

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 23rd
SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.**

PRESENT: Cllr Mark Smith (Chairman), Cllr Giles Steiger, Cllr Charlotte Bloomfield, Cllr Margaret Herbert, Cllr Ian Wilson, Cllr Tom Goodwin & Cllr Penny Green.

In attendance:, Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) & Nikki Nicholson (The Clerk).

1) APOLOGIES

County Councillor Martin Allen, District Councillor Jeremy Owenson & Ann Smith (Advisor to PC),

2) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Malcolm advised that the he had attended the tree warden forum held at Norton Village Hall, he would do a summary report to be circulated to the members.

3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

4) MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd July 2025 were proposed by Margaret, seconded by Ian, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

5) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

County – Martin’s report had been circulated and Mark drew members attention to the fact that MHDC had voted for the 2 Unitary Council option whereas WCC had voted for one Worcestershire Unitary Council.

District – no report had been received from Jeremy.

6) HIGHWAYS MATTERS-

The suggested VAS location on A38 was discussed and it was thought due to it being a 50MPH area the VAS may not be allowed. The clerk was awaiting clarification from WCC.

7) PARISH PATHS

Malcolm advised there was nothing to report and all the items at Donkey Lane had now been addressed. The suggestion of signage explaining the origins of the lane was discussed and members did not think it warranted the cost but were happy for the resident who suggested it to approach the heritage society should she wish to.

8) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

The members discussed the lengthsmen and if Parish Council were advertising the role or making the current person permanent, Charlotte asked the clerk to follow up with Tom Groves who potentially would do the work for £17 per hour, if the Parish Council can get him trained. The clerk advised that she had ascertained from WCC they will only allow people who are contracted to a Parish Council to attend the Lantra training. Members asked for a list of the lengthsmen duties to review what he can and can’t do. Malcolm advised that he had been out with Tim once, he thought he was doing a good job, and was knowledgeable on lengthsmen tasks and duties he offered to do an Autumn tour with Tim.

9) DEFIBRILLATOR

Charlotte confirmed the defib all operational.

10) COMMONS

Smithmoor – Tom advised that the Gilders had sheep grazing on the common. Tom advised that he would gather the ditch work debris to burn later this year.

Margaret advised that she was working on getting the 4 common areas registered with the land registry, this included the piece of land by Stonehall Cottage. Margaret asked the clerk to see if CALC could check the forms before she submitted them to save on solicitors fee. The registration with the Land Registry was required to access Stewardships/DEFRA funding, she hoped to group all 4 pieces of land together in one application costing £30

WCC Nature recovery strategy is being consulted on and Margaret advised it had very detailed recommendations including a draft local habitat map showing where they want trees and ponds etc.

Dunstall – The ditch repair had still not been completed and the clerk was asked to write to Phillip Troughton asking for a timescale as to when the work would be completed.

Marsh – Malcolm, Margaret and Penny had inspected the ash trees and marked those looking diseased, Malcolm thought a further circa 20 trees would need removing. The clerk would review the tree inspection advice and draw up a plan and include into the precept budget.

11) PLANNING

M/25/00770/LB. Associated Ref:M/25/00771/HP Location: The Old Rectory, Church Lane, Earls Croome, Worcester, WR8 9DE

Description of Proposal: Internal alterations to the main house, together with construction of single storey rear extension and extension of terrace area. APPROVED

M/24/01351/HP and associated ref: M/24/01352 The Annex, The Great Barn, Dunstall, 2 storey side extension - APPROVED

Site formally known as 'Baughton Stud' – Mark noted from Martin Allen's report that enforcement notices were being served. (No planning application had been submitted)

Margaret advised that the solar farm that was proposed and discussed earlier in the year on Croome Estate land was now not progressing, she had heard from the tenant, the Parish Council had not received any formal notifications.

Members asked the clerk to query where 'Sunset House' was Martin Allen had referred to his disappointment regarding its approval.

The complaint made by the resident who lives by the new 2025 entrance to the Sunshine Festival was discussed and members asked the clerk to email Martin stating that they fully supported her complaint and they thought the organisers should have written to residents in the vicinity of the new entrance.

12) FINANCE

Annual Risk Assessment – The risk register had been compiled and circulated, members all agreed to approve it and the Chairman signed the register.

The Bank reconciliation for July & August had been checked and confirmed by Penny & Charlotte via email.

Payments made since the last meeting were noted as follows:

Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- July (S/O)	£293.32
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
Churchyard Grant	£175.00
Mr T Hughes – lengthsman services – July	£130.00
Jack Marlew – Grass cutting	£40.00

Lloyds Bank – service charge	£4.25
Mr T Hughes – lengthsman services – August	£80.00
Jack Marklew – grass cutting	£40.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – August (S/O)	£293.32
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
Lloyds Banking – banking fee	£4.25

It was proposed by Penny and seconded by Giles and agreed by all to authorise the following payments:

a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – September (S/O)	£293.32
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
c) Mrs N Nicholson – clerk OPE	£27.00
d) Mr T Hughes – Lengthsman payment – September	£TBC
e) Mr T Hughes – lengthsman payment – October	£TBC

Remittance: WCC Lengthsman reimburse – July £143.00

Members agreed to open an instant access savings account and place the reserve into this account to earn interest to offset the banking fees that were introduced this year.

The clerk was asked to order the RBL Poppy wreath and have it delivered as usual to Ann and the Chairman would talk to Vince Bush about presenting it on behalf of the Parish Council as he had done in previous years.

13.) WEBSITE and gov.uk

The clerk advised that she ordered the domain name and was in the process of setting up the .gov email address, she asked if she could contract some IT support to set the new email up on her outlook and set an automated response from the old inbox, she thought this could be 1-2 hours work and her IT support man charged £45 per hour. Members all agreed.

14.) CORRESPONDANCE/OTHER- N/A

DATES OF THE NEXT MEETING:

25th November 2025 to be held at Earls Croome Village Hall, 7.30pm

Meeting closed 9.30pm