



Whitbourne Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting

4th March 2026

Attendance:

Present: N Shaw (NS) (Chair); R. James (RJ); M. Clark (MC); P. Davis (PD); S. Knowles (SK); P. Wood (PDW); L. Kershaw (LK); T. Hunt (TH); J. Ashcroft (JA)

In attendance: K. Phillips (Clerk). One member of the public present.

1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies received from Ward Councillor P. Stoddart (PS).

2. To receive declarations of interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14th January 2026.

Proposed LK, seconded SK. All in favour. Approved.

4. Matters arising from the above minutes.

There were no matters arising.

5. Public Participation.

The Chairman invited the member of the public present to address the Parish Council. A parishioner raised concerns regarding the timber-processing activity at the Summers Place site, including the use of bandsaws, chainsaws and water jetting to remove bark. The resident stated that noise from timber cutting had not been addressed in the applicant's submission. Concerns were also expressed about potential contamination of a private well from water used in the bark removal process and about damage to the road from heavy log transport vehicles. The parishioner emphasised they were not opposed to the development itself but felt the activity was more suited to a commercial rather than residential location. The member of the public then left the meeting.

6. To receive report from Ward Councillor.

The Ward Councillor had circulated a report prior to the meeting.

- OFSTED Rating: Herefordshire Council's Children's and Young People team rated Good by OFSTED with Outstanding leadership.
- Council Tax Increase: Council tax to increase by 4.99% to £2,067.63, an increase of £1.89 per week.
- Impact of Fair Funding Review: Rural councils like Herefordshire are expected to receive less funding per head compared to urban councils, impacting service delivery.
- Revenue Budget: The revenue budget for 2026/27 is £234.1M, an increase of £2.6M from the previous year. To balance the budget, £20M in savings have been implemented, including cost control, increased fees, and demand management.
- Capital Programme: The capital programme for 2026/27 includes 14 projects worth £44M, covering areas such as emergency accommodation, school provision, and infrastructure improvements.
- Road Network Improvement: The council is prioritising road network improvement, with six repair teams working seven days a week to address the unprecedented number of potholes reported due to adverse weather conditions.

7. To receive the Clerk's report.

- A new grit bin has been placed at the lower part of Stocking Lane.
- The domain name registrant has not responded to the official communication from Nominet. A fee of £200+VAT is required for an independent expert to assess the situation, which may take several weeks. The Clerk was authorised to pay the fee and claim the amount back through expenses.
- Flagpole risk assessment. A regular review of the flag pole located by the village hall is required. TH agreed to undertake this duty.
- A VAT return has been received (£870.73)
- Payment for the white gates, signage and installation has still not been paid by Herefordshire Council despite the Clerk and Ward Councillor escalating the matter many times. Resolved: To authorise the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to make payment to the Lengthsman pending reimbursement from Herefordshire Council.
- Works had commenced on the A44/C1066 junction as advised by Herefordshire Council.



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- An invoice had been submitted for the Lengthsman grant services and a remittance advice had been received with 10 days.
- The issue with the overgrown hedge in Old Forge has not been resolved locally. This has now been passed back to the Ward Councillor for onward resolution.
- A Lengthsman grant agreement has now been received for the 2026/2027 financial year. The amount is £1008 plus £504 in matched funding, making £1512 available. The Clerk was authorised to sign the agreement and return to Herefordshire Council. Further grants were available for Drainage and Public Rights of Way.

8. Clerk Decision

8.1. To pay village hall (£9.00). Proposed (LK) and seconded (PDW). All in favour. Approved.

9. Financial matters.

9.1. To approve accounts for payment.

Clerk Salary, HMRC, Clerk Expenses, Lengthsman and SLCC. It was resolved that the Clerk was authorised to pay a recently received Lengthsman invoice under a Clerk Decision. Details of expenditure are contained in a table at the end of these minutes. Proposed PDW, seconded SK. All in favour. Approved.

9.2. To approve bank reconciliation to 31st January 2026 and

9.3. To approve Income and Expenditure reconciliation to 31st January 2026. Proposed PDW, seconded RJ. All in favour. Approved.

9.4. To review current 2024/2025 budget versus spend. Councillors noted the report and no comments were raised.

10. Planning Consultations

10.1. 251015 - Summers Place, Badley Wood, Whitbourne. Councillors discussed the application and raised concerns that the scale and nature of the timber-processing activity appears inconsistent with a residential location. Members noted reports from local residents that the applicant's submission may understate the level of activity taking place on site. Specific concerns included noise from pressure washing and timber cutting, the presence of industrial machinery within the workshop, and the potential for noise to escape even with roller doors installed. Councillors also questioned the lack of supporting assessments relating to noise and potential water pollution, particularly given nearby properties rely on groundwater from private wells. Members further noted concerns regarding the frequency of log deliveries and the suitability of local C and U class roads for heavy vehicles transporting timber. It was proposed (MC) and seconded (SK) to respond with further comments and continue to object to this aspect of the planning consultation. All in favour. Decided.

10.2. 252843 - Live and Let Live, Whitbourne. Councillors noted that the proposal represents diversification of the existing pub business and could provide support to the local rural economy. However, councillors raised concerns regarding the proposed hot tub, particularly its location adjacent to a neighbouring boundary fence, which could lead to noise disturbance for nearby residents. It was suggested that the use of the hot tub should be restricted to reasonable hours, with use not permitted after 10.00 pm. Councillors also raised the issue of external lighting, noting that any lighting should be carefully designed to minimise impact on neighbouring properties and the rural environment. Subject to appropriate conditions addressing these matters, it was proposed (PDW) and seconded (RJ) to support this planning consultation. All in favour. Decided.

PDW left the meeting.

11. To determine approach to Playing Fields lease renewal.

The current Playing Fields lease expires in April 2027. TH reported that background work had been undertaken to clarify matters with the Charities Commission. The Playing Fields AGM will take place soon, where additional trustees will be sought. TH agreed to supply the Parish Council with the previous two annual accounts. The Clerk was requested to provide a candidate list of solicitors that might undertake the update of the lease.



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12. To decide approach to domain name transfer to Parish Council

As noted above, the Clerk had been in contact with Nominet to commence the process of domain name transfer (whitbourneparishcouncil.org.uk). Payment of £200+VAT to Nominet was necessary to move to the next stage.

13. To receive report regarding the Lengthsman Scheme

PDW was not present to deliver the Lengthsman report. The Clerk noted that the Lengthsman had recently focussed on grip and gully clearing and that a road sweeper had been commissioned to sweep the road within the village. The drainage works at the bottom of Church Bank will take place at the end of March.

14. To determine approach to NDP review and group setup

NS agreed to write to the individuals that had expressed an interest in joining the group. However, it was noted that there hadn't been much activity on this front for some time due to the planning timescales at Herefordshire Council.

15. To receive reports from the Village Hall, Playing Fields, and Manorial Court

- **Village Hall.** Bookings are healthy and the finances are looking sound. The theatre group is becoming a regular user. A jazz group is seeking to stage a musical event. The gate split is being negotiated.
- **Playing Fields.** The quiz night will take place soon and includes a bangers and mash meal. Protective bases have been added to the bottom of play equipment to avoid strimming issues as no weed killer is permitted. More dog fouling signs are being procured as there is an increasing prevalence of fouling on the playing field. Several members of the committee have resigned and new members are being sought.
- **Manorial Court.** At the BCMC ordinary meeting, the main discussion focused on the management of Bringsty Common and grazing rights. Quad bikes have been a recent problem. The committee is looking at the feasibility of seeking HLS funding from Natural England.

16. To receive reports regarding the Glebe/woodlands

PD reported that matters had remained quiet of late.

17. To determine approach to a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

A briefing note had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. PD reported that a BAP was designed to map and improve the biodiversity within the parish. There is a higher level plan (CNAP), which may prove useful to implement at some point in the future. It was agreed that a 'light touch' BAP would be useful. PD and NS agreed to meet to discuss the next steps.

18. To determine the approach to A44/C1066 road surface condition

It was noted that works seem to have started in the immediate area adjacent to the junction. However, NS considered it still worthwhile to write to Herefordshire Council's CEO and Highways manager seeking information about defect assignment, dates of assessment and response times during the safety inspections.

19. To report village issues regarding road maintenance, clearance, etc.

- There was a steadily increasing number of potholes within the parish. Parishioners would be encouraged to report potholes themselves via the online reporting app. An article in the parish magazine would help publicise the app and web site links.
- Stocking lane: The branch overhanging the BT cable has still not been addressed.
- Stocking lane: The old oak tree stump at the bottom of Stocking lane was now showing signs of further deterioration. Its location makes it very vulnerable to causing a landslip due to heavy rains.

20. Confirmation of May 2026 Annual Parish and Annual Parish Council meetings

It was confirmed that these two meetings will take place on the 27th May 2026.

21. Confidential

The public were excluded from the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 due to the confidential nature of the item.



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The Parish Council confirmed that the Clerk's post remains within LC2 (below substantive range) and resolved that the salary spine point within that scale be increased to SCP 21, with retrospective effect from January 2026. Proposed (TH) and seconded (JA). All in favour. Decided.

The meeting closed at 21:43.

Cheque No	Expenditure	Payment
300671	Clerk Salary	£681.57
300672	HMRC	£562.24
300673	Clerk Expenses	£40.00
300674	Lengthsman	£240.00
300675	SLCC	£116.00
300676	Lengthsman	£400.80
300677	Lengthsman	£1160.40
Total		£3201.01

These payments were approved under Minute 9.1 above.

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Chairman – 4th March 2026