

CUSOP PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of Cusop Parish Council held on Wednesday 12th March 2025 at 7 p.m. at Cusop Village Hall, Cusop, Herefordshire.

Present: Councillor Nick Blayney (Chairman) and Councillors Joseph Emmett, David Evans, John Gibson, John Ievers and Christopher Kemp.

In attendance:

David Thame (Clerk)

Councillor Philip Price (Golden Valley North Ward) (from item 3.b to item 5, inclusive)
and six members of the public

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

All members were present.

2. To Receive any Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk reported the receipt before the meeting of written requests for dispensations from Councillors Evans and Kemp, both relating to and declaring disclosable pecuniary interests in item 6 (Neighbourhood development plan), connected to property adjacent to a site that had arisen from the NDP call for sites.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED** to allow Councillors Kemp and Evans a dispensation to discuss and participate in item 6 in so far as the discussion was general, and did not bear on sites, but that the dispensation should not extend to the consideration of settlement boundaries.

3. Open Session.

3.a To receive representations from the public

A member of the public questioned the overlap of settlement boundaries and design code character areas, and the extent to which the design code extended into open countryside, particularly the Upper Dingle, the impact this might have on development, and whether this overlap might be reviewed.

The Clerk reported that a member of the public had drawn attention to silt under Coopers Hall Bridge, whether it was exacerbating flood risk, and if an investigation was desirable.

A member of the public enquired whether the car park at the Village Hall would be available to Dingle residents during the planning resurfacing of the Dingle.

3.b. To receive report from Herefordshire Ward Councillor, Golden Valley North

Councillor Price reported that Herefordshire Council faced a dilemma in meeting the government's housing target of 27,000 new homes by 2041, rather than the 16,000 it had prepared for, because a combination of topography and infrastructure made it hard to identify sites that could deliver.

The possibility of a new town, amounting to around 10,000 dwellings, had long been mooted - perhaps Ewyas Harold/Pontrilas - but offers had now concluded that a new settlement of that scale on this site was ruled out by topography and drainage, and infrastructure issues. Similarly, creating a growth corridor around a western Hereford by-pass was a slow and complicated task with uncertain delivery. For now it seemed likely growth would focus on Hereford, Ledbury and Leominster.

4. Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 12th February 2025 (copies previously circulated) as a correct record of proceedings, and that they be signed by the Chairman accordingly.

5. Traffic Regulation Order/Traffic Calming

The Clerk reported that the Police & Crime Commissioner had agreed to extend the grant period for white traffic calming gates for a further year from 31 March 2025, making it possible to install at Newport Street. At Hardwicke Road the Highways Act, 1980, s. 171 consent was in progress, Herefordshire Council had offered a license to regulate responsibility for the structures, and the order with the supplier, JAKS UK, had been made, as agreed on 10th July 2024 (Minute 12).

After discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the Council agree the terms of the structures license offered by Herefordshire Council and that the Clerk is authorised to sign and complete it, and that the Clerk make such reports and accounts to the Police & Crime Commissioner as are necessary.

6. Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Council considered the notes of a meeting of the NDP Review Group held on 11th March, introduced by the lead member for neighbourhood planning, Councillor Ievers (copy attached to the minutes).

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council welcome the creation of a Biodiversity Working Group arising out of the NDP Review Group, and that Councillor Ievers report to a future meeting.

The Clerk reported oral advice from Kirkwells, received that morning, that including open country (particularly, the Upper Dingle) in the design code did not dilute the planning controls usually applied in open country, and that it was normal for design code areas to extend widely over a locality, rather than being confined to within the settlement boundary.

At the invitation of the Chairman a member of the public addressed the meeting and suggested the design code be extended to the entirety of the parish, including all open country, rather than a discrete and therefore anomalous, extension to the Upper Dingle. It was also suggested that policy wording could be introduced to make it clear that open country restrictions were maintained. After discussion it was **RESOLVED** to review the relationship of design code and settlement boundary, and the protections offered open country, as the results of consultations, and the evidence base, accumulate.

Councillors Kemp and Evans left the meeting.

The Council considered a request from consultants Kirkwells to define the settlement boundary, and the suggestions that arose from the meeting of the NDP Review Group on 11th March. After discussion it was **RESOLVED** that for the purpose of the current drafting exercise, Kirkwells be advised to use the extensions to the settlement boundary at Newport Road and Black Lion Green indicated by the Review Group, and that the constraints on development at those sites identified by the Review Group be embodied in policy wording.

Councillors Kemp and Evans rejoined the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that Kirkwells be instructed to take steps to protect the site of the playground from development, preferably by excluding from the settlement boundary.

It was **RESOLVED** that the new iteration of the design code, having been received today, be

referred to the NDP Review Group for consideration and that, if need be, an extraordinary meeting of the Council be held before 31st March to consider a response, together with draft policy wording from Kirkwells.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk complete the accounts and monitoring report requirements for the NDP grant from Locality/Groundwork, including a refund the £100 overpayment made by the grant-awarding body.

7. Land adjacent to the Playing Field, Cusop/Lease at the Playing Field

The Clerk reported on the ownership of the parcel of land identified as a potential extension to the playing field.

Land Registry searches showed that the playing field, the parcel identified for extension containing the septic tank, and the parcel abutting Dulas Brook, together with the track from Cusop Dingle and several of the Coronation Terrace properties comprised one title, HE14405, registered in 2001 with title absolute to Herefordshire Council. Since 1950 the plot had been in the possession of Dore and Bredwardine Rural District Council and its successors having been purchased from Arthur Evans.

Since the 2001 registration some parcels have been sold, including in February 2022 the small parcel, understood to contain the septic tank, which had been of interest to the Parish Council as an extension to the playground. This is registered as HE59844 at a value stated of £100,000 with the qualification "This value covers more than just the land in this title."

Herefordshire Council's website lists the playground site as an investment property rather than an operational property. Cusop Parish Council's lease on the playground was signed on 3rd May 2006, is for 25 years, and contains no provision for extension. It expires on 3rd May 2031.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED** to record disappointment that a potential extension to the playground is no longer possible; that it would be imprudent to invest substantial sums in a s.106-funded playground refurbishment without security of tenure; and that the Clerk write to Herefordshire Council to seek clarity on its plans for this site and invite them to an offer of an extension of the lease.

8. Hay Town Council/ Greater Hay Co-Operation

It was **RESOLVED** to meet again with Hay Town Council to consider matters of shared concern, and that the Clerk proceed accordingly to convene it, and that the Clerk open a similar channel of communication with Brecon Beacons National Park, the discussion opening with co-ordination of the management and protection of the Dulas Corridor..

9. Environment and Biodiversity

The Council considered the report of the Council's arboricultural consultant on significant trees, stands of trees, and hedges, in the north of the Parish around and within the settlement boundaries.

It was **RESOLVED** to invite the Council's NDP consultants, Kirkwells and AECOM, to embrace the findings of the survey, and to invite Herefordshire Council to consider the report with a view to tree preservation orders on those specimens identified as the most significant for reasons of protected views, amenity, ecology, biodiversity or landscape character.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the quotation from Eyelid Productions for the creation of new biodiversity pages on the Council website.

10. Finance

To Council considered the Clerk's Financial Report and cash book (previously circulated, now attached to the minutes).

It was **RESOLVED**:

(a) To transfer £15,000 from the deposit account to the current account;

(b) To accept Pyons Group Parish Council's payment of £450 to settle the invoice relating to the Clerk's professional qualification appearing as PV64;

(c) Wishing to to promote high professional standards and ensure access to a diversity of advice and support, to join Pyons Group Parish Council in paying fees for the Clerk to join the Soiciety of Local Council Clerks.

(d) That the Clerk is authorised to purchase anti-virus software;

(e) That the the following invoices be paid:

PV61	Clerk's salary (Tax month 11) (includes backpay for five months NDP)	1208.04
PV62	HMRC(PAYE and National Insurance)	222.92
PV 63	Melcon (Lights, Hardwicke Cl)	816.00
PV64	Society of Local Council Clerks (CiLCA - see report)	450.00
PV65	Society of Local Council Clerks (membership)	101.00
PV66	GWG Tree & Garden Care (Drainage, Nantyglassdwr Lane and Archenfield junction)	309.60
PV67	MT Arb Surveying (Tree survey, part funded NDP)	750.00
PV68	Clerk's expenses	48.10

(e) That the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, settle invoices relating to grants required to be spent by 31 March 2025 (Kirwells/NDP, Lengthsman's Scheme), in particular but not limited to:

PV69	GWG Tree & Garden Care (Drainage, Nantyglassdwr Lane)	205.40
PV70	GWG Tree & Garden Care (Local Drainage Fund)	8400.00
PV71	GWG Tree & Garden Care (Dingle, Thirty Acres)	1084.80

11. Street light, Hardwicke Close

The light having been repaired, and payment authorised (PV63) it was **RESOLVED** that, in order to limit the financial liability and other risks to the Council, the Clerk write to residents of Hardwicke Close to remind them, without prejudice, that it is not usual for local councils to fund lighting on private roads or footways and that liabilities may rest with residents.

12. Lengthsman and Local Drainage Fund

The Chairman reported that he met with the Lengthsman on 21 February 2025 for a discussion that included an appraisal, and that the Lengthsman was happy to extend the arrangement for another year. Letters were exchanged. The Lengthsman has adequate public liability insurance which renews in November 2025. The report was noted.

The works undertaken as a result of a bid to the Local Drainage Fund have now been completed, and an invoice received yesterday (PV70) in the sum of £8,400 inclusive of VAT. The Lengthsman reported that damage to ditches at Watery Lane/Michaelchurch Road was the likely consequence of flail-cutting tractors. It was **RESOLVED** to write to those local residents concerned to remind them to protect ditches.

A rising spring on estate land was continuing to create highways and drainage problems close to Nantyglassdwr Farm. When the water table is high the spring carries the rubble surface of a farm track down the lane and into Council-maintained drains and culverts, blocking the drains and causing a flood. It was **RESOLVED** to draw the highways safety problems associated with field run-off at Nantyglassdwr Lane to Herefordshire Council and to the estate owner.

13. Footpaths

The Chairman reported that the Lengthsman had agreed to extend his contract to include footpath work, as resolved at the meeting on 12th February 2025. It was **RESOLVED** that the Lengthsman's contract be extended to embrace footpath work, to be confirmed by an exchange of letters.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk approach landowners (where appropriate) to rectify problems already identified by the footpath audit, and that he then proceed with Herefordshire Council and land owners in those cases where this was the remedy, and elsewhere seek prices from the Lengthsman for rectification as preparation for an application to the Lengthsman Scheme Public Rights of Way Fund; and that he report to a future meeting.

14. Public Information

It was **RESOLVED** that rather than close the Facebook page, currently managed by the Chairman and whose role has been limited to reposting from the Council's website, should redirect users to the Council's website.

The Council considered producing and distributing a brief annual report, to include an invitation to the annual parish meetings on 16th April 2025. The Clerk advised that Local Government Act, 1972 s.142 (provision of information relating to local government) is relevant.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED** to produce an A4 double sided coloured leaflet, for distribution to every household, and to include invitations to the parish meetings, and that the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman be authorised to take any actions necessary.

15. Annual Parish Meeting

It was **RESOLVED** to invite local groups to report to the meeting on 16th April 2025, and that mindful of Local Government Act 1972, s. 145 (power to provide entertainments), refreshments be provided to a value of £50.

16. Herefordshire Flood Group

Councillor Kemp reported on recent action to prevent or mitigate flooding at a Herefordshire and parish level, including a £2m allocation by Herefordshire Council to support local flood initiatives from April 2025. It was **RESOLVED** to monitor progress and consider the value of forming a local flood group.

17. Civility and Respect Pledge

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the civility and respect pledge drafted by NALC and recommended by the Monitoring Officer.

The meeting closed at 9.27 p.m.

Confirmed as a correct record:

Signed _____ Date: _____

DRAFT