

PEOPLETON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk Lisa Cope, Email: peopletonpc@gmail.com Tel: 07773793185
Address: Walcote, Top Street, Charlton WR10 3LE

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 14th May 2025 at 7.00pm in Peopleton Village Hall

1. **Introduction:** Cllr Mason opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present
2. **Present:** Cllrs Mason, Bailey, Wall, Harbon, Killoran, Turner, Vickers, WCC & WDC Robinson and twenty-six members of the public.
3. **Apologies-** Cllr MacCalman sent his apologies.
4. **The minutes** of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting were approved as true and correct and signed by the Chairman.
5. **Chairman's Report-Tim Mason**

I would like to start this report on a positive note. Last year I reported that we had become aware that "Lomax's Field", at the end of Monks Way, was coming up for sale. The Parish Council was able to agree with Vale Landscape Heritage Trust that they would buy the land, with some help from both the Parish Council and Peopleton Charity Lands. The Trust would then plant and maintain a Community Orchard in the field with a small financial contribution from the Parish Council and voluntary help from the village. After a few hiccups, VLHT eventually took possession of the field in February and about 50 volunteers planted a selection of 59 fruit trees on 8th March.

In connection with the field, I should also pay tribute to Anne Lane, Bert Lomax's daughter, who was determined that the village should have the benefit of the field and ensured that VLHT were able to buy it. We plan to have an official opening of the field shortly and may include the name Lomax in the name of the orchard. Other details also have to be worked out about volunteers working and what happens to the fruit when we get some in a few years' time.

Unfortunately, a lot of Parish Council time, and the time and effort of a few councillors, has been taken up with Stone Arrow Farm and the waste business operating there. We have been liaising with several authorities including Wychavon DC, Worcestershire CC, the police and the Environment Agency. Whilst we recognise that a multi-agency operation takes time and the various authorities have to follow the law and collect their evidence, we, nevertheless, have become as exasperated as the rest of the village with the slow progress in closing down the operation. We are grateful to the many villagers who have collected evidence and written to Wychavon and others to urge action, particularly Mark Constanduros for writing regularly to various people, and John Morgan for the photographic evidence which he has provided. I am particularly grateful to the vice-chairman, David Harbon, who initially liaised with the police and Environment Agency and then, while I was on holiday - and since - has liaised with the local authorities. He has spent an enormous amount of time dealing with this. Like all of us, he is a volunteer.

David, Mark, Nigel Clay and I attended a meeting with the various agencies involved in investigating the activities at Stone Arrow Farm at the end of April. A report was circulated to the village on 1st May. It is clear that it is likely to take some time before their investigations reach any sort of conclusion.

On behalf of the council, I, like many parishioners, have written to our MP, Nigel Huddleston. He has taken an interest in what has been going on and been in touch with various officers from both Wychavon and Worcestershire. However, the issue is one for local government and he has to respect the divisions of responsibility between different tiers of government.

David Harbon also liaised with the police and the organisers of The Beltane Bash both after last year's event and in the run-up to the application for the event this year.

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I am pleased to say that the community buses to Worcester on Tuesdays and to Pershore on Fridays are still running. We will find out soon whether Worcestershire County Council will continue to operate these demand-responsive bus services - as I seem to say every year!

Over 180 villagers receive the monthly eNewsletter. In most cases these villagers are from separate households, so a large proportion of the village receive the newsletter. We are grateful to Mark Constanduros, who both maintains the village website voluntarily and ensures that the newsletter goes out each month. My only disappointment is that more village organisations do not make use of the newsletter and website. It is intended to complement the Bowline and goes out on the middle of the month. It also just covers our village.

Since our meeting last year, Jill Phillips, Richard Povey and Natalie Baxter have resigned from the council and we have welcomed Philip Killoran, Susan Turner and Jane Vickers to the council. We are grateful to Philip, Susan and Jane for agreeing to join. I should like to express the appreciation of the council to Jill Phillips who was a councillor for 10 years and served as chair and vice-chair. She worked hard for Peopleton and always made thoughtful contributions to our meetings. In particular, I appreciated her sage advice on many occasions. In addition, Paul Darby has recently moved away from the village and since our last meeting has tendered his resignation. Paul made useful contributions to our business and particularly kept an eye on planning applications affecting us.

I would like to mention Les Bailey who does a lot of work behind the scenes for the Parish Council. He is our Footpaths and Highways Officer and also takes responsibility for contacting the relevant departments when necessary. He tries to ensure that all footpaths and roads are maintained in good condition. Les chose the fruit trees for the orchard, which, I think, he enjoyed. He also liaises with Steve Pike, our Lengthsman, who does a lot of work to help keep our village in good condition; we are grateful for all of his efforts.

I am grateful to all councillors for their efforts during the past year. We would not be able to do our job without the support of our clerk, Lisa Cope. I should like to record my gratitude for her work and support for me over the last year. Finally, I should like to record the thanks of the whole council to Linda Robinson, our District and County Councillor. She attends all of our meetings and takes our concerns to the relevant people at County Hall or Wychavon District Council. We are lucky to have such good support.

6. County & District Councillor's Report- Linda Robinson

Recent County Council Election Results.

I am delighted to have been re-elected as your County Cllr. and look forward to representing you at what may be a very different political arrangement. Whilst nothing has been finalised yet currently no political party has overall control. Reform whilst having the highest number of Councillors do currently not have enough for the required majority so we shall have to see how this pans out over the coming weeks.

VE celebrations

Despite having felt like the vicar Geraldine in the infamous Vicar of Dibley Christmas special as I logged 10 village celebrations it was certainly well worth the effort. Thank you for your hospitality and warm welcome outside the church.

Local Authority Reorganisation Update

Scrapping Worcestershire's seven councils and replacing them with a single authority could save more than £20m a year, according to a report commissioned by WCC.

The external study by consultants PwC, also suggested an alternative option of splitting the county into two new unitary councils – north and south - could save £4.3m a year.

Politicians are currently divided over the two options, after the government asked council leaders to produce proposals to merge the county's two-tier system.

Councils are required to produce a business case for changes by the end of November.

Any new local authorities could be up and running as early as April 2028, following elections in May 2027.

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At present, Worcestershire has one county council, responsible for services including roads and social care, sitting above six district councils that run services such as bin collections and housing.

"One Worcestershire council would be more effective and efficient," said Simon Geraghty, the Conservative leader of the county council, at a scrutiny meeting on Tuesday, external.

Following the publication of Labour's devolution white paper, his administration commissioned consultants PwC to provide an independent review of the options.

The Future Worcestershire Proposal which suggested moving to a single "unitary" authority could cost £11.9m in one-off costs, but save £20.6m a year.

PwC estimated another option, of splitting the historic county in two, would cost £16.9m, and save only £4.3m a year.

Its consultants also said the proposed north and south councils would both face further financial challenges.

A northern council, formed from Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest would take a smaller share of council tax, but a higher proportion of deprived communities, for instance.

In addition, demand for expensive services such as home-to-school transport and special educational needs provision would "disproportionately impact" a southern council formed of Worcester, Wychavon and Malvern Hills, consultants found.

With regards the activities at Stone Arrow Farm, two MP's are now involved and various organisations are closely monitoring activity.

7. Reports from Village organisations:

Village Trust- Steve Smith Chairman

The AGM took place last week and this is Steve's last one as he steps away from the Trust after being Chairman for 10 years and on the committee for 14 years.

The Village Trust remains financially strong with bookings and grants totalling £80k this year (strongest year yet) but all proceeds are invested back into the building. A three year maintenance plan has been drawn up, now the fundraising will start to fund all that is planned, including a new sign for the front and some doors and audio equipment is looking to be replaced.

A new Hall Manager Ginny started in February and is settling in well.

Fundraising events are still key like the Pony and Dog show on Sunday 18th May and a successful dramatics evening was recently held and there will be more to come throughout the year, the Village Trust are also looking for fresh ideas to add variety so please do get in contact with any ideas.

Everyone thanked Steve Smith for his time and efforts to the village over the past 14 years.

Village Shop- Cllr Mason

The AGM takes place on 29th May 2025, a small loss is expected financially this year but there are significant reserves and so the Shop is secure which just need more people to use it.

8. West Mercia Police

A representative was unable to attend but the following report was sent:

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March 2025 1 – Vehicle crime 1 – Violent / Sexual Crime

Feb 2025 0

Jan 2025 1 – Possession of weapon 1 – Vehicle Crime

December 2024 1 – Violence / Sexual Offences

November 2024 1 - public order 1 – vehicle crime 1 – violence / sexual offence 1 – Theft

October 2024 1 – Burglary 1 – Vehicle Crime

September 2024 1 – Anti social behaviour

August 2024 1 – Violence / Sexual offence 1 – vehicle crime

July 2024 1 – Drugs 1 – Public Order 1 – Other crime

June 2024 3 – Anti social behaviour 1 – Public Order

9. Open Session

One parishioner asked why an injunction order had not been placed on activities at Stone Arrow Farm

One parishioner enquired again as to why a weight limit cannot be placed on the road through the village, Cllr Robinson explained that Highways had explored this, but it is necessary for agricultural vehicles to gain access and delivery vans, however a temporary weight restriction is being explored.

One parishioner enquired as to whether the Parish Council could gather funds to employ legal representation to establish what can be done to stop the activities at Stone Arrow Farm, Cllr Robinson suggested that this is not required at present.

One parishioner enquired as to whether legal representation is required at the Traffic Commissioners Enquiry for a licence applied for to operate 7 trucks and 10 trailers from Stone Arrow Farm. The Parish Council is not invited or represented at the enquiry as they were unable to make comment, but a number of residents who raised objections have been invited to speak at the meeting. They feel confident to do this themselves at present.

One parishioner enquired as to access to the Lomax Field Orchard and Cllr Bailey replied that the stile is to be replaced with a kissing gate.

One parishioner commented on the works that have been undertaken to restore the track at Barrells Bridge and Cllrs thanked Cllr Bailey for her persistence with Highways to get this complete.

One parishioner enquired as to whether an additional VAS sign could be placed on the exit to the village.

10. The date for the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 13th May 2026

Signed (Chairman).....

Date