

**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THORNBURY GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2024, AT 7 PM IN EDWYN RALPH VILLAGE HALL**

Members Present: Cllrs A Ede (Chair), T Edwards, J Farrant, H Lewis and A Pitt.

Also, Present: J Eva (Parish Clerk), Ward Cllr Baker, PC Douglas Hamilton (SNT), and 2 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr K Edwards, E Keown-Boyd, D Manning and P Wildig.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the meeting minutes held on 23rd September, 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PC Douglas Hamilton arrived at 7:05 pm.

4. SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM (SNT)

Before giving his update, PC Hamilton, a newly appointed officer to the SNT, introduced himself to the Council.

4.1 PC Hamilton provided the following update on the parish council's three policing priorities, as identified at the last meeting:

1. Speeding along the B4214: He acknowledged the ongoing issue with speeding. However, due to the road layout through Edwyn Ralph, there is no suitable location for the SNT to position their speed camera vehicle for enforcement. PC Hamilton mentioned that he is exploring the possibility of arranging for a Police Motorcyclist to carry out checks, as they would use a mobile handheld camera.

The Chairman noted that there had been instances in the past where Police vans were stationed in the village for enforcement checks. He emphasised the parish council's eagerness for Police intervention. PC Hamilton confirmed he would arrange for an assessment to be carried out to determine whether a motorcycle officer could conduct these checks. The possibility of approaching residents for use of their driveways, as safe areas for the Police to operate, was suggested.

Cllr Lewis asked about the potential use of digital speed signs, which encourage drivers to slow down, and whether it would be possible to install one in the village. PC Hamilton explained that this would be something the parish council would need to fund independently, with the approval of the local highway authority (LHA).

A member of the public inquired about the possibility of installing 'warning, speed camera' signs as a deterrent. It is unlikely the LHA would approve this, as it could be deemed misleading and would only be permitted if actual cameras were in place.

2. Rural Theft: PC Hamilton confirmed no new incidents of rural crime have been reported.

Cllr Pitt mentioned that he is aware of a rural crime incident that recently occurred in the parish. He expressed his disappointment at the time taken for the Police to respond to the victim after his report and the assistance they gave him.

3. Anti-social Behaviour: PC Hamilton confirmed no new incidents of anti-social behaviour have been reported.

PC Hamilton left the meeting at 7:25 PM.

5. WARD COUNCILLOR REPORT

5.1 Cllr Baker provided a brief update which included the following points.

- The B4214 has recently been resurfaced by the LHA.
The Chairman thanked Cllr Baker for his assistance in pursuing this matter with the Parish Council. Councillors confirmed that the resurfacing appears to have been done to a high standard. Some of the ditches alongside the road have been cleared. To prevent further erosion, Cllr Lewis suggested that some of the drains along this stretch should be jetted clear as they are heavily silted up.
- Parish Council Summit was held on 8th October and was well attended. HC has employed a new Director of Children's Services.
- New housing targets have been released for Herefordshire following the change in government. Housing development in the north of the county is dependent on the availability of phosphate credits. Mitigation initiatives, such as the development of new reedbeds and wetlands, have been introduced to offset the impact of development on the River Lugg catchment area.
- A new support centre has opened in Widemarsh Street to specifically help military veterans.
- 190111 – Land at Flaggoners Green, Bromyard. An application for the development of 120 houses was refused by HC's Planning Committee in 2023, due to highway concerns. This decision has recently been overturned by the Planning Inspector.
- The Registrar's Office has moved from the Town Hall to a new office in St Owens Street.
- The temporary library will be housed in the Town Hall before relocating to the Shire Hall at a later date. The former library building in Broad Street is to become a museum and arts centre.
- Devolution, combining Herefordshire Council with a neighbouring authority, is being considered. Parish Councils will be consulted on this matter in due course.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The following question was directed to Cllr Baker.

Q. Where will the new library be located? A Shire Hall.

7. FINANCE

7.1 Members received the November finance report (inc. bank statements, recs., & spend to date). It was **RESOLVED** to accept the finance report as presented – copy attached.

7.2 Invoices for payment: it was **RESOLVED** to approve the following invoices for payment.

Payee	Ref.	Service	VAT	TOTAL
HMRC	Months 7 & 8	PAYE		£130.40
Autela	14856	Aug – Nov payroll	£13.64	£81.86
J Eva	Oct & Nov 2024	Clerk's wages		
J Eva	Agenda item 8	National Pay Awards back-dated pay from April 2024		
J Eva		Stationery – divider pack		£1.00

7.3 Monthly internal financial control checks: it was **RESOLVED** to appoint the Chairman to carry out the checks after the meeting.

7.4 Members considered setting the draft budget and precept for 2025/26.

The clerk and the chairman met to discuss the budget in detail. The chairman explained that when preparing the budget and setting the precept, he referred to the internal audit report for 2024/25. This report recommended that the parish council increase its reserve funds. It is advised that the council maintain reserve funds equivalent to at least one year's net expenditure, roughly £6,000, to ensure financial stability in the event of emergencies or unexpected costs. The Chairman emphasised the importance of balancing the budget.

The parish council's only source of income is the parish precept. Recognising the pressures of the 'Cost of Living Crisis' and the ongoing credit squeeze, the councillors have historically kept the precept low to avoid burdening residents. However, this approach has left the council vulnerable, as it would struggle to cover large unforeseen expenses.

To address this, the council plans to gradually build up its reserve funds over the next three years, aiming to reach the target of approximately £6,000. As part of this plan, the precept for 2025/26 will be set at £6,600. Additionally, any unspent funds at the end of the financial year will be transferred into the council's reserves account to further strengthen the fund.

Recommendations:

- To set the 2025/26 Budget and Precept at £6,600.
- To rename the budget item 'Other' to 'Community Projects'.
- To adopt a suitable 'Donations Policy' which the council will refer to when considering requests for support for local community projects. NB. It is anticipated that the Council will not have any available funds for external applications until the reserve funds are met.

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the recommendations, as listed above.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE PAY AGREEMENT 2024/25

Members noted that The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has agreed the new pay scales for 2024/25.

It was **RESOLVED** that the new pay scales for the Clerk will be implemented in the December 2024 payroll and retrospectively applied from 1st April 2024. The Clerk's salary will be reviewed in the next 6 months.

9. RISK REGISTER

Members reviewed the register and noted that amendments have been made to reflect that the Council is no longer a member of HALC. The Chairman has reviewed the current insurance policy thoroughly and confirmed that it meets the parish council's statutory obligations. The policy is due for renewal at the end of March 2025.

10. PUBLIC CONSULTATION – *Consultation Tree Hedgerow & Woodland Strategy for Herefordshire*

This Consultation is open for responses from everyone. Members are encouraged to respond individually, both as residents and local landowners.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Chairman would respond on behalf of the parish council.

11. ROADS / FOOTPATHS

Members considered issues to report to Herefordshire Council.

11.1 Highways – nothing.

11.2 Footpaths – Update from the Footpaths Officer, Cllr Pitt, following the last meeting where a member of the public reported a very overgrown section of the footpath from Wood Lane down to Collington. Councillor Pitt visited the site and confirmed that there is an issue with the last 20m of the footpath, which is very waterlogged. It appears that someone has attempted to improve the pathway by adding brash and logs. On 5th November, Councillor Pitt reported this directly to the Public Rights of Way team at Herefordshire Council but has yet to receive a response.

12. PARISH DEFIBRILLATORS

12.1 Collington: nothing to report, Cllr Farrant checks the machine weekly.

12.2 Edwyn Ralph: nothing to report, Cllr K Edwards checks the machine weekly.

12.3 Thornbury: The Clerk has been in contact with London Hearts about providing a defibrillator for Thornbury.

London Hearts is a UK charity focused on promoting heart health and raising awareness of sudden cardiac arrest. They supply defibrillators to communities to improve survival chances and offer training on their use and the importance of early intervention.

It was **RESOLVED** for the Chairman to set up a working group with some residents of Thornbury, including Cllrs Pitt and Wildig, to discuss where to situate a defibrillator and what community fund-raising activities could help to match fund it.

13. VILLAGE HALL UPDATE

The Chairman reported several changes to the committee. At the AGM in May, we were sad to say goodbye to the then Chair, Liz Scott, as well as Tynna Loveday, who retired after many years of service on the committee, and Heather Brown. New committee members appointed at the AGM include Stella Watkins (Chair & Bookings), Di Bully (Social Secretary), and Rosie Berry. Longstanding members are Elaine Hall (Secretary), Sarah Wildig (Treasurer), and Mel Boyle (Comms & Press Officer). Cllr Ede is the Parish Council representative on the committee.

One of the first steps taken by the committee was to reintroduce the external social group to the hall's activities, leading to the formation of a 'Friends Group'. This group has been very supportive and helps generate ideas for events. As a result, several initiatives have been launched:

1. Skittles Alley – two successful skittles nights have been held.
2. Coffee with a Cop – regular monthly meetings allow residents to meet with members of the SNT, usually followed by a Friends Group meeting.
3. Pub Night – the last Pub Night was held on 15th November and raised £230.
4. Christmas Party – was held on 14th December.
5. Winter Warmer' Soup & Skittles evening will be held on 11th January 2025.
6. Coffee Mornings – are held on the first Saturday of each month.

The committee is currently seeking grant funding to help maintain and improve the village hall, including work on updating the heating system, improving the insulation and flooring, removal of moss on the roof, and gate repairs.

The Parish Council would like to thank all the volunteers for their hard work and dedication

in supporting the hall and organising such wonderful events for the community.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

Members noted the following information received.

- a) Streetworks list.
- b) Locality Steward Update.
- c) Neighbourhood Matters – Weekly Fraud Update.
- d) Public Consultation - a Tree Hedgerow & Woodland Strategy for Herefordshire.

15. NEXT ORDINARY MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm meeting dates for 2025: 27th January, 24th March, 26th May, 28th July, 29th September, and 24th November

With no further business, the meeting was closed at 8:30pm

Signed by Cllr Ashley Ede Dated

Finance Report – November

Spend against Budget

INCOME	Budget 2024_25	YTD LIVE
Precept	£6,000.00	£6,000.00
Bank interest	£5.00	£7.19
Unpresented cheque	£0.00	£0.00
VAT claim	£430.00	£0.00
Donations towards defibs	£0.00	£0.00
Error payment Hrfd C	£0.00	£0.00
Unpresented Chq	£0.00	£0.00
Total Income	£6,435.00	£6,007.19
EXPENDITURE	Budget 2024_25	YTD LIVE
Insurance	£400.00	£379.62
Village Hall	£0.00	£0.00
ICO	£35.00	£35.00
Audit fees	£250.00	£200.00
HALC Membership	£0.00	£0.00
Salary (inc. PAYE)	£4,670.00	£2,487.94
Salary (overtime)	£0.00	£0.00
Clerks Expenses	£0.00	£0.00
General Admin	£50.00	£0.00
Clerk's WFH allowance	£0.00	£0.00
PC website domain	£0.00	£0.00
Election fees (2019)	£200.00	£0.00
Salt for 3 parishes	£0.00	£0.00
PC anti-virus	£0.00	£0.00
SLCC/ALCC membership	£0.00	£0.00
Meeting Room Hire	£200.00	£96.00
Payroll services	£250.00	£148.76
Defibrillator maintenance	£300.00	£0.00
Community Projects	£200.00	£0.00
VAT	£150.00	£29.74
Total Expenditure	£6,705.00	£3,377.06

Bank Reconciliation; 1st to 31st October 2024

Opening Balance 01/04/2024	NatWest	£3,114.20	£835.38	
		Current Account	Reserves Account	TOTAL
Opening balance		£3,114.20	£835.38	
(+) Receipts		£6,000.00	£7.19	£6,007.19
TOTAL		£9,114.20	£842.57	
(-) Payments		£3,377.06	£0.00	
Balance		£5,737.14	£842.57	£6,579.71
		31.10.2024	31.10.2024	
Bank Statement		£5,932.74	£842.57	£6,775.31
o/s cheques				
	381	£195.60		
		195.60	0.00	
		£5,737.14	£842.57	£6,579.71

Budget 2025/

INCOME	Budget 2024_25	YTD LIVE	Draft Budget 2025/26
Precept	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,600.00
Bank interest	£5.00	£7.19	£60.00
Unpresented cheque	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
VAT claim	£430.00	£0.00	£30.00
Donations towards defibs	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Error payment Hrfd C	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Unpresented Chq	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Total Income	£6,435.00	£6,007.19	£6,690.00
EXPENDITURE	Budget 2024_25	YTD LIVE	Draft Budget 2025/26
Insurance	£400.00	£379.62	£420.00
Village Hall	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
ICO	£35.00	£35.00	£35.00
Audit fees	£250.00	£200.00	£250.00
HALC Membership	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Salary (inc. PAYE)	£4,670.00	£2,487.94	£4,495.00
Salary (overtime)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Clerks Expenses	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
General Admin	£50.00	£0.00	£50.00
Clerk's WFH allowance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
PC website domain	£0.00	£0.00	£150.00
Election fees (2019)	£200.00	£0.00	£200.00
Salt for 3 parishes	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
PC anti-virus	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
SLCC/ALCC membership	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Meeting Room Hire	£200.00	£96.00	£150.00
Payroll services	£250.00	£148.76	£250.00
Defibrillator maintenance	£300.00	£0.00	£300.00
Community Projects	£200.00	£0.00	£200.00
VAT	£150.00	£29.74	£100.00
Total Expenditure	£6,705.00	£3,377.06	£6,600.00