

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

Tuesday 27 May 2025 at 7.30pm in Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall

Councillors Present;

Cllr. J. Lewis Chairman
Cllr. D. Legge
Cllr C. Hadley

Cllr. T. Brazier
Cllr. T. Burge

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

Members of the Public: 4 members of the public attended

First business

57/25 Election of Chairman

Cllr. Lewis was proposed and seconded and then re-elected unanimously. He then signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office

58/25 Election of vice-chairman

Cllr. Burge was proposed and seconded as vice-Chair. He was elected unanimously

59/25 Apologies for absence

Cllr. Thomas sent his apologies

60/25 Declaration of interests and dispensations

None received

61/25 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 22 April 2025 were received and accepted. The Chairman then signed them as a true record of the meeting.

62/25 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman had no announcements

Annual business – previous year

63/25 Annual reports 2024-25

(a) *To receive:* a report from the past-Chairman.

The Chairman reported on two important matters during the year which formed much of the discussion he had with residents-

- The car park was an important ongoing project which would hopefully reach a conclusion during this year.
- Drainage is an important topic and the increase in the precept should enable more progress to be made during the year.

(b) *To receive:* a report from the Clerk

The Clerk reported that-

The car park continued to progress albeit it slowly. A revised planning application was submitted with a modified entrance which significantly improved the design by-

- Separating pedestrians from vehicles
- Reducing construction costs due to much reduced difference in levels.
- Reducing vehicle traffic in the village since the car park entrance will be at the village eastern edge.

This revised application received planning consent in September 2024 some 5 months after the application. This gives residents some idea why such a project can take so long to see the light of day!

Again there was a problem with the consent. Planning conditions had been added, one of which required provision of electric vehicle charging points. Such provision would be expensive in the middle of a grass field. So, more discussions with planning consultants and it was decided to submit yet another planning application to have this condition removed. To help matters along Council offered to provide alternative charging points in the small car park below the Parish Hall where a close by electricity supply would make the provision much simpler and cheaper. There might also be the possibility of a grant for such work. This third planning application was submitted in March 2025 and eventually received consent just a few days ago on 23 May 2025. The way is now clear to have a firm view on the construction costs of the car park and so hold a village meeting where all the information would be available.

On the Neighbourhood Development Plan there was less good news. The Government handed down mandatory house building targets to all Councils in the country and the Herefordshire target increased from about 16,000 houses to over 27,000. Such an increase was bad news for the almost completed new Local Plan which was not designed around such a large increase. Herefordshire decided that the emerging Plan had to be scrapped and a fresh start made. The implication of such a pause in the Plan is that NDPs in course of preparation cannot continue because they have no housing target to relate to until the new Plan provides these. As a result the Pencombe NDP has been paused until the situation is clarified. Such clarity could take some time since the new revised local plan will not emerge before 2028.

Simpler Council projects fared better. Restoration of the Pencombe telephone kiosk was completed and a residents' survey favours using it to house the Pencombe defibrillator. A new combined Parish website bringing together the Council, the Hall, churches, clubs and societies and the Pencombe Show. It is making good progress and will be ready quite soon (but no firm date yet).

So in summary this Council has made slow but sure progress on one major project, received a set back on the other major project and has had success on smaller projects where there has been no need to involve Herefordshire Council.

(c) *To receive:* a report from Parish Footpath Officers

Mr Mottram, PFO for Pencombe reported that-

He had attended a further training/information session with Herefordshire Highways/PROW. The major topic was the division of responsibilities for PROWs. In summary the division of responsibilities is-

Herefordshire Highways	Landowners
Signposting & waymarking	Vegetation
Surface & vegetation	Fitting access furniture
Providing access furniture	Removing obstructions & misleading notices.
Dealing with obstructions & Misleading notices.	Ploughing & cropping
Maintaining bridges & ditch crossings	Managing livestock
	Bridges & ditch crossings

Mr Mottram mentioned that aspects of the Highways responsibilities could be delegated to Parish Councils but the detailed split of these responsibilities remained work in progress. There would also be a guide for landowners produced.

He had walked all the Pencombe paths and there were some issues at the top of Hegdon Hill which he had reported to Herefordshire Council. There was also a broken gate on the bridleway PG8. He also mentioned that, Becky Legge who is PFO for Little Cowarne, is concerned about a number of stiles which are difficult to use, particularly for walkers with mobility problems. There is also a problem on PG5 close to the C1110 where cattle from Mill Farm have created a muddy area which greatly hampers access to the footpath. The best answer would be to apply for a diversion around this area of the path.

It was also mentioned that Herefordshire Council had no record of Becky Legge as the PFO for Little Cowarne and the Clerk would forward her details to Chris Abel at Herefordshire Council.

To receive: a report from the Parish Tree Warden.
The Parish Tree Warden, Ms Alison Fenner, reported that-

Thank you for continuing to support me as a Tree Warden.

Over the last year I have been involved in the following activities

- Walking around the parish to identify and monitor trees, especially those flagged on the Tree Register.
- I have continued to contribute to the county Lime Tree project which is updating the records of native Small and Large Leaf Lime trees. Liaising with other tree wardens and the county botanical recorder.
- Attending training and lectures. Including a talk by an expert on Black Poplars.
- Participating in Wildlife Trust and private woodland walks to increase my knowledge about trees.
- Private study to increase my knowledge.
- I have completed the RHS Level Two course on Plant Growth and Development which includes trees and hedge plants. This involved numerous assignments and two exams. I now have the RHS level two certificate.
- Tree planting in my own garden including disease resistant Elms, Black Poplars and native lime Trees.
- Information on tree projects has been sent to the local school
- Writing articles for the parish magazine.
- Liaising with the people of the parish who contact me with specific questions. Often residents of nearby parishes who have read my articles also contact me.

64/25 Statement of Accounts and Annual Return for 2024-25

(a) *To consider:* a report from the Responsible Financial Officer
The RFO reported that-

As for last year activity continues at a high level. The financial results for 2024-25 were again of a level that a Limited Assurance Review by the External Auditor would be required.

Probably the most significant financial event was the increase in the precept to provide a fund for improving drainage in the Group Parishes. The increase was from £18,300 to £22,000, which along with current reserves, would create a fund of £10,000 to improve drainage. Alongside this fund there has been an increase from Herefordshire grant funding through the new drainage grant for 2024-25. The Council secured about £6,200 to assist with drainage works normally carried out by Balfour Beatty.

Unfortunately however, the Parish Lengthsman (D C Garden Services) resigned in January meaning that the program of works created could not be completed. However, significant work was carried out on footpath PG2 (the Causeway) and there is still hope that some small but important drainage work can be carried out. The position of a new Lengthsman for 2025-26 is still vacant despite approaches to a few possible qualified candidates.

Looking forward it is possible that the car park will be the major financial event of 2025-26 although spending on drainage improvement will also be a major component of the budget.

(b) To approve: the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

(b) To approve: the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

Line No.	PENCOMBE GPC BUDGET 2024-25	Outturn 2023-24	Budget 2024-25	Outturn 2024-25	Variance from Budget	Notes
Income						
1	Precept	18300.00	18300	18300.00	0.00	
2	Cemetery	700.00	700	200.00	-500.00	Moved down to £500 - guests?
3	Grants	7615.00	12000	9990.00	-2010.00	NDP-£5000; Annual mtce. - £2576; Non. Task - £1268; Drainage-£4600; last year £5000
4	Loans	0.00		0.00	0.00	Loan for carpark land purchase and initial construction
5	Other Income	345.63	4800	4700.84	-99.16	Boiler, field rent & Pencombe kiosk donations
6	VAT Reclaim	3334.66	3064	3467.71	403.71	
7	Total Income	30295.29	38864	36658.55	-2205.45	Lower than expected due to reduce grant income (line 3)
Expenditure						
8	Clerk	3998.36	4600.00	6143.73	-1543.73	£830 proper to 2023-24. Salary award arrears & 10% hours
9	Bank Charges	72.00		71.40	0.60	
10	Administration	617.23	750.00	515.15	234.85	
11	Insurance, audit, professional	1011.70	1000.00	1515.59	-515.59	internal & external auditor £460; Ins. £320; HALC £410; SLCC £180; Tree Warden £30
12	IT	100.00	750.00	495.10	344.90	new PC deferred to 25/26
13	Cemetery Rates	329.34	325.00	329.34	-0.34	Currently under challenge
14	Training and development	230.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	
15	Equipment	0.00	0.00	193.90	-193.90	Salt boxes unbudgeted
16	Maintenance	4135.00	4200.00	5494.84	-1294.84	Adverts for grass cutting & Lengthsman £917 Extra October grass cut £520 Budget increased by £220 for salary award & 10% uplift in hours
17	HMRC	1430.17	1720.00	1785.59	-69.59	Trophy for Pencombe Show + Remembrance Day wreath
18	Other Exp.	667.44	100.00	227.00	-127.00	
19	TOTAL Day to Day	12592.24	13521.00	16685.54	-3164.64	Clerk, audit costs and adverts
Special Projects						
20	NDP	6648.06	12000	7306.62	4693.38	£8671 from return of last year's grant. This year assumes spend of £4000 Unable to spend full grants available due to L/man resignation
21	Lengthsman	6640.00	10000	3524.50	6475.50	Complete - July 2024
22	Pencombe kiosk	1116.75	900	893.27	6.73	New domain name only
23	Village website	0.00	500	13.00	487.01	573 application (removing EV charging)
24	Village Car Park	2618.30		493.83	-74.98	Boiler purchase + maintenance allowance (£500)
25	Parish Hall	506.80	6000	6074.98	-74.98	see line 24
26	Loan repayments	0.00		0.00	0.00	
27	TOTAL SPECIAL PROJECTS	17531.91	29400	18906.193	11093.81	Underspend on NDP and L/man
28	TOTAL EX-VAT EXPENDITURE	30124.15	42921	34991.83	7929.17	
29	Reclaimable VAT on expenditure	3064	3800	3529.47	0	
30	Total Expenditure	33188.15	46721.00	38521.3	-138.90	
31	Surplus	-2892.86	-7857	-1862.75	6528.10	Trading loss of £1862. VAT reclaim of £3529 and L/man refund of £1792. Net surplus for year is £3459

N.B. Negative variances are adverse

Chairman: Mr James Lewis

AGAR

27 May 2025
Page 15 of 39

Parish Clerk: Allan Drew



Council approved the Statement of Accounts for 2024-25 which the Chairman then signed.



(c) To approve: the Bank Reconciliation Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025

Pencombe Group Parish Council

Financial Year 2024-25

Bank Reconciliation Statement as at end of year (31/3/2025)

Prepared by Allan Drew (RFO)

Date: 4/4/2025

Balance from Bank Statements

Unity Trust current account dated 31/3/2025
Petty cash in hand

	£	£
Balance as at 31/3/2025		9652.49
As at 31/3/2025		<u>23.50</u>
		<u>9675.99</u>

Plus receipts not banked/cleared
Minus payments not yet cleared

0.00
0.00

Net balance at 31/3/2025 9675.99

The net balance reconciles to the cash books for the year to 31/3/2025 as follows:

Balance in current account cash book

Opening balance at 01/04/2024
Add: receipts to 31/3/2025
Less: payments to 31/3/2025

9862.64
41658.55
41868.7
<u>9652.49</u>

Net balance at 31/3/2025 9652.49

Balance in petty cash book

Opening balance at 01/04/2024
Add: receipts to 31/3/2025
Less: payments to 31/3/2025

26.10
0.00
<u>2.60</u>
23.50

Net balance at 31/3/2025 23.50

All Cash Books

Net balance at 31/3/2025 9675.99

Less Arkwright Trust funds

1650.00

Carried forward 8025.99

NOTE REGARDING BOX 11b on SECTION 2 - ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS 2024-25 (AGAR FORM 3).

This bank reconciliation includes £1650 held in the Council bank account on behalf of the Pencombe Arkwright Trust (501277). This arrangement is temporary and was agreed by Council pending the Trust opening a new bank account. The Accounting Statements for 2024-25 show the total balance of £9676 in Line 8 (as shown in this reconciliation) but show the Council funds of £8025 in Line 7. The rounded difference (9676-8025=1650) is the Arkwright funds.

Signed:

Allan Drew

RFO

Date

4/4/2025

Countersigned:

T. Brown

Councillor

Date

27/5/2025

T. Brown VICE CHAIR

Council was provided with both the reconciliation and the relevant bank statements. The reconciliation was then approved and signed by the Chairman and, following HALC advice, the vice-Chair.

(d) To receive: the Internal Audit Reports and checklist

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Pencombe Parish Council			
https://pencombegrouppc.org.uk/			
<p>During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.</p> <p>The internal audit for 2024/25 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.</p>			
Internal control objective	Yes	No	Not covered
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.		✓	
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓
For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).			
Date(s) internal audit undertaken		Name of person who carried out the internal audit	
23/04/2025 28/04/2025 29/04/2025		HAC Audit Services	
Signature of person who carried out the internal audit		Date	29/04/2025
HAC Audit Services			
<p>**If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).</p> <p>***Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).</p>			

The auditor has registered one non-compliance and has made four observations

The non-compliance is to do with correct authorisation of a petty cash payment of £2.60. The RFO maintains that the payment was properly authorised at the Council meeting of 25 February 2025 but the auditor disagrees. On this point the auditor and RFO have agreed to disagree.



Non Compliance	Auditor's Comment	RFO's Comments
F (Petty cash)	Petty cash payments not authorised by Full Council as per recommendation 4.5 of the internal audit 2023-24.	One petty cash transaction for the year dated 25 March 2025 for refund to Clerk for purchase of new domain name for new website. VAT of £2.60 had mistakenly been omitted from the refund so was taken from petty cash when discovered. Refund had been authorised by Council at Feb 2025 meeting

(e) To approve: the Annual Governance Statement for year ended 31 March 2025

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, that:

	Agreed			Yes means that this authority:
	Yes	No	N/A	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓			prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓			made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓			has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓			during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓			considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓			arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓			responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓			disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
			✓	

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

27/05/2025

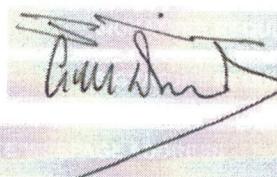
and recorded as minute reference:

64/25(e)

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

Clerk



WWW.PENCOMBEGROUPPC.ORG.UK

After considering the auditor's report on internal control and noting the non-compliance around petty cash, Council concluded that the Annual Governance statement could be fully completed with full agreement. The Chairman signed the statement.



(f) To approve: the Accounting Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

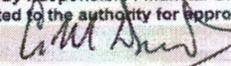
PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	12,782	9,888	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	18,300	18,300	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	11,995	23,358	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	5,428	7,933	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	27,760	33,938	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	9,888	9,676	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	9,888	8025	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	14,804	15,969	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval


Date 04/04/2025

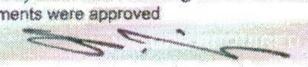
I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

27/05/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

64/25(f)

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved



Council noted that Arkwright funds had modified the reconciliation between lines 7 & 8 and then agreed that the Accounting Statements were accurate. The Chairman signed the statement.

(g) *To approve:* the proposed period for Exercise of Public Rights

Notice of Public Rights.

When all financial aspects of last year have been completed and agreed (which should be during the Annual Meeting) a Notice of Public Rights must be posted. This Notice informs all citizens that they have the right, on reasonable notice, to inspect all the financial information from the previous year. The Notice runs for a period of 30 working days and must include the first 10 working days in July. For this year the 10 July working days run from Tuesday 1st July to Monday 14th July inclusive. It is recommended that this year the period runs from Tuesday 3rd June until Monday 14th July inclusive. Council should agree this recommendation.

To note: the accounts for 2024-25 will be subject to a Limited Assurance Review by the external Auditor as Council income/expenditure for the year is above the £25,000 threshold.



65/25 Forward Plan 2025-26

The Clerk explained that the amount of time now required to complete all the activities at this Annual (May) meeting was such that the meeting would be very lengthy. A new approach could be adopted which would spread some of the May work across the remaining meetings of the year. With the exception of the AGAR work (completed under agenda item 64/25) there is no legal requirement to complete all these activities at one meeting.

The Clerk produced a draft Forward Plan 2025-26 which showed at which meeting these activities would be completed-

DRAFT FORWARD PLAN 2025-26 – PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting	May 2025	June 2025	July 2025	August 2025	Sept. 2025	Oct. 2025	Nov. 2025
Topic	Governance		Policies & Procedures(1)		Policies & Procedures (2)		Finance(1)
Annual Business	First Business Annual reports Internal Audit AGAR Notice of Public Rights		Standing Orders Non GDPR Policies		Financial Regulations GDPR Policies Councillor portfolios		Draft budget Projects Banking Reserves
Recurring Items	End of year Bank Reconciliation Ordinary business	Ordinary business	Qtr. 1 Bank reconciliation Ordinary business	Ordinary business	Ordinary business	Qtr. 2 Bank Reconciliation Ordinary business	Ordinary business

Month	Jan 2026	Feb. 2026	March 2026	April 2026.
Topic	Finance(2)		Risk & Insurance	Miscellaneous
Annual Business	Final budget Precept Projects for coming year		Assets Risk Register. Insurance Policy cover	Meeting dates for coming year
Recurring Items	Qtr. 3 Bank reconciliation Ordinary business	Ordinary business	Ordinary business	Qtr. 4 Bank reconciliation Ordinary business

Note: exceptionally for this meeting of 27 May it will be necessary to agree assets, risks and insurance cover (renewal 23 June). It will also be necessary to agree the meeting dates for 2025-26.

Ordinary business is- Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Approval of draft minutes, Chairman's announcements, District Councillor's report, Planning applications, General financial matters, Lengthsman, PROW, Drainage & Flood group, Current projects

Council thought the Forward Plan provided a sensible way to avoid a very lengthy May meeting and resolved to adopt the draft plan for 2025-26.



66/25 Review of assets and insurance

(a) To receive: the list of fixed assets

ASSET REGISTER - PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL 2024-2025						
Asset	Purchase cost	Purchase Date	Est. life yrs.	Est. Current Value	Further information	
Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall (Custodian Trustee only)	£0.00			£1.00		
St John's Churchyard, Pencombe (closed churchyard)	£0.00			£1.00		
War memorial	£0.00			£1.00		
Notice board - Little Cowarne (purchased 2006/07)	£25.00		25	£7.00		
Bus shelter (purchased 2014/15)	£2,392.37		50	£1,913.00	Donation from Tony Davies of £2400	
Notice board - Pencombe (purchased 2020)	£1,452.00		20	£1,162.00	Replacement notice board	
Computer (purchased 2015/16)	£390.00	2015	8	£25.00		
Brother MFC L2500DW Printer (purchased 2022)	£261.00	2022	5	£157.00		
Defibrillator - Pencombe (donated 2016/17)	£0.00	2016		£1.00		
Defibrillator - Sparrington installed 2019	£1,875.00	2019	10	£937.00		
Defibrillator - Little Cowarne installed 2020	£1,312.00	2020	10	£787.00		
Parish map (purchased 2016/17)	£146.00	2016	10	£29.00		
2 footpath/PROW maps map (purchased 2022)	£100.00	2022	10	£90.00		
1 small footpath/PROW map for LC kiosk (purchased 2022)	£50.00	2022	10	£40.00		
Footpath Officer high visibility waistcoat (purchased 2017/18)	£4.99	2017		£4.99		
Telephone kiosk no.6 - L. Cowarne (purchased 2018/19) Restored 2021	£6,000.00	2018	50	£6,000.00		
Telephone kiosk no.6 - Pencombe (purchased 2022)	£893.00	2022	50	£6,000.00	Restored 2024, valuation updated	
Bench - The Pound, Pencombe	£1.00	N/A		£1.00		
Bench 1 - St John's Churchyard, Pencombe supplied 2022	£125.00	2022	20	£112.00		
Bench 2 - St John's Churchyard, Pencombe supplied 2022	£125.00	2022	20	£112.00		
Bench 3 - St John's Churchyard, Pencombe	£540.00	2022	25	£370.00		
Bench - Post Office, Pencombe	£1.00	N/A		£1.00		
Bench - Causeway, Pencombe	£1.00	N/A		£1.00		
Bench - Causeway, Pencombe	£1.00	N/A		£1.00		
Bench - Cemetery, Pencombe	£1.00	N/A		£1.00		
Salt Boxes (two) on Little Cowarne Rd near Abell's farm	£193	2024	20	£193.00		
Solar lighting Parish Hall & St John's churchyard	£80	2024	5	£80.00		
Total asset values	£15,969.36			£18,024.99		

As at May 2024 the insurance cover provided by Aviva is sufficient to cover these asset valuations

PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL - RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT May 2025

RISK= LIKELIHOODxIMPACT 0-3=LOW (GREEN); 4-6=MEDIUM (AMBER); 7-9=HIGH (RED)

Area	Risk	Impact	Likelihood (1-3)	Impact (1-3)	Risk	Notes	Control (and agreed improvements)
Assets	Damage to or theft of physical assets in public places.	Cost of repair and replacement	2	2	Medium (4)	The Council has limited physical assets (see Asset Register), and does not own its own premises. Public Access Defibrillator at Little Cowarne, Pencombe & Sparrington. Clerk's laptop sometimes taken to meetings.	<i>Asset values now £18,000. Insurance policy through Aviva now should be updated to All Risks cover of £20,000 from 01/06/25.</i>
	Damage to or theft of physical assets and supplies in Clerk's home		1	2	Low (2)	Only items of significant value are the laptop and the printer/copier	Smoke & burgler alarms and locks fitted to premises. Aviva insurance policy cover includes all assets for All Risks.
	Deterioration of physical assets		2	1	Low (2)	Benches installed over a number of years. Maintained as required. Defibrillators installed at Little Cowarne, Pencombe & Sparrington .	Other street furniture inspected regularly by Lengthsman or Clerk and any repairs to be funded from reveue. Checks of defibrillator made by Clerk and recorded.
Finance	Loss of investments and savings	Financial loss	0	3	NIL	<i>Current account with Unity Trust (balance of up to £20,000). Deposit account now likely to be opened</i>	All balances covered by government bank guarantees.
	Loss or theft of cash or cheques		1	1	Low (1)	All cheques banked promptly. Small sums of petty cash (max £100) held.	Cheques insured for £250,000, cash for £5000 in transit or in a safe; cash for £500 not in a safe at Clerk's or councillor's premises or at events.
	Loss of income		1	2	Low (2)	Most income is precept from Herefordshire Council or grant funding.	Insurance not required, as main income is precept, levied by statute.
	Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty		1	1	Low (1)	No cash is handled other than on very infrequent occasions.	Receipts obtained/issued for all cash transactions. Cash banked within 48 hours using paying-in slips.



								Fidelity Guarantee Insurance in place (£250,000 from 1 June 2019) adequate for level of risk
Errors in financial controls and records or financial loss through dishonesty or fraud by Council officers or councillors.	1	2	Low (2)	Invoices, cheques, cash books, receipts and bank statements managed by RFO. Currently nearly all payments made by internet banking, requiring two signatories (nominated councillors). Limited number of payments made by direct debit where no alternative given (e.g. ICO).	Bank reconciliations prepared by RFO, reported to Council with bank statements and signed by Chairman and one other councillor each quarter. All receipts & payments recorded with banking receipts. Two signatories on cheques and IB payments. Internal audit of cash books, receipts, statements etc undertaken in April. Fidelity Guarantee Insurance in place (£250,000) against fraud by RFO/Clerk or councillor.			
Non-compliance with VAT Regulations	1	1	Low (1)	Council not VAT-registered but can reclaim non-business VAT.	VAT accounted separately in cash books and accounts. VAT reclaim for previous financial year made each April.			
Poor budgeting to underlie annual precept	1	2	Low (2)		Precept estimation is now on a more robust footing and improved spreadsheet automation has made budgeting system much less prone to human error.			
Non-compliance with borrowing restrictions	1	0	Nil	No borrowing at present.	If borrowing required, a business plan will be prepared and submitted through HALC for approval, and all borrowing conditions complied with.			
Misuse or loss of debit card	1	0	Nil	Council does not hold a debit card	Fidelity Guarantee Insurance in place (£250,000 from 1 June 2019) adequate for level of risk.			
Legal liability arising from Lengthsman work	1	3	Low (3)	Minor highway maintenance work undertaken through independent	Public liability insurance of £10m, and contractors required to provide to Parish			



							contractors under delegated powers from Herefordshire Council. Council and contractors required to have £5m liability insurance.	Council a copy of insurance certificate of £5m liability insurance. Contractors asked to confirm in writing they have undertaken required training and have appropriate equipment.
	Legal liability arising from accident at events or activities	1	3	Low (3)			Council rarely organises events. Most events are through the village hall using hall insurance	Council's Public Liability insurance (£10m). Risk assessment of any new events undertaken. Written risk assessment and plan prepared by Clerk for any activity using volunteers.
	Legal liability as consequence of asset ownership	1	3	Low (3)			Few physical assets, unlikely to give rise to liability, with exception of public access defibrillator.	Public liability Insurance in place (£10m). At least annual inspection of physical assets for safety/maintenance by Clerk, reported to Annual Meeting. Defibrillator registered with WMAS and inspected weekly/monthly by Clerk; no liability if checked and ok.
	Libel or slander by councillors or employees	1	3	Low (3)				Official council publications/documents approved by Clerk and Chairman or nominated councillor. Insurance (£250,000) in place from 1 June 2019.
	Negligent act or error by employee or councillor including unauthorised disclosure of personal data	1	3	Low (3)			GDPR in force 25 May 2018..	Officials' Indemnity insurance covered under Public Liability cover from 1 June 2019. GDPR compliance Action Plan in place. GDPR policies reviewed annually
Employer Liability	Non-compliance with Employment Law	1	2	Low (2)				Membership of HALC and SLCC to keep up-to-date with requirements.
	Non-compliance with HMRC requirements	0	2	NIL			Autela handles all HMRC issues	.
	Safety of staff, councillors and public at meetings or events	1	3	Low (3)			Meetings held on hired premises covered by premises' insurance.	Employer's Liability insurance (£10m) in place.



Personal Accident	Assault on staff or others carrying cash	Financial loss and harm to staff	1	2	Low (2)		Personal Accident (Assault) cover provided under Money insurance. However no cash handled by Council in last 5 years.
	Accident to staff or councillors whilst carrying out duties	Claim for damages and harm to councillors	1	3	Low (3)		Personal Accident insurance (£100,000) in place.
Legal Liability	Council acting beyond legal powers	Challenge to actions, with consequential financial loss and reputational damage	1	3	Low (3)	Limited range of activities and responsibilities. Council has General Power of Competence..	All expenditure items have specific legal authority identified in payments schedule. Clerk clarifies legal position on any new proposal. Legal advice to be sought where necessary.
	Inadequate Minutes and documents recording authority to act		1	2	Low (2)	Council meets monthly.	Draft minutes circulated to members and approved at next meeting. Minutes made available to press and public on website
	Inadequate document control		1	2	Low (2)	No important legal documents or leases/deeds held. Minutes on numbered pages in loose-leaf minute books.	Minutes signed by Chairman. Electronic copy of minutes since 2016 on computer and off-site back-up.
Councillor propriety	Conflicts of interest by councillors	Challenge to actions, with consequential financial loss and reputational damage	2	3	Medium (6)	Legal requirement for councillors to complete/submit Register of Interests to county Monitoring Officer. Code of Conduct adopted. Standing Orders specify policies and procedures in line with legislation.	Code of Conduct provided to all councillors. Clerk ensures councillors submit Register of Interests and retains copy. Agenda item at Annual Meeting reminding councillors of duty to keep Register up to date, Clerk ensures Standing Orders followed. NALC Model Standing Orders to be adopted.
	Gifts and hospitality to councillors		1	2	Low (2)	Legal requirement to declare gifts and hospitality received	Code of Conduct provided to all councillors.



Legal expenses	Costs of legal proceedings	Unexpected financial loss	1	3	Low (3)	Legal Expenses insurance in place (£100,000 from 1 June 2019).
Staffing	Loss of services of Clerk/RFO temporarily	Inability to act or meet legal obligations; loss of financial controls.	2	2	Medium (4)	Use temporary qualified Clerk service from HALC.
	Loss of services of Clerk/RFO permanently		1	3	Low (3)	In interim, use temporary qualified Clerk service from HALC. Appoint any Deputy Clerk as Acting Clerk with assistance from HALC, or pay HALC to provide a qualified person to be Acting Clerk with the Deputy Clerk supporting. Advertise for permanent replacement.

The highest risks in the register (both are rated medium) are-

- Councilor propriety - Challenge to actions, with consequential financial loss and reputational damage.
- Staffing - Loss of services of Clerk/RFO temporarily

For Councilor propriety it is recommended that all Councilors confirm that their Register of Interests are up to date. For temporary loss of Clerk services HALC can provide a replacement if required.

Council discussed these recommendations and agreed that the Clerk would provide the current Register to each Councillor. Councillors would check their registers and update if required and return to the Clerk.

The use of HALC services for temporary a Clerk was also agreed.

- (c) *To receive and consider:* the RFO's report and recommendations on Risks & Insurance

Insurance cover is provided through a broker, Clear Councils and the underwriter was Aviva. However, Clear Councils have now moved this business to a new underwriter, Ecclesiastical Insurance Office PLC. Council has been offered renewal either on an annual basis or on a three year contract with some (as yet not stated) discount.

However, the new policy document is over 130 pages long, it is poorly written, contains many technical terms but still fails to answer some basic questions (e.g. are the telephone kiosks owned by the Council buildings or street furniture or something else altogether? It is impossible to tell). Some advice will have to be sought and the Clerk will request help from HALC and SLCC. The renewal date is 23 June 2025.

It is worth noting that the premium has risen from £317 last year to £434 (+37%) this year. In 2021 it was £210 so in 4 years it has more than doubled. There has never been a claim.



Council was disappointed to note the increase in premium but resolved that the premium should be paid and that attempts should be made to find better value next year.



67/25 Dates of meetings for 2025-26

The Clerk proposed meeting dates for 2025-26 in line with the normal rule of the fourth Tuesday of every month except December (no meeting). Council agreed this proposal and the dates for 2025-26 are now set as follows-

Tuesday 24 June 2025, Tuesday 22 July 2025, Tuesday 26 August 2025, Tuesday 23 September 2025, Tuesday 28 October 2025, Tuesday 25 November 2025, Tuesday 27 January 2026, Tuesday 24 February 2026, Tuesday 24 March 2026, Tuesday 28 April 2026, Tuesday 26 May 2026 all at 7.30pm.

All meetings will be held in Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall unless otherwise advised.

68/25 District Councillor

Cllr. Baker reported that-

- Herefordshire Council would be introducing a scheme over the next 12 months to collect garden waste and food waste. The food waste would be collected free of charge. Garden waste would be collected for a charge of £60/year. Neither scheme would be compulsory. Additionally small domestic batteries can now be accepted as waste by placing in a plastic bag and attaching to the bin.
- The road re-surfacing scheme continues for 2025-26. It is planned that £12.5m will be spent compared with £11m in 2024-25.
- The drainage problems continue but the grant to Parish Councils to carry out simple local drainage works will be continued.
- OFSTED has completed a further inspection of Children's Services and it is understood that the service will be rated GOOD. Adults' Services will be inspected later in the year.
- The contract to create a transport hub at Hereford Station has been let.
- There is a re-cycling scheme at Hereford Crematorium which removes any metal parts from bodies prior to cremation. Last year this generated £24m in scrap metal sales and was donated to charities.
- A scheme to help elderly people stay longer in their own homes has been launched. This involves an on-line virtual house which can highlight risks and help elderly people cope better with these risks. There is more information at this site [TEC Virtual House showcases a range of assistive tech for people with various health conditions - AT Today - Assistive Technology](#) or you can visit the virtual house here- [Care providers and housing options – Herefordshire Council](#)
- The Government's Devolution proposals have quietened of late, perhaps due to the work of the Boundary Commission which will report on changes before the 2027 election.
- The Avian flu housing order has been lifted.
- Major road works are planned for the A49 south of Hereford. (However, despite considerable searching no detail about timing or location could be discovered on the web).

69/25 Planning - report from Cllr. Hadley

- (a) *To consider:* The following planning applications which will be determined by Herefordshire Council

251291 Hollywell Barn, Pencombe, HR7 4SL

Application for prior approval for the proposed change of use of a brick built barn with single storey stone range from an agricultural building to a dwellinghouse (Class C3) and for associated operational development.

Council discussed this application at its meeting on 27 May and several Councillors were familiar with the building. It was agreed that the building was redundant for current agricultural practices and that if the plans to convert the building to a dwelling were credible to Planning then Council would support the application. After the meeting the Clerk submitted the following comments-

The Parish Council discussed this application at its meeting on 27 May 2025. Hollywell Barn was known to several Councillors and there was agreement that this building was now redundant to current agricultural practices. Since it is Herefordshire policy to re-use such buildings and the plans submitted appear to be in keeping with the current scale of the building (in open countryside), Council resolved to support the application. It is assumed the planning officer will place the usual conditions (should consent be granted) to cover materials, drainage etc.

- (b) *To note:* updates on planning applications

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)

Approved

251144 Meadow Court Farm Little Cowarne HR7 4RH. Application for prior approval for a proposed general purpose agricultural building

Prior approval not required

70/25 Public participation

Following Cllr. Baker's report a number of issues were raised-

- Cllr. Brazier was concerned about the Balfour Beatty practice of painting white lines around potholes which are scheduled for repair. Unfortunately, BB take so long to fix the potholes that the white paint wears or washes away before the repair, so the painting has to be re-done. Perhaps a number of times! Cllr. Brazier believes that the Locality Steward carries out this painting work and as a field operative with a large, equipped vehicle the cost of carrying out this work is significant. (Past studies suggest that the fully allocated costs of a field operative is around £100k/year).

This problem is yet another example of the "cost of failure" inherent in Balfour Beatty's operations. These costs are of course funded by the taxpayer and lead, in part, to Herefordshire Council always being short of money.

- Cllr. Hadley raised yet again the problem of the barriers at Abell's farm. The accident which destroyed the barrier happened two years ago and Herefordshire Council has been supplied on several occasions with the details of the vehicle which damaged the barriers. It should be an easy matter to have the vehicle's insurance cover the cost of a repair but such a simple step has so far eluded Herefordshire Council. Cllr. Baker would raise the matter again with BB.
- Cllr. Legge again drew Cllr. Baker's attention to the corrugated surface of the newly laid tarmac on the A417 between Bodenham and Dinmore Hill. When using a tractor or similar vehicle there are significant "up and down" movements caused by these corrugations. Cllr. Baker would pass the complaint onwards.
- Mr Nicholson asked if the flagpole erected for the VE Day celebrations could be retained permanently. It was agreed that the matter would be discussed at the next meeting.

Mr Nicholson mentioned that the normal Parish Hall item had been omitted (apologies from the Clerk!) and he would like to report some items on behalf of the Hall-

- The oil delivery had been received at a very good price of about £0.49/litre.
- The floor polisher needed attention and Mr Mobey had arranged an inspection/service.
- Mr Verry had been engaged to resolve the leak in the male toilets.
- The Platinum Jubilee Fund has been re-launched and there might be some funding for a PV/battery for the Hall. Worcestershire Council had also stated that they hoped the Marches Energy fund would be re-launched imminently.

71/25 General Financial Matters – report from the RFO

The RFO reported that-

Bank balance on 17/5/2025-Unity Trust current account £20,591.12 (Arkwright £1525.00)

Net Council= £19,066.12)

Payments

The following payments were made as authorised at the April 2025 meeting (minute 51/25)

Payments made since last meeting.					
No.	Name	Ex-VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	A M Drew	65.85	13.17	79.02	Refund for replacement pads for Pencombe defibrillator
2	A M Drew	321.81	0.00	321.81	Clerk's April salary
3	Viking Direct	93.41	18.68	112.09	Toner cartridge, paper, files etc. Shared with HFSP
4	CSS Computers	375.00	75.00	450.00	New Council laptop
5	Mobes Mows	440.00	0.00	440.00	May grass cut
6	Service charge	6.00	0.00	6.00	Banking
7	Mrs Janet Legge	100.00	0.00	100.00	Contribution to Little Cowarne VE Day events
8	HMRC	231.82	0.00	231.82	April 2025 PAYE
	TOTAL	1402.07	106.85	1508.92	

Income received since last meeting.				
No.	Name	Amount £		Details
1	HMRC VTR	3201.34	3201.34	VAT refund for 2024-25
2	Herefordshire Council	1792.00	1792.00	Lengthsman grant work for 2024-25
	TOTAL	4993.34	4993.34	

Payments for Authorisation					
No.	Name	Ex-VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	Parish Online	45.00	9.00	54.00	Mapping services - annual charge
2	A M Drew	321.41	0.00	321.41	Clerk's May 2025 salary
3	HMRC	232.22	0.00	232.22	PAYE May 2025
4	A M Drew	20.83	4.17	24.99	Refund for McAfee security software
	TOTAL	619.46	13.17	632.62	

The RFO had also received an invoice from Mrs Barrett for the two cakes she had baked for the Annual Parish Meeting. The invoice is for £15 and the RFO, with Council agreement, wished to add this item to the list of payments. Including this item raises the payments to £634.46+VAT.

The RFO also reported that the progress on the case for recovering business rates payments for the cemetery had been progressing very slowly. The new rates demand for 2025-26 had now arrived and he recommended to Council that, in the absence of a settlement, it would be best to pay the rates bill, since it would be a significant legal breach if it remained unpaid. The bill for 2025-26 is £329.34 and Council agreed this payment with the hope that it might eventually be recovered.

In summary Council agreed payments of £963.80+VAT as appropriate.

The RFO also reported that the Council is now liable to employer's National Insurance following the reduction in thresholds for paying this tax. It amounted to about £17/month and is within the payment to HMRC.

72/25 Lengthsman & Grass cutting – report from Cllr. Brazier

To consider: appointment of Lengthsman for 2025-26

The Clerk reported that he still did not have a Lengthsman in place for 2025-26. He did have a candidate available if required but he was aware that Mr. Sam Walsh was interested in the contract. However, time is getting short and Cllr. Brazier volunteered to speak with Mr Walsh about taking on the work for 2025-26. (Clerk's note: Mr Walsh has now signed the contract for 2025-26).

With regard to the newly formed working group it was agreed that the group would be known as the Pencombe Drainage Group.

Mr Foster explained that he would be unable to attend the next two Council meetings but would present his plans for drainage works during September.

To consider: any work required around the Group Parishes

Cllr. Brazier raised two issues-

- grass cutting on the Causeway. The Council's contractor Mobes Mows had quoted £50 per cut for the Causeway (needed twice in the season).
- Strimming around the salt boxes and the 30mph signs

Council agreed that the contractor should be instructed to carry out these works. The salt box and speed limit signage work will be paid by the Herefordshire Annual Maintenance grant

Cllr. Burge mentioned that work on the Causeway has not been fully completed and Cllr. Brazier confirmed that there was still some outstanding work which was scheduled for completion in the near future.

Cllr. Legge raised grass cutting at St. Guthlacs Church and residents had decided they would carry out the work. A mower had been obtained but it needed a new engine at a cost of £300. In principle Council would

make a financial contribution to the cost of re-furbishing the mower and it would appear in the next schedule of payments for formal agreement.

Cllr. Legge raised the matter of the step between the Church and the school and it was agreed that this project would be the Nominated Task for 2025-26 match funding. There was also a possibility that planters could be placed across the steep steps adjacent to the proposed steps.

73/25 Village Car Park – report from Cllr. Brazier

To receive: any updates on the village car park

The Clerk reported that the planning condition 4 which required the provision of EV charging points in the car park had been lifted. Mr Foster commented that his information from vehicle manufacturers is that there is now full commitment to producing electric vehicles. Council remained committed to the principle of providing EV charging in the village and it was possible that revenues from the use of charging points would be a worthwhile income stream for the village.

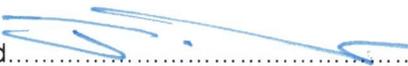
The Clerk confirmed that, now the EV charging had been removed from the project, all other cost estimates had been received for the construction of the car park. All that now remained was to agree other uses for the piece of land not required for car parking and whether there might be grant funding available.

Cllr. Burge suggested that creation of a task specific working group to consult and agree the use for the unused part of the car park site would be a good way forward. Mr Foster volunteered to speak with Mr John Hammonds who had been successful in receiving grants for allotments. Mrs Drew mentioned that she had drawn up a draft plan for a play area/community garden.

74/25 Matters for information and future business

Retention of the flagpole by the War Memorial

The meeting closed at 9.58pm.

Signed..........Chairman

Date..........

