



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

**Wednesday 28th January 2026,
At Croome National Trust SOQ meeting room**
The meeting commenced at 7.30pm

Parish Councillors: (# absent with apologies, ## absent without apologies)

Cllr Richard Hill (Chair) (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward)
Cllr Laurence Freeman (Deputy Chair) (rep for Croome parish ward)
Cllr Ian Daly # (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward)
Cllr Laura McEwan-Hill (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward)
Cllr Pat Preston (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward)
Cllr Ray Williams (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward)
Later, Cllr Simon Bott (rep for Croome parish ward)
Responsible Financial Officer, Proper Officer and Parish Clerk Lisa Stevens

Other community representatives:

National Trust Michelle Fullard, General Manager South Worcs
National Trust Katherine Alker, Grounds Manager Croome #
Worcestershire County Councillor Martin Allen
Malvern Hills District Councillor John Michael
Malvern Hills District Councillor David Harrison
Volunteer Footpath Officer Richard Humphries
Parish Lengthsman Tim Hughes
PC Jon Hand/Safer Neighbourhood Off. Dee Stanley/Police Comm. Support Officer Ashley Smith #
Friends of St. Denys' Committee John Henderson #
Tarmac Colin Stratford (Clifton Liaison Committee Chair Martin Allen)

Residents in attendance: 1

01/26 Welcome, introductions and points of order

- i. Declarations of interest. Nil new. Points of order. Nil.
- ii. Apologies. Duly accepted. Prps: RH. Scnd: LMH.
- iii. Adjustments required to facilitate participation. Nil
- iv. **Motion to determine any items on this agenda that should be considered of a private nature.** Specifically, a Motion to exclude members of the press and public during consideration of an agenda item by reason of the confidential nature of the items of business to be transacted, in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960. Nil Items. No resolution was required.

02/26 To receive written applications for the office of Parish Councillor and to co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancies (six at time of publication).

- i. An application has been received from Mr Simon Bott.
- ii. As the number of candidates (1 at the time of publication) was less than the number of vacant seats, a confidential interview session was not required. The Candidate was welcomed, invited to introduce themselves and ask/receive questions.
- iii. **Resolved. Motion** to co-opt Mr Simon Bott to the vacant **Croome Parish** Seat. Prps: LF. Scnd: LMH. **Duly approved.** Unanimous. Cllr Bott was welcomed to the table. Signatures were applied to Acceptance of Office and other documentation as appropriate. Welcome pack given, including Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, list of policies, NOLAN principles, meeting dates and declaration of interests guidance.
- iv. **Lengthsman Contract.** Cllr Bott noted that with regard to his existing contract as Parish Lengthsman, as a contractor he has exercised his right to terminate the agreement and withdrawn from the contract effective immediately. Nonetheless, for purposes of transparency he verbally declared an interest as the previous Lengthsman (subsequently received in writing by the Parish Clerk)

02/26 cont. The order of the minutes is amended here for continuity in the matter of the Lengthsman.

- v. **Resolved. Motion** to confirm the existing appointment of Mr Tim Hughes as Lengthsman for the 25/26 contractual period as per minutes 24/09/25 64/25iii and 26/11/25 71/25 v. Prps: RH. Scnd: LF.
- vi. **Resolved. Motion** to confirm the appointment of Mr Tim Hughes as lengthsman for the 26/27 contractual period. No other persons having given an expression of interest within the advertised timescale. Mr Hughes will be provided (for signature) the template contract once issued by WCC in March 2026. Prps LMH. Scnd LF. Duly **approved**.
- vii. **Motion** of thanks to Mr Bott and Mr Hughes.

The order of the minutes is reinstated.

03/26 Minutes of the previous meeting.

- i. **Resolved. Motion** to accept and approve the minutes of the meeting of 26th November 2025. Prps: LMH. Scnd: RW. Duly **approved**.

04/26 The meeting was adjourned for **Open Forum** (public question time). Residents noted the guidance provided for information on their seats. (Nb. Standing orders were relaxed for this section with general agreement).

i. Update on the Environment Agency (EA) Flood Bund Project

- Dame Harriet Baldwin press release dated 22/01/2026 Appendix 4
 - EA resident update dated 22/01/2026 Appendix 5
 - Letter from Emma Hardy MP Appendix 6
 - Letter from Dame Harriet Baldwin MP Appendix 7
- a) Correspondence from Emma Hardy MP confirms that all funding is in place and that WCC and the EA will complete the works. Tenant farmers have received similar correspondence indicating that discussions will take place in February 2026.
 - b) The Clerk was **instructed** to ask for a meeting with Ian Cresswell WCC and Marc Liddarth EA and Rachel Hull WCC. (Note post meeting, a drop-in session planned by EA for 25th February 5 til 7.30ppm St Denys’).
 - c) The Clerk was **instructed** to ask for a delivery plan and detailed finances. (Note post meeting, request was made and all will be made available to the PC as soon as possible).

The Resident was thanked for his input and Standing Orders remained open for Community and Committee representative reports.

05/26 Community and Committee Representatives

- i. **County Councillor Martin Allen.** See Appendix 2 for the written report.
- ii. **District Councillors David Harrison and John Michael**
 - a) MHDC will not be raising their portion of council tax for 2026/2027.
 - b) Enforcement action on Severn Bank: A site viewing has taken place by Officers and a notice has been issued regarding signage.
 - c) It was noted that planning permission has been provided to the applicant for the Old Boars Head Car Park and that attention has been given in the planning conditions to matters raised by the parish council.
 - d) Cllr Williams requested additional dog fouling signs for Kinnersley village **Action** DH.
- iii. **The National Trust.**
 - a) MF has been appointed General Manager for all of Worcestershire.
 - b) Contractors for car park project will hopefully start in Easter, weather permitting.
 - c) The site Defib is now outside the Court rather than inside it.
 - d) Cllr Bott to provide details of the HeartStart campaign and training.
 - e) EV chargers are now active and in public use (pay as you go) in the car park.

- iv. **Parish Hall Committee.**
 - a) Appendix 3a for the parish council update provided at the Hall Committee AGM.
 - b) Appendix 3b for the report of financial accounts provided by the Hall Committee.
 - c) The AGM was attended by one member of the public owing to the snow. It remains every much business as usual for the Hall Committee and the next meeting is in April 2026.

- v. **Mowing at Parish Hall**
 - a) Motion to approach existing contractor to renew mowing contract from March 2026 – no motion was made. Cllr Bott confirmed that he has withdrawn from the contract effective immediately Tim Hughes agreed to receive and consider the spec. **Action:** Parish Clerk

- vi. **Lengthsman.**
 - a) Noting item 02/26 v and vi above.
 - b) To note reinstallation of zebra bollard in Kinnersley by Tim. Thanks given.
 - c) Tim has received the new bin ready to install along the A38 in the sewage works layby.
 - d) Raised footpath Severn Bank fencing has been sorted.
 - e) Large amounts of flytipping have been reported.
 - f) WCC template for 2026/2027 lengthsman contract has been received and will be distributed to Tim for inspection shortly.
 - g) The two flood warning signs (belonging to Highways) will remain stored with Larry until they are needed and Tim agreed to fetch and put these out as required.

- vii. **Volunteer Footpaths Warden.**
 - a) It was noted that Severn Stoke Fish Pools broken PRow infrastructure has been reported to and acknowledged by Savills. *(Note post meeting – the gate has now been repaired).*
 - b) 31 incidents/issues remain on the WCC PRow list and are never provided with any update or inspection reports.
 - c) RH kindly volunteers as a litter picker for Madge Hill and was given thanks by Councillors.

- viii. **Broadband** - update on progress to expand provision to Severn Stoke residents. Appendix 10.

- ix. **Defibrillator Rose and Crown (not PC owned or maintained)**
 - a) The pad expiry date is 2028. No monthly checks are taking place. The chef is happy to do the checks.
 - b) The Clerk was **instructed** to write to the publican to remind him of the need for regular checks and reporting on the Circuit website.

- x. **Resignation of a Parish Councillor**
 - a) Cllr Laurence Freeman asked to address the parish council and after thanking his colleagues, tendered his resignation with immediate effect. Larry confirmed that he would like to step back from parish council after an enjoyable and interesting period of service. Larry is happy to help with continuing to change VAS batteries with the assistance of Tim Hughes. Parish Cllrs thanked Larry for his time on the parish council and expressed sadness at his leaving.

Larry departed at this point in the meeting. The Parish Council remained quorate with 6 Cllrs present. Closure of Open Forum. Motion to reinstate Standing Orders duly approved.

06/26 Planning and enforcement.

- i. Standing Item: To consider (and as required, arrange an extra ordinary parish council meeting) planning applications received after date of publication of this agenda. Nil.

- ii. **Applications examined by Cllrs by email since last meeting:**
 - a) **M/25/01947/LB, Broughton House**, 47 Severn Stoke, WR8 9JA, e-roof existing tiled roof slopes with new felt, battens and handmade roof tiles. Cllrs had no comments.
 - b) **M/25/01867/LB, Pippins, 8 Kinnersley**, Severn Stoke, WR8 9JR, Retrospective structural repairs to roof, chimney maintenance of brickwork. Cllrs had no comments.

07/26 Budget and Precept 2026/2027 - to consider and resolve to set the budget for the 2026/27 financial year and to submit the request for the parish council portion of council tax to the district council by 31st January 2026

- i. **Annual review of donations and grants.** To examine current annual donations. **Resolved.** **Motion** to approve existing schedule of donations as table below with no amendments. Prps. PP. Scnd. LMH. Duly **approved.**

- 6 th Worcester Kempsey Scouts (takes the YP of our parish)	£50
- Severn Stoke Brownies (based temporarily at Earls Croome)	£50
- Annual Remembrance Wreath (British Legion)	£30
- SARA search and rescue	£50
- St Denys' churchyard maintenance	£500
- Upton Library	£200

Donations that have previously been declined until further quotes received:

- Belfy repairs – PCC St Denys'

- ii. **Declined with no proposers.** **Motion** to accept the recommendation of this parish council to increase the precept for 2026/2027 by 7% from £14,000 to £14,980.
- Ref Appendix 8 Explaining the precept (displayed on the parish council website).
 - Parish Councillors received draft budget for consideration in November 2025.
- iii. **Resolved.** **Motion** to accept the recommendation of this parish council to increase the precept for 2026/2027 to £16,000. This is in light of recent correspondence that will necessitate the appointment of further solicitors. Prps: RW. Scnd: LMH. Duly **approved.** Unanimous. The Clerk had sought WCALC advice on this course of action and had received confirmation of legitimate business expenses that a council must cover to perform its functions.

08/26 Highways, Infrastructure and Parish Assets

- i. **Phone box High Green.** Project review and quality control.
- a) Cllr Williams agreed to paint the inside of the phone booth.
 - b) **Resolved.** **Motion** for no further action in respect of the outside surface, which is generally good considering the budget and age of the unit. Cllrs were satisfied with the general quality of the contractor work. Paint appears to have stabilised. Prps: RW. Scnd: RH. Duly **approved.**
- ii. **VAS parish wide**
- a) Stats reports are no longer possible as the website service is no longer accessible.
 - b) Larry, as a resident, will help change VAS batteries with the assistance of Tim Hughes.
- iii. **VAS update Severn Bank**
- a) Clerk has asked Westcotec to attend and inspect. Awaiting their response.
 - b) Clerk has submitted application for Divisional funding:
Extract from application (for information): The original unit purchase price was £3500 plus VAT and the parish council considered that this asset should be brought back into a state of usefulness and was an asset that should not be wasted. Our county councillor has granted match funding of £300 in a £600 project of general assessment and maintenance and the original manufacturer is also assisting with this project. The parish council is now seeking match funding/partial funding towards a new solar panel costing £300 plus VAT as part of a final stage of repair. The parish council has between £150 and £200 to allocate to the project (infra3).
- iv. **Overgrown trees Severn Stoke Bank**
- a) WCC attended to cut trees back from nearby homes and VAS. Assessment of effectiveness. The Clerk was **instructed** to write to Highways for confirmation that there is no danger to the garages underneath the trees. *(Note post meeting: Highways have responded verbally to say that they will not produce any such written undertaking as a matter of policy).*
- v. **Croome Corner infrastructure.**
- a) It was noted that that Zebra bollards have been knocked over at Croome Corner London Arch and are scheduled for replacement by Highways. Residents have asked if additional bollards can be installed in order to protect the gate visibility splay. *(Note post meeting: Highways have confirmed that no further action will be taken in respect of new bollards or additional measures on this corner, as further work is not enforceable).*

09/26 Finance, admin and training

- i. **Resolved. Motion** to consider/motion to approve payment of accounts for this month and the previous month. Prps: RH. Scnd: PP. Duly **approved**. Appendix 1. No urgent accounts.
- ii. **Resolved. Motion** to receive and approve the latest bank reconciliation/quarterly report (as applicable). Prps: PP. Scnd: LMH. Duly **approved**.
- iii. **Resolved. Motion** to receive the Clerk's timesheet. Prps: RH. Scnd: LMH. Duly **approved**.
- iv. Clerk's correspondence list for information. Appendix 11. Duly **accepted**.
- v. To note that the subscription for Malwarebytes Standard will be renewed around 09/02/2026 for £39.99 for 1 year.
- vi. **VAT reclaim** has been made for 24/25 financial year. £1,333.80
- vii. **To note that NALC has published a 'parish and town councils recommended basic governance checklist'**, which has been completed by the Clerk. Appendix 9. Two outcomes were to remind Cllrs of availability of training (done via email) and to create a risk management policy (done and to be approved a next meeting). A **Resolution** was considered required. Prps: RH. Scnd: PP. Due **approval** of this course of action.
- viii. **Reminder from WCALC of availability of councillor training**. Cllrs can log on and sign themselves up for any cllr course that they like. Duly **noted** by all.
- ix. Duly **noted** that the parish council **workplace pensions re-enrolment deadline is 8th March 2026**.
- x. **Duly noted updated SECTION 137 NOTICE:**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has informed us of an increase in the Section 137 expenditure limit for parish and town councils in England for the 2026/27 financial year. The new limit is £11.60 per elector, up from £11.10 in 2025/26. The increase reflects the percentage rise in the retail price index between September 2024 and September 2025, in accordance with Schedule 12B of the Local Government Act 1972. Section 137 of the Act allows parish and town councils to incur expenditures for purposes that benefit their communities when no specific statutory power is available. NB. This does not affect the budgeted threshold that the parish council sets each year, which is £500.

- xi. Duly noted that HMRC has written to confirm that **PAYE** is in credit by £30 due to tax code changes. Clerk and Cllr McEwan-Hill are liaising to sort.
- xii. The Clerk requested permission to explore **Sharepoint** options for dissemination of council materials and was **instructed** to obtain a quote from Active Council if not already provided as part of the existing IT package. Risk assessments have been renewed and are due to be sent to the auditor asap – best if these can be loaded onto Sharepoint for inspection by both auditor and Cllrs.

10/26 Correspondence, dates for diary, items for future agenda.

- i. **Site of Parish Hall**. Cllrs had received correspondence from Carbon Law Partners (AM 28/01/26 nb after publication of this agenda) in respect of the Old Parish Hall Site and agreed to set a date for an Extra-Ordinary meeting of full council as soon as became required. The Clerk was **instructed** to keep both sets of solicitors informed of likely timetable. Previous Motions in respect of this correspondence supported continued engagement of the existing solicitor and to respond in a timely manner as per the request of Carbon Law Partners. Cllrs also noted that the Delegation to the Clerk Policy (5.1a et al) permitted expenditure up to £1000 for urgent matters. Prps: PP. Scnd: RH. Duly **approved**. (*Note post meeting: date set for 4th March 2026, 5pm, venue is SOQ Croome, public welcome, agenda published 26/02/2026*).
- ii. *Items for future agenda*
 - War Memorial. ownership, maintenance, ownership of verge, progress with valuation.
 - Audio recording for parish council meetings.

11/26 Date of the next meeting. Wed 25th March 2026 7.30pm. St Denys' Church, which will be the Annual Meeting of Residents of the Parish Areas of Severn Stoke and of Croome d'Abbtot. A standard parish meeting will occur afterwards, 8.30pm approx..

Signed

Chairman

.....Date

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

Proper Officer, RFO & Parish Clerk: Mrs Lisa Stevens, 9 The Limes, Kempsey, WR5 3LG.
Tel: 01905 820956 / 07950256363 parishclerk@severnstokeandcroomedabitot-pc.gov.uk

New website: <http://severnstokeandcroomedabitot-pc.gov.uk>

Notes to minutes – Terms

- Once approved, the Motion/decision is called a “resolution”
- Resolved – Where a decision is made about a Motion.
- Duly Approved – Motions where a formal vote took place, accepting the Motion.
- Duly Accepted/Agreed – Motions where no formal vote took place but the action/recommendation within the Motion or debate is to proceed. Usually for non-financial matters or for items already agreed as part of an existing budget.
- Declined – Motion where a formal vote took place, with the Motion rejected.
- Duly Noted – Information not requiring a vote at this time.
- Abstentions or votes against a Motion will be noted but the minutes will NOT always show individual names, unless Councillors have declared an interest and the transparency of that interest must be maintained.

Requests for this information in other languages/audio/large print will be reasonably considered.

Please take a moment read the council’s privacy notice, which explains how we use and look after your information and your rights. This document is available via the website above.

Appendix 1. Items already paid since last PC meeting June 2025 (Approved under previous agenda or required payment under contract monthly) and Items for payment July 2025 outstanding:

73	28/11/2025	Mr S Bott	Replacement key parish hall site	£18.00
74	Not used			
75	28/11/2025	Mr T. Hughes	Lengthsman invoice Nov 2025.	£375.75
76	18/12/2025	Mrs L. Stevens	Expenses & HMA (£26) Dec 2025	£28.48
77	18/12/2025	Mrs L. Stevens	Chair's allowance for volunteers	£32.90
78	23/12/2025	Thomson & Bancks LLP	Parish hall advice.	£2,860.80
79	18/12/2025	HMRC Shipley	EmployEE Income tax payment.	£5.00
80	29/12/2025	Mrs L. Stevens	Clerk wage Dec 2025	Redacted <£350
81	16/12/2025	Service charge	Bank monthly fee	£4.25
82	02/01/2026	Mr T. Hughes	Lengthsman invoice Dec 2025.	£376.20
83	07/01/2026	Mrs L. Stevens	1 x Ink High Capacity HP 953XL	£189.88
84	outstanding	Mrs L. Stevens	Expenses & HMA (£26) Jan 2026	£31.45
85	22/01/2026	HMRC Shipley	EmployEE Income tax payment.	£5.00
86	outstanding	Mrs L. Stevens	Clerk wage Jan 2026	Redacted < £350
87	19/01/2026	Service charge	Bank monthly fee	£4.25
88	outstanding	Mr T Hughes	Lengthsman invoice Jan 2026	£373.50

Appendix 2 – County Councillor Martin Allen report to the Parish Council January 2026

THE BUND - Pleased that the Bund is now going ahead.

CHANGES AT COUNTY HALL - The leader of WCC, Reform Cllr Jo Monk has removed Cllr Taylor from the cabinet. He was until a few months ago the deputy leader and then headed the Local Government Reorganisation team. Cllr Wharton is now the deputy leader.

REFORM ADMINISTRATION APPOINT ANOTHER CABINET POST - Bromsgrove councillor Nik Price who was elected in May has now been appointed to the post of delivery, operations, governance and efficiency (DOGE)

BRIEFING AND BUDGET - The legal deadline for WCC to vote through a budget is the 11th of March, or 1st of April if the Secretary of State becomes involved. The County Council is battling a budget shortfall for 2026/27 of more than £70m and has requested permission to have the option to increase council tax by 10%. In addition, the WCC has had to ask central government for Exceptional Financial Support of £65M, on top of the £33M the last administration had to ask for last year. If council tax is increased by an extra 5%, so raising the tax to 10%, would bring in £18m year on year, while an extra 2 ½% would bring in £9m year on year. Last year Highways carried out 30K safety related fixes.

CHANGE OF BUDGET MEETING DATES - The council meeting budget date of 19th February has been cancelled.

A new council meeting date of the 26th of February has been set, with a reserve date of 6th of March lined up for another meeting if required. One of the reasons for the change is that the application for Exceptional Financial Support will not be decided by the government until around the 20th of February.

#10339 BOLLARDS DAMAGED BY LONDON LODGE, CROOME. - I understand that these have now been replaced.

#10812 VERGE MASTERS DAMAGED ON A38 ON SEVERN BANK - I have reported that some of the Verge masters on the A38 have been damaged and requested that they are replaced.

DITCH OPPOSITE STONE COTTAGE, CROOME

“The drainage team have met with the contractor, and the outcome is that the work on the ditch took longer than anticipated. The intention was to at least start the work on the headwall and pipe whilst they were on site, however they discovered that this work will require about 5 -7 days to be programmed in and only 2 days were allowed on this permit. Therefore, after meeting today they have moved the programme around and this will now be slotted in for the end of January beginning of February. I will confirm the date nearer the time as they will need to secure the permit for the road space”. County Highways Liaison Officer

EMENTIA CAFÉ - A new dementia café has started, based in Upton’s Rugby Club, it meets every other Tuesday morning from 1030 – 1200. If you would like any other information, please contact D.Ashwell of Ashwell Home Care Services.

End of update. Some items redacted as containing contact details.

Appendix 3a – Updated provided to the Parish Hall Committee by the Parish Council at the AGM

L.Stevens Parish Clerk on behalf of SS&CDA Parish Council

June/July 25 - The Parish Council locked the old hall site car park due to the threat from travellers in the adjacent parish. At this time, residents approached the Parish Council stating a right to retain access to the car park (stating acquired access rights and/or stating access rights in their title deeds). Evidence to support these claims has not been received by the Parish Council. The closure of the car park became permanent subject to legal consideration.

October 25 - Recognising the role the Hall Committee has oft played in managing access to the car park, the Parish Council sent a request for cooperative working and funding. A response offering sharing of written records was received, along with a decline for joint clientship. The Parish Council supported this decision. The Hall committee has provided extracts from Minute books 1960 to 2025.

November 25 - The Parish Council appointed a Solicitor, conducted a site visit and obtained advice in writing, which was passed in a hand delivered letter to the relevant residents.

December 25 - The Parish Council has made no decision about the lease, but feels it prudent to meet the new Savills rep. This is under the advice of the parish council auditor who recommends examination of use of public money (ie consideration of continuation of the lease against an assessment of the purposes that the site can be put to and the value for money that this represents to the public purse). The cost of the lease and maintenance is in the order of £1,500 pa. This is in the context of the 2025 parish council annual income of £14,000 from resident council tax. The new Savills rep is **W.Debenham, Associate, Rural and Projects**. A meeting has been arranged for 19th of January. No decision will be made until further update has been received regarding the flood bund.

End of update.

Appendix 3b – Notes to the Accounts Parish Hall Committee Financial Year ended 31st March 2025

Sources of income over the financial year have been primarily from dividend distribution arising from the M&G Charifund investment account, which has again returned dividends in the order of 6% of the fund as valued at 31 March 2025. It has now been ten years since the Charifund account was first opened and has proved to be a sound investment, returning dividends every year. In addition, cash relating to equipment sales from November 2024, but not banked until April 2025, also shows as income. As can be seen from the accounts, the majority of the expenditure has been in professional fees. One large invoice for the Bat Mitigation Class Licence / Ecological Clerk of Works at Demolition was not presented by ATW until after the end of the 2023/24 financial year therefore was shown as an accrual on the balance sheet last year, but now shows as expenditure in the current financial year. In addition, professional fees were paid in connection with the auditing of the FY24 accounts and also for professional advice from Thomson Bancks in connection with the charity's constitution and charitable objectives.

Accounts prepared by LMH 7th June 2025

Appendix 4 - Press release from Dame Harriet Baldwin MP 22/01/2026

West Worcestershire MP Dame Harriett Baldwin has secured full funding for the long-awaited flood defence scheme for Severn Stoke only days after the project was threatened with a shut down.

And the MP thanked the Environment Agency and Worcestershire County Council and urged them to work together with urgency to get the contract agreed and get spades in the ground this Spring on a project which she has campaigned for since major flooding hit the community in 2012.

News was communicated prior to Christmas that the scheme could be cancelled owing to a funding shortfall, but Dame Harriett immediately wrote to Flooding Minister Emma Hardy MP asking her to review the decision and issue a Ministerial Direction.

A letter from the Minister confirming that funding has now been secured was delivered yesterday and the Environment Agency will now liaise with the Worcestershire County Council highways team to ensure that the flood defences and the road raising project can start this Spring. Dame Harriett commented:

"I am delighted that the Environment Agency can now press on with the long-awaited flood defence scheme and I am particularly grateful for the intervention of Minister Emma Hardy who has been following this matter closely and has offered me her constant support to get this scheme underway.

"This project has been a long time on the drawing board but it has planning permission, archaeological studies have been carried out and some soil is already onsite. "I plan to meet with Worcestershire County Council in the coming days to ensure that its contractors are able to work with the Environment Agency to get the work done quickly but I am pleased that common-sense has prevailed.

"This has been one of my longer campaigns but I look forward to standing on a new flood bund in Severn Stoke protecting homes, businesses, the historic church and the vital A38 link road. -end-

creating a better place
for people and wildlife



Severn Stoke Flood Risk Management Scheme (FRMS) – 22 January 2026

This update provides the latest information on the Severn Stoke FRMS

The community of Severn Stoke has suffered frequent significant flooding from the River Severn and a flood risk management scheme has been explored for the community over the last 20 years, with significant work undertaken after the 2007 floods and further progress made in recent years. The Environment Agency's aim has always been to reduce the flood risk from the River Severn for the local pub, church, and surrounding properties.

Historically, delivering a scheme for the community has been challenging. This is due to the very marginal business case and funding constraints, given the construction costs related to the small number of affected properties. Over the last 12 months the Environment Agency has continued to work with Worcestershire County Council to explore a potential partnership delivery approach.

Latest position

We are pleased to announce that funding for this scheme has become available from our Flood Risk Management Investment Programme. With detailed costings in place we are working closely with Worcestershire County Council to finalise a programme of work to construct the Severn Stoke Flood Risk Management Scheme this year. Delivering the scheme within this timeframe will be challenging, but both the Environment Agency and Worcestershire County Council are making every effort to achieve it.

Next steps

- We are meeting with Worcestershire County Council to finalise programme of works to deliver the scheme within 2026.
- We will continue to liaise with the flood action group, local elected members, and the landowners to share the latest information.
- Once these discussions are complete, we plan to host a public meeting to provide a full update and to confirm further details. This is likely to take place in February 2026.

Contact us

If you have any questions about the proposed scheme, please contact the

Environment Agency at: Enquiries_Westmids@environment-agency.gov.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this update and for your continued support as we work towards improving flood resilience for Severn Stoke.

Appendix 6 – Letter from Emma Hardy MP



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Emma Hardy MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Seacole Building
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London
SW1P 4DF

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Dame Harriett Baldwin MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
harriett.baldwin.mp@parliament.uk

Our ref: MC2026/00273/LB

21 January 2026

Dear Harriett,

Thank you for your letter of 18 December 2025 the Severn Stoke flood risk management scheme (FRMS). I appreciate how frustrating the project delays have been and the uncertainty your constituents have experienced as a result. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I am pleased to have been informed by the Environment Agency that funding has become available, and that the local team has been working with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) on how this scheme will be delivered for the community of Severn Stoke. The Environment Agency's West Midlands Area Director, Marc Liddeth, will be in contact with you to discuss the delivery plan for the scheme in more detail.

Thank you for highlighting this important issue, if you require any further information please do get back in touch.

Appendix 7 - Letter from Dame Harriet Baldwin MP

DAME HARRIETT BALDWIN MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lisa Stevens
Parish Clerk
Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council
9 The Limes
Kempsey
WR5 3LG

January 26, 2026

Dear Lisa

As you will be aware, I met with local managers from the Environment Agency, before Christmas, who were starting the communications process to inform the community that it would cease work on the proposed permanent flood defence scheme for Severn Stoke. I immediately asked the team to pause this process and I wrote to the Flooding Minister, Emma Hardy MP, to ask her to intervene and issue a Ministerial Directive to fund the project and allow it to now proceed.

I was pleased to receive written confirmation from the Minister that she had done that, and I enclose the letter for your information. Last week, I received a briefing from the Environment Agency to confirm that the scheme is fully funded and it would be able to proceed using a contractor on the Worcestershire supplier framework.

Last Friday, I met with Worcestershire County Council to ask them to confirm that the funding, secured under the previous administration, to support the road raising is still available and that that project is also able to proceed. I am told that this is the case.

Bearing in mind that this project has started a number of times, and has already cost the tax payer nearly £900,000, I believe it is the right decision for the Environment Agency to press on with this project protecting the houses, the church and businesses as well as increasing resilience for the A38.

It has been a challenging effort to keep this project alive and I am thankful to your parishioners who have showed extraordinary patience, I am hopeful that work can get underway shortly and I plan to keep a close eye on this matter, as ever, until permanent flood defences are in place. I would be grateful if you can share this letter with your councillors at the next opportunity.

Appendix 8 - The Precept Explained 23/01/2026

Councils across the UK are facing severe funding pressure and budget shortfalls and they no longer make regular funding contributions to parish councils. To address this your Parish Council will be debating an increase in the local Precept at the next parish council meeting (details included as the date of this meeting)

What is a Precept? The Precept is the main source of income for most parish councils as they do not receive direct funding from Central Government. It is a small part of each household's council tax payment and helps fund the parish council's operations and services. In addition, parish councils seek grant funding for some projects.

What does a Parish Council provide? Here are some of the key activities/outgoings:

- Maintenance, insurance and public liability for parish council land and assets, including the war memorial, street lighting, litter bins (which accept mixed waste and dog waste), heritage phone booths, bus shelters, community noticeboards, seats and benches. In 2025/26, insurance was £700 pa, expected to rise in the coming year.
- Membership in the Lengthsman Scheme, contributing to the hire of a contractor for roadside maintenance across the parish, maintaining and installing signage, keeping visibility splays clear, clearing drain tops and gullies etc, assisting landowners who are maintaining their roadside ditches, reporting flytipping and liaising with the parish clerk as to any issue parish wide.
- Provision and maintenance of speed VAS signs across the parish.
- Contribution to the maintenance of Public Rights of Way and related infrastructure.
- Statutory consultee on planning applications and a local voice on highways and environmental matters.
- Representing residents' views to higher-tier councils (like district or county councils) and other organisations.

How is the Precept raised? Worcestershire Council collects your Council Tax on behalf of themselves, Police, Fire, Adult Social Care, and the Parish Councils in their district.

How is it calculated? Each January, your Parish Council sets the Precept for the next financial year by considering projected income, grants, and expenses. The Precept is the amount needed to balance the budget and deliver services. This year, your Parish Council is accounting for potential additional services due to the upcoming process of Devolution (the merging of County and District Councils 2027/2028).

How much does the average household pay for the Precept? The average Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot household's Precept for 2025-26 was £46 per year, costing a Band D household £0.88 per week. Parish Councillors are considering increasing. The final amount depends on the number of contributing households. Increases are never welcome but we take the following points into consideration:

- **Risk of Devolution Outcomes:** Parish Councils may need to cover costs for services previously paid for by the County and District Councils. These include a much larger contribution towards the Lengthsman Scheme, wider responsibility for gully cleaning, hedge cutting, ditch clearing and mowing roadside verges (which includes taking responsibility for roadside bio-diversity and general maintenance).
- **Loss of Grant Funding:** Parish Councils may no longer receive grants from County and District Councillor Divisional Funding which can amount to £500-£600 or more annually.
- **Inflationary pressure:** Rising cost of labour and raw materials, are impacting our capital spending and maintenance work.
- **Need for Protected Funds:** There is a need to build up protected funds for unforeseen repairs, renewals and any required legal processes.
- **Parish Clerk Availability:** The Parish Clerk is available 24/7 for emergencies and helps ensure that resident voices are heard.

Overall, the Parish Council believes a prudent increase is necessary given the current economic climate. Conscientious monitoring of income and expenditure has allowed the Parish Council to maintain a stable annual financial base of around £20,000 which is used to deliver community services and projects. This amount is carefully managed and is just about sufficient for an organisation that hires contractors and has only one employee. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact the Parish Clerk [details] -end-

Appendix 9 – Governance checklist

Outcome 1 – Remind Cllrs of the availability of training via WCALC

Outcome 2 – Create a risk management policy (to sit alongside existing risk register) – done and to be approved at next meeting.

Outcome 3 – GDPR Data Map updated – who receives data and why.



IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, QYW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

Parish and town councils recommended basic governance checklist

Good governance underpins a well-run town or parish council, and without it can be the cause of civility and respect, and other issues and problems which could escalate.

This first step governance checklist is recommended to councillors, clerks, county officers and monitoring officers to review when there are complaints and concerns regarding the functioning of the council.

If the council is unable to complete part of the checklist, addressing this initially could prevent the problem from escalating.

1	<p>Is the council a member of National Association of Local Councils (NALC)?</p> <p>NALC supports and promotes parish and town councils providing statutory and not statutory information. NALC also works with county associations for local support.</p>	1. Yes, membership is automatic via our parish council WCALC membership.
2	<p>Is the clerk a member of Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)?</p> <p>Parish and town councils should ensure and pay (Local Government Act 1972 S143 (1) (b)), for their clerk to have professional membership to enable to receive training and be kept fully up to date on the sector. SLCC has a mentoring scheme to support new clerks and local meetings.</p>	2. No. We have been in the past, but the cost was too high when considering value for money. Joining fee is £12. Subscription is £158 pa.
3	<p>Employment matters</p> <p>Does the clerk (and other staff) have a contract of employment? Does the clerk (and other staff) have a personal development plan reviewed at least annually?</p>	3. <u>Yes</u> and yes.
4	<p>Code of conduct</p> <p>Have all councillors signed up to the code of conduct? Have all councillors received code of conduct training?</p>	4. Yes. Training is available and we encourage cllrs to sign up. All have received their WCALC training log in details.
5	<p>Training</p> <p>Is there a plan for undertaking recommended training e.g. code of conduct for councillors? Some free training is available via county associations and principal authorities and/or can be shared with neighbouring councils.</p> <p>Does the clerk have access to recommended training? There are many forms of training for clerks from progression for new clerks one day online up to an MA. There are also many relevant topic-based training in person and online to keep clerks up to date and benefit their councils and community. Being a member of SLCC will normally ensure a reduced rate for training. Some grant funding can be available for training.</p>	5. As above. The Clerk attends training.
6	<p>Does the clerk attend professional development conferences?</p> <p>Professional conferences have sessions specifically designed for clerks' skill building, professional development and enrichment. This will enable a clerk, council and the</p>	6. <u>Yes</u> via WCALC.

	community to stay ahead of a challenging and fluctuating environment and recommending solutions to issues that have been addressed by other clerks and councils. Conferences provide ideas, best practices, contacts and tools which can not only improve the day-to-day governance of the council, can assist with financial savings, accessing funds and project management.		
7	Professional helpline, advice and support Has advice on the problem been sought from NALC? Has it been acted on? Being a member of NALC will enable free access to the professional helpline and support. Has advice on the problem been sought from SLCC? Has it been acted on? SLCC is not a union. It's helpline for clerks is provided to assist with professional matters advising of best practices and practical solutions. It also provides the facility of networking clerks who have been through similar problems. SLCC Advice Library includes over 700 documents listed under the 90 categories; within each category you'll find the documents grouped by advice notes – statement of fact or law, guidance notes – how to do something, model documents – can be adapted to suit a council's particular circumstances. SLCC members may use and adapt the documents within their own council(s) on the understanding that the copyright remains with SLCC. The document must not be shared with or transferred to non-members.		7. N/A at this time. The Clerk consults WCALC whenever there is an issue.
8	Is the council trying to operate without a clerk? There can be several reasons why the clerk is not currently available. The recommendation is that a locum clerk who has professional qualification is brought in to assist with the issue to prevent escalation.		8. Clerk in place
9	Does the chair and mayor have professional support? This can be from the clerk, locum clerk, county association or NALC.		9. Yes, via WCALC.
10	Are the council, councillors and clerk clear about their roles and responsibilities? Council who acts as a corporate body making policies and decisions on behalf of the Council. Councillors who form the corporate body and cannot act as individuals nor be involved in the day to day management of the council. Clerk who carries out the instructions of the council as a corporate body and manages the day to day functions and governance of the council.		10. Cllrs have been provided with the 'Parish Council Induction Guide', 'Powers and Duties of Parish Councils', Roles and Responsibilities of Parish Councils', 'How councils work – an induction guide', and 'Good councillors Guide 2016',
11	Is there evidence of bullying and harassment by a councillor? This becomes a code of conduct matter and therefore the council as the corporate body cannot investigate and take actions. The process is referred to the monitoring officer for determination.		11. N/A at this time.
12	Is there evidence of inappropriate behaviour by the clerk? The council if it believes the clerk has acted inappropriately should ideally address in the regular performance development plan. If there continues to be a problem it is recommended that professional advice is sought to address employment matters rather than a council trying to do their best, which can sometimes make problems more difficult and bring the council into a crisis situation.		12. N/A at this time.

Appendix 10 – Update from the County Council on progress with broadband provision

"As you know, we are working with commercial operators and central government to oversee full fibre deployment across the county. It appears that Openreach does have commercial plans for the area (although all plans are subject to change and can be withdrawn at any time). Areas like Clifton, Severn Stoke, Earls Croome and Kinnersley, plus premises in between are worst affected. These sit between 3 exchanges – Kempsey, Severn Stoke and Upton. Upton build is slowly coming to a close. Kempsey build is ongoing and due to finish next year. Also Project Gigabit (Govt funded programme) is due to start next year too. I understand that between both programmes, majority of the area will be upgraded, but I am not certain of exactly which premises and the timescales. I have recently spoken with the OR lead for Worcestershire and he hasn't got visibility post March 26 at present.

Senior Project Manager,
Broadband & Connectivity Team

Appendix 11 - Clerk's correspondence list for items NOT included in the agenda above

Police Crime Commissioner newsletter & PCSO quarterly contract
MHDC Overview Scrutiny Committee: Tuesday 6th Jan Council Tax 2026-27 and Police & Crime Commissioner Recording
NALC Chief Executive's bulletin & WCALC monthly bulletin
MHDC Planning monthly bulletin
WCC Funding Finder monthly bulletin
The Rural Funding Digest - funding for your local project or community group & Rural Services Network weekly bulletin
The Rural Bulletin national rural news and ensuring rural communities have a voice
HMRC – payroll update and legal requirements.
Parish Magazine monthly submission
Broadband - digital infrastructure and connectivity newsletter Jan 2026
Severn Trent Councillor Newsletter December 2025
Worcestershire Regulatory Service Councillor Newsletter December 2025.
Police priorities for Q1 2026 sent 23/12/25
SWDP Review Main Modifications - plans and link to view on website.
Procurement Thresholds from 1 January 2026
Financial Services Compensation Scheme
Home Working Tax Change
New WCALC query ticketing system
Worcestershire County Council's Community Services Directory update contact details on directory