

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 12th MAY 2025

Suckley Parish Church

This is NOT a formal Parish Council meeting but facilitated and funded by your Parish Council for the benefit of the community.

The Annual Meeting was open for all local electors of the Parish. Anyone was able to attend but only registered electors of the Parish to speak and vote in the meeting.

The minutes are draft until approved at the next annual meeting.

MINUTES

1. Welcome

The chairman of the Parish Council Richard Lewis thanked everyone for coming along, taking time out to attend the Annual Parish Meeting. It was their meeting.

2. Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting.

Held 20th May 2024 were approved as correct and signed by Richard Lewis Chairman of Suckley Parish Council.

3. Worcestershire County Council

Presented by Worcestershire County Councillor Christopher McSweeney

I have only been in the post for a couple of weeks looking after quite a few parishes, thank you for asking me along this evening. I don't live far from Suckley, married with two teenage sons. My details are now on the Worcestershire County Council website if you have any issues. I hope to hold drop in sessions in the future. Early days so I think that's about it.

4. Malvern Hills District Council.

Presented by District Councillor Peter Whatley

The main item on MHDC's agenda since last autumn has been our impending extinction. The government's local government reorganisation will see MHDC cease to exist in April 2028, replaced by a restructured "unitary" county council which will take on the 6 current Districts' functions, plus a new, higher level of government at regional level. In other words, two levels of administration will replace today's two levels – just at more cost and more remote from all of us, the council tax payers. The geography and number of councils at the new levels is under active discussion, but there is no consensus between current councils or between MHDC councillors. Sarah and I believe a single unitary council for Worcestershire is the most cost effective solution for council tax payers. We remain focused on what is important for residents

locally. Ultimately, the Secretary of State will announce a solution very late this year.

In the interim, MHDC is attempting to use the reserves set up over many years to benefit residents who paid for those reserves. The alternative would be to hand them as a gift to the new unitary authority, which will inherit the current county council's debts and will need to channel cash from council tax payers in MHDC and Wychavon to Bromsgrove and Redditch. Your parish council has access to MHDC's funding schemes and can channel requests from other parish organisations. Alas, we as individual councillors can not apply directly, though we can help the PC. Do please make funding requirements known to the parish council. In parallel with all this, the revised South Worcs Development Plan (SWDPr) has gone to the Planning Inspectorate for review and checking. We were pleased to be able to highlight to the Inspectors the lack of reality concerning Rushwick's proposed 1000+ housing allocation, especially the required transport infrastructure. Before the SWDPr went to the Inspectors, the Rushwick proposal had been formally assessed as "not viable", the only major housing proposal in SWDPr in that status. For "non viable", read "too expensive to deliver" with major costs coming from the need for often promised railway station. MHDC's current administration has continued to push for SWDPr's acceptance, despite the issues around Rushwick and other sites. The issue now is that even if SWDPr is approved by the Inspectors and subsequently MHDC's councillors, the Labour government's hugely increased targets for new house building will mean an SWDP update will need to start immediately. On the revised targets, MHDC currently has only a two year housing land supply. Other Districts are in a similar situation. That means it is very difficult legally to oppose housebuilding projects. One way or another, the current government will force MHDC, along with the other local planning authorities, to allocate land for housing. We have been told that if we fail to do so, the government will make decisions about where housing will go. For parishes, Neighbourhood Plans still afford some protection against uncontrolled housing development, though they are undoubtedly time consuming for PCs to achieve. Away from these "big ticket" topics, Sarah and I have supported residents with a wide variety of issues. Planning issues, including advocating at Planning Committee, pursuing Worcestershire CC highways and drainage problems, council tax issues and footpath blockages all spring to mind. It is a privilege to represent you: we will continue to do so vigorously for as long as higher levels of government permit.

5. West Mercia Police
Report from the Safer Neighbourhood Team read out by the Chairman
Richard Lewis

The figures represented crime reports created between 28th April 2024 to the 28th April 2025.

Crime Type	Number
Assault (with and without injury)	3
Public Order Offences	2
Theft	2

In the period searched for there have been 7 crimes in total in Suckley. There have been 3 incidents of anti-social behaviour which appear to originate from the same persons.

Over the last year the local policing team has conducted speed enforcement in areas where we are permitted to do so. We visited the local school and showed the reception class our vehicle and told them about what we do.

Suckley is patrolled daily when local officers are on duty, essentially this is every day.

6. Suckley Parish Council

Chairman's report. Presented by Richard Lewis

Welcome everyone

Firstly I would like to thank Karen Hanks for her help and support over the years and good luck to her and hope all goes well.

For anyone who doesn't know it, this is Lesley our new clerk. New being five months in the role. Having Lesley is a bit like Ronaldo sign for Hereford United, shes been great for us , and to say thank you for joining us on a low wage !

The parish council is looking for a new logo which the school has been asked if the children can get involved and help. The logo a move forward and I hope will be put on my robes as well !

We started a new lottery this year, selling 150 tickets, raising £2700 for the playing field. The first draw took place this evening, a really good way to raise funds. I would especially like to thank Michelle Cairns from the Cross Keys, who sold a lot of the tickets and been great for the community.

We're hoping to have a summer event on July 5th, which will involve a BBQ on the playing field and to meet the councillors. Maybe a game of rounder's, a few beers and a planned walk as well. If anyone would like to come along to that, it would be great, build a bit of community spirit.

A new parish Map Board has been installed, a big thank you to Cllr Ormerod, who's been working on it for three years and can be found by the car park at Damson Way.

I would like to thank the previous chairman for all his hard work and enthusiasm. I was elected as chairman in July last year, I would also like to thank John Sutton for producing the councils Facebook page which is proving a great way forward.

There still remains three vacancies on the parish council so if anyones interested please contact me.

We're also looking to have a 6-a-side football competition next year at the playing field to try and get more interest, and better usage out of them so that's our aim next year event wise.

Grants have been given to the Suckley Quarter Marathon which is wonderful idea, and the Good Neighbour Scheme.

The Malvern Hills District Council Community Recognition Scheme we've put forward Anne Lewis, who I think you'll all agree has done huge amount of work for this village.

We've also been talking to Atlas Tower, about supplying a mobile phone mast, with two or three areas still under consideration. A definitely a move forward with greater coverage for mobile phones. Ambulances will be changing over from airband.

Thank you to Mike Baldwin, who does all the grass cutting around the memorial area.

This year we formed the Playing Field Working Group which helps run the playing fields and makes it easier to manage.

Looking forward as a council, we all live in a lovely parish and all its wonderful parishioners, we hope to promote a real community spirit if we can. I would love it if we could all work together to make this wonderful village better. If that's at all possible then I've done what I wanted to do. And that's it from me.

Health & Wellbeing in the Parish. Presented by Cllr Andrew Mansell

This year health and wellbeing for the parish is really all about defibrillators. With the loss of three good friends in the last year to heart attacks I think we all know how important defibrillators are, so were pushing this forward on the parish councils agenda. Thank you to Lisa Reynolds who does the weekly checks on the current defibrillator at the school for us. It been very difficult to get grant funding, we keep applying for more defibrillator funds, my personal feeling because were such a rural area, we seem to come along way down the list. The bigger grant organisations seem to want to put their money in more populated areas, so were not very deserving. What we did as a parish council if a group of parishioners /houses would like to put together to fund a defibrillator and install it, we as a parish council would adopt it, carry out the weekly checks and ongoing maintenance which is most of the expenses. We have to replace the pads every few years and batteries as well. That's the councils initiative. Good stepping stone if we can get funding for a defibrillator. Moving on from that, we've been very lucky to get a Worcestershire County Council Grant for a defibrillator that wasn't easy, our first application turned down, we did some additional write ups, with additional letters from Doctor Richard Lewis, outlining why the area to be situated so important and we were fortunate to get funding for a second defibrillator which I personally think a good achievement for us which will be placed at the Nelson Pub at Longley Green which has the second highest number of houses. The Nelson has agreed to put it on the wall side and also provide the electricity. Thank you very much to the Bradleys. We hope to see it in the next couple of months. The Bruff Defibrillator if anyone asks, whilst they are happy for it to be publically used, they will not put it on the NHS circuit. Also we'll be getting a new trauma kit for controlling high bleeds from accidents.

A discussion took place with members of the public around CPR and the need for training and locations for defibrillators which was acknowledged.

Playing Field Working Group
Presented by Cllr Andy Mansell

The working group has been set up reporting to the parish council, not actually making decisions. One of the reasons for doing this was to be able to claim back the vat. 3 parish councillors and 6 volunteers, it is hoped that the playing fields become self funded, more volunteers needed. The stone path has been completed stopping muddy boots coming into the pavilion and any broken slabs replaced and slab path extended. Plenty more jobs to be done including the removal of the compacted sand with a brush.

A grant applied for £15,000 from HMDC with no need to match fund, for an upgrade to the pavilion including an outside toilet and the replacement of the weather boarding at the all weather pitch. Will be looking at the play equipment and the surface, any other ideas welcome.

Neighbourhood Plan
Presented by Andrew Ford MHDC Principal Planning Officer

He's also involved in the South Worcestershire development plan (SWDP) But this evening hes here to talk about Neighbourhood Plans.

The Neighbourhood planning empowers local communities to shape the development and growth of their area through the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Preparation requires significant time, expertise and financial resources.

Neighbourhood plans contribute to more democratic, locally- informed planning decisions and support the delivery of sustainable development aligned with community needs and aspirations. Nationally 5000 plans, and about a dozen plans in the Malvern area.

Suckley has applied for the first stage in the process of the Neighbourhood Plan and in June this to be formalised. If adopted the planning authority would need to be mindful of this plan when planning applications are submitted. There's no size fits all, they can protect green spaces and economical development and opportunities including sites for development. If a site identified for housing opportunities this would help when considering planning applications and would free up the housing opportunities. Help would be provided to produce a neighbourhood plan and funding including a grant of £10,000, a parish such as Suckley may cost £13,000, taking two years to produce. Draft plans consulted on with the community and would be sent to MHDC and these tested against current policies. If more than 50% of the turnout in favour of the plan then that's adopted.

A Neighbourhood plan can't stop development, but it can give you more say in how a site is developed and more control in the process. A design plan can also sit alongside it. It also gives the parish council a framework in which to be able to respond to planning applications.

Cllr Jew mentioned that once matters progressed and funding achieved a questionnaire would go out to all parishioners. A Neighbourhood Plan so important to the village.

7. Reports from local organisations & Trusts:-

Parochial Church Council St Mary Magdalene Church, Suckley Parochial Parish Council Report – Presented by Rev Anne Potter, Team Rector.

The Church building has had another active year serving various communities here in Suckley. The school continues to be the main hirer with the nave offering a large space for different activities supporting the delivering of the curriculum. The PTA have held after school disco's and fund-raising events, including a bouncathon – which involved having a bouncy castle here in the nave. It was great to see the children having fun whilst raising funds. Another regular hirer is Anjuli Yoga and hopefully the heated floor has proven to be a real asset for those taking part.

The PCC, initially with the Good Neighbour Scheme, host a monthly Warm Welcome session offering an opportunity for people to drop in for a light lunch and some craft activities. Thanks go to Anne Lewis, Penny Hewlett, Catherine Owen and their team for ensuring this worthwhile community has carried on meeting.

It is good to see the building being used for evening meetings, including tonight. The PCC have a policy that any community organisations or events are not charged as the Church is here to serve as a community hub. The PCC are grateful to SPACE, set up initially to raise funds for the re-ordering project and who continue to raise funds through events such as the ceilidh, for ongoing work. In the past year the PCC has completed the North Transept and had some guttering work carried out on the north side.

The PCC are also grateful to the Suckley Festival Committee for the funds they raise to ensure this church, despite the small worshipping congregation, except for festivals, remains healthy and sustainable for future generations. Once again last September the PCC were very happy to host the newly named Suckley Festival, evolved from the BFG which started in and around the Church when it still had pews.

It is great to see the church building, this ancient symbol of Village Life, alive and being used by young and old alike and may it long continue. On a personal note, as the incumbent, I would like to express special thanks to Catherine Owen for all she gives to this community, as an active member of PCC, Warm Welcome, SPACE, Suckley Festival Committee, the Hill Trust and the Historical Society. A true community node.

Hill Trust Report (Village Hall) – Presented by Anne Potter on behalf of the Chair, Felicity Beaumont

The trustees of the Hill Trust, which has overall responsibility for the fabric and finance of the Village Hall, are pleased to report that financially they remain stable with enough funds to ensure the building is maintained. In the past year, to assist with the heat disappearing into the roof, a false ceiling has been installed. Also, some rotten trees in the grounds have been taken down. The main hirer continues to be Fledglings Nursery.

The trustees are grateful to John Sutton for, alongside his role as Treasurer, taking care of the building and acting as a voluntary caretaker when required

The History Society

Presented by Annette Savage

An update provided on what the society had been doing over the year which included several informal events. Photographs of the area and of the houses over the years showing changes being taken and documents. They want to build up an archive of this type of material. A talk given on The Whitehouse, Suckley Knowle and Suckley Green which was very informative. On June 11th we will be meeting at Knightwick Chapel for a guided tour of the beautiful chapel, everyone welcome to join us. It is hoped to be able to continue with documenting the area and would be delighted to see any old documents and photos anyone has. If anyone has any ideas and topics they would like to be discussed to please let them know.

The Good Neighbour Scheme

Presented by Amanda Kitteringham

An apology sent from Anne Lewis's who was unable to attend. The scheme started around 10 years now with currently 50 volunteers. The aim is to supply short term help in an emergency situation, such as walking the dog, transport to hospital, domestic support. Last year had been a very quiet year for the scheme, available Monday to Friday 9 till 5, so please don't have an emergency at the weekend! Email contact has seldom been needed.

Time to take a fresh look at what Suckley needs and how best those needs can be met. Several longstanding core members have left this year, and we have enjoyed welcoming new faces that have introduced themselves at our Hop Shed gatherings or recent meetings. I think we all agree it is a good time to look at what Suckley needs and how best we can help the world go round locally. A new future with new talents brought together.

The monthly Warm Welcome in the church takes place the first Monday each first Wednesday from 12pm until 4pm is always a visit. Folk working from home find a welcome break and good company. Familiar faces enjoy the opportunity to meet together over a delicious home made refreshments and try their hands at new hobbies and activities. If you enjoy something artistic or 'crafty' that you'd like to share with others, come along and bring a friend.

We are still looking for someone to be our treasurer. We have minimal activity here but would still benefit from having a bank account to formalise things. The Parish Council has always generously supported us and our few running expenses. Is there anyone willing to be our treasurer? We could also do with another 2 or 3 on the rota to receive calls, less than one a month, willingness and a listening ear are all that is needed. Faces old, faces new, skills are borrowed, smiling welcome if you're feeling blue. Suckley folk are very self sufficient, but the Good Neighbour Scheme, supported by our parish council is always highly valued. The parish council have just given us £100 to support our expenses.

The Suckley Charities

Presented by Cllr Howard Ormerod

This small entity has existed in Suckley since 1885, not very well known. From that date until this year there had been only one change to the governing document (The Trust Deeds) issued by the Charity Commission. As a result, the wording of this document had become out of date; for example, it allowed the charities to fund the supply of coal, clothing, bedding fuel and food to “deserving and necessitous persons” or to Provident Clubs and Societies. Contributions could also be made to Infirmarys and Hospitals as well as towards the provision of Nurses for the sick. In short these provisions predated the modern welfare state including the NHS.

The trustees had found it increasingly difficult to adhere to some of these requirements, compounded by a reduction in the income which, in turn had seen the charity downgraded to an unregistered organisation. Nevertheless, it was decided that there may be a continuing role for the charities provided that a degree of modernisation could be implemented. The charities’ investments were reviewed and re-invested and consultation with the Charities Commission has recently resulted in changes to the Trust Deeds which were due to be formally accepted on 13 May 2025. It was also the aim to adopt the rather newer status of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), one advantage of which would be to provide a greater degree of protection for the trustees. Once the changes have been implemented, the move to CIO status will be pursued.

Suckley Womble

Presented by Catherine Armstrong

I have been running the Suckley Womble for about 8 years. It started when I was out, seeing all the litter in the curb side. I have about 50 Womble volunteers on my list but of course they can’t always make it. The next Womble is Saturday 31st May meeting at the Hop Shed for about two hours. All the safety reports, risk assessments undertaken, normally we meet back at the Hop Shed for a beer and food. In the past food made but with pizzas being made at the Hop Shed it didn’t seem quite right to bring their own food. The parish council thanked for their grant support of £100 which would help provide a couple of slices of pizza for the Womblers. They seem to be short of about 4 wombles so more helpers would be nice. They do have to work in pairs due to health and safety and children can come along. During lockdown, “adopt a street” took place. The first Womble gathered around 40 bags of litter, normally once a year Womble they can collect around 28 sacks of litter. Its hoped the Womble keeps the litter in the village down.

The Suckley Festival

Presented by Catherine Armstrong

The next Suckley Festival (formally the BFG) will be held around the church grounds as usual on Saturday 20th September starting at 3pm. As many of you know, the Suckley Festival is a self-financed event arranged with the sole purpose of providing a family fun-filled day for the locals in Suckley and surrounds.

A non-ticketed event, for funding we rely only on donations from the entrance gate and any sponsorship we can raise, and we’ve been fortunate enough in the

past 8 years to make enough money to pay for the event then give any profits to charity. In recent years the charity has been SPACE which, as you already know, is the organisation that is working to make the church a hub for all locals to use and enjoy whether they be church goers or not.

Over the past years, the Suckley parish council have been very generous in providing a grant to the festival (ex BFG). The argument by some that it would be easier to just give the money directly to the charity, misses the point that the money is used to help put on a brilliant festival for the locals (its's main remit) which then goes on to raise money for the actual charity (although this is a side perk- the aim of the event is to cover all costs and put on a fantastic festival- any profit is purely a happy bonus).

With this in mind, we would be extremely grateful if the parish council might approve a sizeable donation towards the 2025 Suckley Festival again please. The money will be used towards more signage, paying for extra safety lighting, electrics, fencing, toilets etc. Having said all that, we know the parish council are under some steep financial constraints this year and we won't take umbrage if you feel forced to deny assisting in any way this year. However, if there was any funding being set aside to help with this type of good fun family event, then we have to be in the pot to be considered worthy recipients, so we hope you don't mind us asking again.

As well as money we are in need of volunteers. Last year we had 77 volunteers which we were eternally grateful for, but we could do with more.

Suckley Primary School. **Presentation by Helen Field.**

Hand out presented to all at the meeting, which outlined the events and activities held by the school over the year as sadly the school children unable to attend.

May

Mini marathon on the local playing fields the week of the London Marathon to encourage participation at the Suckley Quarter marathon.

Celebrating VE day, planting our own produce to use for cooking etc

April

A whole school text linked to environmental and sustainability which we were inspired to read after our Little Litter Picker workshop where we collected litter in our local community, they found a crisp packet from 1982

March

Welcomed 'The History Man' into school to aid our Roman and Explorer topic where we used the church space to lay out all of the artifacts he shared with us. We invited the local PCSO team to introduce themselves to the children and talk about internet safety

February

We supported the NSPCC national number day, raising money for a charity close to our hearts whilst making 'number fun' through dressing up and having number problems to solve throughout the days activities.

January

Completed our gymnastics and dance lessons in the church

December

Entered the tree decorating competition at Bromyard Tree Festival and wrote Christmas Wishes on decorations. All children took part in Christingle and Nativity services

November

Small schools football and netball tournament and reading festival in Malvern.

October

An 'Apple Celebration' Harvest looking at harvest in our local area. Apple bake off with each class designing and apple product. A local farmer came to talk about harvesting in Suckley, brought his tractor down. Visits to local farms. Welcomed a paralympic athlete to talk to the children about her experiences in Paris Olympics

September

Finals of STEM Worcestershire with two children . Opened our Sensory Pathway following donations from local trusts.

Current Project:

- Extension to our smallest classroom to meet the increased numbers and better disabled access

Future Plans:

- To improve our playground facilities and surfacing
- The pond area
- The 'wild area' chippings
- Giant playground games e.g. Chess, snakes and ladders
- Role play areas

SPACE

Presented by Catherine Owen

SPACE is a registered community charity, Suckley Parish Academy and Community Enterprises. SPACE is an initiative to bring new life to the Suckley community by providing 21st Century facilities within a large well situated church building, offering this scattered rural village a much needed active hub, useful to all, including our adjacent primary school and being its primary function the parish church. The vicar has already outline the building works at the church with further investment needed further down the line for more improvements. Membership has increased and are indebted to Worcestershire County Councillor Chris Mcsweeny for taking on the role as Membership Secretary. Always looking for help with putting on activities, fundraising, awareness raising, and community events. We hope to become involved in the arts events with Live and Local and hope to put on more events often with the help of the PCC and SPACE. Anyone with music skills or theatre to help with these activities to let them know.

This summer 7th June Kayle, taking place at the church, tickets available at the school via Becky, Hope Shed. Please do come along. A big thank you to Dave and Lynn Barber who help donate their skills and music with support of the band Stone the Crows. If they had to pay for that they would make very little money. They are also very grateful for the donations to SPACE from the Suckley

Marathon. For more information we do have website which is to be much improved. Lastly an open day will be organised to showcase the work that has been achieved in the church, Thank you.

8. Open Forum – opportunity for residents to raise any issues concerning the parish and their aspirations for the future.

A thank you received by the parish council for all their work, it was appreciated. The chairman stated that it had not been easy.

For those who do not know who I am , I'm Carol Luton. I've been in the village for 46 years, my husband's 76, and I taken an interest in things in the village. It was brought to my attention 12 months ago, that I had been responsible at that time for a a grant being refused at the playing fields. At the time I was told, I thought should I challenge it or leave it. I thought to leave it. This year I'm wholly or partially responsible now for an increase in your parish precept. Now I want to tell you that the day I handed my keys over to Howard which I helped run for over 20 years on the council, or even before the council had any interest in the playing fields, Its only been since 2020 that the parish council took over the playing fields following a grant which had to be match funded. I have to tell you that I knew nothing of that grant, because I had blocked all communication with that person, you all know who that is. I want it minuted that I had no involvement in the record spending of money before procurement taking place. The parish council funds healthy as it should have been. That money a target and it was going to be spent no matter what. I didn't want a part of it. I have been asked to come back as a parish councillor but I've done my bit and don't want to. But I want you all to know, that I absolutely knew nothing about that grant and feel bitter that a person has destroyed what has been a fantastic parish council and you struggle to attract people to volunteer as you don't know what might be stirred up and just to make trouble. I want it put on record that I'm not responsible. A round of applause given.

The meeting closed at 9.08pm

Signed

Dated.....