

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 25th
JANUARY 2025 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.**

PRESENT: Cllr Ian Wilson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Penny Green, Cllr Charlotte Bloomfield, Cllr Giles Steiger & Cllr Margaret Herbert

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

Public: Ann Smith

1) APOLOGIES

District Councillor Jeremy Owenson, Cllr Mark Smith (Chairman), Malcolm Tomkins (Tree Warden) & 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 November 2025 were proposed by Penny, seconded by Charlotte, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

5) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

County – Martin's delivered his report as follows:

CHANGES AT COUNTY HALL

The leader of WCC, Cllr Jo Monk has removed Cllr Taylor from the cabinet. He was until a few months ago the deputy leader and then headed the Local Government Reorganisation team. Cllr Wharton is now the deputy leader.

REFORM ADMINISTRATION APPOINT ANOTHER CABINET POST

Bromsgrove councillor Nik Price who was elected in May has now been appointed to the post of delivery, operations, governance and efficiency (DOGE)

BRIEFING AND BUDGET

The legal deadline for WCC to vote through a budget is the 11th of March, or 1st of April if the Secretary of State becomes involved.

The County Council is battling a budget shortfall for 2026/27 of more than £70m and has requested permission to have the option to increase council tax by 10%.

In addition, the WCC has had to ask central government for Exceptional Financial Support of £65M, on top of the £33m the last administration had to ask for last year.

If council tax is increased by an extra 5%, so raising the tax to 10%, would bring in £18m year on year, while an extra 2 ½% would bring in £9m year on year.

Just for interest I thought you would like to know that last year Highways carried out 30K safety related fixes.

CHANGE OF BUDGET MEETING DATES

The council meeting date of 19th February has been cancelled.

A new council meeting date of the 26th of February has been set, with a reserve date of 6th of March lined up for another meeting if required.

One of the reasons for the change is that the application for Exceptional Financial Support will not be decided by the government until around the 20th of February.

FUNDS FOR THE REPAIR OF YOUR VASS UNIT

I would like to invite you to send me an application for funding to get the VASS unit repaired.

#8769 A38 EARLS CROOME FOOTWAY NEEDED ATTENTION

It was lovely to see that the A38 pavement has now been Sided out.

Since the work has been completed, I have reported the following issues:

#10813 PAVEMENT BROKEN UP ON THE A38 NEAR QUAY LANE TURN 12/01/26

10814 FOLLOWING SIDING OUT, PART OF THE FOOTWAY IS UNDER THE HEDGE AND CANNOT BE USED.
12/01/26

#10815 JUST SOUTH OF THE BUS STOP NEAR THE GARDEN CENTRE ON THE A38 IS MISSING, REPORTED
12/01/26

OTHER ISSUES REPORTED TO HIGHWAYS

#10793 GATE AND LOCK REQUIRED AT THE A38/A4104 ROUNDABOUT 09.01.26 09.01.26

#10816 HEDGE JUST SOUTH OF A38 GARDEN CENTRE IS BLOCKING THE FOOTWAY 12.01.26.

#10817 VERGE MASTERS OPPOSITE SIDE TO THE GARDEN CENTRE ON THE A38 AT EARLS CROOME NEED
ATTENTION. 12.01.26

DISTRICT MATTERS

LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The government have withdrawn their funding for Town and Parish councils to produce a local neighbourhood plan. As from the next financial year MHDC will provide assistance with funding of £10K. Part of producing a LNP is the requirement to do a Housing Needs Assessment, I understand that Andy Ford from MHDC can assist with this.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION SCHEME RETURNS

I have emailed you details about the community recognition scheme.

District – no report had been received from Jeremy.

6) HIGHWAYS MATTERS-

County Councillor Allen offered ECPC a grant to send the VAS to Westcotec to have it assessed for repairs, members thanked Cllr Allen and asked the clerk to make the arrangements.

Members thanked County Councillor Allen for getting the pavements on both the A404 and the A38 sided out, it was noted there was a further area from the Garden centre to the top of the bank still to be addressed.

Penny advised she had reported overhanging trees opposite North Quay to WCC.

It was noted that there had been some awful fly tipping on to Tom's land opposite the war memorial.

7) PARISH PATHS

Following WCC correspondence regarding footpath closures, Malcolm had reported that it was only a tiny length affecting ECPC near the bottom of 'Donkey Lane' and all was expected due to the quarry works.

8) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

There was pooling surface water, adjacent to the Lodge where the new tarmac was laid, the clerk was to report to WCC.

There was a discussion regarding the ditch clearance from Emblem Villa towards Dunstall, members agreed it was good the ditch was being kept clear and flowing but they were very concerned regarding the spoil being left on the very narrow verges in the area, it was impossible now for pedestrians to get out of the carriageway. – Tom was going to have a word with the owners of Emblem Villa as he is digging out the ditch without Tom's permission...I don't think Tom was at the meeting?

9) DEFIBRILLATOR

Charlotte confirmed the defib is all operational.

10) COMMONS

Smithmoor – Giles had request Tom cuts the reeds and long grass on his side of the access track at the previous meeting, this was still to be actioned.

It was noted due to the terribly wet weather, the clear up the debris from the ditch clearance work had not been completed, the clerk was asked to make sure this was done prior to the bird nesting season.

The sheep grazing payment had been received from the Gilders.

Margaret had reported there had been no progress on the environmental project and a meeting of the working party was required, she was in the process of registering the Commons with DEFRA not the Land Registry, it was likely to cost £30. Margaret advised it was looking likely that access to funding may not be available to the PC as a local authority.

The request for ponds that had been made by a resident at the last meeting was discussed and it was thought some more 'ditch' ponds could be created along the left side of the common but creating ponds or adding trees in the body of the common would not be practical. The clerk would discuss this with S Coole. It was noted that Malcolm had planted some trees around the edges of Smithmoor.

Dunstall – The ditch repair had still not been completed but the Croome Estate Land Steward was aware and the ditch would be repaired when the area was dry enough to do so.

A chain and padlock had been installed on the gate, members discussed that this was not acceptable and should be removed immediately, the gate was locked by a special lock due to a number of unauthorised access incidents in the 1970/80's, there had never been a regular access across the common and the access had been granted as a one off good will gesture for the maize harvest, the regular access was up Red Deer Drive, Malcolm was going to check if any of ECPC trees were causing access issues.

Margaret advised there was a mess on the top bank of Dunstall opposite Red Deer drive – **was there an action here?**

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.

11) PLANNING

M/25/01757/HP & LB The Old rectory, Earls Croome – Widening of gate piers and linking of walls to piers. New doorway in garden wall and associated landscaping including terrace awning - Approved
M/25/01798/HP: The Old Stable, Red Deer Farm, Dunstall, Earls Croome, Worcester, WR8 9DF. Proposed single storey rear extension. Approved

M/25/01864/FUL – Baughton Stud, Baughton objection had been submitted to the Retrospective Planning Application, on the grounds that the application is insufficiently robust, lack of information, in a flood zone, no ref to SWDPR and no Highways access plan.

12) FINANCE

The Bank reconciliation for November & December 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- November (S/O)	£293.32
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
Mr T Hughes – lengthsman services – November	£140.00
Lloyds Bank – service charge	£4.25
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – December (S/O)	£293.32
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
T Hughes – lengthsman services – December	£180.00
Lloyds bank – service charge	£4.25

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

a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – January (S/O)	£293.32
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
c) Mr T Hughes – Lengthsman payment – January	£TBC
d) Mr T Hughes – lengthsman payment – February	£TBC

Remittance: WCC lengthsman reimburse Sept - £132.00

Gilders – sheep grazing £289.40

13.) WEBSITE and gov.uk

The clerk advised that the best price website she had found was £149.99 from HugoFox to build the website with an ongoing annual fee of £120. It was proposed by Penny and seconded by Giles to commission this to ensure it was in place and fully compliant by September 2026 when the MyParishPages will cease to exist.

14.) CORRESPONDANCE/OTHER

The annual litter pick will be held on the first Sunday in March, Charlotte would put the banner up and co-ordinate, the clerk was asked to order 2 rolls of blue bin sacks from MHDC and arrange for the bag collection on the Monday

after the litter pick. Margaret advised she was away that weekend, but she would litter pick the Commons in advance.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, 24th March, to be held at Earls Croome Village Hall, 7.30pm.

Meeting closed 8.55pm