

## Minutes of the Meeting of Severn Stoke & Croome d'Abitot Parish Council

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025, 7.30pm  
At St Denys' Church, Severn Stoke

<b>Parish Councillors Present:</b>	Cllr Susan Faulkner (Chair) Cllr Larry Freeman (Deputy Chair) Cllr Richard Hill Cllr Pat Preston	(rep for Severn Stoke parish ward) (rep for Croome parish ward) (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward) (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward)
<b>Also in Attendance:</b>	Mrs L Stevens (Clerk and RFO). Martin Allen (County Cllr) David Harrison & John Michael (District Cllrs). National Trust reps. St. Denys's reps. Village Hall Committee reps. S.B (Lengthsman). 5 members of the public.	<i>The meeting commenced at 7.30pm</i>
<b>Apologies:</b>	Cllr Royston Garrard (rep for Croome parish ward) Cllr Ray Williams (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward)	

01/25	<p><b>Introduction, apologies and points of order</b></p> <p>a. There are currently 6 vacancies on this parish council, (1 in Croome parish ward, 5 in Severn Stoke parish ward). The quorum of this council is that 4 parish cllrs must be present for the meeting to proceed. Nil candidates stepped forward for co-option to fill existing vacancies. Apologies and the reasons for them were duly accepted. No points of order. No new declarations of interest were noted. No adjustments were requested to allow participation.</p> <p>b. <b>Minutes</b> - <i>To receive and consider approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.</i> 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024. <b>Resolved</b> and duly <b>approved</b>. Prps: LF. Scnd: RH.</p> <p>c. <b>Acceptance of written reports from District and County Councillors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report received from DCllr John Michael – appendix 2.</li> <li>- Verbal report from DCllr David Harrison on matters of planning and a general reminder for residents to feed back to MHDC or the parish council on matters relating to Croome Court variation of condition to opening hours. A decision on whether or not to go to planning committee will be made sometime in February.</li> <li>- Verbal Report received from CCllr Martin Allen – appendix 3.</li> </ul>	
02/25	<p><b>Planning and Enforcement</b> - <i>to consider, comment and resolve to respond to the following applications or enforcement matters.</i></p> <p>a. <b>M/24/01352/LB</b> <i>The Annexe, The Great Barn, Dunstall Earls Croome WR8 9DF – Two story side extension.</i> No concerns have been raised and no comments received from the public. <b>Resolved</b>. Support without comment. Prps: LF. Scnd: PP. Duly <b>approved</b>.</p> <p>b. Update on <b>Croome NT</b> planning applications. – nil received from MHDC at time of meeting. Parish Cllrs advised residents to keep an eye on the MHDC planning website and that they should sign up for automatic alerts to changes or new documents.</p> <p>c. <b>Standing Item:</b> To consider (and as required, arrange an extra ordinary parish council meeting) planning applications received after date of publication of this agenda. Nil.</p>	Clerk  Resid-ents
03/25	<p><b>English Devolution White Paper</b></p> <p>Ref Policy paper - English Devolution White Paper - Published 16 December 2024</p> <p>Forthcoming merger of District and County councils and implications for parish councils. Clerk is attending WCALC training 4th Feb.</p>	

<p>03/25 con</p>	<p>Continued</p> <p>The Clerk notes post meeting that Worcestershire is not included in the 6 authorities forming part of the 'fast track' Devolution Priority Programme (which, if included, would have meant that Worcestershire would have moved to unitary status by May 2026). The Clerk also notes that Worcestershire is not included in those areas permitted to delay County Council elections in 2025.</p> <p><b>Who currently does what</b> Responsibilities currently split between authorities:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>Worcestershire County Council is responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- education</li> <li>- transport</li> <li>- planning</li> <li>- fire and public safety</li> <li>- social care</li> <li>- libraries</li> <li>- waste management</li> <li>- trading standards</li> </ul> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>Six district, borough and city councils look after:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rubbish collection</li> <li>- recycling</li> <li>- Council Tax collections</li> <li>- housing</li> <li>- planning applications</li> </ul> <p>for the <b>Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester, Wychavon and Wyre Forest</b> areas</p> </div> </div> <hr/> <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>Source: GOV.UK</span> <span><b>B B C</b></span> </p>	
<p>04/25</p>	<p><b>Parish Council submissions to the Lengthsman Scheme</b></p> <p>a. The WCC grant has been fully claimed for this financial year, as predicted and accepted by PC in previous budgets and forward planning. Cllrs observed that the county council consistently underestimates the value of the parish Lengthsman and under funds the scheme.</p> <p>b. <b>Motion</b> to continue to submit monthly invoices to lengthsman scheme so that they are aware of the level of work being undertaken and consider in future budgets. <b>Resolved.</b> Prps: PP. Scnd: LF. Duly <b>approved</b></p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>05/25</p>	<p><b>Parish Hall</b> - The AGM is due to take place 26th Jan 2025 7.30pm.</p> <p>a. Clerk progress with <b>public consultation</b> re lease of land. Results will be published in Feb. Defford and Sandford residents report non receipt of copies sent via royal mail. Clerk has emailed copies out. Deadline for responses will be kept flexible to allow for this. Results of public consultation so far: 48 responses were received, with a 50/50 split in opinion as to the way forward. Many suggestions have already been rejected by the land-owners.</p> <p>b. Residents cautioned against ending the lease too soon, as they consider this the last remaining asset of the parish in many respects. Options for moveable temporary structures (portacabin style) will be passed onto the hall committee, but Cllrs queried whether the precept could be sig. raised for a temporary building and the matter of the 25 year lease restriction remains. Cllrs agreed to defer any decision until after the outcome of proposals for the flood bund project is known</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

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05/25 con	<b>Parish Hall Mowing contract</b> – Clerk has requested a quotation from contractors. 1 has indicated that they will provide a response. Will need to add a break clause in case of cessation of contract in Autumn – pending decision about future of land.	Clerk
06/25	<b>Parish Council website and development of use of social media</b>	Clerk Cllr Hill
a.	<b>Next steps website development.</b> The Clerk and Cllr Hill were <b>instructed/requested</b> to continue to liaise with the developers.	Clerk
b.	<b>Progress exploring purchase of video conferencing and microphone recording.</b> Cllrs suggested that video conferencing if purchased should meet best practice requirements but where is the demonstrable need? Upon debate it was agreed that if the parish council adheres to best practice then the residents will follow along and start attending soon enough/start using online viewing platforms. Cllrs <b>agreed</b> to continue once the website is full operational. The Clerk was <b>instructed</b> to seek funding for the equipment, from for example MHDC.	Clerk
c.	Social media and community engagement – <b>Motion</b> to approve co-option advert. <b>Resolved.</b> Prps: PP, Scnd: SF. Duly <b>approved.</b>	Clerk
d.	Parish Council will be 70 years old this May. Celebrations and reflect in new logo? This might become too wordy, but to consider again if required.	
e.	Receipt of NT approval for use of Panorama as parish council logo, subject to final approval of design. Motion for thanks. Motion for thanks: <b>Resolved.</b> Prps: PP. Scnd: RH.	
07/25	<b>Phone box maintenance High Green</b>	Clerk Cllr Free -man
a.	<b>Motion</b> to approve one quote and appoint contractors.  Quote 1 – Stephen Edwards (phone conversation and not a site visit) for £2500 (including VAT). Plus option purchase of plexiglass kit for approx.£1000. Complete overhaul with windows removed and replaced. <del>Quote 2 – Outstanding. Simon Norton has visited the booth – quote not forthcoming.</del> Quote 3 – Copes: £732.00 - rub down, clean, base coat, top coat and lacquer. Quote 4 – D J Amphlett: £646.94 - sanding/cleaning/painting undercoat and top coat, gold paint on crown, oil on hinges.  Considerations: County Council grant of £1000 can be applied for in May 2025. Permissions required: A pre-application Listed Building Consent application has been submitted to MHDC for approval by the Clerk. No charge is applicable to parish councils.	Clerk Cllr Free -man
b.	<b>Resolved.</b> Motion to accept quote 4 from D.J. Amphlett. Prp: SF. Scnd: PP. Duly <b>approved.</b> Contractor is also going to quote for replacing tired glass with superplex – Cllr Freeman to liaise. The Clerk was <b>instructed</b> to write to the contractor and accept the quotation.	Clerk Cllr Free -man
08/25	<b>Bench maintenance Severn Stoke village (5 Mins)</b>	
a.	<b>Motion</b> to approve one quote and appoint contractors.  Quote - D J Amphlett £173.97 - Strip and sand the bench by hand including the metal legs, wipe over in preparation for painting. Paint the legs with black hamerite exterior paint and paint the wooden slats with a Ronseal exterior Natural oak wood stain.	

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08/25 con	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- County Council grant of £150 has been offered if the project can be completed asap and the grant applied for by the end of March 2025 (via the lengthsman's grant scheme)</li> </ul> <p>b. <b>Resolved.</b> Motion to accept the quote from D.J. Amphlett. Prp: SF. Scnd: PP. Duly <b>approved.</b> The Clerk was <b>instructed</b> to write to the contractor and accept the quotation. Cones can be borrowed from SB if required.</p> <p>c. The white rails at this location require a clean up and then an assessment for need of future painting. The Lengthsman offered to conduct this work, with thanks from Cllrs. The Clerk was <b>instructed</b> to apply for the County Cllr division fund grant towards the bench repairs.</p>	Clerk  Clerk S.B
09/25	<p><b>General Finance and Admin</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. To consider/motion to approve payment of accounts made in the previous month. App1. <b>Resolved.</b> Prps: LF. Scnd: PP. Duly <b>approved.</b></li> <li>b. To consider/approve payment of outstanding accounts this month 2024 incl. Clerk expenses. App1. <b>Resolved.</b> Prps: LF. Scnd: PP. Duly <b>approved.</b></li> <li>c. To receive the latest bank reconciliation and quarterly report. <b>Resolved.</b> Prps: LF. Scnd: PP. Duly <b>approved.</b></li> <li>d. To receive Clerk monthly timesheet. Noted and accepted.</li> <li>e. To sign bank mandate to close saving account (to avoid monthly bank charges). Duly signed.</li> <li>f. Motion to approve purchase of Malwarebytes for laptop £39.99. <b>Resolved.</b> Prps: RH. Scnd: LF. Duly <b>approved.</b></li> <li>g. To note that the precept 25/26 £14,000 has been requested and acknowledgment received MHDC. Duly noted.</li> <li>h. Cllr Freeman going to assist Clerk with writing monthly parish mag submission. Thanks given.</li> <li>i. Clerk is arranging repairs/replacement battery for parish council laptop. Costs falls within delegation to clerk policy. Cllrs will be fully informed before any purchase. Duly noted and accepted.</li> <li>j. To appoint a Cllr to keep back up hard drive of PC records. Completed.</li> <li>k. <b>Motion</b> to support in principle the greater safety of lithium-ion batteries campaign (no financial commitment). Prps: LF. Scnd: RH. Duly <b>approved.</b></li> </ul>	Clerk      Clerk  Clerk Cllr Free- man  Clerk
10/25	<p><b>Confidential session - motion and resolution to move into a closed session without prejudice and exclude members of the press and public because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.</b> Lengthsman contract 2025/2026</p> <p>a.</p>	Clerk



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	<p><b>Resolved:</b> Motion to increase the Lengthsman pay to £20 per hour, and to remain at 0.45p per mile. Prps: PP. Scnd: RH. Duly <b>approved</b>. Cllrs gave thanks to Mr Bott for all that he does for the parish and our residents – much of it above and beyond.</p>	
11/25	<p><b>Correspondence, dates for diary, items for future agenda.</b> Cllrs may use this opportunity to report minor matters of info not included elsewhere on the agenda:</p> <p>a. <b>Knights Hill parking/access to driveways</b> Courtesy parking signs. To note that Signomatic has sent their apologies for the delay. They misplaced the order over Christmas.</p> <p>b. <b>AOB. Croome National Trust proposal (early stage proposal) for reduced price entry for public bus users.</b> Cllr gave thanks to hear of this scheme and will wait to hear more.</p> <p>c. <b>Future agendas:</b></p> <p>a. Resident request for a reduced speed limit at Croome to 30mph. Scoping request to Highways has suggested that any amendment to speed limit should wait until results of yellow line trial.</p> <p>b. National Highways: disruption caused to A38 communities during M5 night closures.</p> <p>c. Improving Broadband for the parish – resident enquiry. The Clerk was <b>instructed</b> to write to the Director at Airband and enquire whether Severn Stoke could be able to benefit from their services. <b>Resolved.</b> Prps: PP. Scnd: SF. Duly <b>approved</b>. MHDC district Cllrs may be able to point us in the direction of a money off scheme £60 off/free installation and the Clerk was <b>instructed</b> to make enquiries.</p> <p>d. Flooding at Kinnersley – Highways have declined involvement and have asked the PC to refer the enquiry to the land drainage team at the district council to investigate and action as necessary. <b>Resolved.</b> The Clerk was <b>instructed</b> to make enquires. Prps: SF. Scnd: PP. Duly <b>approved</b>.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
12/25	<p><b>Dates of next meeting</b> Please always double check meeting dates and times before attendance, as meetings may unavoidably change at short notice. Meetings venue unless otherwise stated: SOQ room, Croome National Trust Visitor Centre. Satnav: Near High Green, Worcestershire, WR8 9DW. What3 words location: ///alleyway.rescuer.perfect</p> <p><b>Wed 26th March 2025, 7.30pm</b> – Annual Parish Meeting of Residents of the Parish Areas of Severn Stoke and of Croome d'Abitot. Venue: <b>St.Denys' Church</b>, Severn Stoke. A standard Parish Council meeting will occur afterwards, same venue.</p>	

Signed ..... Chairman

.....Date

**Contact the parish clerk if you would like to receive agendas or minutes by email.**

#Clerk & RFO: Mrs Lisa Stevens, 9 The Limes, Kempsey, WR5 3LG.  
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<https://e-services.worcestershire.gov.uk/MyParish/>

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**Appendix 1a. Items already paid Nov/Dec 2024 since last PC meeting:** *(Approved under previous agenda or required payment under contract monthly)* **And Appendix 1b. Items for payment January 2025 outstanding:**

28/11/2024	Prysmian Cables and Systems Ltd	£10 test to new payee - prior to payment of full invoice	10.00
28/11/2024	Prysmian Cables and Systems Ltd	SSCDA 100124. Stonnall close light column replacement. £1555.90 plus VAT	2,662.58
31/11/2024	PCC	Annual donation towards grass mowing etc	500
12/12/2024	Mr Simon Bott	Lengthsman invoice Nov 2024	362.70
18/12/2024	Mrs Lisa Stevens	Home working allowance and expenses	44.53
18/12/2024	HMRC Shipley	Monthly income tax payment. Clerk reimburses manually.	5.20
31/12/2024	Mrs Lisa Stevens	Clerk wage November 2024.	303.12
03/01/2025	Mr Simon Bott	Lengthsman invoice Dec 2024	287.15
03/01/2025	Worcestershire CALC	Parish Hall Committee charity law training	42.00
03/01/2025	Mrs Lisa Stevens	Ink Cartridges for printer and paper from Currys (paper receipt)	81.98
20/01/2025	Mrs Lisa Stevens	External harddrive from Amazon Seagate 1tb for backing up laptop	51.19
To be paid	Mrs Lisa Stevens	Clerk expenses, stamps, postage, paper, HWA	42.90
Awaiting invoice	WJPS	SSCDA202470 - website set up.	952.80
20/01/2025	HMRC Shipley	Monthly income tax payment	5.00
To be paid	Mrs Lisa Stevens	Clerk wage December 2024.	308.16

### Appendix 2 - Report from District Cllr John Michael, Kempsey Ward

You are all aware of the proposed plan for Worcestershire to become a Unitary Authority ref 2027 which County Cllr Allen will have briefed you on. As far as the District Council is concerned many of its responsibilities will continue to be progressed so there will be a smooth transition to the new authority.

I am currently Chair of the Policy Development Panel for the Environment and this update is to appraise you of schemes going forward namely the proposed timetable for waste food collection and Destination Zero.

With effect from April this year waste food collection will commence for commercial businesses that produce food waste and although this will be optional for smaller concerns it will be mandatory for businesses with over 10 employees. The following year April 2026 residential waste collection will commence which will be an optional service but residents will be encouraged to sign up to the scheme to make it as cost effective as possible as well as good for the environment. Details are available on the Council website.

Destination Zero which is the Council's carbon reduction plan is on track to achieve the 2030 target and the latest report is available on line. To assist in achieving the target set Town and Parish Councils are encouraged to get involved by various means such as suggesting areas suitable for tree planting, encouraging food waste reduction which includes adopting composting opportunities for gardeners. There are a host of ideas including plantings to encourage pollinators and the ongoing support for active travel and active travel corridors. I'm quite willing to be contacted by residents who are interested in finding out more about the green policies the District Council are promoting.



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### Appendix 3 – Report from County Councillor Martin Allen

**UNITARY AUTHORITY** - We now know that the government are instructing Worcestershire's district and county councils to become a Unitary Authority. Currently, there are 57 County Councillors, their number would be increased to about 100 to 120 assuming that Worcestershire becomes its own Unitary Authority. This could well be the case; because the size of a Unitary Authority is 500K residents or more, and this fits in with the numbers for Worcestershire which are about 600K residents. I understand that by April 2027 at the very latest all new unitary authorities are to be delivered.

The Conservative leader and the CEO have submitted a letter to the government requesting that Worcestershire in included in the first round. If this request is accepted, the May 2025 WCC elections would be cancelled, and Unitary Authority elections would take place in May 2026. We will know by the end of Jan 2025 if we are to be in the first wave. If so, a plan must be in place by the end of March this year. If we are not accepted into the first wave, a plan must be in place before the 1st of September 2025, otherwise the government will impose a decision upon us. Maybe this is the time to seek what assets your council would like to either obtain or rent on a 99 year lease with a peppercorn rent.

**COUNTY COUNCIL** - It has been announced in the Council's Cabinet papers that Worcestershire County Council are facing a funding gap of £33.6 million for the next financial year, rising to £43.6 million the year after. The leader of the WCC has had to go cap in hand to the government asking for a bailout. Any bailout will be in form of a loan, which would incur interest. WCC do not know what the interest rate will be. The council may have to issue a section 114 notice, which is how an authority effectively declares itself bankrupt. Councils can't actually go bankrupt, but a section 114 notice, issued by its finance officer, means it cannot commit to new spending and makes service cuts more likely. There are 20 odd councils also in the same boat, of which 4 are Unitary Authorities, of which I believe 2 were formed in 2023. Any debts that current councils have would be passed to a new Unitary Authority.

**COUNTY HALL** - You may have heard that WCC are not going to move back into county hall. The costs are such, and the finances so perilous, that no repairs are to be made. Currently, I don't know what the administration will do with the building and land.

**KEPAX BRIDGE IN WORCESTER** - This cycle and pedestrian bridge is now been open. It initially cost was just under £5m, I am very disappointed to say that it has in fact now cost the taxpayer approximately £18M, although the final total has not been calculated and is expected to rise. I am very disappointed that the current administration was unable to keep a grip on the finances. I believe there should be a public enquiry so that WCC can learn from this terrible financial blunder.

**ON DEMAND BUS** - This is now free for Veterans from 0930 each day. Also, it will now go to Malvern Science Park, Barnards Green, Eastnor Castle and Ledbury. I will keep pushing for the hospital in Worcester to be added.

**REQUEST FOR DROPPED KERBS ON THE A38** - For the last few months I have been pressing WCC to provide dropped kerbs to allow disabled residents to cross the A38. I even offered to pay for the work using my fund for this type of work. WCC have refused the request in case they have to accept liability for an accident.

**REPAINTING OF THE BENCH BY THE MEMORIAL** - I am happy to report that I have found funding of £150.00 to get your bench painted. You must have the invoice in by the middle of March at the very latest.

-end-