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

Tuesday 24th May 2022 at 7.30pm in Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall

Councillors Present;

Cllr. W. Brazier, Chairman	Cllr. P. Hope
Cllr. D Legge	Cllr. C. Hadley
Cllr. S Davis	Cllr. S. Barrett

In Attendance: Allan Drew Parish Clerk

Members of the Public: 10 members of the public attended

First business

54/22 Election of Chairman

- (a) *To elect:* a Chairman for 2022-23.
Councillor Brazier was proposed and unanimously elected
- (b) *To receive:* the elected Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office
Cllr. Brazier signed his declaration of acceptance of office

55/22 Election of vice-chairman

To elect: a vice-chairman for 2022-23
Cllr. Legge was proposed as vice-Chairman and was unanimously elected

56/22 Apologies for absence

To receive: any apologies for absence.
All Councillors were present for the meeting

57/22 Declaration of interests and dispensations

- (a) *To receive and record:* any declarations of interest in agenda items in accordance with the Council's adopted Code of Conduct.
No declarations of interest had been received
- (b) *To consider:* any applications for dispensations from the rules on participation by members with a disclosable pecuniary interest, in accordance with Standing Order 2.18.
No applications had been received

58/22 Minutes of the last meeting

- (a) *To approve:* the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 26th April 2022 The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting. Mr Nicholson agreed to send the Clerk a copy of the paper which he had distributed to Councillors at the last meeting so that this paper could be included with the minutes.
- (b) *To note:* any matters for report arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda. The Clerk raised the issue of the car park and that Berrys had offered a ZOOM call during working hours. Council was keen to have a meeting outside of normal working hours. The issue of school drop off and pick up was also raised.

59/22 Chairman's Announcements

To note: any announcements from the Chairman.

60/22 Public participation

Under Standing Order 2.5, any member of the public may make a statement or give evidence to the meeting on any business to be transacted or any other business, and answer questions from councillors. At the discretion of the Chairman such participation may be permitted under the relevant agenda item.

A number of discussion topics were raised by residents-

- Improving communication around the Parishes and a Parish newsletter was mentioned perhaps in combination with the Parish Hall. The newsletter would best be available as paper as well as online published either monthly bi-monthly or quarterly.
- Tree planting had been successful in other Parishes and it had been possible to involve the local school.
- Bulk buying of photo voltaic cells to help with the current cost of living crisis had featured in a recent edition of a national newspaper and might be worth further investigation for Pencombe.
- Organisation of the Council and roles of Councillors.

Members of the public attending the meeting were keen to ensure that a way forward to deal with these issues would be developed.

Annual business – previous year

61/22 Annual reports 2021-22

- (a) *To receive:* a report from the past-Chairman.
- (b) *To receive:* a report from the Clerk
 - The NDP had been started during the year and the grants were now available for 2022-23. It might be possible to get to the referendum by May 2023.
 - The village car park project had started and although progress had been slow it is starting to take shape. The car park and NDP kick off meeting had been very well attended.
 - Thanks to former Councillors Hayes and Barrett who had given many years of service to the Parishes. Also a welcome to new Councillors Barrett and Davis
 - The LinC lunches had returned after COVID and were as popular as ever, as were coffee mornings. New activities had also started – gardening club, cinema shows and a wine tasting society.
 - The Council had applied for a £13,000 drainage from Herefordshire but the scheme had been heavily subscribed and, similar to other Parishes, we had received just less than £5000
- (c) *To receive:* reports from representatives of the Parish Hall Trustees.

Pencombe and Little Cowarne Parish Hall Report for the Parish Council AGM

The Pencombe Group Parish Council is the Custodian Trustee of the Parish Hall. The responsibility of the Parish Hall Trustees is, on behalf of the parish Council, to pursue the Object of the Charity which is “the provision and maintenance of a village hall for the inhabitants” of Pencombe and Little Cowarne.

Regular reports about the hall are provided by trustees to the members of the Parish Council at their meetings.

Councillors will be aware that while the Covid Pandemic seriously affected the activities at the hall the Covid Recovery Funding (made available to village halls across England) has enabled the trustees to both keep solvent and make various improvements to the hall

The trustees are pleased to note that normal activity levels are beginning to resume.

The trustees have benefited from and contributed to the work of Community First, which is an agency helping rural communities across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Both before and during the pandemic, Community First have been encouraging village halls to be involved in schemes to reduce rural isolation and loneliness. The trustees organise the weekly Community Coffee on Thursdays and the monthly LinC Lunch which provide opportunities for much appreciated social interaction. The trustees also initiated the Community Cinema, Garden Club and Wine Society all which are now or are becoming ‘free standing’ activities. In addition, these community activities are supplemented by the weekly Tuesday Club and monthly WI meetings.

The hall trustees produce a quarterly newsletter (supplemented by occasional special notices) which is sent digitally to those on the mailing list plus some printed copies which are variable from the notice boards.

As a consequence of a number of disputes which had to be determined in Court, Community First have advised village hall trustees to ensure that their hall hiring agreements and supporting documents are in line with current requirements and legal advice in order to ensure they are sufficiently robust in case of any dispute. Although it can appear off putting, the hall trustees have introduced the necessary improved documentation.

The AGM of for the Parish Hall Trust will be held on Monday July 4th at 7.30pm.

Andrew Mottram
for and on behalf of the Trustees

(e) *To receive:* a report from the Clerk on Parish footpaths

The Clerk reported that in the absence of a Lengthsman work on footpaths was currently suspended but that he would be organising a meeting with the footpath officers to sort out priorities and working methods. The footpath officers had both provided annual reports which are appended to these minutes.

62/22 Statement of Accounts and Annual Return for 2021-22

(a) *To consider:* a report from the Responsible Financial Officer

The year 2021-22 was one of significant development for the Council-

- Two major projects – the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and provision of a village car park were started.
- Face-to-face meetings were re-started in May 2021 with the loosening of COVID restrictions.
- Two Councillors resigned – Cllrs. Hayes and Barrett - after many years of service to the community. The resultant vacancies were filled by election on 31st March 2022 (by Cllrs. Davis & Barrett).
- The precept remained unchanged from 2020-21 at £13875.
- A surplus was generated for the year of £1,200.
- The Clerk achieved CiLCA qualification and the Council resolved to adopt the General Power of Competence.

(b) *To approve:* the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022

(c) *To approve:* the Bank Reconciliation Statement for the year ended 31 March 2022

(d) *To consider:* the Internal Audit Reports and checklist

(e) *To approve:* the Annual Governance Statement for year ended 31 March 2022

(f) *To approve:* the Accounting Statement for the year ended 31 March 2022

(g) *To approve:* the Certificate of Exemption from external audit for the year ended 31 March 2022

Council examined all the above financial returns and agreed that they represented a true financial position for the year just completed. The Chairman signed the documents as appropriate. Cllr. Davis raised the issue of checking details on invoices and the RFO reported that due to the relatively small number of invoices received he is able to verify every one as legitimate. As regards inaccurate banking details Council's bank (Unity Trust) has committed to introducing a name checking system similar to larger banks.

The RFO explained the "Notice of Public Rights" which had to run for 30 working days and must include the first 10 working days of July. He recommended that this year the period should run from Monday 27th June until Friday 5th August inclusive. Council agreed this recommendation

Annual business – review of current regulations and policies

63/22 Review of Standing Orders

The Standing Orders (July 2018) have been kept under review and amendments adopted in October 2017 and November 2014,. No further amendments are proposed.

64/22 Review of Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations (2020) have been reviewed by the Responsible Financial Officer and no amendments are proposed.

65/22 Review of Council procedures and policies

The Clerk had reviewed the remaining policies and procedures and there was no need to make any changes.

Annual business – forthcoming year

66/22 Review of assets and insurance

- (a) The list of fixed assets was discussed and some benches were in need either of refurbishment or replacement. Mr Maynard raised the issue of a bench outside the Church which was in dire need of replacement/re-conditioning. Cllr. Davis knew a supplier of plastic benches which were reasonably priced. The Chairman mentioned that he could produce re-conditioned benches at a very reasonable price and Council could consider this option at a later meeting.
- (b) The RFO's report and recommendations on Insurance were that the risk assessment had moved downwards due to better authorisation procedures and Council was happy to renew insurance on the same terms (and price) as the previous year. It was noted that a report had not been received from Adrian Hope, the Council's tree surgeon, for a number of years now and the Clerk would follow up on this matter

67/22 Dates of meetings for 2022-23

The following dates for meetings were agreed:

Tuesday 28 June 2022, Tuesday 26 July 2022, Tuesday 23 August 2022, Tuesday 27 September 2022, Tuesday 25 October 2022, Tuesday 22 November 2022, Tuesday 24 January 2023, Tuesday 28 February 2023, Tuesday 28 March 2023, Tuesday 25 April 2023, Tuesday 23 May 2023 all at 7.30pm.

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

Ordinary business

68/22 Clerk's Report

The Clerk had no further matters to report

69/22 District Councillor

Cllr. Harrington was not present but had supplied a written report. The highlights of that report were-

- Herefordshire Council had agreed a trial of the dog warden proposed by Council. The Clerk would circulate a note to residents to introduce the scheme and hopefully attract a few volunteers for training. The idea behind the scheme was to aim to persuade owners to clean up after their dogs. Any legal action necessary would be undertaken by Herefordshire.
- The phosphate problem was improving in that it was hoped that Herefordshire would shortly sign off on a phosphate trading scheme which would allow some new development to start. Herefordshire however, could not solve this problem on their own since they do not control the rivers. (The Environment Agency is responsible but so far has not taken any initiatives to resolve the problem).
- Looked after children was absorbing a large part of Herefordshire funding and investigation revealed that taking children into care was the first resort not the last resort. So the Council now found the bill unaffordable because of the number of children in care. Children's Services were now being re-vamped with more resources to get the service back into better shape.

On other matters Cllr. Harrington had replied on the bus service cancellation issue but lack of digital exclusion of the residents involved made this solution unlikely. The Post Office had also replied to an enquiry saying that "they were still considering the position." The Clerk would follow up with Joe Francis the PO Area Manager.

Cllr. Hadley raised the matter of a commemorative bench in Little Cowarne for the Jubilee rather than tree planting. He asked for a contribution from Council of £200 (+VAT) which was agreed instead of the tree purchase which had already been approved.

70/22 Planning Committee and Planning updates

No new applications had been received

Planning application 220101 of Land at Grendon Court. Details reserved by condition had been approved

71/22 General Financial Matters

Payments received since last meeting.

HMRC VAT refund for 2020-21 had been received £1701.79

Payments for Authorisation

No.	Name	Amount £	Details
1	A M Drew	£337.45	Clerk's May salary
2	Parish Online	£45.00+VAT	Mapping services
3	DC Gardening Services	£600.00+VAT	Grass cutting
	TOTAL	982.45+VAT	

Council agreed that these payments should be made.

72/22 Matters for information and future business

Cllr. Hadley raised the matter that the school had asked for the access code to the Pencombe defibrillator and this was agreed subject to the school taking responsibility for correct use of the equipment.

Cllr. Hadley also undertook to find a trainer so that the number of trained responders could be raised.

Mr Bull raised the matter of plants growing sideways out of the churchyard wall causing visibility issues for drivers.

Council agreed that such plants could be trimmed or removed

The chairman closed the meeting at 9.15pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated : 28 June 2022

