Paper, eventually makes the layer of administration above the parish/town, a central mayoral structure covering a target 1,500,000 citizens. I have pressed for these protections to be an objective in the MHDC 5 Year Plan, currently under review. Tenbury Town Council, at their January 2025 meeting, voted not to have a Plan.

MHDC Strategy, Post White Paper

MHDC is in a strong financial position with good reserves funded by the citizens and businesses of our district and successfully husbanded by MHDC Officers. My view, expressed to the Administration, is that MHDC should do all it can to put the citizens, businesses and institutions of our district in the strongest position possible to enter the devolved regime. Worcestershire County Council have advised that they cannot balance their 2025/6 budget and without help will have to issue a section 114 notice effectively declaring bankruptcy.

MHDC Planning

Evidenced by their own reporting, MHDC Planning has had problems over several years. Recent changes and new staff may not wholly rectify matters. I have asked for a formal review comparing best service in the public and private sectors.

Working from Home

Working from home was a logical response to Covid – but has continued. Given varying reports on its efficacy, and the move back to offices in the private sector, I have asked for a formal review of MHDC productivity comparisons with exemplars in the public and private sectors.

Malvern Hills District Council Report (January 2025)

Cllr Lesley Bruton (Tenbury Ward)

Devolution and Local Government Reform for Worcestershire

Following the issue of the English Devolution White Paper, Worcestershire County Council have written to the Minister of State for Local Government informing the Government that the Authority is keen to move at pace to deliver devolution. Therefore, the Authority has requested the Minister to postpone the County Council elections, which are due to be held in May 2025. This will allow the Authority time to put together proposals for local government reform.

Devolution will see the District Council's dissolved and a Unitary Authority formed for Worcestershire. Town and parishes councils will remain however there may be implications for town councils with certain services being passed down such as public conveniences or car parks that the Unitary Authority would not wish to takeover.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

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On Friday 13th December it was announced that all areas of the UK are receiving a further allocation of UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Malvern Hills District Council have received an allocation of £830,918 for 2025/2026.

Market Street Wall and Flood Defences

At the last Malvern Hills District Council meeting, held on 26 November 2024, I requested that the Administration consider allocation the £1m Infrastructure Reserve towards Tenbury's flood defences following recent events.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Government has now published the revised NPPF as well as its response to the consultation on proposed reforms to the NPPF and other changes to the planning system.

The NPPF came into effect on 12th December 2024, applying to all pending applications and appeals.

The Planning Inspectorate is expected to invite representatives on appeals where the new NPPF is relevant, although Malvern Hills District Council are unlikely to face significant impacts given the recent acceptance of a lack of 5 Year Housing Land Supply in appeals.

- Housing targets are now mandatory again, reversing the 2023 amendment that made them advisory. This aligns with the Government's goal of delivering 1.5million homes over five years.
- The Standard Method for calculation housing need has been revised, which has resulted in a much larger housing need figure. Malvern Hills increased from 368 to 651 (77% increase).
- The ability to show a four rather than five-year housing land supply has been removed.
- The requirement for local planning authorities to include a buffer of 5% on top of their five-year housing land supply is reintroduced.
- Additionally, from 1 July 2026 this buffer will increase to 20% because the annual housing figure will be less than 80% of local housing need under the new Standard Method.

Under the transitional arrangements, the SWDPR examination can continue, and the Inspectors will still be testing the Plan against the September 2023 NPPF. On adoption of the SWDPR the South Worcestershire Council's will be able to use the housing requirements in the plan as the basis for demonstrating a five-year housing land supply for five years, rather than the new Standard Method.

The updated NPPF says that Plans at examination would continue to be examined under the version of the NPPF they were submitted under. However, if the adopted housing need figure is less than 80% of the figure in the Standard Method the Local Planning Authority would be required to begin preparation of a plan under the new system as soon as possible. The SWDPR as submitted to the Planning Inspectorate uses an annual housing target of 1,193. This is only 55% of the housing need under the new method, so the requirement would apply to the SWC's. As part of the examination process, officers have forecasted what the five-year housing land supply position will be when the SWDPR is likely to be adopted at the end of 2025. If a 20% buffer is included in those calculations, then there would still be more than a five-year supply. Maintaining a five-year supply under the SWDPR will therefore be challenging but achievable.

The framework aims to deliver the most significant boost to affordable and social housing in a generation. Green Belt developments are expected to include a higher proportion of affordable housing.

There is protection for up-to-date Neighbourhood Plans if there are less than five years old and includes allocations to meet housing needs.