

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 27th MAY 2025 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.

PRESENT: Mark Smith (Chairman), Penny Green & Ian Wilson (Members) and the Clerk. Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) & Ann Smith (Special advisor)

1) ELECTION OF CHAIR

Penny proposed Mark, Ian seconded the proposal, which was agreed by all. Mark signed the declaration of Acceptance of Office form, specified under Section 51 of the local Government Act 2000.

Vice- Chair, Penny proposed Ian, Mark seconded the proposal, which was agreed by all.

2) APOLOGIES

County Councillor Martin Allen, District Councillor Jeremy Owenson, Tom Goodwin, Margaret Herbert, Giles Steiger, Charlotte Bloomfield (Members)

It was noted that County Councillor Martin Allen had delivered his report in the Annual Parish meeting that preceded this meeting.

3) REGISTRATION AND DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- (i) The Clerk advised members that they should ensure their Registration of Interest forms are kept up to date and any changes notified to the monitoring officer of the Malvern Hills District Council Standards Committee.
- (ii) No declarations were declared.

4) TO NOTE THE CODE OF CONDUCT, STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Code of Conduct for Members, which had been adopted by the Council in May 2022, and the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which had also been adopted by the Council in 2024 were noted.

5) PUBLIC:

It was agreed to retain Malcolm Tomkins and Ann Smith as special advisors to the Parish Council, with permission to contribute to meetings with no voting powers.

6) DELEGATION OF PLANNING AND OTHER MATTERS

- (a) It was agreed by all members that the function of responding to the Local Planning Authority be delegated to the Clerk.
- (b) It was agreed by all to re-adopt the terms of reference for the Staffing Committee, including delegated powers for recruitment, performance reviews and disciplinary & grievance procedures.

7) REPRESENTATIVES TO BE APPOINTED

Those present reviewed the delegated responsibilities and they were reviewed as follows:

Open Spaces (Including the Commons) - Tom, Margaret and Giles

Playing Field – Penny

Highways (including flooding and drainage) – Tom

Planning Team – Mark, Ian & Margaret

Staffing Committee – The Chair + Penny & Charlotte

SWDPR Monitoring – Planning Team

Website – The Clerk with Ian monitoring

Social media – Tom

Defibrillator (Including phone box) – Charlotte

Finance (Including monthly bank reconciliations) Penny & Charlotte

8) LEGAL DOCUMENTS AND CONTRACTS

All legal documents regarding the ownership of the Village Hall and Playing Field are kept with Whatley Recordon, Solicitors in Malvern.

It was noted that the historical minutes books are now with the clerk. The minutes books will be taken to the archives at the Hive and noted in the minutes annually.

The contract with Worcestershire County Council to provide a Parish Lengthsman is effective until 31 March 2026. It was with sadness to note the passing early in May of the contracted lengthsman Brian Arrowsmith.

The Chairman advised members that the insurance contract with ANSVAR is due for renewal on 1st June 2025 the renewal cost was £429.50 if the VAS was not moved more than once a month otherwise the premium increased. It was agreed the VAS would not be moved from pole to pole more than once a month to keep the lower premium, the members agreed to renew. (It was noted that the clerk had checked with another broker who actually came back with the same policy!)

9) MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2025 were proposed by Mark, seconded by Penny, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

10) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Martin Allen had delivered his Annual report in the Annual Parish Meeting

No report from Jeremy Owenson.

11) HIGHWAYS MATTERS-

Request to remove the trees that had been planted by WCC, Penny has sent detailed reasons to Martin for the tree removal, response from WCC required.

12) PARISH PATHS

Margaret had emailed regarding over growth at Donkey Lane and people walking in farmers field rather than the path, Malcolm said people unfortunately walkers generally did walk in the field but the path would be cleared by the proactive strimming from WCC, Malcolm noted that the new lengthsman was strimming the entrances to the PROW a good few yards in which helps.

13) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

As noted earlier in the meeting due to the sad passing of Brian Arrowsmith the Parish finds itself without a Lengthsman, the Lengthsman from Kempsey/Ryall, Tim Hughes has offered to cover and is interested in the role ongoing, his rate is £20ph. Members agreed to use Tim's services for the summer, and advertise properly in Autumn, Tim would likely apply. His hourly rate was higher than ECPC had previously paid and it would reduce the number of hours that could be spent in the Parish. Malcolm had already briefed Tim and reported him as knowledgeable he had a number of Parishes and would be coming to Earls Croome for lengthsman duties Tuesday afternoons. Members thanked Malcolm. The clerk had collected the VAS battery and charger from Brians family and would pass these to Tim.

14) COMMONS

a) Smithmoor

The chairman read the update from Margaret on the environmental commons working group, they had not had a meeting yet but would do before the July meeting, she had researched the registration of the Common to access the Natural England grant funding and there would be a cost of circa £150 to do this, it was proposed by Ian and seconded by Penny to approve spending of up to £180 so Margaret could go ahead and register prior to the July meeting if she needed/had time to.

Hay and maintenance – Steve Coole would make hay when weather conditions were favorable and the clerk had asked again for him to address the /creep, of the hedge and brash at the Jakeman Farm end of the Common. The ditch work debris would be gathered and burnt in the autumn.

b) Dunstall – The ditch damaged in the maize harvest remained and the clerk was asked to write to the farmer to reinstate it.

a) Marsh – N/A

15) PLANNING

Nothing this month.

16) FINANCE

- a) The monthly bank reconciliation for March & April 2025 had been checked and confirmed by Charlotte & Penny.
- b) Following a review of the draft accounts, it was agreed by all that the draft accounts and annual bank reconciliation should be signed by the Chair and Clerk and adopted as the Council's annual accounts for the year ending 31 March 2025
- c) It was agreed that the Parish Council would use the services of Mr Mike Clemas as the internal auditor.
- d) Following a review of the AGAR exemption document, it was agreed by all to authorise the Chairman & The Clerk to sign the exemption certificate and return it to the external auditor.
- e) Following a review of section 1 of the Council's annual return for year ending 31 March 2025, it was agreed by all to authorise the Chairman and Clerk to sign section 1 of the Council's annual return for the year ending 31 March 2025.
- f) Following a review of Section 2 of the Council's Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2025, it was agreed by all to authorise the Chairman and Clerk to sign Section 2 of the Council's Annual Return for year ending 31st March 2025
- g) It was agreed by members that 3rd June would be the commencement date for the exercise of Public Rights.
- h) Insurance Renewal – as discussed earlier

Payments made since last meeting were noted as follows:

Stroke Society – Duggan donation	£25.00
Mr B Arrowsmith – lengthsman services – March	£182.00
Mrs N Nicholson – clerk OPE (Nov- March)	£50.93
J Marklew – playing field grass cutting	£40.00
Lloyds Bank – service charge	£4.75
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- April (S/O)	£289.66
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance April (S/O)	£20.00
Mrs Nicholson – balance of salary	£3.66
Worcestershire CALC- Membership fee	£180.48
J Marklew – playing field grass cutting	£40.00

It was proposed by Mark and seconded by Penny to authorize the following payments:

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| a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – May (S/O) | £293.32 |
| b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance May (S/O) | £20.00 |
| c) Tim Hughes – lengthsman payment – May | £TBC |
| d) CAS Ltd – Annual Insurance premium | £468.25 |
| e) Tim Hughes – lengthsman payment – June | £TBC |

To be reviewed at July meeting.

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|---------------------------------|---------|
| f) Church Yard Grant | £175.00 |
| g) Village Hall annual hire fee | £100.00 |

Remittance:

MHDC Precept payment	£2650.00
WCC lengthsman reimburse – March	£182.00

18. Website & .gov requirement

The clerk advised that this would be a requirement before the end of this financial year and she was researching and looking for best price and easy user interface, she would have proposals for the September meeting, Penny asked what if we just don't do it due to costs, the clerk had asked CALC and the authority would not fulfill its Annual Governance responsibilities.

19. CORRESPONDANCE

MHDC Communities Grant, the VHC was making an expression of wish to replace the toilet, kitchen windows and patio door. It was thought nothing else was required for the Parish Council at this time, the Village Hall car park was thought to 'good enough'.

20. INFORMATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Tuesday 22nd July 2023 at 7.30 pm at Earls Croome Village Hall

Minutes of last months and previous meetings and other relevant information can be found at:

[My Parish \(worcestershire.gov.uk\)](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/my-parish)

Meeting Closed 8.50pm.