

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

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

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

Public: One resident in attendance

1) APOLOGIES

District Councillor Jeremy Owenson, Cllr Giles Steiger & Cllr Margaret Herbert

2) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The resident who has attended in the past, asked for an update on the wildlife/environmental project and requested that an increase in ponds for Smithmoor Common be considered. The Chairman advised that this would be referred to Margaret as the lead on that working party. The clerk advised that Margaret's update was that there had been no progress since the last meeting due to members time constraints.

Malcolm asked that mesh protecting the self-seeded saplings at Smithmoor Common be removed explaining that ECPC had a tree planting programme, but not planting in the open areas of the commons.

3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

4) MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2025 were proposed by Charlotte, seconded by Penny, agreed by all and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

5) REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

County – Martin's delivered his report as follows:

NEW COUNTY COUNCILLOR

A new County Councillor for Bromsgrove South has been voted in; Sam Ammar is a LibDem and I wish her well.

UNITARY AUTHORITY'S

At the last county council meeting it was approved that officers at WCC were to continue with a One Worcestershire Unitary Authority.

The figures produced are very interesting and if believable, clearly show a huge benefit financially to One Worcestershire option rather than the Two.

NEW SCHOOL

Also, at the last meeting the administration proposed that the £63m school be scrapped, this motion was defeated. However, WCC do not have the funds to build a new school, nor do I believe they will have the funds in the short to medium term.

CUTS PROPOSED BY THE COUNTY COUNCILS' ADMINISTRATION FAIL

During the last county council meeting, the present administration presented a proposal to carry out wide sweeping cuts. They made the mistake of proposing all the cuts as a job lot and it was voted down. I have respectfully pointed out to the Councillor who made the proposal that if he had asked for a vote, item to item, most would have been approved.

MY MOTION YET AGAIN FOR FREE COMMERCIAL BUS TRAVEL FOR VETERANS

In 2022 I had a motion to let Service Personnel and Veterans of His Majesty's Forces use the commercial bus service for free, in line with the Pensioners bus pass. The previous administration all voted for it and then did nothing.

I am pleased to report that at the last county council meeting I presented the case again and it will now commence from the 6th of April 2026.

#10011 FOOTWAY ON A4104

24/09/25 I sent you an email from Highways about my request for the A4104 from the Memorial to Baughton to be Sided out. As you no doubt read, WCC does not have the funds available to Side the footway out. I was then told that the Parish Gang would try to do something, this was then changed to - its too big for the Parish Gang - and has been referred back to the footway team.

DISTRICT MATTERS

Food Waste

The Environment Act 2021 requires Waste Collection authorities, including Malvern Hills District Council, to collect food waste from all households from April 2026.

To prepare for the introduction of this new service, the Council has ordered the new vehicles required and these will be available for use in accordance with the Government's timetable. The vehicles and containers will be purchased using a grant provided by Government as well as £300,000 of the Council's own funds. This was agreed at Executive Committee on 17 June 2025.

The annual running cost of delivering the new service has been estimated at £1.2m - £1.3m and the Council is currently awaiting clarification from the UK Government on the level of new burdens support it will provide.

Once the level of financial support is clear, a further report will be considered by Council. It is expected that the new service will be introduced on a phased basis starting c 6 – 9 months after we have certainty that the annual running costs can be met. This will allow for the recruitment and training of the new staff required.

A further requirement to provide a commercial food waste collection service from April 25 has already been achieved.

NEW DEPOT

MHDC have purchased a new depot near the old site. The old site will continue to be utilized. I understand that the new site will be used to house the new vehicles MHDC will need to collect food waste next year.

5 YEAR LAND SUPPLY UPDATE

Inspectors scrutinising the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) are satisfied Malvern Hills District, Worcester City and Wychavon District Councils would have a five-year housing land supply, with a 5% buffer, once the Plan was adopted.

The confirmation follows a series of public hearings to examine the Plan to ensure it is sound and legally compliant and additional evidence provided by the three councils about progress on the Worcester Urban extensions.

District – no report had been received from Jeremy but he had drawn attention to MHDC funding available for Neighbourhood Plans.

There was a discussion regarding the MHDC funding for Neighbourhood Plans, The Chairman advised that the Planning Working Group would discuss this in more detail and consider the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Earls Croome or perhaps a joint plan with neighbouring parishes and report back in the January meeting.

6) HIGHWAYS MATTERS-

The safety of the bus shelter was discussed and the clerk was asked to request the lengthsman review and suggest what could be done to make it more secure.

It was noted that the travellers at the roundabout had indicated they would be staying there until Christmas selling holly wreaths.

7) PARISH PATHS

Malcolm advised there was nothing to report and all the paths were passable.
Malcolm thanked Julia for her work at Donkey Lane and advised that WCC had addressed the rest.

It was noted that the diversion at Goodwin's Farm had been waymarked.

8) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

It was noted there was a gate post in the verge on Quay Lane dangerously close to the carriageway, the clerk was asked to refer to the lengthsman.

It was noted that a number of tractors from Croome Composting were speeding through the Village rather than using Turnpike on their way to Hanley Castle and the clerk was asked to write to Phil Troughton regarding this.

Members decided that with the constraints on the VAS locations and it being unable to be utilised on the A38 and the cost of service and batteries it was no longer required and the clerk was asked to advise Martin Allen and see if he could re-allocate it.

9) DEFIBRILLATOR

Charlotte confirmed the defib is all operational and replacement pads had been included in the 26.27 precept budget.

10) COMMONS

Smithmoor – Giles had asked the clerk to request Tom cuts the reeds and long grass on his side of the access track.

Tom was asked to clear up the debris from the ditch clearance before the next meeting in January
Tom was asked to organise the sheep grazing payment with the Gilders.

As discussed in democratic time, Margaret had reported there had been no progress on the environmental project, there would be further updates in January.

Dunstall – The ditch repair had still not been completed despite x2 letters from the clerk, Margaret had also spoken to Mr Troughton who said he will do the repair. Mr Troughton had contacted Mark who had also requested the repair.

Mr Troughton had contacted Mark as the Chairman of the Parish Council to request a 3rd key or different lock system for the gate across Dunstall Castle, members discussed the historic access for the fields beyond Dunstall had been accessed via Red Deer Farm and access was granted as a one off for the maize harvest 2024. The gate had a specially designed lock that had been installed to ensure security of access. Steve Coole had recently had a second key cut, this key was currently lent to Mr Troughton but should be kept with the clerk. The clerk was asked to write to the Croome Estate Land Steward and try and ascertain if the access across the common was the official right of access.

Marsh – Malcolm advised that the ash die back would be reviewed again in full leaf in the summer and that currently there was no action required. Funding had been included in the precept budget in case the summer review necessitates any works.

11) PLANNING

M/25/01692/HP The Old Rectory, Earls Croome – construction of ancillary pavilion, greenhouse and construction of new garden wall – No objection.

M/25/01798/HP: The Old Stable, Red Deer Farm, Dunstall, Earls Croome, Worcester, WR8 9DF. Proposed single storey rear extension. No Objection submitted.

Site formally known as ‘Baughton Stud’ – It was noted that no application had come forward and members assumed enforcement notices would be served soon.

12) FINANCE

Precept Budget – the proposed precept budget had been circulated and was reviewed, it was noted that some reserves had been used on tree works and that the balance brought forward April 2025 had been £6123 compared with £8282 in April 2024. It was therefore thought a higher increase of circa 10% should be applied especially as Government requirements were increasing costs including delivering a new website by September 2026. It was proposed by Penny to request a precept of £5830, this was seconded by Mark and agreed by all.

The Bank reconciliation for September & October 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- September (S/O)	£293.32
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
Mr T Hughes – lengthsman services – September	£120.00
Jack Marlew – Grass cutting	£40.00
Lloyds Bank – service charge	£4.25
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – October (S/O)	£293.32
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
Mitcham PC Solutions – IT set up emails	£90.00
Jack Marklew – grass cutting	£40.00
RBL – Poppy Wreath	£20.00
T Hughes – lengthsman services – October	£180.00
Steve Coole – fence posts for Marsh Common	£46.68

It was proposed by Ian and seconded by Tom and agreed by all to authorise the following payments:

a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – November (S/O)	£293.32
b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
c) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk OPE	£22.60
d) Mr T Hughes – Lengthsman payment – November	£TBC
e) Mr T Hughes – lengthsman payment – December	£TBC

Remittance: WCC lengthsman reimburse Aug - £88.00

MHDC Precept 2 - £2650

National Grid Wayleave payment £90.08

13.) WEBSITE and gov.uk – IT Policy adoption.

The clerk advised that the new email address: clerk@earlscroome-pc.gov.uk had all been successfully set up and she had informed all agencies, it was now on her phone and via outlook on her laptop and a divert was in place on the old email address.

The clerk was asked to see if the IT support person would quote to build the website using HugoFox as the ongoing years costs were £120PA, compared with the circa £300PA quoted from Parish Online.

The IT policy was reviewed, Penny was thanked for her work on the policy. It was proposed by Charlotte to adopt the policy, seconded by Tom and agreed by all.

14.) CORRESPONDANCE/OTHER- N/A

DATES OF NEXT YEARS MEETING:

All Tuesdays, 27th January, 24th March, 19th May, 28th July, 22nd September & 24th November.

All to be held at Earls Croome Village Hall, 7.30pm.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held prior to the monthly Parish Council meeting at 7.00pm on 19th May.

Meeting closed 8.55pm