

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 Thursday 7th May 2026 from 7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Alison Cook (re-elected as Chair)
Cllr Roisin Burge
Cllr Steve Turner
Cllr Chris Pickering Grey (re-elected as Vice Chair)
Cllr Michael Agyeman

In attendance:

Parish Clerk; Alison Wright and Ward Cllr; Toni Fagan

Annual Parish Meeting

There were no members of the public present and no topics were raised. The Annual Parish Meeting closed at 7.31pm.

The Annual Statutory Meeting opened

Cllr Pickering Grey took the chair

1.0 To elect a Chairman

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

Cllr A Cook took the Chair from this point in the meeting.

2.0 To elect a Vice Chairman

Cllr Pickering Grey was proposed by Cllr Cook and seconded by Cllr Burge. 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 David Irwin (re-elected as Footpath Officer in his absence)

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 Much Birch Community Hall on the 2nd April 2026, 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 at Herefordshire Council. A number of consultations were taking place. Details of these would be sent. A new Chief Executive Officer had been appointed to Herefordshire Council. He is Mr Paul Satoor and he had previously come from the Wirral. Balfour Beatty would be stepping down in June 2026. The Highway Inspection Manual was being looked at in terms of how defects were being assessed. There were ongoing complaints concerning the piecemeal fixing of potholes. There was a more holistic approach needed from

the Locality Stewards and better feedback was required on defect solutions. The Ward Cllr was pushing for resurfacing and repairs for Tump Lane.

It was hoped that there would be better connection going forward with National Highways and a meeting was to be held to improve communications.

The strategic housing and homeless situation was being reviewed. Rental properties were being sold and Herefordshire Council was buying properties.

There was a drainage issue reported at a property on Barrack Hill. Cllr Turner would check the situation with the resident in regard to the source of the flooding.

There were no dedicated dog waste bins in Much Birch Parish. The Ward Cllr would put out a message to encourage people to clear up after their pets. Thank you was recorded to the Ward Cllr from the Parish Council for all of her work on behalf of the parish and ward.

The Ward Cllr left the meeting at 7.50 pm.

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

Golden Valley Briefing had been sent when received.

6.3) Locality Steward - the Locality Steward, had sent his bulletins. There had been a number of potholes filled in Tump Lane and the chair had checked in with the Locality Steward on this as there were still lots of holes requiring repairs.

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

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 2026 HSBC Community Account £9,704.27

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) £95.00

Much Birch Community Hall (hall hire) £54.00

Arthur J Gallagher (PC Insurance) £407.61

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

10.0 Planning Matters, Neighbourhood Plan and any appeals

10.1) To consider any planning applications as received

There were no new applications for comment at the meeting.

10.2) To receive any update on the Neighbourhood Plan and approve any changes

The NDP changes had been circulated for review with the opportunity to amend and use tracked changes. The changes would be approved at the June 2026 meeting. Cllr Turner would check that the final issued version, dated 2025 on the front cover of the Much Birch NDP, was on the parish website.

11.0 Parish Roads and Footpaths including appointment of Footpath Officer

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

M Group would be taking over the Public Realm Contract from June 2026. Hollybush Lane required urgent repairs and resurfacing. Cllr Turner was happy to meet the Locality Steward on site to discuss and highlight the issues. The condition of the road would be reported again and the note about meeting mentioned.

11.2) To discuss and determine works for the Lengthsman and approve actions

It was agreed that the quotation for drainage works to be carried out under the grant application process would be sent in for consideration of approval. The point about road closure and any associated costs, which had not been specified as an amount, would be noted as to be included in any reclaim.

11.3) To appoint Footpath Officer and to receive any report

David Irwin was reappointed to the position of Footpath Officer. This appointment was being subject to his confirmation of acceptance of the role on his return. Cllr Irwin had sent his annual report (below) and apologies for absence for the May Meeting. There had been notification that a "footpath" in the parish appeared to have undergone some modifications. The parish council would look at this to see if there were any implications.

Annual Footpath Report from the Much Birch FPO: "Report on Public Right of Way footpaths for 2025/26

There are 30 footpaths in Much Birch with a total distance of almost 10km. All are categorised as Cat 2 and 3 despite having two footpaths that are part of the Herefordshire Trail.

With the PRoW Grant 25/26 [Public Right of Way] we were able to use EnviroAbility on 6 days to help with repair stiles, replace stiles, repair steps and clear footpaths of overgrowth.

1st July – Cleared 9 footpaths

14th July – Repaired steps to MB18 & MB15

21st July – Replaced stiles to MB8

28th July – Repaired steps, removed gate and cleaned Bus Shelters

5th Jan – Replaced stile to MB8, repaired stile and assessed some steps

30th March – Cleared 11 footpaths

We had two wooden gates replacing stiles on MB2 funded by "Walkers are Welcome" in Ross.

Over the year I have organised 5 Parish Walks, organised 6 local PFO meetings, attended 4 LAF meetings and attended one training session on strimming and hedgecutting.

Currently we have some steps at MB22 that the PRoW team have assessed and are waiting for a date. There are bridges at MB16A and MB4A that have been scoped but no date set for repair.

We have two DMMOs [Definitive Map Modification Order] from 2020 that have no date set for review.

I am in the process of formulating our application for the 26/27 PRoW Grant.

David Irwin
MB PFO"

Note: A DMMO is a legal process under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 used to update the Definitive Map and Statement, which is the official legal record of public rights of way in England and Wales. It records existing rights, not new ones, and is initiated based on historical or user evidence.

11.4) To update regarding parish land, visits and any actions

An appointment to visit the second land parcel tenant, on site, was being arranged. The feedback on the Rosebank parish land was that there were no particular issues. Part of the land was wilding and part orchard. The parish council requested that the tenant should be asked to

clear the large brush pile during the window of 1/9/26 to 1/3/27, in order to mitigate eco-disruption. There were concerns about the pile and possible fire hazard. Clause 4 item a) of the Tenancy Agreement was referenced.

11.5) Water Quality Monitoring – update and actions

A report would be made in June 2026. Work was in progress.

12.0) School Parking

The parish council had received a request to place school parking on the agenda. The meeting was advised that the new system in place for drop off etc. was under review and that it appeared to be working well.

13.0 Parishes Newsletter and Much Birch Website and X

13.1) To consider items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter and on the website etc.

The Clerk would send a précis to the Newsletter with a note about clearing up after pets. Please take bagged waste home or place bagged waste in an available bin. Please do not throw bags of pet waste into the hedgerow or roadside.

13.2) To consider any actions in regard to the website, replacement etc.

The Chair advised that the interim solution for the website would likely be suitable as a permanent adjustment and that going forward the AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) Assertion 10 criteria would be met.

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 2025 – 2026, parish land actions, including rental charge for new tenancy, and the Neighbourhood Development Plan changes plus Water Quality Monitoring

15.0 Confirmation of the date of the next Meeting

The next Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Thursday 4th June 2026, from 7.30pm, at the Much Birch Community Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.58pm

Signed:

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Chairman

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Date