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Great Comberton Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Parish Council - Minutes Monday 11th May, 7.30pm Village Hall

Parish Councillors Present: K Collingwood (Chair), S Hamilton, (Vice-Chair), G Hodgson, A Lavelle & M Lolley.
County Cllr A. Hardman

Clerk/RFO: Nicola Harding

In attendance: Thirteen parishioners

1. Apologies: Received from District Cllr B. Hardman.

2. Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations.

3. Election of Chairman and signing of declaration of acceptance of office: Proposed Cllr Hamilton, seconded Cllr Lolley, one Cllr in favour, to nominate Cllr Collingwood as Chairman. Cllr Collingwood signed the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

4. Election of Vice Chairman: Proposed Cllr Lavelle, seconded Cllr Collingwood, all in favour, to nominate Cllr Hamilton as Vice-Chairman.

5. Casual vacancy: One application had been received which was circulated for Cllr's information in advance and shared with the meeting. The Chairman moved to a vote and proposed, Cllr Lavelle, seconded Cllr Lolley, one Cllr in favour, to co-opt D Barker onto the Parish Council. A Cllr declaration of acceptance of office was signed.

Actions: Clerk to notify Wychavon District Council & forward a register of interest's form for completion & all relevant Council documentation. New Cllr information pack to be checked and forwarded for information.

6. Parishioner's Comments: These were raised during item 8e, Highways, to enable further discussion involving the County Cllr, regarding the road safety item at the Annual Parish Meeting.

7. Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 12th January 2026 & the extraordinary meeting on 23rd February 2026:

Proposed Cllr Hamilton, seconded Cllr Collingwood, all in favour, to approve the minutes as a true record. A query was raised regarding the number of conditions reported in the extraordinary meeting draft minutes. Cllr Collingwood agreed to confirm this.

Action: Cllr Collingwood.

8. Progress reports from Parish Activities:

a. Lengthsman: Latest work undertaken in the parish during April was confirmed and discussed. Broken branches were attended to on a tree along Main Street and ownership requires establishing with WCC in terms of future maintenance.

Action: Clerk.

A query was raised regarding drainage tasks within the lengthsman's remit. It was confirmed that under the terms of the Lengthsman Scheme's agreement, the lengthsman may clear gully grates and verge grips to ensure the surface is cleared, but is not able to clear ditches, as these are the responsibility of the landowner. It was agreed to forward future priority tasks to Cllr Collingwood who would continue to liaise with the lengthsman and to circulate WCC's remit to the village for information.

Actions: Cllr Collingwood/Clerk.

b. Sewage smells: Severn Trent have cleared the drains and conducted odour checks, however the smells remain prevalent. The Council is waiting for the results of an assessment of the network which will be shared with the Parish Council, Allens Caravans and their pumping specialist, once completed. A meeting will be arranged and updates provided to the village in the Council's ongoing attempt to find a solution.

It was agreed to continue to encourage reporting of incidences via the Clerk to maintain and update the village odour log & for villagers to also report these directly with Severn Trent, so that a reference can be associated with each report.

Cllrs agreed and approved the draft Terms of Reference circulated ahead of the meeting for the proposal to set up a working advisory group, in order to monitor the discharge conditions, as notified by Wychavon District Council. Cllrs agreed that membership would comprise of Cllr Collingwood, Cllr Lavelle & Cllr Hamilton and up to two invited residents.

Actions: Clerk to formalise and circulate final Terms of Reference document to Cllrs; Cllr Collingwood to draft a village email update for Cllr's approval inviting interested residents.

c. PRoW: Following an ongoing report of a damaged stile at PRoW #509C, it was reported that the stile has now been moved to one side due to the extent of its damage, enabling livestock to access the adjacent field. The Clerk noted that this had been reported to the parish footpath warden and PRoW team at WCC, requesting confirmation of liability and attempt to arrange a repair.

Action: Cllrs to forward landowner details to the Clerk for further reporting to WCC.

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d. Parish Council communications, website & IT policy:

Communications: It was confirmed that the new email system is working well. Cllrs & the Clerk were reminded of the use of specific key words in the subject bar of messages, in order to avoid misunderstanding and facilitate easier access to information. It was also requested that documents attached to emails be sent as a PDF, as a non-editable file which prevents formatting issues between different versions of software.

Action: Clerk & Cllrs. Clerk to request council email address for co-opted Cllr.

Website: The next phase of ensuring the Council's data and digital compliance will involve the creation of a parish council owned website in line with statutory Practitioner's Guidance. A template has been provided by the approved registrar who specialises in websites for Parish Councils, to be reviewed for final agreement in June. Suitable training opportunities will be explored, however it was also noted that compliance with standards and security will be committed to and covered via the website provider, as standard.

Action: Cllr Hamilton to initiate the process with the website provider and circulate updates to Cllrs via email for consideration.

IT policy: In line with Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26, a draft IT policy for smaller authorities had been prepared for Cllr's consideration. The draft was approved in principle, following an amendment agreed regarding the use of personal devices in section 5.

Actions: Cllr Hamilton to amend and circulate; Clerk to minute reference approval, circulate & publish.

e. Highways: A discussion continued regarding the road safety item on the agenda of the preceding annual parish meeting. A summary of the parish council's previous actions and the main points of concern from the annual parish meeting were revisited, with key suggestions shared. It was confirmed that 20mph limits are advisory and the government are not changing their guidelines at present, with such schemes considered in the context of additional supporting speed reduction measures. The potential option of a weight limit was raised, in addition to road narrowing measures at pinch points.

An exchange of views ensued and a point of order was called in an attempt for Cllrs to continue a respectful exchange in line with Standing Orders.

It was confirmed that WCC Highways have been requested to undertake speed measurement assessments in the village to obtain clear data. The meeting concluded that proactive measures should be considered, based on effective long term solutions, safety and evidence based. The following actions were noted & agreed:

- County Cllr Hardman has requested that WCC Highways conduct a seven-day speed survey to include the village entrance, top of the hill and main pinch point along Main Street.
- Parish Council to formulate specific questions for WCC's Senior Highways Liaison Officer, to establish the Council's options & WCC's rules and regulations for further discussion and consideration.

Actions: Cllrs to formulate and agree.

f. Water testing: Local volunteers continue to monitor the water quality at Comberton Quay on a weekly basis. High nitrates, phosphates & electrical conductivity levels continue to be recorded, with similar results noted in neighbouring Little Comberton.

9. To note model Calc standing orders and approved financial regulations: These were circulated ahead of the meeting and Cllrs were reminded to review the contents as key documents which outline how the Council operates during the year.

10. To note the Code of Conduct: This was circulated in advance of the meeting - Cllrs were reminded to review the contents and observe the principles within.

Action: Cllrs to continue to observe the Code; Clerk to forward a copy to the newly co-opted Cllr.

11. To consider and appoint Councillor roles:

The following roles were agreed:

Budget & IT – Cllr Hamilton

Bank Reconciliations – Cllr Lavelle

Lengthsman & Planning – Cllr Collingwood

Brailles Orchard – Cllr Lolley

Water testing & Calc Cllr updates – Cllr Hodgson

12. District & County Cllr's reports:

District Council: A report was circulated in advance of the meeting. In summary:

- Planning: The expected planning application at Bredon View Holiday Park resulted in an extraordinary meeting held by the Parish Council. Many concerns were raised to help form questions to raise with planners at Wychavon District Council, as to why this application should not be approved. The application was discussed at two planning committee meetings before a final decision was reached, the outcome of which was approval, with conditions. One of the conditions is that Severn Trent's Cropthorne Heath pumping station will need to increase its capacity – a planning application for this project has been approved in April by Worcestershire County Council.

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- Waste & Recycling: Changes will take place when the current contract ends on 31 March 2028, ahead of when WDC is due to be abolished. Wychavon is currently the only district council in Worcestershire not operating their own waste and recycling collection.
- Unitary Council: The Council is continuing to plan for the expected end of Wychavon in 2028, when one or two unitary councils will replace District and County Councils. The government have said that a decision is expected before the end of July 2026.
- Council Tax: Wychavon District Council are not increasing their council tax this year, unlike several other councils around the UK.

County Council: Cllr Hardman had provided an annual report ahead of the meeting to share with Cllrs and residents. It was agreed to circulate this separately following the meeting, included in a pdf of all reports shared at the annual parish meeting, appended to the minutes. In summary:

- Council Tax: From April, residents have incurred an 8.98% increase applied by the County Council, the main driver being pressure on demand-led services, particularly Adult's Social Care, Children's Services, SEND provision and transport, supporting some of the most vulnerable people in the County.
- Housing: There remains ongoing pressure in the context of significant planned housing growth and government targets set for Wychavon, including plans for new homes in Bredons Hardwick and a new town by Junction 7 of the M5.
- Roads: Pot holes have continued to arise following a wet Winter; road surfacing has been actioned in Quay Lane, in addition to surface dressing between the village and Eckington to keep up standards

13. Planning

W/26/00232/LB: Vine Cottage, Russell Street: Replace three rotting soft wood casement windows with very similar hard wood 'heritage' double glaze casement windows – this application has been approved.

W/26/00927/HP: Church House, Church Street: Demolition of garage and erection of garden room and store (ancillary use to the main dwelling.) Cllrs discussed the amendments compared with the previous application refused and agreed that no further comments would be submitted ahead of the close of consultation on 20 May 2026.

14. Finance

a) Current Balances at 1st May 2026

Current Account:	£696.34
Business Premium Account:	£9,897.90
TOTAL	£10,594.24

b) Payments to report:

Salary: April 2026	£366.17
Salary: May 2025	£366.17
Expenses: Feb-May 26	£48.00
Hall hire: March/April x 2	£28.00
Calc subs 2026	£232.25
Internal audit fee: 25/26 accounts	£80.00
Parish Insurance: 3 year LTA 1/6/26-31/5/27	£369.50
Lengthsman: April 2026	£184.00

TOTAL **£1,674.09**

Income to report:

WCC LM April 2026	£184.00
Precept (i) 26/27	£3,125.00
Council Tax Support grant (i) 26/27	£121.00

TOTAL **£3,430.00**

Proposed Cllr Collingwood, seconded Cllr Hodgson, all in favour to approve the payments presented.

Following a query raised, the Clerk reminded the Council that they had been informed by Npower in December 2025 of a delayed electricity invoice, covering charges for a supply period greater than 12 months ago, due to the phone kiosk's supply being migrated from Unmetered Supplies to Half-Hourly, as part of the P434 industry programme earlier in 2025. In accordance with supply licence obligations, payment will not be charged for any energy consumed more than 12 months ago for which the Council has not been previously invoiced.

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c) Bank reconciliation (iv) 31 March 2026 & end of year budget review: The Clerk had prepared and forwarded the final quarterly bank reconciliation to the nominated Cllr for checks, which were verified as accurate and signed at the meeting. The Clerk had also prepared and circulated an end of year budget review for 31.3.26 and the 2026/27 budget outline, both of which were noted.

d) To approve and sign the Certificate of Exemption for the year ended 31/3/26 - this was circulated in advance of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

e) Audited accounts & Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26 – following the internal review of financial systems and internal controls of the 2025/26 accounts by an independent internal auditor, the Clerk shared the contents of the internal audit report, which identified no significant areas for improvement or weakness.

(i) Proposal to approve and sign Section 1: Annual governance statement

(ii) Proposal to approve and sign Section 2: Accounting statements

Completed Sections 1 & 2 of the AGAR were circulated to Cllrs for their attention ahead of the meeting and:

Proposed Cllr Hamilton, seconded Cllr Lolley, all in favour, to approve the annual governance and annual accounting statements. Documents were signed by the Clerk & Chairman.

Actions: Clerk to forward completed Certificate of Exemption to the external audit authority and publish key documentation online, as required by audit regulations and The Transparency Code for smaller authorities.

f) To approve the period of public rights to inspect the financial records of the Council, to commence on 3/6/26-14/7/26 – a notice had been prepared by the Clerk for online publication on 1st June.

Action: Clerk/Cllr Hamilton.

g) Proposal to approve expenditure @ £469.00 + VAT for the design, build, and content migration (a one-off cost) for council owned website.

Cllrs approved this expenditure, as ratified in the 2026/27 budget proposal agreed in January 2026.

Action: Clerk to notify selected provider and update Cllr Hamilton. Updates to be provided to Cllrs via Cllr Hamilton, as reported under item 8d.

15. Correspondence

No new correspondence had been received in addition to updates circulated to the Council via email.

16. Date of Next Meeting: Monday 7th September 2026 at 7.00 pm

Signed

Date.....

Chairman