

STAUNTON ON WYE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the annual meeting of Staunton on Wye Group Parish Council on Monday 12th May 2025 at the Village Hall, Staunton on Wye, Herefordshire at 7.15 p.m.

Present: Councillor N Sellar (Chairman) and Councillors A Andrews, B Arthur, L Boddington, M Jones, E Pearson-Gregory, W Shepherd, R Skyrme and S Williams.

In attendance: Dr D Thame (Clerk), County Councillor Robert Highfield, Lindsay Allen (Internal Auditor).

One members of the public.

2025/1. Chairman 2025/26

It was **RESOLVED** that Nigel Sellar be appointed Chairman for the 2025/26 municipal year. The Chairman made his declaration of acceptance of office, which was witnessed by the Clerk.

2025/2. Vice Chairman 2025/26

It was **RESOLVED** that Michael Jones be appointed Vice Chairman for the 2025/26 municipal year.

2025/3. Appointment of Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

The Chairman reminded the Council that he and the outgoing clerk had interviewed the candidate in late March, and that the Council had met the candidate informally earlier in April. It was **RESOLVED** that David Thame be employed as Clerk/Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer with effect from 1st May 2025.

Thanks were expressed to Mr Grist for his work as clerk over many years.

2025/4. Clerk's Contract of Employment

The Council considered a draft contract which had been circulated in advance, specifying five hours weekly at scale point 26 (£18.72), and after discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve the contract of employment, and that the Chairman be authorised to sign on behalf of the Council.

2025/5. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Jeremy Price.

2025/6. Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

2025/7. Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2025, having been previously circulated, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2025/8. Lengthsman

The Chairman reported that he had indicated to the existing lengthsman, Terry Griffiths, that the Council was likely to re-tender services. The Clerk reported contact with two potential lengthsman providers who had expressed an interest. It was **RESOLVED**:

- (a) that Councillors Arthur, Shepherd, Jones and Pearson-Gregory, together with the Clerk, meet with potential lengthsman contractors to ascertain their services and pricing; and
- (b) that the Council renew its agreement with Herefordshire Council for lengthsman services in 2025/26.

2025/9. County Councillor's Report

Councillor Highfield addressed the meeting on the outcome of the Parish Summit on 8th April (which had been attended by the Chairman and Clerk), on improvements to the management of public rights of way, on the prospect of further bids to the Local Drainage Fund, on highway and traffic management improvements, and the impact of new housing allocations.

2025/10. Playing Field

Councillor Andrews reported continued concerns with the adequacy of the grass cutting, the need for replacement signs, and persistent problems with gates which either will not shut, or are being lifted from their hinges. The annual inspection is due in later summer. After discussion it was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) after consultation with Councillor Andrews, the Clerk procure a new sign or signs within a budget of £250;
- (b) that potential locally contractors suitable for cutting the grass be directed to the Clerk, bearing in mind the prospect that a new lengthsman could manage this task; and
- (c) that a list of necessary maintenance tasks be prepared for the Clerk, who will seekways to resolve them.

2025/11. Website and Policy Compliance

The Clerk referred to an estimate of costs for the transition to a .gov.uk domain, plus email addresses, from Parish Online in the sum of £360 ex vat per year, with a discount of £100. The Clerk explained the importance of councillors using .gov.uk email addresses, rather than personal email addresses, for data protection and freedom of information purposes. It was important that the website, too, conformed to government accessibility expectations and to data protection and freedom of information requirements, not least the regular publication of information under the

Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2025. After discussion it was **RESOLVED**:

- (a) that the Parish Online quote be accepted, and that a .gov.uk domain be acquired;
- (b) that the draft Privacy Statement (previously circulated) be adopted; and
- (c) that the Clerk, working with Councillor Boddington and the Chairman, take such steps as are necessary to conform with data protection requirements (such as data protection policy, data retention and disposal policy) and report for endorsement to the next meeting.

2025/12. Defibrillator

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council pay for the hire of the village hall for first aid/defibrillator training, as envisaged by Councillor Arthur.

It was further **RESOLVED** that Councillor Pearson-Gregory would continue to investigate the feasibility of using the old phone box in Monnington, and will ascertain whether it is still mains power connected.

2025/13. Public Footpath Officer

It was **RESOLVED** that Dave Shepherd be appointed public footpaths officer, and that the Clerk and the public footpath officer meet to discuss how best to interact with new Herefordshire Public Rights of Way structure.

Councillor Pearson-Gregory offered to take oversight of public rights of way in Monnington.

2025/14. War Memorial

Councillor Arthur reported that the sub committee met on 5th March and 2nd April 2025. Groundwork for the relocated war memorial was carried out by Luke Trumper, with concrete for the foundation supplied by CR & J Jenkins, both business giving services and materials free of charge. McMillan and Holder Ltd, stonemasons, successfully moved the memorial from the A438 to Doctors Pool from 14th to 22nd April. A further £2,000 has been raised by Lorna Williams and Steve Grist. Rededication would be on 6th September. Sue Hubbard is finishing a book, and publication is envisaged, whilst research by Martyn Price was likely to go to the County Archive. Members were impressed that the memorial already looks naturalised in its new home.

On the motion of the Chairman, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to thank all of those involved for a rapid and happy solution to a long-standing concern, and to congratulate all those involved on a successful outcome.

It was further **RESOLVED** to place a “No parking” sign at Doctors Pool, and that the Clerk be authorised to act within a budget of £100.

2025/15. Risk Management Policy and Reserves Policy

It was **RESOLVED** to consider a risk management policy and a reserves policy at the September meeting.

2025/16. Finance and Banking Arrangements

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Autela Payroll Services to be payroll administrator, and that the Clerk make the necessary arrangements.

It was **RESOLVED** to alter the Lloyds Bank mandate to appoint the Clerk as administrator; to remove the name of the previous Clerk; to authorise signatories to take such steps as are required to operate online banking; and that the mandate be varied to provide that authorised signatories will be Councillors Sellar, Andrews, Jones and Boddington.

2025/17. Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft standing orders, circulated before the meeting, be adopted, and that they be reviewed at the annual meeting in 2026.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft financial regulations, circulated before the meeting, be adopted, and that they be reviewed at the annual meeting in 2026.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council re-adopt the LGA/Herefordshire Code of Conduct, as adopted by Herefordshire Council in May 2022.

The Clerk reminded members of the importance of updating their declarations of interest forms, if interests have changed.

2025/18. Annual Internal Audit Report 2024-25

Lindsey Allen, the Internal Auditor, presented her report (copy attached to the minutes). She concluded that in half the required areas the Council was not compliant, and that she would not normally expect a parish council to report such a low level of compliance. In two areas she has qualified her report relating to areas reported last year but not acted upon. She drew attention to the lack of discernable budget process traceable in the minutes, nor rationale for decisions including the level of reserves and the precept. However, having attended some of the meetings she was aware that discussion had taken place. There was no evidence of budget monitoring nor of quarterly verifications of bank reconciliations. Work was required on risk management and evidence should be provided of the rationale for decisions.

The Chairman drew attention, as signs of the Council's serious intent, to the adoption of new standing orders and financial regulations, the steps taken to provide a compliant website, further work now agreed on risk management and reserves, and the appointment of a new Clerk who has completed training for a CiLCA qualification. He thanked the Internal Auditor for her work.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED** to receive and note the Annual Internal Audit report, to fully and unreservedly accept the findings and recommendations of the internal audit, in particular to begin quarterly verification of bank reconciliations and regular presentation of the cash-book with budget monitoring.

2025/19. Annual Governance Statement 2024-25

The Council considered the annual governance statement, and after discussion answered “no” to assertions two, four and five, and “yes” to the remaining assertions, and thereafter **RESOLVED** that the Annual Governance Statement 2024-25 be approved, and signed.

2025/20. Accounting Statement 2024-25

The Council considered the accounting statement and **RESOLVED** that the Accounting Statement 2024-25 be approved and signed

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** that a review of the Council's asset register, its rationale and its completeness, be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

2025/21. Certificate of Exemption 2024-25

The Council considered the certification of exemption and it was **RESOLVED** that the Certificate of Exemption 2024-25 be approved.

2025/22. Period for the Exercise of Public Rights

The Clerk reported on the timetable required by regulations, and it was **RESOLVED** that the dates for the period of the exercise of public rights relating to the 2024-25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return run from 3rd June to 14th July 2025, and that accordingly notices be placed on notice boards, and on the website.

2025/23. Insurance

It was **RESOLVED** to authorise the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, to take such steps as are necessary, including the paying of premiums, to ensure continuity in the Council's insurance cover.

2025/24. Date of September Meeting

It was **RESOLVED** to meet again on Monday 8th September 2025.

The meeting closed at 9.11 p.m.

Confirmed as a correct record:

Signed _____ Date _____