

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 24th MARCH 2026 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.

PRESENT: Cllr Mark Smith (Chairman) Cllr Ian Wilson, Cllr Penny Green, Cllr Charlotte Bloomfield & Cllr Margaret Herbert

In attendance: County Councillor Martin Allen, Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) Ann Smith (Advisor to PC) & Nikki Nicholson (The Clerk).

Public: None

1) APOLOGIES

District Councillor Jeremy Owenson, Cllr Giles Steiger & Cllr Tom Goodwin

2) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

4) MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2026 were proposed by Penny, seconded by Margaret, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

5) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

County – Martin's delivered his report as follows:

COUNCIL TAX AND FINANCES

The government allowed WCC to increase the council tax by an additional 4%, so a maximum of 9% all together. I voted against the increase of 8.98% which was passed by a handful of votes at the February meeting. Both the LibDems and Labour members were not in chamber to vote either way, thus allowing Reform a free hand.

Also in February, MHDC passed a zero percent increase, I voted in favour of that motion which saves you £5.00.

HEAD OF HIGHWAYS CLLR KARL PERKS SACKED

Reforms head of highways, Cllr Perks has been sacked by his leader Joe Monk.

He has been replaced by Cllr Nik Price.

DEMENTIA CAFÉ

A new dementia café has started, based in Upton's Rugby Club, it meets every other Tuesday morning from 1030 – 1200, I attended yesterday and was pleased to see how many people attended, there were games, laughter and I was really pleased I went.

If you would like any other information please contact Deb Ashwell of Ashwell Home Care Services by either telephoning 01684 778750 or by email info@ashwellhomecareservices.co.uk

SPEED SURVEY A38

24/02/26 I emailed you the last three speed surveys.

There has been no real change in speeds, but there appears to be a drop in vehicle movements of about 1000 per day, which surprises me.

I have asked WCC more than once to change the speed limits, I am sorry, but they will not.

	Daily Volume	Mean Av. Speed	85th percentile Speed
Northbound	2,442	47	53
Southbound	2,051	43	49
Combined	4,493	<i>Figures above shown in miles per hour</i>	

The injury collision data shows only one recorded collision in the last 3 years which was likely due to other external factors and not the highway, therefore there is no justification for any traffic calming measures at this location.

#11311 PAVEMENT OUTSIDE EARLS CROOME HOUSE NEEDS ATTENTION

I reported this to Highways on 12.03.26.

EARLS CROOME A38 FOOTWAY ON EASTERN SIDE HAS TEMPORARY BARRIERS ON THE PAVEMENT

As you may have seen, there are temporary barriers around the pavement on the A38 eastern side almost opposite The Yorkshire Grey. The pavement is in a very poor state and when workmen started to repair it they found that a badger set is there, therefore, ecology will have to make an assessment of the area before work can continue and it is likely that work may not be able to start until November/December because of the badger season. For now, the barriers provide a safe walking route.

DISTRICT MATTERS

DISTRICT COUNCIL TAX

As I mentioned earlier, MHDC has not increased its council tax share this year, I voted for this proposal.

SWDPR

I am pleased to let you know that on Thursday the SWDPR will have been adopted.

This will give us a 5-year land supply with a 5% buffer. In June this year, the next revised local plan will need to be started.

District – Jeremy's report had been circulated, as follows:

SWDP Review reaching its closing stages. MHDC has passed some new Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) for consultation. The purpose of this is to ensure that MHDC retains control of these areas once the new Government Framework comes into place. ECPC is invited to respond: These include:

- a. Air Quality

- b. Affordable Housing
- c. Sustainable Building and Design.

MHDC has agreed to fund Community Action for the next four years. Community Action provide support, particularly for travel, for rural areas and the funding was passed unanimously at Executive Committee. This allows the volunteers to continue to deliver this vital service. It was noted that the Village Hall windows had been funded by this and that EC Village Hall was now a designated 'HUB'

MHDC is also looking at increasing community grants. This includes:

- d. Investment in Community Hubs
- e. Community Mental Health
- f. Community Arts and Culture
- g. Increase in Ward Member budgets – this gives your Ward Councillors a larger budget to fund local initiatives.

Grants for local businesses. MHDC has agreed a new round of grant funding for local businesses for Capital investments that will help them grow. Feel free to refer prospective companies to me and I can help signpost within MHDC.

6) HIGHWAYS MATTERS-

Verge at Emblem Villa – It was noted that due to the spoil being placed onto the verge, it was no longer accessible to pedestrians to get off the carriageway, it was suggested that in the future when the work was completed the spoil could be loaded onto a trailer for removal the clerk was asked to discuss a solution with Tom.

A dip in the carriageway near to the Lodge was discussed and Penny would report it on the WCC hub with photos if it continued to be a concern.

It was noted, with thanks to Martin, that nearly all the siding out on the A38 had been completed except for a small section which would be complete in the autumn due to badger setts in the location.

7) PARISH PATHS

Malcolm reported no new issues.

He advised there was a broken bridge on the path behind Dunstall Castle.

Residents had approached Penny regarding an increase in dog waste being left on the pavements with in EC village, Malcolm agreed to erect x3 signs he had and the clerk was asked to request a further sign from MHDC to be placed on the chain-link fence at the entrance to the footpath at North Quay and to patrol.

8) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

The clerk advised there had been no increase to the annual budget from the lengthsman scheme for 26/27 and that this calculated to 9 hours a month for the current lengthsman at £20ph. The Council had been under budget in 25/26 due to carrying a lengthsman vacancy for a few months.

Malcolm asked if the lengthsman could reinstate the drips and uncover the water hydrant at the verge near Emblem Villa and offered to have some time showing the lengthsman summer issues.

9) BUS SHELTER

The bus shelter on the A38 was discussed, the roof was in poor repair, the bus shelter had been reviewed by both Malcolm and the lengthsman and there were no safety concerns but without repair it would only continue to deteriorate.

The bus shelter is no longer in use as there is no regular bus service stopping there, one option discussed was to remove the bus shelter. Malcolm offered to add some funds to repair and make good if this is possible and Mark offered cedar if the broken shingles could be replaced. The clerk was asked to contact a contractor she thought could help Inand to arrange for him to meet with Malcolm to review what was possible and at what cost, members thought removing the bus shelter could cost more than the repair.

10) DEFIBRILLATOR

Charlotte confirmed the defib is all operational.

11) COMMONS

Smithmoor – Tom had confirmed via email that all Smithmoor work was complete, he had a bonfire and cleared the rest, harrowed and planted some herbal ley grass seed on the area where the bonfire was.

Tom also confirmed the track down to Smithmoor has been trimmed back including the hedges

Malcolm advised he had been at Smithmoor highlighting the good self-seeded oaks.

The suggested creation of additional ponds, requested by a resident in January was discussed and it was thought that it would not be manageable – the clerk was asked to write to the resident to advise.

The suggestion of a late hay harvest was discussed and it was thought this could be difficult to manage for Steve Coole, hay needed to be made when the correct weather permitted a good yield. It was agreed to ask Steve to leave a 3 meter perimeter around the edge when cutting the hay for wildlife and birds etc, but it was noted this would need topping in the autumn at least bi-annually or the brambles etc would encroach/Grow onto the grass areas.

Margaret advised that all the land registry documents had been submitted. Margaret advised that many funding options were closed to Parish Councils, it was also noted that the Parish Council was a small rural Council with limited resources to research further funding options or even the recourses to manage such funding. Margaret was planning to devise a Commons management Plan with the working party over the coming months.

Dunstall – The ditch repair had still not been completed but the key has been returned and the gate was locked using the PC keys. Mark agreed to call Mr Troughton when the weather improved enough to remind him to borrow they key and make good the ditch damage.

Malcolm had cleared overhanging trees at Red Deer and it was thought the farmer should be able to access the field via this access as has always been the case, with no need to regularly cross Dunstall Common.

Marsh – as advised in January the ash die back would be reviewed again in full leaf in the summer and that currently there was no action required.

It was noted that some horses were being taken to graze albeit on lead ropes on Marsh Common and there was a concern that horse manure would not be good for the hay quality, it was also noted that the residents in question don't have grazing rights, the clerk was asked to write to the residents at Orchard Cottage to advise them.

There was a discussion regarding the faded by-law signage needed refreshing for clarity, it was thought adhesive to place over the existing faded signage could be a cost-effective solution.

12) PLANNING

M/26/00211/PIP. Location: Bluebell Farm, Pershore Road, Earls Croome, Worcester, WR8 9DJ Description of Proposal: Permission in principle for the erection of between 1 and 3 dwellings. The Parish Council had not made any comments, there was a discussion about the limited comments that could be made on Permission in Principle applications and the 14 day consultations and the impact of these.

Baughton Stud – There had been no update on the application or enforcement activities at Baughton Stud, it was noted that there appear to be 4 new pitches being created at Baughton View, the clerk would ascertain if this was within current planning permissions.

13) FINANCE

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

Payments made since the last meeting were noted as follows:

ICO – Data protection fee	£47.00
Mr T Hughes – Lengthsman payment – January	£180.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- February (S/O)	£293.32
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
Lloyds Bank – service charge	£4.25
Mr T Hughes – lengthsman services – February	£160.00
J Marklew – grass cutting	£40.00

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

a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – March (S/O)	£293.32
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
c) Mrs N Nicholson – clerk OPE	£TBC
d) Mr T Hughes – lengthsman payment – March	£TBC
e) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – April (S/O)	£302.12
f) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
g) Mr T Hughes – lengthsman payment April	£TBC

Remittance: WCC lengthsman reimburse Oct/Nov/Dec - £425.00
WCC M Allen VAS Grant £120.00

13) WEBSITE and gov.uk

The clerk advised that she would order the website, as agreed last month.

14) LITTER PICK

It was noted that the litter pick had taken place it had been well attended, the clerk was asked to send official thanks to Vince Pierce who once again used his van to gather the litter at the Village Hall for MHDC to collect. It was also noted that the Yorkshire Grey had offered an afternoon tea for the volunteers.

15) CORRESPONDANCE/OTHER

Local Government reorganisation – there was a consultation on the two options for Worcestershire, these included a North/South option called 'Transform Worcestershire' – this was being supported by MHDC, the other option was 'One Worcestershire' this was being supported by the northern districts and WCC. Members were asked to complete the response to the consultation individually if they felt strongly towards either option. It was noted it would ultimately be a Central Government decision.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, 19th May, to be held at Earls Croome Village Hall, 7.30pm.

**To be preceded by the Annual Parish meeting at 7pm.
All Councilors were asked to attend if possible.**

Meeting closed 9.25pm