

PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Pencombe Group Parish Council
held on

Tuesday 22 April 2025 at 7.30pm in Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall

Councillors Present;

Cllr. J. Lewis Chairman
Cllr. D. Legge
Cllrs. P. Thomas

Cllr. T. Brazier
Cllr. T. Burge
Cllr C. Hadley

In Attendance: Ward Councillor Bruce Baker, Allan Drew Parish Clerk

Members of the Public: 11 members of the public attended.

43/25 To receive: apologies for absence

All Councillors attended the meeting.

44/25 To receive: Declarations of Interest and written requests for Dispensation

None received

45/25 To receive and approve: draft minutes of the meeting of 25 March 2024

The draft minutes of the meeting on 25 March 2025 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

The confidential minute 41/25 was also signed.

46/25 To receive: matters arising not otherwise covered in the minutes

Mr Mottram provided a verbal on a Herefordshire Council workshop he had attended for Parish Footpath Officers. The main points arising from that workshop were-

- Herefordshire Council acknowledge that management of footpaths across the County has been inconsistent.
- PROW have the same legal status as any other highway.
- Parish Councils can undertake some works on PROW. (Large works are Herefordshire responsibility, minor works are Parish responsibility).
- Responsibility shared with landowners. Enforcement is Herefordshire responsibility
- The definitive map is often different from other map sources. New definitive maps will be prepared.
- Some equipment/PPE will be provided for PFOs
- Becky Legge is not recorded as PFO for Little Cowarne.
- Money is tight given the amount of work required.

47/25 To receive: a verbal update from the Ward Councillor

Cllr. Baker provided the following information-

- £1m had been allocated for research into the pollution in the River Wye
- The number of speed checks on Herefordshire roads is increasing.
- The Local Plan has been re-started following the increased mandatory housing target from central Government. As a consequence NDPs older than five years will have no weight in the Planning system.

- Re-surfacing of Herefordshire's A, B & C roads is increasing. Last year £8m was spent, this year the target is £11m with an additional £2.5m on surface dressing.
- The A417 from Burley Gate to Newtown will be closed for re-surfacing from 22 April until May 7.
- Herefordshire Council would like to know if any residents in the Group Parishes suffered from fuel poverty. Cllr. Baker reminded the meeting that there are Warm Home Grants available to households with low incomes.
- Children's Services are much improved following an OFSTED inspection

48/25 Queries from residents to Ward Councillor & Council

Councillor Hadley raised the matter of the broken roadside barrier outside Abel's farm, Little Cowarne. Nothing had still been repaired despite numerous requests. Cllr. Baker would press the matter again.

Cllr. Legge asked about the Wye pollution and why farmers were being blamed. Cllr. Baker re-assured him that the research project was to establish the facts rather than the speculation about the causes.

Cllr. Legge also asked why more work had not been done on overhanging trees on the A417 while the road was closed for re-surfacing. Cllr. Baker would take the matter forward.

Mr Nicholson asked about grant funding for PV on the village hall. Cllr. Baker had no update on grants.

Mrs. Drew asked if the Warm Home Grants were for running costs or to improve the thermal performance of the dwelling. Cllr. Baker believed it would be for both purposes although the improvement element would be limited to simpler measures.

49/25 **To receive:** a planning report from Cllr. Colin Hadley

To comment on new applications to be determined by Herefordshire Council.

250740 Land adj. to Parish Hall, Pencombe, HR7 4SH. Application for removal of condition 4 following grant of planning permission 240561 (Proposed car-parking area)

The Clerk outlined the reasons for the application to have condition 4 lifted and explained that Council had offered to install EV charging in the small car park below the Hall. He was disappointed that the determination date was the end of May. Cllr. Baker would contact the planning officer and see if determination could be speeded up.

251144 Meadow Court Farm Little Cowarne HR7 4RH. Application for prior approval for a proposed general purpose agricultural building **Comments not required**

Existing applications

None

50/25 **To receive:** an update on the Parish Hall.

Mrs Legge reported that-

- The drive to minimise energy costs continues and the new electricity contract is cheaper than the previous one.



- The quote for generator hook-up has been received at £310. A second quote may be obtained.
- The quotation for fitting PV on Parish Hall roof has been updated with the lowest quote being £5550 (PV only) or including a battery £9283. Currently a feed-in tariff for exported electricity is around 15p/unit although that does need final confirmation. The price of the basic system seemed good value and might be a project that the Council and Hall could collaborate on.
- Hall policies & procedures are being revised and will probably be completed by the next meeting
- The last LinC lunch was well supported.
- All the Hall chairs had been cleaned.
- Film society had now finished for the summer
- The next Trustees meeting is on Monday 2 June 2025.

51/25 Finance *To receive*: a finance report from Cllr. Paul Thomas

Bank balance on 20/03/2025-Unity Trust current account £12,193.13 (Arkwright £1650.00)
Net Council= £10,543.13)

Payments

Payments

The following payments were made as authorised at the March 2025 meeting (minute 37/25)

Payments made since last meeting.

No.	Name	Ex-VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	A M Drew	428.81	0.00	428.81	Clerk's March salary
2	Autela	85.28	17.06	102.33	Payroll charge
3	HMRC	107.00	0.00	107.00	PAYE
4	A M Drew	180.42	36.08	216.50	S73 application refund
5	M A Walsh & Sons	1400.00	280.00	1680.00	PG2 repairs
6	Unity Bank	6.00	0.00	6.00	Bank charges
7	Eddie Prince	125.00	0.00	125.00	VE Day donation - Council
8	Eddie Prince	125.00	0.00	125.00	VE Day donation - Arkwright
9	Frank Nicholson	10.83	2.17	13.00	Refund for solar lights
10	Parish Hall	48.37	0.00	48.37	NDP Design Codes workshop
11	Mobes Mows	490.00	0.00	490.00	Grass cut includes £50 for grass removal
	TOTAL	3006.71	335.31	3342.01	

Income received since last meeting –

No.	Name	Amount £	Details
1	Emma Bouston Funeral	250	Mrs Violet Hope - funeral
2	Herefordshire Council	11000	2025-26 precept - first part
	Total	11250	

Payments for Authorisation					
No.	Name	Ex VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	AM Drew	65.85	13.17	79.02	Refund for replacement pads for Pencombe defibrillator
2	AM Drew	428.81	0.00	428.81	Clerk's April salary - estimated pay advice not yet received
3	Viking Direct	93.41	18.68	112.09	Toner cartridge, paper, files etc. Shared with HFSP
	TOTAL	588.07	31.85	619.92	

Total for payment £588.07+VAT as appropriate.

Council agreed these payments.

Replacement of Council computer

The present Council computer (HP Pavillion) was purchased in 2015/16. It has been showing its age for some years now but its final demise is now here.

Windows 10 goes out of support in October 2025. In many cases a new machine will be required for current users due to Windows 11 supporting a limited list of hardware. The current HP machine is incompatible with W11 (processor is not compliant) and will have to be replaced. Replacing now will allow plenty of time to change over all Council's data, email etc.

It is worth considering buying locally to obtain local support if required. The following suppliers are in Hereford, have support capability and are easily accessible if necessary.

The following machines are pre-loaded with W11

Machine	Price ex VAT	Supplier	Notes
HP 255 G9	£375	CSS Computers Hereford	Current supplier to HFSP. Provides expert support when required
ACER Aspire 3	£340	Currys, Hereford	Mainstream supplier with enough expertise to solve common problems
HP 250 G9	£575	John Finch Computers, Hereford	Support capability but rather expensive.

Software is also required but Council already holds a Microsoft 365 Business Standard license. However, security/anti-virus is required and there are many suppliers Norton, McAfee, AVG etc. Typically cost is around £21.00+VAT.

The Clerk should be able to manage the transition to the new machine. However, if assistance is required all the above suppliers can provide this quickly at a cost of around £100.

In total up to about £500+VAT is required for a new machine, support and software suite. The Clerk seeks authority to order a machine and software within the £500+VAT limit from whichever supplier he believes will provide the best value package including support capability.

Council considered the proposal and given the situation with Windows 11 resolved that the Clerk should be authorised to replace the current machine up to the £500+VAT limit

52/25 Neighbourhood Development Plan To receive: report from Cllr. Tim Burge

Cllr. Burge reported that-

Herefordshire Council are of the view that NDPs in course of preparation cannot proceed further due to the absence of a Local Plan until 2028. Council's planning consultant, Louise Kirkup did not agree with this view but did say that without Herefordshire's support it would be very difficult to make progress. Council would have to decide the best way forward. After some discussion it was resolved that-

- The NDP would be paused pending more clarity on the way forward.
- The current NDP would be refined by Kirkwells and the Clerk to be in the best possible state for a future re-launch.

53/25 Provision of a village car park. To receive: report on the car park from Cllr. Tony Brazier
A third quotation for construction has been obtained from TJ Groundworks of Hereford. Owen Pell has also visited the site recently and will provide a quotation shortly. Council will then have four quotations to consider which exceeds the requirement of the Financial Regulations.

The S73 planning application to remove the EV charging part of condition 4 had already been discussed under item 49/25

Importantly the additional use of the car park site should be progressed as quickly as possible since it can be grant assisted. Such assistance will make a significant contribution to overall costs of the project and will provide a number of village facilities. Without pre-judging any consultation the working group may undertake, if half the car park site becomes a community facility such as a garden and a children's play area, then some approximate financials are-

Portion of site purchase cost (50%) for community use	£10,000
Cost of play area equipment	£6,000
Community garden	£3,000
Create 3 parking spaces @ £2,000/space	£6,000
TOTAL	£25,000

The effect of this additional grant funded project is-

- Reduce the price of car park construction by £16,000
- Provide a community facility in the Parishes where none currently exists.

Such a project should be attractive to grant funders given the community benefits.

The working group should consider progressing a Parishes' questionnaire to establish what residents would be keen to see provided.

Car Park costs to date.

At the last meeting Cllr. Hadley requested a breakdown of the car park costs so far.

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	TOTAL
Berrys	1711	4137	1379		7227
Planning applications		149	114	493	756
Surveys			1125		1125
TOTAL	1711	4286	2618	493	9108

54/25 Single website for Group Parishes.

Report from the Clerk

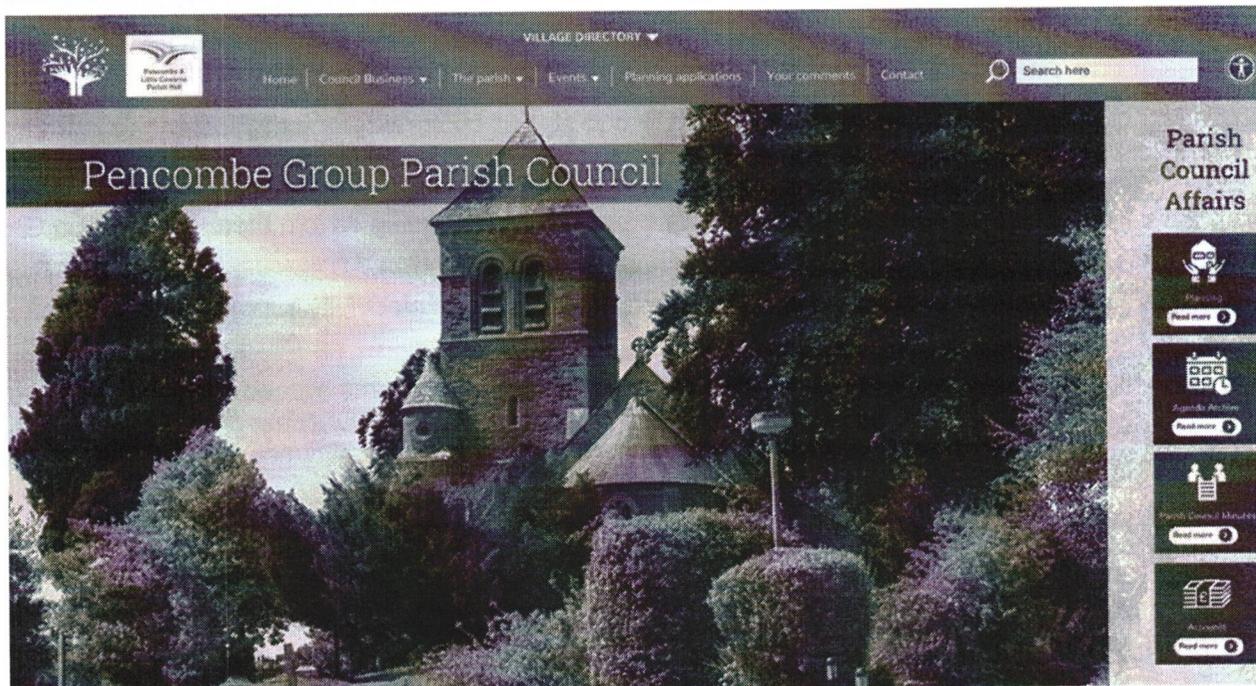
The Clerk attended the Hall Trustees meeting on 7 April and showed the branding options which Council had already discussed at the March meeting. In summary the Trustees agreed-

- the use of the “Two Hands” motif shown below as a theme for the Parishes-wide landing page and for the Parish Council pages (as present).
- the Hall would use their current branding on relevant pages with other organisations free to create their own logos if the wished.
- Layout option 3 with top and sidebar menu was the preferred layout for all pages except the landing page.

These preferences were closely aligned with Council’s view and the Clerk has instructed Nextnorth to proceed to the next stage (creation of a demonstration site) on the above basis.



Above shows the proposed theme for the landing page (which would not have specific Parish Council labelling).



This shows option 3 with the context specific sidebar menu.

55/25 Lengthsman Scheme: To receive: a report on Lengthsman work
The Clerk reported that-

The drainage grant will close at the end of June. Progress will need to be made if Council is to spend the £6000 allocated. Fortunately some longstanding drainage issues located in the highway can be addressed without further bureaucracy. Highways have advised that the Lengthsman can open the road (C & U) for drainage work with no further authorisation. Some traffic control should be provided with 1 or 2 banksmen using STOP/GO signs or similar.

There are three locations in Pencombe where work can now start-

1. on the C1110 just above the telephone kiosk
2. On the On C1114 approximately opposite The Wheelwrights Inn
3. At the junction C1117 opposite Poppybank where Welsh Water's contractor may have damaged the crossroad drain.

Cllr Brazier mentioned the crushed drain close to the cemetery which could be added to the list.

Herefordshire is also organising a gully sucking machine to tackle silted drains.

The Lengthsman was present and agreed that the work could be completed by the end of June. The Clerk and Lengthsman would tour the sites prior to work starting.

- Council resolved that a Flood Group should be created and Mr Foster had already offered to lead such a group. Mr Foster also reported that he had been involved with Herefordshire Flood Group meetings which were now starting to encourage formation of local groups. Mr Foster and Cllr. Brazier would meet to agree who should join them in the Flood Group.
- Cllr. Brazier was concerned that emergencies other than flooding should not be forgotten, in particular how prepared the Parishes would be if electricity supplies were disrupted for more than a few hours.
- Mr Mobey (trading as Mobes Mows) accepted the terms agreed at the closed Council session following the March public meeting. He has now commenced grass cutting and has removed the grass from the first cut as requested. Council agreed that Mr Mobey's invoices should be paid on receipt.
- The grant aided Lengthsman scheme for 2025-26 has already been published and the terms are as last year. Council wished to participate in the scheme for 2025-26

As an additional matter, Mr Prince asked for agreement that a temporary flagpole could be installed next to the War Memorial to raise the VE Day flag. Council was happy to agree the request.

56/25 To consider: Matters for discussion at the next meeting

Date of next meeting Tuesday 27 May 2025

Signed Chairman

Date.. 27 MAY 2025