

PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a scheduled meeting of the parish council held on
Tuesday 25th November 2025 at 7.30pm in Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall**

Present

Councillors: James Lewis (Chairman), Tim Burge (Vice Chair), Colin Hadley, David Legge and Paul Thomas.

In attendance:

Helen Tinson – HALC – Meeting cover.

Bruce Baker – Ward Councillor.

PC Hamilton, West Mercia Police Safer Neighbourhood Team (Bromyard).

Three members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr Tony Brazier
2. **Declarations of interest and written dispensation requests:** There were none
3. **Consideration of HALC meeting cover @ £275.00 plus VAT:**
It was RESOLVED: to access HALC's meeting cover at a cost of £275.00 plus VAT.
4. **Open Session**
 - 4.1 **A brief verbal report from PC Hamilton included:**
 - 4.1.1 Personal introduction;
 - 4.1.2 Rural Crime – not much locally but there have been recent burglaries at rural churches; suspicious circumstances possibly targeting Land Rovers and trailers in Ocle Pychard; and members were warned to be vigilant in the run up to Christmas when there is a usual spike in burglaries.
 - 4.1.3 PC Hamilton answered questions concerning the area he and his team cover, confirmed that the team comprises two PC's and one PCSO, and confirmed that PCSO's now stop work at 8pm. Cllr Baker noted that Herefordshire Council have submitted a motion to object to the new working hours for PCSO's.
 - 4.1.4 PC Hamilton confirmed that anything suspicious should always be reported to 999, and anything non-urgent to 101, online or via email to bromyard.snt@westmercia.police.uk. Parishioners can also follow the North Herefordshire Police social media pages.

PC Hamilton left the meeting at 7.36pm.

4.2 A brief verbal report from Ward Councillor – Bruce Baker, included:

- 4.2.1 A follow up on the highway repairs to the C1117 discussed at the last meeting – report handed to the Chairman;
- 4.2.2 Openreach are looking at bringing broadband to rural households. It was noted that Gigaclear undertook some work but hadn't reached all of the county;
- 4.2.3 The new Crown Court is now open in Hereford at the site of the old magistrate's court on Bath Street;
- 4.2.4 Garden waste will be collected from March 2026 (book on website);
- 4.2.5 Training for Parish Footpaths Officers is forthcoming – parishes will be notified in due course;
- 4.2.6 Footpaths – report on completed works and notification that Callum Bush has now left Herefordshire Council. Shona Butter has been appointed as the new principal PROW Officer.
- 4.2.7 Planning – Herefordshire Council are calling for sites for development of any sort (must be the landowner or have landowners' consent);
- 4.2.8 Male Domestic Abuse – highlighted recently, estimated 1 in 5 males suffer;
- 4.2.9 Cyber attacks have increased across country – advice is to ensure stringent passwords are in place;
- 4.2.10 Ofsted – inspection of Children's Services is positive; the inspection for safeguarding adults is ongoing;
- 4.2.11 Public Realm Service Contract from June 2026 has been awarded and will be announced on the 5th December;
- 4.2.12 Boundary Commission are looking at the ward boundaries and number of councillors and may make changes for the May 2027 elections.

4.3 Views of local residents on parish matters included:

- 4.3.1 Housekeeping – it was noted that the hall had not been booked for the meeting and therefore the heating had not been put on in advance. It was undertaken that a representative from the hall would liaise with the Chairman to book for the forthcoming year.
- 4.3.2 Grit Bins – it was noted that two grit bins in Little Cowarne need to be filled. They belong to the parish and therefore were not filled by Herefordshire Council. However, it is understood that salt is available from BBLP to parishes and the HALC Clerk was asked to request a delivery of one tonne of road salt to be delivered to a local address.
- 4.3.3 Allotments – it was reported that two people have expressed an interest in allotments. Although enquiries are not at a level that obliges the Parish Council to consider the provision of allotments, members were asked to think about any possible locations or landowners who might consider this an attractive diversification.
- 4.3.4 Flooding – it was noted that despite county floods, the brook has held.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th October 2025.

It was RESOLVED: to adopt the minutes as a true record. The minutes were signed by the Chair.

6. Planning:

- 6.1 To receive an update on the following application and consider action: Application P252087/F: The Wheelwrights, Pencombe. Proposed change of use from a public house (Sui Generis) to a dwellinghouse (Class C3) ... to note decision of Planning Committee:**

It was NOTED that the committee had unanimously refused the application.

7. Finance:

- 7.1 To note Bank Balance:**

Cllr Tim Burge reported that access to the bank has not yet been completed but is anticipated in the next few days. Outstanding payments will be prioritised. As no payments have been made since the last meeting, it was assumed that the bank balance would be similar to last months reported balances (less admin charges).

- 7.2 To consider Draft Budget:**

Cllr Burge presented a thorough budget monitoring report detailing current year income and expenditure to date and noting a forecasted year end position. It was noted that the current budget aimed for a surplus of circa £5,000 but the anticipated end position will be a surplus of circa £7,000. It was requested that the term Flood Mitigation is changed to Drainage.

Members considered a review of current reserves noting a shortfall in bank funds for earmarked reserves of £4,512.37.

Cllr Burge presented the draft budget for 2026/27 and proposed a small increase in the precept to £23,000. There was discussion but no questions or amendments. It was RESOLVED: to approve the draft budget for public consultation.

Members wished to record their thanks to Cllr Burge for his work on establishing the council's financial position and draft budget.

Cllr Bruce Baker left the meeting at 8.22pm.

- 7.3 To consider outstanding payments:**

It was RESOLVED: to approve the following payments:

7.3.1 Christmas Tree Festival £60.00 for the purchase of a Christmas Tree (a volunteer will be sought to decorate the tree)

8. Footpaths - to receive report and consider action:

It was reported that the £25,000 annual limit for Herefordshire Council funding has been assigned to drainage projects for the current year and therefore no funding is available for PROW work. It was therefore agreed to look at PROW projects that can be submitted for 2026/27 funding.

9. Village Hall Committee – to receive report and consider action:

Members received a report including:

- 9.1 New representatives were appointed at the last meeting;
- 9.2 All policies and procedures have been completed – thanks minuted to Karen Hodges;
- 9.3 The dripping urinal has now been repaired;
- 9.4 The hot water boiler may need to be replaced;
- 9.5 Hook up for a generator is being researched;
- 9.6 Pub nights continue to be very successful – thanks minuted to the team;
- 9.7 Curry night was very well received, circa 40 people despite very poor weather;
- 9.8 The Christmas tree light switch on is this coming Friday with refreshments and carols at the Church;
- 9.9 Christmas lunch is 6th December 2025;
- 9.10 Next meeting is 15th February 2026.

10. To consider repair of Flagpole:

It was reported that a parishioner has taken responsibility for the flagpole and flags but has reported that some minor decorative repairs are needed to the pole.

It was RESOLVED: to agree in principle and request the parishioner obtain quotes for further consideration.

11. To consider grass on the pound:

Members considered concerns received about the condition of the grass on the pound where cars are parked and whether cars should be stopped from parking there.

It was RESOLVED: to apply grass seed (Cllr Thomas) to repair the grass and monitor and review if needed.

12. Church Path – to receive update on completed work and consider outstanding items:

It was reported that Cllr Legge continues to liaise with the contractor and anticipates that work will be completed later this week.

13. Telephone Kiosk – to consider update and proposals for information point:

It was reported that the light is back on – in fact never disconnected, just turned off.

It was RESOLVED: to progress the installation of information boards

It was RESOLVED: to approve a budget of up to £100 for the purchase of the boards. Cllr Lewis to progress.

14. Causeway – to receive report from site meeting and consider plan:

It was reported that the path has in part washed away and is looking tired in places. It would be a fairly major job to replace in its entirety so it was proposed to carry out maintenance where it is needed most and monitor, and consider grant funding or using nominated task funding next year.

It was RESOLVED: to assign foliage maintenance to contractor, Mobes Mows.

It was RESOLVED: to work on costings to replace stone and kickboards for 2026/27.

15. Parish Council website ... To receive update and consider action.

Members considered whether to reassign the development of the website. Cllr Burge reported that he had spoken with the current web developer who has suggested a fortnightly meeting with a parish representative in order to progress the project.

It was RESOLVED: that Cllr Burge seek a local volunteer to work on the village content and continue to push forward for the time being. The HALC Clerk advised that only the Parish Clerk should have access to the Parish Council content.

It was RESOLVED: to continue with the current web developer.

16. Employment of Parish Clerk: to receive an update and consider action:

It was reported that one formal application has been received and a second expression of interest, though this has not yet developed to a formal application. It is anticipated that interviews would take place early in December.

It was RESOLVED: that the Chairman will follow up with HALC.

17. Date of the next scheduled meeting ... Noted as Tuesday 27th January 2026, 7.30pm.

17.1 A member of the public requested that the steps to the Churchyard are considered as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Meeting closed 8.50pm

SIGNED DATE