



---

**PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Approved Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Pencombe Group Council held on**  
**25<sup>th</sup> August 2020**  
**Video meeting, 7.30pm**

**Councillors attending;**

Cllr. T. Brazier (Chairman)  
Cllr. C Hayes  
Cllr. C. Hadley  
Cllr. D. Legge  
Cllr. J. Barrett  
Cllr. P. Hope

**In Attendance:** Cllr. J. Harrington (Ward Councillor), Allan Drew (Parish Clerk)

**Members of the Public:** Susan Drew (Treasurer, Parish Hall), Tim Maynard (Resident)

**26/20      Apologies for absence**  
None, full attendance

**27/20      Declarations of interest and written requests for dispensation**  
None received

**28/20      To re-appoint council office holders in lieu of annual meeting**  
The annual meeting, normally held in May, was cancelled this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Government guidance modified this requirement and allowed office holders to be re-elected at the next properly called meeting of the Council. The clerk asked Cllr. Brazier if he was prepared to continue holding the office of Chairman and he replied that he was prepared to do so. The Chairman then asked Cllr. Hayes if she would be prepared to continue as vice Chair and she replied that she would continue in that position. The Chairman duly signed the acceptance of office form after the meeting.

**29/20      Draft minutes of the previous meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020**  
The Chairman signed the draft minutes as a true record of the meeting  
**Draft minutes of the extra ordinary meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020.**  
The Chairman signed the draft minutes as a true record of the meeting.

**30/20      Action Tracker.**  
20/20 Allotments. The Chairman reported that during lockdown there has been no progress on a new site for allotments now that the initial site was unavailable. The suggestion to use the Parish Hall newsletter to gauge opinion had not yet happened and the next newsletter was some months away. The Hall Treasurer suggested use of the Council email list to gauge support and this was agreed. The Clerk would also post a notice on the village boards and on the Council website.  
**Action: Clerk**

13/20 Hollybush Lane deterioration at junction with A417. The clerk reported he had been advised that the road would be surface dressed on 21<sup>st</sup> August and this work had been done. However, the area we were concerned about had not been improved. The clerk undertook to press the matter further. **Action: Clerk**

The same action on the tracker covered a similar issue but at the A465 junction with the Little Cowarne road. The clerk reported that he had discussed the problem with the Stoke Lacy clerk (in whose Parish the problem was) and a response from BB is awaited.

319/19 NDP. The clerk explained that the opportunity to apply for funding to create a Neighbourhood Plan had narrowed considerably (it has to be granted and spent during the same financial year). He would however, see if there was an opportunity to for the grant giving body to be more flexible given the current situation. Councillor Harrington observed that the new planning proposals, currently at white paper stage, would potentially make NDPs more important should these proposals become law. **Action: Clerk**

### 31/20 **Open session:**

31.1/20 Cllr. Harrington gave an update to the meeting-  
School transport.

School children using public transport have to use masks and maintain social distancing so buses carry fewer children. Some companies have been able to provide additional capacity. School buses contracted to the council do not require masks or social distancing and this position has been confirmed by Government (DfE and DfT). However, hand sanitisers are provided in contract buses and council is considering whether to request children over 11 to wear masks. For children travelling by train there are ongoing discussions with the train operator (Transport for Wales) about providing extra capacity by increasing the number of carriages.

Emergency active travel measures.

These measures have been implemented and are not particularly welcome. Bromyard has not been much affected but in Hereford and Leominster the measures have been more obvious. Cllr. Harrington visited a number of traders in Leominster to hear their concerns. Some traders were supportive but others raised real concerns so the measures will be reviewed.

Balfour Beatty

Council has commissioned a review of Balfour Beatty.

Cllr. Harrington reported he is not completely happy with the way this contract with BB is being run. Currently in year 7 of a 10 year term, the contract can be renewed for a further 10 years if performance is satisfactory. One of the problems is that BB actually measure their own performance and there are doubts about the objectivity of these assessments. Council have asked for and received advice from PWC consultants on contract performance and that advice will be publicly published shortly. Irrespective of how this contract moves forward, there are real concerns that council has lost most of its technical skills, such as highway engineers and contract management. Cllr. Harrington views this loss as a danger, partly because it has now become so reliant on BB to carry out these functions for them. Whilst it is accepted that council can choose not to have their own labour force it was inappropriate to have lost the technical and corporate skills required to performance manage the contractor.





### Two Hoots

There have been no further applications from Assured Energy so Cllr. Harrington has told Kevin Bishop to prepare for Enforcement action. The enforcement report is being prepared and an update will be received by Cllr. Harrington by the end of this week.

31.2/20 No issues were raised by local residents.

### 32/20 Parish Hall update

The Parish Hall Treasurer provided an update-

The Hall received the £10,000 grant due under lockdown restrictions and have used some of the funds to re-paint the Hall. Re-opening is planned for beginning of September and extensive prevention measures have been put in place such as hand sanitisers. The first scheduled event is the coffee morning due for 3<sup>rd</sup> September. There are other bookings already from the school (Tuesday PM and all-day Friday) for every week. The LINC lunch will restart on the first Saturday in October (3<sup>rd</sup> October). Capacities under the current rules are-

Committee room	4
Hall (for community events)	50 (where partners face each other)
For family events	30

The Chairman thanked all the Hall Trustees and their helpers for all the good work done in bringing the Hall back into safe operation.

### 33/20 Finance

33.1/20 HSBC Bank balances and spend against budget.

The clerk reported that the bank balances at 25<sup>th</sup> August were-

HSBC Current account	£3072
HSBC Savings account	£13169

33.2/20 To consider income received/due

Since the last meeting Council had received £9547 including the first part of the annual precept. Included in this is the VAT refund for 2 years (2018-2020). Of the more minor items, the cemetery had been a large contributor with both interment fees and EROB purchase. The only item to be followed up is an outstanding payment due from Sparrington Farm as a contribution to the ditching work carried out by the Council last winter. The Chairman undertook to follow up with Mr. Thomas of Sparrington Farm. **Action: Chairman**

33.3/20 To consider payments due

The clerk reported he had recorded all payments made and payments received since the February meeting. He used the delegated authority from the November 2019 meeting to make payments on behalf of the council. The payments were mostly routine, and the clerk was clear that council had an obligation to make these payments. The most significant payments were to the Lengthsman which the clerk observed were at one time likely to be paid in full or part by Herefordshire but this turned out not to be case. Cllr. Harrington said he would be happy to look again at the position given the discussions held in past meetings. **Action: Cllr. Harrington.**

For payments pending approval the clerk reported that the unusual items were reimbursement of the costs of implementing the IT strategy agreed at the 18<sup>th</sup> June meeting



(tablets £1130, software £135 and cases £48). Additionally there was the clerk's August salary to approve, and also a delayed invoice from HALC/NALC for annual subscriptions (£441.48). Council agreed that-

- HALC was a worthwhile "insurance policy" and payment should be made.
- The clerk should be re-imbursed for the spending he had incurred for the IT strategy.
- The clerk's August salary should be paid

The clerk reported that the work on the Hall roof had been paid for as the members agreed by letter back in May. In due course Council would receive a contribution from the Hall of £1200 for this work

### 34/20 Planning applications/decisions

34.1/20 Planning applications received.

P202168 Replacement dwelling at Grendon Court. The proposal is for a new house to be erected on the site of an existing dwelling. Also included was a triple garage and games room above. Members considered the proposal to be in keeping with the local area and to have a positive impact given the appearance of the new building as shown in the drawings. Crucially the new building was a replacement and so did not run counter to the core strategy. The clerk was actioned to make appropriate comments. **Action: Clerk**

The clerk also raised the issue of making comments on planning applications received during the lockdown period when Council meetings were suspended. The clerk has no delegated authority to make comments on behalf of Council and it would be useful to create a process of delegation whereby the clerk could establish the views of councillors and submit these comments on their behalf. **Action: Clerk**

34.2/20 To note planning consents from Herefordshire Council  
None have been received

34.3/20 To note planning consent refusals from Herefordshire Council  
None have been received.

### 35/20 Lengthsman scheme/Grass cutting

35.1/20 The Chairman reported that A C Garden Services were progressing with grass cutting as best as possible during the poor weather. In addition to the normal grass cutting there was also the wild flowers to be trimmed, a yew tree in the church to be lifted and a cutback of the brambles and other weeds which are encroaching in to the "under 5s" area at the school.

35.2/20 The Chairman reported that considerable work had been carried out and still more was required for the Causey to be brought up to standard after the heavy rains of last winter and the subsequent summer growth. A local resident Emma Chilman had taken the lead in this work and the Chairman felt that the level of work had been such that Council should make a payment to Emma in recognition. He suggested that £150 would be appropriate and there was general agreement amongst Councillors to this suggestion. Councillor Hayes proposed that the payment of £150 should be made and the proposal was seconded by Councillor Legge. All councillors voted in favour of the proposal. The clerk would arrange payment by cheque. **Action: Clerk**

Councillor Hadley raised the issue of the ditch close by Little Cowarne church which required some clearing in time for winter. The Chairman undertook to look into the issue and brief the Lengthsman as necessary. **Action: Chairman**





### 36/20 To carry out the AGAR governance risk assessment

The clerk explained the background to the AGAR return and asked Councillors to consider each of the questions in turn. The only significant discussion was around the question of the churchyard wall next to the road. Were this wall to collapse the costs and possible damage would be significant. However, both the clerk and Chairman had inspected the wall and at this stage did not consider that a more expert/in depth examination was required. On question 6 regarding an effective system of internal audit etc. the clerk reported that in line with best practice he would arrange for an independent review of the Council's financial regulations before these were re-adopted in the near future. No other issues were raised and the risk assessment return was agreed by Council and signed as required by both Chairman and clerk.

**Action: Clerk**

Following on from the AGAR discussion Mr. Maynard asked about the insurance position should the churchyard wall be damaged by traffic using the adjacent road. In particular he was concerned that large, heavy vehicles could cause considerable damage which might be unobserved/unreported. The clerk stated he would check the position with the Council insurers and Mr. Maynard said he would provide details of a recent incident relating to the wall.

**Action: Clerk**

The discussion progressed into consideration of a weight limit through the village and Councillor Harrington thought that such an approach would be a useful way to deal with potential damage to the wall and also the difficulties raised by the Two Hoots vehicles. It was agreed that Councillor Harrington would progress the possibility of a weight limit with Herefordshire and the clerk would put the matter on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Action: Clerk & Councillor  
Harrington**

### 37/20 Matters for discussion at next meeting

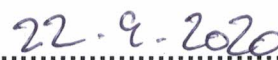
Possible weight limit for village.

There was also discussion about the proposed car park and the clerk reported that he had received a note from Ollie Jones that he had opened a pre-application advice file and would be in contact shortly with more information, probably by the next meeting.

With no other business to discuss the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45pm

**The date of the next meeting is 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 at 7.30pm. It is likely that the video format will be used again, but that decision will be finalised closer to the date when any new COVID-19 guidance has been received from Government.**

Signed.......... Chairman of the Parish Council

Dated ..........