

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 21st JULY 2026 AT 7.30 PM AT EARLS CROOME VILLAGE HALL.

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

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

Public: One

1) APOLOGIES

District Councillor Jeremy Owenson, Cllr Mark Smith and Cllr Tom Goodwin

2) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The resident raised her concerns regarding the mowing of the hay at Smithmoor Common, she had attended previously to request a section was left un-mowed but this had not happened during the recent hay making. Members advised her that a 3 meter perimeter had been agreed and left uncut, this was not what she had meant by an area she wanted an area that rotated each year including the centre of the common not just the outer edge.

The resident gave a lot of information regarding ways to manage the Common to enhance the wildlife, some of which had been explored previously and rejected due to clerical time and costs. Members/Malcolm advised the resident that there was a reciprocal agreement with a local contractor to maintain all three Commons in return for the hay. The agreement saved the Parish Council thousands of pounds in mowing, hedge cutting and other maintenance costs, so any change in hay making that would detrimentally affect the yield for the contractor was unacceptable.

The resident suggested that income could be generated via the wildflower seeds and potentially had some contacts to explore this option. Members thanked the resident and would review the options again over the winter period. The resident was advised that there was an active Commons working party that reviewed regularly the flora and fauna and the management of the commons and there was active protection of self-seeding saplings by the tree warden on the edges of the Commons so as not to affect grazing or hay making in the central areas.

3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

4) MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2026 were proposed by Giles, 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:

REPORT TO EARLS CROOME PARISH COUNCIL

JULY 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

As you will be aware, the Government has now confirmed plans for the future of local councils in Worcestershire.

From 1 April 2028, the county's current seven borough, city, district and county councils will be replaced with two unitary councils: one covering North Worcestershire and one covering South Worcestershire.

The decision follows Government consultation and consideration of the two proposals submitted for reorganisation in Worcestershire.

Visit our dedicated web page www.malvern hills.gov.uk/about-your-council/local-government-reorganisation for more information.

DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIVE-YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY.

The councils have now published an updated five-year housing land supply report on 30 June 2026 incorporating the most recent monitoring data. The report details how the councils are able to demonstrate a 5.48-year supply with a 20% buffer.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) requires at Paragraph 78 c) that a 20% buffer is included on the five-year housing land supply from 1 July 2026 where an adopted Local Plan has a housing requirement adopted in the last five years examined against a previous version of the NPPF, and whose annual average housing requirement is 80% or less of the most up-to-date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method set out in national planning practice guidance.

Paragraph 78 c) is now engaged for the South Worcestershire Councils, due to the adoption of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review in March 2026.

For more information or to read the report, please use this link: [Monitoring Reports - South Worcestershire Development Plan.](#)

HOWEVER, MHDC FAIL TO PERFORM

The government has decided that MHDC has not performed well enough in the matter of planning applications. On 27th March 2026, the Chief Planner wrote to MHDC confirming that the Council was at risk of designation for quality of decision-making for applications for major development, based on data for local planning appeals for the two years up to the end of March 2025 and appeal decisions to the end of December 2025. For this period, the performance of the Council was 12%. This exceeds the threshold of less than 10% of an authority's decisions being overturned at appeal. Now developers applying to build over 10 houses or more can request that their planning application bypasses MHDC and goes straight to the Planning Inspectorate.

I understand MHDC are objecting; let's hope they are successful.

Members discussed the 'failure to perform notice' that had been given to MHDC re Planning. Allowing applicants applying for 10 houses or more to apply directly to the inspectorate rather than the local authority.

(A note here – in reality this is not happening because they lose the right to appeal so generally applicants will still apply to MHDC and then if rejected and they feel they have grounds to appeal they will same as before!)

Bin Collection Update

Collections will continue to be made from 6am until further notice to take account of the weather conditions.

MHDC are asking residents to present their waste and recycling at their usual collection point from 6am for the crew to access.

6) HIGHWAYS MATTERS-

Margaret asked if the clerk had written to Highways regarding the roundabouts. She had not as she was awaiting the correct email address from M Allen.

7) PARISH PATHS

Malcolm reported that the proactive strimming had taken place.

8) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

Malcolm advised that the many of the signs in the Parish required cutting out and the Elm Suckers at the Quay Lane junction to A38 needed cutting back as they were causing visibility issues.

He advised re pushing back creating more space at the bend by the Village hall car park.

Penny advised that the brambles from hedge on the footpath to the Crucifix were dangerous a resident had tripped over at the location so these needed an urgent cut back

There was a general discussion regarding his work and members asked the clerk to circulate his time sheet so they can review what he is doing, Malcolm reminded members to tell the clerk if they saw items that needed addressing that could be minor Highways cutting back etc that the lengthsmen can do.

9) VAS

It was noted that Westcotec had assessed the VAS unit and it was fully operational the issue appears to be that the battery isn't holding charge.

Members discussed the cost of replacing the VAS with a solar unit but it was thought to be cost prohibitive. The clerk had ascertained that x2 batteries can be purchased from an Ebay shop for circa £120 this would enable the Parish Council to retain an operational VAS.

Members discussed the time costs for the lengthsmen changing batteries and rotating the sign, the clerk would ascertain more details on this and Charloitte suggested members could volunteer to do this to utilise the lengthsmen for more appropriate Highways tasks.

It was proposed by Margaret and seconded by Penny to go ahead and purchase the batteries, the logistics and time the lengthsmen will charge can be reviewed again in the September meeting.

10) BUS SHELTER

The item was moved to September meeting – The clerk was asked to recirculate the information and quote provided by S Coldbreath so members can review for discussion in September.

11) DEFIBRILLATOR

Charlotte advised that the battery was running out faster than it should, she was investigating and would have to replace if it was not operating correctly.

New pads will be ordered in September – these are included in the 26/27 budget.

12) COMMONS

Smithmoor – It was noted that the hay making had been completed.

Dunstall – Nothing to report.

Marsh – as advised in January the ash die back would be reviewed again in full leaf and reported on in September.

It was noted that National Grid has applied for planning permission for the works they have requested to do on the pylon and stays, the clerk expects she will be informed when they have a date for the works.

S Coole has offered to reduce the height of the roadside trees, they are causing visibility issues for higher vehicles and farm machinery, he will complete this as part of his reciprocal Commons management agreement, it will be a 3 man job and will all be completed from the Common side so no road safety issues. Members all agreed for him to go-ahead.

Signage – It was noted that Martin Allen was looking to give a £500 grant towards this from his MHDC divisional fund, there was a requirement for 8 signs but members thought the price difference for 8 or 10 could be negligible and if it was the clerk should order 10. (1x Smithmoor, 4x Marsh and 3 x Dunstall) design and wording to be reviewed in September meeting.

13) PLANNING

M/26/00918/OL – National Grid pylon works Marsh Common.

Baughton Stud – It was noted that the Planning Officer was awaiting further Highways details and then to reconsult with WCC Highways before determining the application.

Baughton View – The clerk advised that the additional hardstanding had been reported to Enforcement and they were anticipating a planning application for additional pitches to be submitted.

14) FINANCE

The Bank reconciliation for May & June had been checked and confirmed by Penny & Charlotte via email. Payments made since the last meeting were noted as follows:

Mr T Hughes – Lengthsman payment – April	£160.00
J Marklew – Grass cutting	£40.00
Lloyds Bank – service charge	£5.17
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary- May (S/O)	£316.83
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
CAS Insurance services – annual Insurance	£437.19
J Marklew – grass cutting	£40.00
Mr T Hughes – lengthsman payment – May	£160.00
Lloyds Bank – service charge	£4.25
J Marklew – grass cutting	£40.00
T Hughes – lengthsman services – June	£120.00
Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk salary – June (S/O)	£316.83
Mrs N Nicholson – clerk working from home allowance (S/O)	£20.00
PPC Earls Croome – Churchyard grant	£175.00
J Marklew – grassing cutting	£40.00
Earls Croome Village Hall – annual meeting room hire	£100.00
Lloyds bank – service charge	£4.25
Mrs N Nicholson – clerk OPE	£33.08

Members reviewed and authorize the following payments:

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| a) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – July (S/O) | £316.83 |
| b) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O) | £20.00 |
| c) Mr T Hughes – lengthsman payment – July | £TBC |
| d) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk Salary – August (S/O) | £316.83 |

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| e) Mrs N Nicholson – Clerk working from home allowance (S/O) | £20.00 |
| f) Mr T Hughes – lengthsman payment August | £TBC |

Remittance:

HMRC – VAT reimburse £38.56

13) WEBSITE and gov.uk

The clerk advised the website had been ordered, the initial review and snagging had been sent to HugoFox and a new updated version had been circulated, Members were given 2 weeks to further review and notify the clerk of any additional changes. The clerk was also asked to add a link to the new Village Hall website. The clerk would book her training and the website would be launched for use for the September meeting.

15) CORRESPONDENCE/OTHER

Local Government reorganisation – It was noted there has been various communications from MHDC and CALC regarding the Government decision on the North and South Worcestershire Unitary Councils.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, 22nd September, to be held at Earls Croome Village Hall, 7.30pm.

Meeting closed 9.10pm