

# PARISH OF CUSOP

**MINUTES** of a parish meeting called by the Chairman by notice given 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025 in accordance with Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, Part III, paragraph 15, for 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025 at Cusop Village Hall at 7 p.m. for the transaction of the business given below.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Nick Blayney (Chairman), Councillor John Ievers, Councillor John Gibson and six parishioners.

In attendance: David Thame (Clerk)

## **1. Chairman's Introduction to the Parish Budget 2026-27**

The Chairman explained the context of the Parish Council budget, distinguishing discretionary spending from the basic costs of operating a council, and welcomed the opportunity to explore participatory budgeting. Hitherto a large proportion of funding for much discretionary work has been provided by Herefordshire Council in the form of grants from the Local Drainage Fund, Public Rights of Way Fund and the lengthsman's scheme. It is likely that the two funds will cease to operate in their current form in 2026-27, and that lengthsman's scheme core funding is insecure. In those circumstances the Parish Council could chose to replace Herefordshire grants with funding from the precept – whether it should, and to what extent, was the purpose of the meeting.

The Chairman referred to the draft budget, considered by the Council at its meeting in November, and drew attention to the £4,000 withdrawn from reserves to cushion an increase in the precept. This had a material impact on the levels of reserve, which if not addressed at some point, would limit the Council's room for manoeuvre where grants require the Council to spend first, and claim later; or in unforeseen circumstances. The Council had a reserves policy which it was required to reconsider before making a budget: it is not yet clear whether the unallocated reserve would fall below the level indicated in the reserves policy, but if budget projections for 2025-26 were fulfilled, and the precept increased was smoothed by a withdrawal from reserve, it could be. The Council would have more accurate figures at its January meeting, when a precept would be set.

## **2. Allocations for Lengthsman's spending 2026-27**

Parishioners expressed their recognition of the value of the core lengthsman scheme, and their appreciation that several years backlog of work had meant that some larger projects – such as the minor drainage scheme completed in 2024-25 on the roads approaching Mousecastle and Cusop Hill, and at Nantyglassdwr Lane in 2025-26 – were necessary. Whilst it might not be possible to entirely replace Herefordshire funding, speakers expressed reluctance to entirely forego spending on minor drainage schemes, and great reluctance to forego core lengthsman services.

Speakers were reluctant to see a sharp reduction in reserves of the kind that might make it hard for the Parish Council to secure grants and to ride out fluctuations in calls on its resources.

Those who expressed a view preferred to reduce the sum allocated from reserves to soften an increase in precept, and to increase the precept instead with a clear indication that the additional revenue was intended to ensure a modest recruitment of reserves.

The Chairman answered questions about clerking and establishment costs.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.