

Fownhope Parish Council

Serving the community



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 4th February 2026 at the Pavilion,
Fownhope

Present: Cllrs Tim Jones, Sue Eames, Gareth Williams, Mike Simmons, Frank Hemming, Michael Short, Peter Neale, Kevin Braybrook, Claire Patel, Lavinia Smith, Will Morris

In attendance: 21 members of the public; Clerk Tanya Walshe

1. To accept Apologies for Absence: Apologies were received and accepted from Ward Cllr Graham Biggs.

2. To Co-opt a New Councillor and accept their Declarations of Interest:

It was RESOLVED: to co-opt Alex Potter onto the Parish Council. Cllr Alex Potter took a seat at the table and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. Cllr Alex Potter received a Register of Interests form and was asked to return it within 28 days.

3. To Receive any Declarations of Interest and Written Requests for Dispensation:

3.1. To receive any declarations of interest: Cllrs Michael Short and Lavinia Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7.2.2. 260115, Tygwyn, Fownhope. Works to trees in a Conservation Area. At item 9.1, Cllr Sue Eames declared a non pecuniary interest in item 9.2.

3.2. To consider any written requests for dispensations: there were none.

4. Open Session:

4.1. Report from Ward Councillor: The Ward Councillor was not present and there was no written report.

4.2 Representations from the Public:

Cllr Tim Jones advised that public participation would be limited to five minutes due to the length of the agenda, noting that many attendees were present for Item 6 (Tan Brook Swing) and that written representations had been circulated to the councillors.

Members of the public raised queries including:

- Why the swing was taken down and why there was no communication to parishioners.

Cllr Tim Jones advised that responses would be addressed under Item 6.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

5.1. Members considered the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on the 3rd December 2025. It was **RESOLVED**: to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting. The minutes were signed by Cllr Tim Jones.

6. To consider a report on the Tan Brook Swing:

6.1. Members received a presentation from Cllr Sue Eames regarding the Tan Brook tree swing, previously considered at recent meetings. It was noted that although the swing was not installed by the Parish Council, it is situated on Parish Council land and therefore, the Council has a duty of care and potential liability.

Advice had been sought from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC), and the Council's insurance brokers. This indicated that independent inspections of the tree and swing, together with an ongoing inspection regime, would be required to satisfy safety and insurance considerations. The swing was removed on 11th December 2025 following insurance advice. Indicative costs for initial inspections were reported at £1620 + VAT (tree inspection followed by RoSPA inspection and access arrangements, subject to the tree being suitable).

It was **RESOLVED**: to proceed with a staged inspection process, commissioning a tree inspection in the first instance and, subject to a satisfactory report, commissioning a RoSPA inspection and necessary access arrangements, up to £1620 + VAT.

7. Planning

7.1. Planning Working Group response to questions raised during Dec 25 meeting regarding advertising signs.

Members received an update from the Planning Working Group regarding advertising/signage matters raised previously, including:

- The Shop at Coe Corner: flag considered permitted; owner requested to move A Board onto forecourt and remove illumination (to satisfy consent requirements).
- Fire Service recruitment sign at Lower House: working group recommended supporting the sign as a community/voluntary service.
- Old Barn Close (developer signage/flags): planning permission granted; condition that flags be removed once development is complete; developer contacted and response awaited.

- Land for sale boards (land behind recreation field): considered valid while land remains for sale.

- Contractor sign at Nash Pitch: permitted while works ongoing.

It was **RESOLVED**: to support the Fire Service recruitment sign remaining in place.

7.2. To comment on the following planning applications for determination by Herefordshire Council:

Cllr Frank Hemming (Tree Warden) has inspected the trees mentioned and deems the work necessary for safety reasons.

7.2.1. 260036: Lime Tree House, Fownhope. Works to Trees covered by TPO. It was **RESOLVED**: to support the application.

7.2.2. 260115, Tygwyn, Fownhope. Works to trees in a Conservation Area. It was **RESOLVED**: to support the application. Cllrs Michael Short and Lavinia Smith abstained from the vote.

7.2.3. 260051, Pole north of Pennybrook, Fownhope. Electricity Prior to Approval. Noted as a notification.

8. Finance

8.1. To receive and approve the financial report:

Members received a financial report noting the bank balances at 31.01.26: Current account £11,277.36; Reserve account £35,473.70; Hargreaves Lansdown £28,797.85. Total funds £75,548.91. A bank reconciliation has been carried out to 31st January 2026. It was **RESOLVED**: to approve the finance report.

8.1.1. Members received the Finance Working Group Report:

8.1.2. Review of the earmarked reserves was carried out, with agreement to streamline reserve categories for clarity in accounting.

8.1.3. Review of investment strategy/policy; **ACTIONS**: clerk to investigate alternative investment options and report in April.

8.1.4. Review of banking arrangements; decision to remain with Lloyds for day-to-day banking.

Next Finance Working Group meeting scheduled for 29th April.

8.2. Payments:

It was **RESOLVED**: to ratify the following payments made between meetings:

8.2.1. Jon Parr (Dark Skies event mulled wine) £18.50

8.2.2. Bradfords Building Supplies (Purchase of sandbags) £210 and £42 VAT

8.2.3. Wye Media (Artwork and design on Dark Skies bench reimbursed by the Flag) £176 and £35.20 VAT

8.2.4. Greenspace Designs Ltd (Dark Skies Bench. Paid for via grant received 12.03.2025) £3160 and £632 VAT

8.2.5. Nick Maddy Coaches (458 bus service August) £120

8.2.6. Nick Maddy Coaches (458 bus service November) £120

8.2.7. Terry Griffiths (PROW grant) £3952 and £790.40 VAT

8.2.8. Cloud Next (.gov email hosting service) £50 and £10 VAT

8.3. Payments: To consider the following invoices for payment:

It was **RESOLVED:** to approve the following invoices for payment:

8.3.1. CiLCA (clerk's training) £275 and £55 VAT

8.3.2. FRFA (hire of Pavilion for Dark Skies event) £16.50

8.3.3. R&D Price & Son (Hedge Trimming Green Lane) £40 and £8 VAT

8.4. To consider the Draft Budget for 2026/27 and set the Precept:

Members considered the draft budget noting one response had been received from the public consultation regarding the website/computer expenditure for the year. It was

RESOLVED: to increase website/computer expenditure from £500 to £750. It was

RESOLVED: to approve the draft budget for 2026/27. It was **RESOLVED:** to set the precept for 2026/27 at £42,299, an increase of 5%.

9. Highways:

9.1. To receive Highways Report and agree any works to be undertaken

Members received a report from the Highways Working Group, noting:

9.1.1. Grant application £6,750 requested; offer received £447.38

9.1.2. Water running down Common Hill: landowner to investigate and repair when ground conditions permit.

9.1.3. SID relocation towards Cherry Hill: uncertainty remains over Section 106 process and who appoints contractor.

9.1.4. Common Hill Lane blockage has now been rectified.

9.1.5. Visibility mirror request (B4224 opposite Common Hill Lane junction): officers reluctant due to liability; agreed lining/kerbing improvements but no date provided.

9.1.6. Possible road subsidence near Wye Leisure (reported; locality steward aware).

9.1.7. White Lining/'chicane' works associated with development: concerns raised at lack of progress; proposal to write formally to Herefordshire Council to request update.

9.1.8. Unstable wall next to Coo Corner. Connexus have accepted liability; no repair date given.

9.1.9. Pavement repairs (Coo Corner to Common Hill Lane junction): previously promised; no date provided.

It was **RESOLVED:** to write formally to Herefordshire Council requesting an update/timetable regarding the outstanding white lining/chicane/safety works associated with the development. **ACTION:** Cllr Neale to draft a letter for Chair approval and send to Herefordshire Council.

9.2. Volunteer training/PPE discussion (SID volunteer and lengthsman)

- To confirm legal/insurance requirements for highway-side work, PPE provision, training options, and whether training can be arranged cost-effectively, (e.g. group training)
- Concern expressed that work should not continue if training is required and absent.

ACTION: Clerk to consult insurers regarding training/PPE requirements for volunteers undertaking roadside tasks, and report back with options and costs.

10. Environment:

10.1. To receive Environment report and agree any works to be undertaken
Members received a report from the Environment Working Group, noting:

- Meeting held on 20th January with 11 attendees
- Test run the idea of introducing topics to each meeting
- Event taking place on April 11th, 7pm. Astronomy talks with Keith Maslin
- Next meeting 24th February, 6:30pm, The Green Man

11. Footpaths:

11.1. To receive Footpaths Report and agree any works to be undertaken

11.1.1. Cllr Will Morris gave an update regarding the six-metre bridge near Nash Pitch remains closed; awaiting confirmation whether it is included in a list of six bridge replacements this year. The diversion route impacted by collapsed stile; landowners kindly agreed to repair the stile as a short-term measure.

11.1.2. Vegetation management plan for April-September was presented within the agreed PROW maintenance budget of £3000. Proposal to allocate £2400 for routine strimming, approximately £400 per month, targeting routes most effected historically.

It was **RESOLVED:** to approve the proposed vegetation management plan and expenditure profile within the existing PROW budget. It was **RESOLVED:** to earmark/approve up to £500 for the installation of a gate to address the stile issue (subject to confirmation of gate availability). ACTION: Cllr Will Morris to confirm whether a gate is in stock and bring forward details/costing of installation.

12. FRFA/Recreation Field

12.1. To receive report on FRFA matters and agree any actions required:

12.1.1. Cllr Mike Simmons reported that slab works outside the pavilion is completed with scalping.

12.1.2. Green netting has been purchased and will be installed in the next couple of weeks to mute the white areas on the cricket nets.

12.1.3. Notices are now installed inviting car park users to make voluntary donations to help towards to upkeep of the Pavilion and the field.

12.1.4. Investigations are being carried out around sound treatment at the Pavilion. Jon Parr will be presenting findings to the FRFA.

12.1.5. The National Grid will be carrying out work to move high voltage cables underground.

13. S106 playground funding consultation update

13.1. Cllr Lavinia Smith gave members an update on the Section 106 funding of £19,750 for play improvements and consultation results:

The children's survey (primary and preschool) showed a strong preference for a trampoline. For 12+ age group, preference identified a zip wire.

A site meeting was held with a representative from Herefordshire Council to scope feasible locations (including moving a balance beam to install a trampoline; zip wire proposed in the recreation field area subject to FRFA agreement). It was stated that both items may be achievable within the £19,750 depending on specification; an additional £4000 may be required for preferred specs. ACTIONS: Cllr Lavinia Smith obtains quotes/options to confirm what can be delivered within the £19,750 S106 budget, for trampoline and zip wire, and report back to council.

14. To consider Councillor Training for 2026

14.1. The Council discussed the need for councillor training and proposed arranging an in-person session delivered by HALC, to include basic parish council responsibilities and some bespoke training, targeted for March. It was RESOLVED: to proceed with

arranging councillor training in March, subject to dates/availability. ACTION: clerk and chair to liaise with HALC to confirm date, content and logistics.

15. To consider a financial contribution towards an AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) at the New Memorial Hall.

15.1. The council considered a request from the Fownhope New Memorial Hall committee to install a public defibrillator, and whether the Parish Council should contribute. No decision was taken at this meeting pending clarification.

ACTION: clerk to seek clarification from the New Memorial Hall as to whether they have explored grant funding for sports venues to fund the defibrillator.

16. Councillor resignation and vacancy:

16.1. Cllr Peter Neale’s resignation was noted, and he was thanked for his time on the Parish Council. ACTION: Hereford Council to be notified of Councillor vacancy.

16.2. Advertising campaign to commence after Casual Vacancy Notice end date.

17. To note date of next meeting: 4th March 2026, 7pm, Pavilion

18. To consider Agenda items for the next meeting (no discussion).

- Coronation Pump House repair update

Meeting closed 9:02pm.

Signed

Chairman