

DRAFT MINUTES OF YARKHILL ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING

HELD AT YARKHILL VILLAGE HALL

ON THURSDAY 22ND MAY 2025

Present: Councillor Jeff Hughes, Councillor Sarah Daw, Councillor Chrissie Dobson, Councillor Ian Carr, Councillor Steve Kirby, Councillor Peter Durnan and Clerk Sallyanne Lees. Ward Councillor Jonathan Lester. There were 8 Members of the Public present.

1. **Election of Chairman.** Cllr Jeff Hughes was proposed by Cllr Peter Durnan and seconded by Cllr Chrissie Dobson. A vote by show of hands was taken and Cllrs Daw, Dobson and Durnan were in favour with Cllrs Carr and Kirby against. With the majority vote Cllr Hughes was voted Chairman.

2. **Election of Vice Chairman.** Cllr Sarah Dobson was proposed by Cllr Hughes and seconded by Cllr Dobson. A vote by show of hands was unanimous and Cllr Daw was voted Vice Chair. The Clerk distributed the Acceptance of Office documents to all Cllrs.

3. **Apologies for absence.** Apologies received from Edwin Wilson, Harvey Clay and Caroline & Richard Borley.

4. **There were no declarations of interest and written requests for dispensations.**

5. **To consider approving, adopting and signing minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 24th April 2025.** A parishioner, Justine Williams, asked for an amendment to be made to the draft Minutes. The Clerk agreed to do the amendment and the approval of the minutes was postponed to the next PC Meeting.

6. **To consider the appointment of:**

6.1 **Footpath & Pond Officer.** Sallyanne agreed to continue as Footpath and Pond Officer

6.2 **Tree Warden.** Peter O'Neill agreed to continue as Tree Warden

7. **To receive brief reports from:**

7.1 **Ward Councillor Jonathan Lester.** Ward Cllr Lester pointed out the large amount of road improvements taking place throughout the County. Last year £8m was spent on highway maintenance; this year the figure is £13.5m. Notable improvements are noted in Children's Services and a mini OFSTED inspection of Children's Special Education Needs and out of a grading between 1 & 4 (where 1 is excellent) Herefordshire obtained a 2. Well over 80% of families welcomed the intervention of

Children's Services. Ward Cllr Lester reintroduced the Parish Summit Meetings when he became Leader of the Council again and he wants to create a Charter. The aim is for all Councils within the County to interact with each other and the Charter is being co-produced with Parish Councils, HALC and Herefordshire Council. . One of the key factors in the Charter is that time limits will be set on responses from various HC departments to Parish Councils. The document is to go before the Charter Steering Group before being distributed to HALC affiliated and non HALC affiliated Parish Councils for adoption. Herefordshire Councils Budget figures will be published shortly. Ward Cllr Lester assured us that Herefordshire Councils Financial position is "robust. Ward Cllr Lester has had a meeting with the Police & Crime Commissioner and the newly appointed Chief Constable (Richard Cooper). They are keen to work harder and closer together, in particular with regard to highway safety. Devolution talks with neighbouring Councils have not yet happened because with all Councils holding their Annual Council Meetings it was not clear who would be Leader of the various Councils. Tom Misselbrook asked how HC was so financially stable when many others are struggling. Ward Cllr Lester explained it was down to foresight and good management.

7.2 Chairman. The Chairman made his report in the Annual Parish Meeting.

8. **Parish Clerk Update:** The Clerk informed the meeting that as a result of joining the Lengthsman Scheme for 24/25 we secured funding of £720 basic scheme, £5900 drainage grant and £5749 PROW grant. Both the drainage and the PROW grants will be available for 25/26 but will only be available to Councils joining the Lengthsman Scheme. Cllr Kirby asked if collection of fly tipping was covered by the Lengthsman Scheme and the Clerk confirmed it was not. Fly tipping is reported to the Clerk who in turn reports it to the relevant HC department and it is collected without charge.
9. **Lengthsman Scheme for 2025/6.** A vote by way of a show of hands was taken and the response was unanimous.
10. **Questions from the floor.** Tom Misselbrook asked if the funds that Ward Cllr Lester referred to for road maintenance would be used on C & U roads and the Clerk confirmed that it would. She receives a weekly update of proposed works and will advise the Parish when works are due to be carried out on our lanes. Cllr Carr pointed out that once Herefordshire Council have marked the roads where repairs are to take place, it is the responsibility of drivers to avoid the potholes and HC

cannot be held liable for damage to vehicles. Justine Williams asked who was responsible for the overgrown trees opposite her entrance and the Clerk suggested she report directly to HC on the Council website and also via the Clerk if she wished. James Snell asked if the Yarkhill Charity and the Village Hall Committee had been invited to make a report at the current meeting. The Clerk explained that they had been invited but declined at that time. She also pointed out that they are not obliged to make a report to the Parish Council. Mr Snell advised that he would write to Edwin Wilson to ask for the report personally. He would not be contacting the Village Hall Committee. The Village Hall report may be made available at the next PC Meeting. Mr Snell asked if the date for the next PC Meeting could be divulged. The Clerk reminded him that the next Meeting would be an Extra Ordinary PC meeting to approve the AGAR etc. The postponed items from this meeting will be added to the Agenda for the next PC Meeting. Mr Snell then asked about the PKF Action Plan and the lack of completion dates thereon. The Clerk/RFO pointed out that those dates would be added at the forementioned AGAR Meeting. The Chairman allowed Mr Snell to read out item 9c of the PKF Action Plan which states that "Form of AGAR and responses must be agreed by all Cllrs without exception before signing takes place. No Cllr may abstain himself from meeting his/her responsibilities as defined in the Guide" Mr Snell asked if this meant that all Cllrs had to agree the AGAR before it was submitted and Cllr Hughes confirmed that it did. Mr Snell asked in the event that 1 or 2 Cllrs did not approve – would the AGAR be delayed. Cllr Hughes said that Yes, it would be delayed but that steps are in place to make sure that all and any queries about the AGAR are raised and resolved before the AGAR meeting. The purpose of this process is to avoid the same thing happening this year as happened last year when complaints were made to the external auditor before consultation with the Parish Council and RFO resulting in an expensive External Auditor bill.

Peter O'Neill asked that following Ward Cllr Lesters announcement about working closely with West Mercia Police to increase road safety, was now not a good time to tackle the speed issue on the A4103 between Yarkhill and Hereford. The Clerk confirmed that she was still working with West Mercia Police to improve safety. These things do take time but she is doing her utmost to get action taken. Cllr Kirby asked if we have a local Police Liaison Officer and the Clerk confirmed that we do and that he may well be happy to attend a Parish Council Meeting. It was pointed out that to deem an area dangerous and therefore worthy of consideration,

there has to be a serious accident with all three emergency services in attendance. It was pointed out that it is important to report all and every accident that occurs on our roads. The Clerk will start to log all incidents in future and the Parish will report them to her.

11. Finance.

11.1 Bank Balance. The bank balance was reviewed with no queries.

11.2 Performance against Budget. Cllr Carr was concerned that Cllrs were not involved in financial discussions. The Chair pointed out that this was not the case and the Clerk confirmed that all financial documents had been sent to Cllrs prior to this meeting and no queries had been raised.

11.3 General Reserves figure for 2025/26. Cllr Hughes explained that he saw a reserve figure to be sufficient to cover our essential financial obligations and any unforeseen costs such as last year with the cost of the External Auditor. We are also heavily reliant on Grants for road maintenance and PROWs. Following discussions with the RFO it is suggested we set a reserve figure of 90% of our budgeted expenditure which equates to a reserve figure of £14,000. Cllr Kirby suggested the figure should be reviewed regularly and Cllr Hughes suggested we review it at the meeting where the budget and precept are discussed. A vote by way of a show of hands was taken and the amount of £14,000 was agreed unanimously.

11.4 Payments made as follows:

Village Hall invoice 6/25 £ 33.60

Community First Insurance £163.99

Mr Snell asked to have sight of the latest Bank Statement and Cllr Hughes said he would check the process for parishioners viewing bank statements.

- 12.** The Clerk said that the date of the next Meeting would be arranged, if not within two weeks, then shortly after.