

# **Little Comberton Parish Council**

**2025/13**

## **May Annual Meeting of the Parish Council - Minutes Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025, 7.30pm Village Hall**

**Parish Councillors Present:** N Jamieson, C Rabbette, L Schmitz, D Smaylen, D Smithson & N Smithson.

**Clerk/RFO:** Nicola Harding

**In attendance:** Three parishioners

**1. Apologies**

Received from District Cllr B. Hardman & County Cllr A. Hardman.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

**3. Election of Chairman**

Cllr Smaylen proposed to nominate Cllr Jamieson as chairman, seconded by Cllr N. Smithson, unanimously supported by all Cllrs. Cllr Jamieson agreed to continue in the role for another year and the Chairman's declaration of office was duly signed.

**4. Election of Vice-Chairman**

Due to existing work responsibilities of remaining Cllrs, it was proposed by Cllr N Smithson, seconded by Cllr Rabbette, to share the role of vice-chairman in the future absence of the chairman as required.

**5. Parishioner's Comments**

*Trees:* Attention was drawn to the mistletoe growth on trees along Wick Road. Despite the previous best endeavors of village volunteers, the infestation is progressively worsening. A local contact is prepared to cut the affected trees and lift the roots, however it was noted that engagement with a nearby resident is appropriate in the first instance before any further action can be taken.

*Action:* Cllr Smaylen to make an initial approach on behalf of the parish council. Include as an agenda item for further discussion at the June meeting.

*Public Rights of Way:* Attention was drawn to the public right of way at the rear of Pool Close (PRoW #501). The new farming tenant has ploughed the field and commenced planting, however the footpath and way-marking posts require reinstatement. It was agreed that the Senior public rights of way officer at WCC would be able to advise further, therefore a request would be made with the parish footpaths warden to make contact for comment. *Action:* Cllr Jamieson to update footpaths warden.

*Village posts:* A parishioner requested clarity on the purpose of the recently installed village posts positioned at the residential start to the village towards Orchard Drive. An explanation was provided by Cllr Jamieson regarding the reasons for their position and purpose, as advised by Worcestershire County Council Highways, and it was also noted that the posts are constructed from plastic and are designed to snap upon impact.

*Parish projects:* Regarding agenda item 9, a parishioner suggested an idea for a whole village photograph, as undertaken previously 25 years ago. All Cllrs agreed that this was a great option for future consideration, should funding become available. It was confirmed that the previous village photographs would be reinstated at the village hall following the recent decorations, once volunteers were available to do so. A query was also raised regarding the agenda item for the consideration of expenditure for registration of land at the memorial garden. It was confirmed that this would be discussed and considered under finance item 15c, as reported and minuted.

*Insurance:* A query was raised regarding agenda finance item 15b, parish insurance. It was confirmed that this related to the legal requirement for the annual policy renewal of the council's public and employer's liability insurance, and this figure related to the total premium due for the policy renewal, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2026.

**6. Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

Proposed Cllr D Smithson, seconded Cllr Rabbette, all in favour to approve the minutes as a true record.

**7. Progress reports from Parish Activities - brief updates:**

- a. *Lengthsman:* The Clerk provided updates regarding the 2025/26 WCC lengthsman budget & existing hourly rate increases applied in neighbouring parishes. Budget implications of potential options of hourly rates and working hours were shared and discussed. It was proposed by Cllr Jamieson, seconded by Cllr N Smithson, all in favour, to approve in principle a rate of £19.00 per hours for 10 hours per month, subject to a discussion with the lengthsman.

*Action:* Clerk to liaise with lengthsman, update Cllrs and prepare the revised 2025/26 contract for completion.

- b. *Airband poles:* Wick Road: Cllr Jamieson confirmed updates received from an Airband manager following a recent site visit and internal discussions. Airband's senior management team had considered and agreed that at this time the redundant poles will remain in place, based on current operational requirements and the role the infrastructure plays in supporting essential services. Further updates will be provided as received. *Action:* Cllr Jamieson.

- c. *Trees:* Wick Road Mistletoe: As reported under item 5, parishioner's comments.

- d. *Bonfires:* It was reminded that Cllrs N Smithson, Schmitz & Rabbette have prepared a draft guidance document to be shared with Cllrs for agreement, ahead of circulating to the village via email/ by hand for those residents not on the email system.  
*Action: Cllrs N Smithson, Schmitz & Rabbette.*
- e. *Village parking:* Cllr Jamieson noted his apologies regarding wording he has agreed to draft, to be circulated and discussed at the next meeting.  
*Action: Cllr Jamieson.*
- f. *Footpaths/PRoW:* As reported under item 5, parishioner's comments. It was confirmed that the land agent had made previous contact with the tenant who is aware of the duty to reinstate the public right of way, therefore it was agreed to request that the footpath warden liaise with the senior public rights of way officer at WCC for further updates.  
*Action: Cllr Jamieson to liaise with footpath warden.*

**8. Parish Council's data and digital compliance: 2025/26 annual return**

Following confirmation of a new assertion as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the 2025/26 financial year regarding digital and data compliance, Cllr D Smithson & the Clerk had explored further information regarding the requirement that every authority must have a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain. There will be a requirement for parish councils to publish specific documentation onto a generic website (as currently adhered to on the Worcestershire County Council site which has been suggested will cease to exist in the near future.) A discussion ensued and it was considered that this is a costly exercise and the current village website is well used, containing important historical information, therefore it was agreed that Cllr D Smithson would explore the costs for potential registration of a domain name in the first instance, and a separate Parish Council business website later in the financial year, as a more cost effective way of fulfilling these obligations.

*Action: Cllr D Smithson to liaise with a recommended, registered provider to discuss the process and cost implications further.*

**9. Parish Projects**

A suggestion raised for another parish photograph was raised and reported under item 5, parishioner's comments.

Cllr Jamieson confirmed he will be in contact with a parishioner regarding consideration of a potential seating area adjacent to the village hall. Options have also been explored to establish if the orchard area opposite the village hall might become available and at what cost. It was agreed that a Cllr would make an initial approach without commitment, to establish any further information for future consideration.

*Action: Cllr Jamieson.*

**10. To note model Calc standing orders and approved financial regulations**

These were noted. The Clerk reported that Nalc had recently approved a revised 2024 financial regulations template which was circulated for Cllr's information ahead of the meeting. The Clerk agreed to review any changes and report at the next meeting, as this is required to be tailored to suit a council's individual size and needs, to be formally approved by the full council.

*Action: Clerk to review and include as an agenda item at the June meeting.*

**11. To note the Code of Conduct**

Cllrs had been circulated a copy of the approved code of conduct as a reminder of its contents and this was noted for information.

**12. To consider and appoint Councillor roles:** The following roles were agreed by Cllrs:

*Lengthsman & Village email:* Cllr Jamieson

*Police & Village Hall liaison:* Cllr N Smithson

*Quarterly bank reconciliations & council email/website:* Cllr D Smithson

*Online payment authorisations & Sports & Social committee liaison:* Cllr Rabbette

**13. District and County Councillor's reports**

- **County Cllr report:** Cllr Hardman provided a copy of his annual report ahead of the meeting, due to his attendance at two other meetings. This is appended to the minutes for information.
- **District Cllr report:** A new leader of the district Council will be appointed and detailed discussions continue regarding the government's proposed structural changes to a unitary system in the area, which will see the removal of the local districts. Further updates are expected in the coming months regarding the revised South Worcestershire Development Plan, to be provided once available.

**14. Planning**

**W/25/00495/GPDQ:** Land and Buildings (OS 9640 4333) Little Comberton Pershore - Notification for Prior Approval for the proposed change of use of an Agricultural Buildings to 2 no. dwelling houses and associated operational development – this application has been refused & full details are available via: <https://plan.wychavon.gov.uk/Planning/Display/W/25/00495/GPDQ>

**W/25/00444/FUL: Bredon View Holiday Park Estate at, Great Comberton Golf Club, Pershore Road, Great Comberton**  
**Description of Proposal:** The change of use of land for the siting of additional holiday lodges and decking, associated internal access provision, parking, landscaping including amenity areas, drainage, associated works and the redevelopment of the remaining golf course to provide a new, nine-hole course. Comments of objection were forwarded on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025 & a decision remains pending. The application has been requested for consideration by the district council's planning committee by District Cllr Hardman and a date will be circulated once received. *Action: Monitor.*

**W/23/01519/AGR: Old House Farm** – A discussion took place regarding the agricultural prior notification for the replacement of an expired agricultural building, approved by Wychavon in August 2023. Concerns had been received regarding the scale & proposed use of this building, therefore advice has been requested from the district council regarding technicalities for any further comment. *Action: Monitor/updates from District Cllr Hardman as received.*

**15. Finance****a) Current Balances**

Treasurer's Account	£15,707.37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£15,707.37</b>

**b) Payments to report since the April meeting:**

Salary: May 2025	£405.08
Clerk's monthly Expenses: Energy	£12.00

**Payments to approve following the meeting:**

Clerk's expenses: Printing (Ink)	£18.41
Clerk's overtime: 2.25 hours	£35.00
Worcs Calc 2025 annual subscription fee	£252.11
Village Hall: April 25 hire	£13.00
Parish insurance 1/6/25-31/5/26	£376.61
Z. Kirby: Internal audit fee 2024/25 accounts	£180.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,308.79</b>

**Income to report:**

Precept (i) 2025-26	£3,800.00
Council Tax Support Grant (i) 2025-26	£162.00

*Proposed Cllr Smaylen, seconded Cllr Rabbette, all in favour to approve the payments presented.*

**c) Proposal to consider and approve expenditure @ up to £830.00 exc VAT for legal advice and first registration of possessory title of land at parish memorial garden.**

A discussion took place regarding a quote received to formally register land at the memorial garden in the name of the parish council. Given that historical documents evidence that in 1934 the then trustees of the garden confirmed their agreement for the parish council to take over its care, a precedent has subsequently been set in the remaining years since this document. It was agreed therefore that it is not justifiable to consider such additional costs at this time, in view of the expenditure to be incurred for data and digital compliance in this financial year, as reported in item 8.

**d) Proposal to consider and approve quotations for website & email transition: as reported under item 8; to be revisited at the next meeting.****e) Audited accounts & Annual Return: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 - Internal auditor report: The Clerk shared details of the internal audit conducted in April 2025. No significant areas of weakness or concern had been identified and advisory points for attention were shared in the report for future council consideration.**

*Certificate of Exemption:* The Clerk informed the meeting of the council's qualifying criteria to certify itself exempt from a limited assurance review, as a smaller authority with neither a gross income or gross expenditure at £25,000 or less for the 2024/25 financial year. Proposed Cllr Schmitz, seconded Cllr Smaylen, all in favour to sign the certificate of exemption, to be forwarded to the external auditors for information. *Action: Clerk to submit to external auditor, no later than 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.*

**2025/16**

(i) Proposal to approve and sign Section 1: Annual governance statement: Cllr Jamieson read out each assertion in the governance statement. Proposed Cllr Schmitz, seconded Cllr Smaylen, all in favour to approve each statement and the document was duly signed by the Chairman & Clerk.

(ii) Proposal to approve and sign Section 2: Accounting statements for the 2024/25 financial year had been prepared by the clerk and forwarded to Cllrs for their information. The statement had been checked and verified by the internal auditor and was therefore signed as accurate. Proposed Cllr Schmitz, seconded Cllr Smaylen, all in favour.

**f) To note the period of public rights to inspect the financial records of the Council, to commence on 3/6/25 – 14/7/26.**

*Action: Clerk to publish all relevant accounting documents before 1<sup>st</sup> July on a publicly available website as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities: Certificate of Exemption, Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25, Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25, Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25, analysis of variances, bank reconciliation & Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights.*

## 16. Correspondence

Parishioner A Freedom of Information request had been received via email on 27 April 2025 & circulated to Cllrs. A draft response had been prepared and circulated by the Clerk for Cllr's consideration at the meeting. It was confirmed that all Cllrs had noted the details of the response and Cllr Jamieson proposed formal approval of its contents. All Cllrs confirmed their agreement that the response be forwarded to the parishioner.

*Action: Clerk.*

A subsequent email had been received by the parishioner on 11<sup>th</sup> May requesting a copy of the 2016 minutes where the parish council at that time agreed not to replace the tree which had been previously removed from the memorial garden. The email was requested to be shared with the meeting and the chairman read out its contents. The parish council had considered a request to plant a replacement tree in November 2024, as referred to in the parishioner's email and minuted, however following subsequent concerns raised regarding highways visibility at the crossroads once a tree had matured, as well as the additional maintenance which would be required in time, the council had reconsidered this request. Following WCC Highways advice and further discussions in January – April 2025, it had unanimously been agreed and minuted that the parish council have agreed not to replace a tree at this time. It was therefore confirmed by Cllr Jamieson, supported by all Cllrs, that the issue will not be revisited further and the matter is now closed.

## Councillor's reports and items for future agenda

It was suggested that annual financial reports of village organisations would be helpful to share with the parish council, when available, in order to consider any future funding requests received.

*Action: Cllr Rabbette & Cllr N Smithson to update relevant village organisations.*

## Trees, Wick Road: Mistletoe

## Digital & Data compliance

## Policies

## Financial regulations & risk assessment

**16. Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 7.30 pm**

The Clerk was asked to leave the meeting while councillors discussed remuneration in recognition of the growing experience and development training of the clerk. It was agreed that Cllr Smaylen would make enquiries regarding Clerk's salary scales and report back at the next meeting.

**The Clerk was asked to return and the meeting was closed at 8.30pm.**

**Signed** .....

**Date.....**

**Chairman**