

MUCH BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish and Annual Statutory Council Meetings of Much Birch Parish Council held, consecutively, at the Much Birch Community Hall on Friday 9th May 2025 from 7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Alison Cook (re-elected as Chair)
Cllr Roisin Burge
Cllr David Irwin (re-elected as Footpath Officer)
Cllr Chris Pickering Grey (re-elected as Vice Chair)
Cllr Michael Agyeman

In attendance:

Parish Clerk; Alison Wright and Ward Cllr; Toni Fagan plus one member of the public, there were also three representatives from West Mercia Police present, for the first part of the meeting

Annual Parish Meeting

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was one member of the public at the meeting. There were three representatives from West Mercia Police present. The police updated the meeting regarding recent police matters, there had been one non-suspicious death and two recent road traffic collisions dealt with. There had been an unpleasant encounter for a lady on a horse, who had been subjected to inappropriate language. The motorist had revved their engine and had sworn at the rider. It was reiterated that it was important for drivers to show respect for horses and riders. The priorities for the charter with the parish council were speeding and school parking. The school were continuing to update their "travel plan". The community speed watch would be coming back into action and details about potential new people etc. would be forwarded to PCSO Marsh, who had been absent for a period of time. The police advised that residents can e mail in any details of speeding vehicle registrations and company details of any speeding lorry etc. The A466 was a "good" place for the police to monitor for speeding offences. The Ward Cllr updated regarding traffic surveys with Ian Connolly but these were not actionable due to the percentage of findings being below the action threshold.

There was a brief discussion about the proposals to cut the PCSO working hours back from a 22.00 finish time to 20.00. This was being contested by the employees, in the role, and had been challenged by the parish councils as concerns over local policing and patrol cover were voiced.

The Annual Parish Meeting closed at 7.37pm and the police left the meeting at this point.

The Annual Statutory Meeting opened

1.0 To elect a Chairman

Cllr Cook was proposed by Cllr Pickering Grey and seconded by Cllr Burge. There were no further nominations for the role. Cllr Cook accepted the role of Chair and signed her acceptance of office form.

2.0 To elect a Vice Chairman

Cllr Pickering Grey was proposed by Cllr Cook and seconded by Cllr Agyeman. There were no further nominations for the role. Cllr Pickering Grey accepted the role of Vice Chair.

3.0 Apologies for Absence

There were apologies received from Cllr Steve Turner

4.0 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

5.0 Minutes of previous meeting

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held at the Hall on the 3rd April 2025, were approved as a true and correct record of the Meeting.

6.0 Reports

6.2) Ward Councillor Ward Cllr Toni Fagan was present at the meeting. The Ward Cllr updated the meeting regarding items from her recent Ward Report. Consultation was ongoing about the local transport plan with the rural perspective, community transport and the idea of a request service all being looked at. Matters were said to be improving in the management of the public rights of way and it was hoped that the service would go from strength to strength. Any issues with PROW were to be reported back to the Ward Cllr who was having conversations with Lee Whitehouse, who was in turn overseeing the service. Keep Britain Tidy and litter control were mentioned as being worthwhile. Clear ups on litter would be co-ordinated alongside road closures for other matters. The “Green Hut” lay-by was seeing two bags of litter being picked up each week. “You are being Watched” Eye posters were being used in places. Generally facilities for truck drivers were commented as being “really poor.”

The Local Government Boundary Commission would be looking at Ward boundaries and numbers of councillors.

Speeding issues on the A49 had been in focus. Some people believed that 40 mph was too fast when going through a settlement.

There was a forthcoming gas works project between Broadleys and Bullingham Lane to consider when travelling into the City of Hereford.

Craig Sandman the new Locality Steward was being replaced by Lee Fishwick.

6.2) P.C.S.O. from West Mercia Police

Golden Valley Briefing had been sent when received and the police had updated at the meeting.

6.3) Locality Steward - the Locality Steward, had sent his bulletins.

7.0 To appoint councillors to the following working groups

Finance Working Group – all

Employment Working Group – convene if required

Parish Land Working Group – allocate as needed

Neighbourhood Development Plan – Cllrs Burge, Pickering Grey and Turner

Funding may be available to review the NDP with a consultant. The timeline on housing numbers would be reviewed and targets monitored. The recent application outcome for Larkrise had not yet been published to the website, so the total number of expected houses was not determinable. The NDP would be kept on the parish council agenda.

8.0 Information and Correspondence

8.1) Written report received and contents noted including:

Herefordshire Council:

Talk Community bulletins

9.0 Financial Report

9.1) The following bank balances were noted:

@ 13th April 2025 HSBC Community Account £11,229.24

9.2) To approve list of payments (circulated separately)

The following payments were approved:

Payments to be made from main account

Clerk paid in accordance with contract for May	
HM Revenue & Customs (tax)	£89.80
Much Birch Community Hall (hall hire)	£54.00
Arthur J Gallagher (PC Insurance)	£407.56

Resolved: that the payments were passed for payment: Unanimous.

9.3) To adopt the new model Standing Orders for 2025

The Parish Council resolved to adopt the new model Standing Orders for 2025

9.4) To adopt the new model Financial Regulations for March 2025

The Parish Council resolved to adopt the new model Financial Regulations for March 2025

10.0 Planning Matters and Parish Land

10.1) To consider any planning applications as received

There were no new applications for comment at the meeting.

11.0 Parish Roads and Footpaths including appointment of Footpath Officer

11.1) To note any defects to be reported to Balfour Beatty

It was noted that it would be helpful if the weekly reports contained more details about the whereabouts of the fixed potholes.

There had been an incident in Little Birch Road, at the bottom of path MB22, where a car had rolled onto a person who was changing a wheel. This had been reported by the relevant persons and was being looked into.

11.2) To discuss and determine works and update on meeting with the Lengthsman

The Ward Cllr and member of the public left the meeting at this point. The Clerk and Cllr Pickering Grey had met with the Lengthsman to discuss his tour report and proposed objectives. It was agreed that the Clerk would draft a summary response to the report and recommendations for clarification, ahead of commissioning the works. It would be commented that excavated soil/spoil deposits were to be removed. There would also be a comment about any potential increase to the pricing as detailed. The draft would be circulated to the councillors, for their comments and input, ahead of sending it to the Lengthsman. Cllr Irwin would send the Clerk a list of the areas, as covered on the parish tour held on the 26th February.

11.3) To appoint Footpath Officer and to receive any previous report

David Irwin was reappointed to the position of Footpath Officer. He was proposed by Cllr Cook and seconded by Cllr Pickering Grey. Cllr Irwin accepted the role. Thanks were recorded for all of his work in regard to the local public footpaths. Cllr Irwin showed the new kit that he had been supplied with to help him carry out his duties. The kit included goggles, secateurs, a trimming tree saw/knife and a first aid kit all packed in a bag. He had attended a Footpath Officer Induction Meeting at which the kit had been presented. There was a forthcoming "Dawn Chorus" walk coming up and a Wildlife Walk on the 1st June. The next Footpath Officers Meeting would be on the 6th June.

11.4) To update regarding any drainage issues in the parish and determine actions

Details covered under item 11.2) and forming action plan for drain clearance works. An initial clearance would be carried out and detailed projects commissioned later on.

12.0) To consider support from the parish council for the refurbishment of the parish memorial clock project

The parish council had considered the presentation made by the Revd Mark at the April Meeting and agreed that they were in support of the objectives and principle to refurbish the memorial

clock. Any discussion on financial support for the project would take place at the appropriate time.

13.0 Parishes Newsletter and Much Birch Website and X

To consider items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter and on the website plus X. The Clerk would send a précis to the Newsletter with any planning update, as applicable.

14.0 Matters to be raised on the Agenda for the next meeting

All the usual items would be included. Also passing of the annual accounts for 2024 – 2025 and the Neighbourhood Development Plan

15.0 Confirmation of the date of the next Meeting

The next Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Thursday 5th June 2024, from 7.30pm, at the Much Birch Community Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed:

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Chairman

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Date