

**Approved minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 24 March 2026,
Pencombe and Little Cowarne Parish Hall**

Present

Councillors: James Lewis (Chair), Tim Burge (Vice Chair), Tony Brazier, Colin Hadley, and David Legge

In Attendance

Jane Legge – Parish Clerk
Bruce Baker – Ward Councillor
Four members of the public

- 1. Apologies for absence** – apologies received from Councillor Paul Thomas
- 2. Declaration of interest and written dispensation requests** – none received.
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 February 2026** - it was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes.
- 4. Open Session**
 - 4.1. To receive an update and consider action from the Chair on current matters**
 - 4.1.1. The C1117 road to Little Cowarne road has been repaired temporarily and is due to be resurfaced properly in this calendar year.
 - 4.1.2. The Chair reported the replacement parts for the de-fib machine in Little Cowarne were currently not available. If the parts cannot be sourced (due to the model being obsolete), a new machine would have to be purchased at a cost of approximately £700. There is a loaned de-fib machine at Sparrington whilst the Parish Council one is being repaired.
Action – Chair to obtain costs to replace the de-fib machine.
 - 4.1.3 The new dog poo bin had arrived and in place. A second one is now on order.
 - 4.1.4 Ditching work progressed well over the last month. Invoices have been received and submitted to Herefordshire Council for reimbursement. The Chair advised that the ditching work will be able to take place earlier this year due to changes when grant applications can be submitted.
 - 4.1.5 It has been confirmed that the Parish Council should not have been paying business rates on the cemetery, as it is eligible for a 100% discount. The

payments have now been stopped, and the Parish Council is due a six-year rebate of approximately £1800.

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

- 4.2.1. There is a big focus to rehome homeless people (those living in B&B's, hostels etc. rather than on the streets). Homeless people are able to register with 'Home Point' which is a central register for people in need of affordable housing. Bruce advised that Home Point can be contacted to register empty properties with them.
- 4.2.2. Three thousand potholes were repaired in the first six weeks of the year, but resurfacing work cannot take place in cold and wet weather.
- 4.2.3. The recruitment process is underway again for the new Herefordshire Chief Executive and the successful candidate is due to be announced in May.
- 4.2.4. In March, Herefordshire Council partook in International Women's Day.
- 4.2.5. Devolution has raised its head again and the Council have been told that they can apply to become a Foundation Strategic Authority. That means they would be able to make decisions on joining other authorities. If Herefordshire are pushed, they will look to join the 'Three Counties Group' which is Worcester, Herefordshire, and Gloucestershire.
- 4.2.6. The Herefordshire Council Finance Director was due to leave but has decided to stay in post.
- 4.2.7. Special Development Strategies can be introduced to the Council which is similar to a Local Plan. It could mean that the Three Counties Group would be led by a mayor and replace the Police & Crime Commissioner.
- 4.2.8. The current Police & Crime Commissioner is asking for comments on the plans by the Government to merge the 43 Police Forces down to a maximum of fifteen. They want local people to write to give their views on whether that should go ahead.
- 4.2.9. There is talk that there will be a 50% increase in business rates and 76% increase for public houses.
- 4.2.10. Local business leaders are due to meet with Ellie Chowns MP to discuss putting pressure on the Government to sort the Fair Funding review out, as there is 32% less funding per head than those in urban areas.
- 4.2.11. Briefings have taken place in the Council in preparation for the change of Highways contract in June.
- 4.2.12. It was reported to Bruce that trespassers styled as 'urban explorers' had gone into a property in Pencombe on a number of occasions. It had been reported to the Police, but Bruce will also report back to the Council.

4.3. To receive views of local residents – none received

5. Finance

- 5.1. The bank balance was noted as £18,858.50.
- 5.2. Tim Burge presented the financial report, and it was RESOLVED to approve it.
- 5.3. It was RESOLVED to approve invoices received.
- 5.4. It was RESOLVED to purchase an additional laptop for the Parish Council at a cost of approximately £515.

6. Lengthsman & PROW

6.1 To receive and an update on Lengthsman & Footpaths Officer activities

- 6.1.1. Local landowners (bar one) have agreed to pay towards the costs of the ditching work needed across their land. The areas will be marked out so a cost per landowner can be calculated.
- 6.1.2. The clearing and jetting of ditches has taken place. The ditch at The Nash needs to be dug out to clear the roots etc. as it is completely blocked up. Another drain has been hit by a vehicle, the headwall has been knocked away and the drainpipe smashed, so will need replacing. The work for both can be carried out by the Lengthsman.
- 6.1.3. The drain by the kiosk in Pencombe has been cleared and jetted and it has been identified that jetting is needed for the blocked drains by Marsh Court.
- 6.1.4. The Footpaths Officer and the Chair walked the footpaths in the Parish to identify work that needs to take place. The Footpaths Officer will send the list of work to the Clerk and Chair.
- 6.1.5. The bridge at Hawkhurst is due to be repaired this year.
- 6.1.6. The Footpaths Officer asked for a bigger Ordnance Survey map to mark the footpaths in Little Cowarne to display the bus shelter or the telephone kiosks.
- 6.1.7. It has been quoted that two and half litres of Hammerite paint would be needed to paint the flagpole and to cover other work in Pencombe at a cost of approximately of £50. There is £100 set aside for flagpole refurbishment, so the spend comes within the budget.

6.2. To consider any additional work required

- 6.2.1. A damaged drain on Pearson's Corner in Little Cowarne needs to be replaced to stop water running down the public road.
- 6.2.2. Similarly, there is a drain on the Risbury road going out of Pencombe that is smashed and needs to be replaced.

7. Village Hall Committee update included:

- 7.1.1. A new water heater has been installed in the bar.

- 7.1.2. On the 25 March, the emergency light units will be replaced, and the fire alarm and fire extinguisher checks will take place.
- 7.1.3. Policies, procedures and signage for the village hall are being updated.
- 7.1.4. The March LINC lunch went well, and the next one is due on the 04 April.
- 7.1.5. The pub nights are still going very well thanks to Frank and the volunteers.
The pub nights are supporting the village hall financially and the Committee are looking to refurbish the bar area with newer fridges and more storage.
- 7.1.6. There will be a curry night on the 17 April 2026.
- 7.1.7. Eligibility to apply for an FCC Communities grant to support future projects for the village hall is going to be looked into.
- 7.1.8. There will be a need for more tables for the Pencombe Show and ideas have been discussed for additional storage space in the storage room.
- 7.1.9. The next Trustees meeting will take place 22 April 2026.

8. Parish Matters

- 8.1. **To consider options for creating a parking area on the Pound** – discussions were held regarding the liabilities (to the Parish Council) if a parking space were to be created and the Chair will look into this further.
 - 8.1.1. The Chair will ask the Lengthsman for ideas regarding the proposal.
 - 8.1.2. It was suggested that the hedge opposite the Pound needed cutting back to prevent overhang onto the road.
- 8.2. **To consider and approve costs for additional motion solar lights at the village hall** – the Chair reported that the cost to purchase additional lights would be approximately £50, but the suitability of the lights would be checked before purchasing them.

9. Parish Council Website

- 9.1. To receive an update and consider actions
 - 9.1.1. Tim Burge reported that the new website is due to go live on 25 March 2026 and showed what the website will look like. He advised that he was still waiting for the Pencombe PCC information to add to the website.
 - 9.1.2. Training on the new website has been arranged for Tim, the Clerk, and a Village Hall representative.

10. To consider agenda items for the next meeting

- 10.1. To agree work that will be covered by the drainage grant in 2026/27

11. Date of next scheduled meeting – Tuesday 28 April, 7.30pm

Meeting Closed: 20:40