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# Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council

## Draft Minutes

of the (re-scheduled) Ordinary Meeting of the Group Parish Council  
on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 7.30pm in Risbury Village Hall

Present: Cllr. Hugh Fowler-Wright (Chairman)  
Cllr. Tim Yair  
Cllr. Derek Silk  
Cllr. Ken Bemand  
Cllr. Rob Pugh  
Cllr. James Hinton  
Cllr. Chris Marston  
Cllr. Richard Thomas

Clerk & RFO: Allan Drew  
1 member of the public attended.

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## First business

### 36/24 Election of Chairman

Cllr. Fowler-Wright was nominated and re-elected as Chairman. He then signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

### 37/24 Election of vice-chairman

Cllr. Marston did not wish to stand for re-election. With a number of Councillors absent the Chairman proposed deferral of this matter to the next meeting. This proposal was accepted.

### 38/24 Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs. Fullwood, Collins and Grace. Cllr. Silk had sent his apologies that he would be late for the meeting

### 39/24 Declaration of interests and dispensations

None received

### 40/24 Minutes of the last meeting

Cllr. Bemand raised the matter of the woodwork replaced at Humber crossroads when it should have been at Blackwardine crossroads. The Clerk admitted that he had instructed the Lengthsman to do the work after consulting a local map which specified the area as Blackwardine. It was in fact Humber crossroads. There was general agreement that the work at Humber was necessary anyway and had been done to a good standard. It was agreed that the work at Blackwardine (the next crossroads to the North) would be carried out at a later date. There was also concern that the old woodwork had been left in-situ giving a rather untidy look to the otherwise good quality of workmanship. The Clerk would raise the matter with the Lengthsman.

The Chairman then signed the minutes.

Any matters for report arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

The Clerk reported that-

- He had been contacted by the residents at Monkerton that The Prill Brook needs some attention. Cllr. Hinton reported that a local resident had facilities to carry out such work and he would make enquiries.
- The sad death of Jake Campbell, one of the Lengthsman's son, in a car accident on the A44 about 10 days ago. Council asked the Clerk to send a sympathy card to David and Pam Campbell.
- He had received the official portrait of the King and would ask Cllr. Silk to arrange for it to be hung in a suitable position in the Hall.

#### **41/24 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reported that the Pump advertising manager, Chris Blum, would be leaving the area and a replacement is required. Councillors were asked to pass the message on to residents to seek a replacement.

#### **42/24 Bonfires in Stoke Prior**

A resident had complained to the Chairman about bonfires in Stoke Prior which had discoloured washing and may have triggered an asthma attack. The resident had been invited to the meeting but did not attend. The Chairman would ask the Pump editor to include a relevant mention in a future issue. (Cllr. Silk joined the meeting at this point).

Cllr. Thomas raised the issue of stray sparks causing fires when vegetation becomes really dry. The Chairman would include this point in his discussion with the editor.

#### **43/24 Public participation**

No issues were raised by member of the public present.

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### **Annual business – previous year**

#### **44/24 Annual reports 2023-24**

(a) Report from the past-Chairman-

The number and complexity of planning applications remained subdued, probably still due to the phosphate issues in the Wye, the cost of building materials and overall financial climate. Herefordshire Council's as yet undecided emerging Core Strategy adds to the uncertainty of future planning and has led to a PC decision to await this crystallising before possibly revisiting our NDP.

The PC strongly supports the production of The Pump and I hope continues to do so going forward.

Positive drainage improvements at The Heath and Wheelbarrow Castle continue to be tested and the overall state of parish drains, challenged by climate change, means funding whether from Herefordshire Council or the PC is likely to a regular significant topic and require significant ongoing financial expenditure. Cllrs Fullwood, Bemand, Thomas and Pugh have provided generous time along with practical and astute insight in tackling drainage issues.

Projects to re-build the Parish website and create a Welcome Pack for new residents have both been completed with express gratitude to Cllrs Yair & Marston and Fullwood, respectively. These projects are important 'shop windows' for the community and PC and both have required much time, thought and skill to achieve such successful outcomes.

A further ongoing project is the Traffic Safety Group which has already become well established and set excellent goals through sterling work by Cllrs Grace and Marston and must become a permanently vigilant active group within the PC. Traffic not only on the A44 but around the school and lanes will always be at times challenging and will surely only increase. Collecting and analysing traffic data is central to both understanding the issues and achieving funding and signage permissions from outside authorities.

The planned trails booklet has got delayed due to an expansion in its content (now 12 walks and rides) and some contributors on over lapping holidays. However, it will be an excellent added ingredient to the Welcome Pack and ties in well with the two relatively new village hall map cabinets.

The Lamb Inn remains a facility that the PC would like to see as a functioning and thriving pub and the PC continues to monitor the situation and request that HC ensure planning regulations are adhered to. Mean-times the entertainment group set up to support Stoke Prior Village Hall has run several Village Inn evenings amply demonstrating the considerable appetite for a local pub and the resultant social benefit for many members of the community who have attended these.

As ever the contribution and importance of a wide number of volunteers should be fully acknowledged, not least Parish Councillors, so it was good to have three new Councillors (James Hinton, Derek Silk and Rob Pugh) fill three vacancies to keep the PC operating healthily at full capacity.

Volunteer Mike Hayward had recently stepped down as Foot Paths Officer for Stoke Prior & Ford and like all volunteers deserves our gratitude.

Other greatly valued voluntary staffed activities include The Pump with its editor, advertising manager many distributors; those running the village halls; the Community Week committee; church wardens for the three churches; the tree warden; foot path officers ... The Chair greatly appreciates all who give time, labour and expertise for the community's benefit.

(b) report from the Clerk

The year 2023-24 has been the busiest year so far in my time at the Parish Council. From a more detached standpoint it looks like the Localism agenda, first placed in legislation back in 2011, is really starting to have an effect. The aim of the Localism legislation was to devolve more power to local communities. One of the most obvious steps was the introduction of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and the Group Parishes' 2016 NDP was an early exemplar of how such plans could mobilise local opinion to help create the sort of places people wanted to live in. It is worth mentioning that since that NDP became law (yes, an NDP is a legal document) there have been no planning decisions which did not accord with the policies of the Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior NDP.

Fast forward now to 2024. Increasingly Herefordshire Council is loosening its hold on areas of operation which are important to local residents. I'm thinking of activities such as footpaths, simple highway maintenance and, from this year, the right to work on the drainage system. This is devolvement to local level where we have long maintained that we can do such work faster, cheaper and more effectively than Herefordshire's public realm contractor, Balfour Beatty. Crucially this devolvement does come with funding and this year there was about £5,400 available from Herefordshire. Add to that the budget of about £3,000 which the Parish Council normally allocates to such work and there is a fair-sized pot available to at least start tackling some of the problems.

So, during 2023-24 Council focussed on three main areas-

- The normal extensive program of cleaning drain tops, maintaining highway grips and ditch headwalls, cutting vegetation where required (e.g. around traffic signs etc.).
- Completing the work at Wheelbarrow Castle which had been started by Balfour Beatty a year ago but never completed. The work involved removing a large, fallen willow tree which straddled the key drainage ditch close to Cross Cottage. This tree obstructed the water flow in the ditch and was a big part of the cause of frequent flooding at Wheelbarrow. The drains and the ditch were then cleaned out and we hope that the problems in this area are now resolved.
- Drain jetting and cleaning around Stoke Prior centre and the Heath. We managed to get water flowing through these drains including resolving a problem with the cross road drain at the Heath which was full of roots.

In other areas the Council commissioned a completely new website complete with a .GOV.UK domain name which brings some security benefits. This project was under the leadership of Councillors Tim Yair and Chris Marston and skilfully avoided the problems which often beset local Government IT projects! The new site is much simpler than its predecessor and hopefully residents will find it much improved.

Councillor Fulwood embraced the Welcome Pack project and produced a great result in record time. She finished the project by the September Council meeting and since then all new residents in the Parishes have been greeted by an interesting and useful Welcome Pack of information to help them settle in.

As for last year all this activity has been reflected in the finances which, again, exceeded the £25,000 threshold on expenditure and so have to be examined by the External Auditor.

*To receive:* reports from representatives on the Village Hall Committees.

REPORT FOR PARISH COUNCIL : STOKE PRIOR VILLAGE HALL 2023 - 2024

The year 2023/2024 has seen a year of significant changes for Stoke Prior Village Hall.

During early 2023 and following the Covid restrictions it became apparent that the number of active trustees was no longer sufficient for the amount of work running the hall entailed. Following a meeting chaired by the Parish Council, well attended by parishioners it was clear that the over riding issue was use it or lose it.

This successful meeting resulted in lively debate. The outcome was not only the appointment of new trustees but also the formation of an events committee. Since that time the Village Hall has enjoyed a new lease of life thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of this committee.

Stoke Prior Village Hall now has a licence to sell alcohol, it's holding a fortnightly indoor bowls tournament. A monthly Pub Night, a quiz night, plus the resurrected music quiz and the popular horse racing night, complete with tote. This year the Race Night resulted in 60 tickets and all 48 horses being sold and a profit of £1300. Well done events committee enjoyed by all who attended.

Flicks in the Sticks continues to be well attended with a food option for those who enjoy a night off in the kitchen. The variety of films could be described as eclectic, some block busters, some thought provokers, and a few of a more romantic nature - in essence something for everyone.

Thank you to Gill Stovold who has retired from the board of trustees. During her time as a trustee she has worked tirelessly to bring the Village Hall up to the required standard to comply with so many statutory regulations.

Also a huge thank you to Molly Firth who in March 2024 retired, following an unmentionable number of dedicated years of service to the Village Hall. Molly your regular raffle will be missed!! Molly's replacement is Cheryl Poole so the Church is still represented on the board of trustees.

Stoke Prior Village Hall strives to be a valuable community space for all our residents and will remain that with all your support.

Janette Fullwood  
Representative on hall committee for HFSP Group Parish.

(c)

*To receive:* reports from PROW officers.

Mr Iain Cholerton (Bridleways) was present and had as usual produced a very comprehensive report on the problems with the Parish bridleways. He reported that- Drainage is a problem on many bridleways particularly after the very wet winter. In particular Witsets/Wicton (SP28) and around the Marston area (HU10/PG11) remained problem areas. Mr Cholerton asked if anything can be done to improve drainage and he doubted if any landowners could be identified as responsible for such maintenance. Cllr. Thomas pointed out that these were low points where water would collect and the heavy clay soil meant natural drainage was very slow. The Chairman asked that PROW be contacted in connection with action to be taken when no landowner can be identified.

Another generic issue is with headlands – the space between the cultivated edge of a field and the boundary hedge. The requirement is for a minimum of 3m but many are less than this making for very limited access by riders. The Chairman felt that again a mention of these requirements in the Pump would be a starting point for raising awareness with landowners and he would undertake to progress the issue.

Gates also presented a general problem with some gates needing replacement and others some maintenance. The Clerk mentioned the gate on HU10.3 would be replaced by PROW and asked Mr Cholerton if he would be able to specify the size of gate required.

The courts had ruled on the PG11 problem and some remedial work had been done to improve the safety of the area though the was still scope for further improvement.

The Chairman thanked Mr Cholerton for his detailed and informative reports and the effort he put in every year to monitor the state of the bridleways.

Mr Cholerton's full report can be seen on the Parish website [www.hfspgroupparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.hfspgroupparishcouncil.gov.uk) under the "Parish Council" section as part of the papers for this meeting.

Stoke Prior footpaths.

Mr Mike Hayward had sent a comprehensive report. Council picked a particular issue raised concerning a locked gate on SP4. Cllr. Hinton commented that there was in fact a stile to by-pass the gate but that it was rather overgrown.

Humber footpaths.

Mr Philip Brown had sent a report which is also available in the papers for this meeting on the website. Council noted the issue with PG12 where the route was obstructed by woodland. The landowner is Cllr. Pugh and he undertook to improve the situation.

Mr Brown had prepared a summary of key improvements required and the Clerk would write to the landowners requesting action, and offering Council assistance as appropriate.

There was a discussion on the status of the Community Week committee following mention by CE HALC that rules covering spending might not be adequate. However, the Chairman and vice-Chairman are ex-officio members of the committee and the Clerk asked if they were happy that appropriate procedures were being followed when spending decisions were taken. Both Councillors replied they were satisfied that Council Financial Regulations were being followed and it was agreed that the current arrangement was satisfactory.

#### 45/24 Statement of Accounts and Annual Return for 2023-24

a) Report from the Responsible Financial Officer

Key points are-

- After some discussion mainly around inflation and the rising costs of some services the precept for 2024-25 was maintained at £50.20 per household (Band D equivalent). However the number of houses had increased by 2.3% so the total precept will rise from £15000 to £15322.
- The precept accounted for almost exactly 60% of all income the Council received. Of the remaining 40% grants amounted to 15% and most commendably Pump advertising was 12%. The remaining 13% was due to the VAT reclaim received.
- There was considerable grant aided activity during the year particularly in the area of Public Realm maintenance. This activity reflects a growing understanding within Herefordshire that small Parishes are better placed to carry out minor works rather than using the main Council contractor. Better value can be obtained in this way and communities have much more say in what problems are prioritised.
- Overall, grant funding of £3852 was received. Some of this grant was used to carry out normal annual maintenance in the Public Realm (cutting vegetation, maintaining signage, clearing drainage “grips” from the highways etc.) and the remainder was used to improve drainage at Wheelbarrow Castle and in the area of the Heath.
- Due to the high expenditure in 2023-24 the VAT reclaim was significant at £2097.
- As a measure of financial activity the RFO has recorded the following number of transactions in the Council accounts over the years-

Year ended	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Transactions	72	62	74	49	82	122	121

- This level of financial activity is very similar to 2022-23 and has also resulted in Council exceeding the arbitrary threshold of £25,000 for expenditure. As such the accounts are subject to a Limited Assurance Review by the External Auditor.

The RFO raised the point that the bureaucracy required to manage the finances is rising dramatically both with the increase in grant funded activity and the unchanging £25,000 threshold resulting in submissions to the External Auditor when previously there was exemption. After some discussion it was agreed that the Clerk would write to interested parties such as HALC, NALC etc to explore the possibility of raising the threshold.

On the following reports (b) to (f) it was not possible to progress scrutiny and sign off since the Internal Audit by HALC would not start until 3 June. Sign off was not possible without the Internal Audit report. It seemed inevitable that an extra ordinary meeting would be required to complete sign off of the AGAR reports.

b) *To approve:* the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

c) *To approve:* the Bank Reconciliation Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024

d) *To consider:* the Internal Audit Report and checklist

e) *To approve:* the Annual Governance Statement for year ended 31 March 2024

f) *To approve:* the Accounting Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024

g) *To approve:* the Period for Exercise of Public Rights for the year ended 31 March 2024

Council agreed the recommendation that for this year the Period for Exercise of Public Rights would be from Monday 1 July 2024 until Friday 9 August 2024.

h) *To note:* the accounts for 2023-24 will be subject to a Limited Assurance Review by the external Auditor as Council income/expenditure for the year is above the £25,000 threshold.

At this point in the meeting the Chairman was called away on a personal matter and Cllr. Marston as vice-Chair took over Chairmanship of the meeting.

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## Annual business – review of current regulations and policies

### 46/24 Review of Standing Orders

The Clerk's review of Standing Orders (2013) as amended resulted in a recommendation that no changes were necessary at this time. Council accepted this recommendation

### 47/24 Review of Financial Regulations

The Clerk's review of the Financial Regulations (2016) as amended resulted in a recommendation that no changes were necessary at this time. Council accepted this recommendation

### 48/24 Review of Council procedures and policies

The Clerk's review Council's policies resulted in a recommendation that no changes were necessary at this time. Council accepted this recommendation

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## Annual business – forthcoming year

### 49/24 Review of Councillor portfolios

Last year it was agreed that each Councillor would take a lead role in an aspect of the Council's business as follows-

<b>Lead Role</b>	<b>Councillor(s)</b>
Environment	Cllrs. Yair & Hinton
Website	Cllrs. Yair & Marston
Ford & Stoke Prior Drainage	Cllr. Fullwood
Humber drainage	Cllrs. Pugh & Bemand
Finance	Cllrs. Yair & Marston
Police liaison	Cllr. Fowler-Wright
Pump liaison	Cllr. Fowler-Wright
Traffic & road safety	Cllrs. Marston, Grace & Silk
Safeguarding	Cllr. Yair
Humber Close liaison	Cllr. Grace
Community Week	Cllrs. Fowler-Wright & Marston
Stoke Prior VH	Cllr. Fullwood
Risbury VH	Cllr. Silk
<b>Planning</b>	
<i>Humber</i>	Cllrs. Fowler-Wright & Collins
<i>Ford &amp; Stoke Prior</i>	Cllrs. Bemand, Grace & Fullwood
<b>Public rights of way</b>	
<i>Humber footpaths</i>	Mr Philip Brown
<i>Stoke Prior footpaths</i>	Mr Mike Hayward (resigned wef May 2024)
<i>Bridlepaths</i>	Mr Iain Cholerton

Council felt the scheme gave useful points of contact to residents. However, it would be fair to await the next full meeting before final confirmation of roles

A replacement for Mr Hayward, FPO for Stoke Prior is required.

## 50/24 Review of assets, risk assessment and insurance

The list of fixed assets was provided-

Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council				Asset Register 2023-24		
Fixed Assets 2023-24						
Asset	Location	Notes	Date acquired	Purchase Price (Book value) (£)	Estimated current value (£)	Estimated replacement cost (£)
Bus shelter	Risbury Cross	built locally	unknown	1.00	50.00	1650.00
Noticeboard	Humber Close		unknown	1.00	1.00	250.00
Noticeboard	Risbury Bus shelter	Internal noticeboard+sign	09/06/2022	75.00	60.00	75.00
Noticeboard	Stoke Prior Post Office	bought second-hand	22/11/2012	25.00	1.00	450.00
Waste bin	Risbury bus shelter		23/11/2005	114.29	5.00	180.00
Waste bin	Stoke Prior Village Hall		23/11/2005	114.29	5.00	180.00
Bench	The Lamb Inn, Stoke Prior	On highway	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Bench	Stoke Prior Lane, near School	On highway	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Bench	St Luke's Church, Stoke Prior	On Church land	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Bench	Ford Chapel	On Church land	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Bench	Verge outside Bank Cottage, Stoke Prior	On private land	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Bench	Humber Woodland of Remembrance	On private land	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Bench	Risbury Village Hall	On Village Hall land	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Bench	Bowley Lane/Blacksmiths Lane junction	On highway	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Bench	Humber Close, children's play area	On private land	21/07/2008	273.58	100.00	450.00
Data projector	Clerk's home		04/06/2014	299.00	50.00	299.00
PROW Map cases	1 each in Risbury and Stoke Prior	Risbury village hall & o/s SPVH	10/01/2023	1125.00	1125.00	1125.00
Salt-grit bin	Marston Cottages, U94009	On verge	14/01/2015	59.95	30.00	80.00
Salt-grit bin	Upper House Farm, C1113	On verge	14/01/2015	59.95	30.00	80.00
Queen 90th commemorative medal	Cash box	Free sample	29/02/2016	1.00	2.00	2.00
Defibrillator and SADS cabinet	Risbury Village Hall		16/11/2016	500.00	250.00	1000.00
K6 telephone kiosk	Risbury Cross	Adopted from BT	11/11/2017	1.00	1500.00	1500.00
Salt-grit bin	School Hill, Risbury C1110	On verge	23/10/2018	77.49	50.00	80.00
Salt-grit bin	Near SP27 entrance C1110	On verge	23/10/2018	77.49	50.00	80.00
Lenovo Laptop computer	Clerk's home		16/01/2019	470.83	250.00	500.00
Minky gas barbecue	Great Marston Farmhous HR6 0NJ	Community use	05/12/2019	216.65	200.00	216.65
QTX QR12PA portable PA system	Great Marston Farmhous HR6 0NJ	Community use	31/03/2020	154.17	125.00	154.17
Parish PROW maps	In map cases.	RVH & SPVH	23/03/2022	108.00	108.00	108.00
War Memorial	Stoke Prior "roundabout"	On highways land	01/07/2022	10000.00	10000.00	10000.00
CW Marquees 3x6m 2 off plus walls and tie down	Metal shed in St Lukes Churchyard	Funded by donation from Paul Arnold	26/04/2022	1048.00	1048.00	1048.00
Metal shed for storage of marquees	In St Lukes Churchyard	Funded by donation from Paul Arnold	28/06/2022	731.00	731.00	731.00
<i>Finger post sign on War Memorial</i>	<i>Stoke Prior "roundabout"</i>	<i>Final addition to initial War Memorial design</i>	<i>26/05/2023</i>	<i>343.00</i>	<i>343.00</i>	<i>343.00</i>
<i>New shared noticeboard for SPVH &amp; Council</i>	<i>On highway at SPVH</i>	<i>£400 donation from SPVH</i>	<i>21/03/2024</i>	<i>880.00</i>	<i>880.00</i>	<i>880.00</i>
			TOTAL:	18945.33	17794.00	25061.82
<b>Assets disposed of in 2023-24</b>					0.00	
<b>Net assets at 31 March 2024</b>			<b>Total</b>	<b>18945.33</b>	<b>17794.00</b>	<b>25061.82</b>
NB Assets added during the year are shown in bold italics						

(b) *To receive and approve:* an updated Risk Assessment and Management document  
The risk register is reviewed and where necessary, updated annually. This year it would appear that no updates to the register are required so for Council's information the following is a summary of the risks within the various categories assessed-

Score	Assets	Financial	Public Liability	Employer Liability	Legal Liability	Councillor Propriety	Legal Expenses	Staffing	Total
No Risk (0)		2		1					3
Low Risk(1-2)	2	5		2	2	1			12
Medium (3-5)	1	1	2	2	1		1	2	10
High (6-9)			1			1			2

The high-risk area in Public Liability is-

Area	Likelihood (1-3)	Impact (1-3)	Risk	Notes	Control ( <i>and agreed improvements</i> )
Legal liability arising from accident at events or activities	2	3	High (6)	Community Week events: Guidance provided by insurers about specific risks (eg bonfires).  Voluntary activities (eg litter picking).	Confirmation obtained annually from CW Committee that proposed events covered under Council's Public Liability insurance (£10m). Assessment of any new events undertaken. Written risk assessment and plan prepared by Clerk prior to CW activities and any activity using volunteers.

Council discussed the likely issues around Community Week (there being no other circumstances where Public Liability would arise) and accepted that the mitigation measures in place were adequate.

And in Councillor Propriety is-

Area	Likelihood (1-3)	Impact (1-3)	Risk	Notes	Control ( <i>and agreed improvements</i> )
Conflicts of interest by councillors. Challenge to actions, with consequential financial loss and reputational damage	2	3	High (6)	Legal requirement for councillors to complete/submit Register of Interests to county Monitoring Officer. Code of Conduct adopted. Standing Orders specify policies and procedures in line with legislation.	Code of Conduct provided to all councillors. Clerk ensures councillors submit Register of Interests and retains copy. Agenda item at Annual Meeting reminding councillors of duty to keep Register up to date, Clerk ensures Standing Orders followed. Council reviews any changes to legislation and required changes to Standing Orders at least annually at Annual Meeting.

The Clerk asked if all Members (particularly new members) had a copy of the Code of Conduct. He also reminded Members to ensure that their Register of Interests, which they had completed on first election/co-option, were up to date. He would email both the Code and the Register to every Member so they could ensure their Registers were up to date and they were familiar with the current Code.

The RFO's report and recommendations on Insurance included these key points-

- The Council has insured with Zurich Municipal from 1 June 2018
- The following cover would be provided from 1 June 2024, with no change to the premium:

Property, all risks	£10,000
Money – cheques & in safe	£250,000
Money – elsewhere (in custody / not)	£5000 / £250
Employer liability	£10,000,000
Public liability	£10,000,000

Fidelity guarantee	£25,000
Libel and slander	£100,000
Officials indemnity	£10,000,000
Personal accident compensation	£20,000 /£50 per week
Legal expenses	£100,000

- Since risks on balance have moved downwards somewhat these levels of cover are still considered adequate with one exception. The one area of concern is the asset cover at £10,000. This is now well below the level necessary with current value of Council assets being around £18,000. The Clerk has written again to Zurich asking for an upgrade to £20,000 and advice as to the revised premium.
- The current premium of £167.44 is in the Payments for Authorisation section and should be paid so that insurance remains in place from 1 June 2024. Should an additional payment be required the RFO was granted delegated authority to pay that to increase the asset cover immediately.

#### **51/24 Committees and membership 2024-25**

- (a) Planning Committee  
Currently members of the committee are Chairman and vice-Chairman ex-officio, Cllrs Bemand, Collins, Fullwood and Grace. Cllr. Bemand was happy to remain a member and the Clerk would write to the other members to see if they were prepared to continue to serve. (Cllr. Collins has resigned, Cllr. Grace is happy to continue).
- (b) Community Week Committee  
Current Members - the Chairman and vice-Chairman ex-officio, Margaret Brown (Secretary and Treasurer) and any other member of the community wishing to attend.
- (c) Finance Working Group  
Current Members - the RFO, Cllr Tim Yair and Cllr. Chris Marston. Both Councillors are prepared to serve on the group for 2024-25

#### **52/24 Membership of other bodies, representatives and portfolios 2024-25**

The Clerk presented the subscriptions to other bodies-  
HALC ~£700/year  
CPRE £36/year  
Parish Online £36/year.

Council agreed that these memberships should continue.

To appoint Councillors to the following positions-  
Risbury Village Hall Committee representative: Cllr. Silk is happy to continue in this role  
Stoke Prior Village Hall Committee representative: Cllr. Janette Fulwood is happy to continue in this role  
Police Liaison Officer: Cllr. Fowler-Wright. The Clerk will check he is happy to continue in this role .  
Public Rights of Way Officers: Iain Cholerton (bridleways), Philip Brown (Humber) and one vacancy (Stoke Prior)  
Safeguarding Officer: Cllr. Yair is happy to continue in this role  
Humber Close Liaison Officer Currently Cllr. Grace is happy to continue in this role

#### **53/24 Dates of meetings for 2024-25**

The proposed meeting dates for the following year were approved-  
Wednesday 17 July 2024, Wednesday 18 September 2024, Wednesday 20 November 2024,  
Wednesday 15 January 2025, Wednesday 19 March 2025, Wednesday 21 May 2025 (Annual Meeting)  
all at 7.30pm.

Council agreed the, July, September & May (2025) meetings will be held in Stoke Prior Village Hall.  
The November, January & March will be held in Risbury.

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## Ordinary business

### 54/24 District Councillor

Cllr Baker was unable to attend but provided a report- The Wyescapes project launched on 8<sup>th</sup> May with its inaugural meeting held on the banks of the Wye in Hereford. The project brings together 40 land holdings covering more than 4000 hectares of land along the river corridor, spanning the county of Herefordshire from north to south.

The farmers and land managers are working to identify actions and changes they can make to restore the rivers' health such as reducing nutrient use, reverting high risk fields from arable cropping to grassland, creating new wetlands, floodplain meadows and woodlands.

The project's long term aim is to restore the Wye catchment to a healthy condition, so its rivers and their tributaries can support the unique wildlife that depends on them, provide clean and plentiful water, be resilient to climate change, mitigate flood risk, provide places for people to enjoy – all while supporting sustainable food production.



You will all be aware of the proposals in the pipeline, by a private organisation, to develop the old railway line that ran from Worcester to Leominster. Part of this old route runs across the top of the county, with most of it within Hampton Ward, hence the wide circulation. A feasibility study was carried out a couple of years ago at a cost of some £35k in this area alone. They are looking to create a footpath, cycle way and equestrian facility to run across the north of the county.

No detailed consultations were carried out with the owners of properties on these lands, or the landowners themselves, which has caused much concern and worry to those residents who could be seriously affected if these plans were to be adopted.

I'm pleased to be able to tell you that at a meeting this morning I was informed that these proposals are purely on a wish list and have no grounding in fact. Such developments have no chance of success in this county and can be disregarded.

One or two members of the organisation have recently been seen circulating around the area spreading falsehoods and rumour and they should be discouraged from trespassing on private property and any similar such actions.

Will you circulate this information as far and wide as possible in order to reassure residents that their homes and lands are safe.

### 55/24 Planning Committee and Planning updates

- (a) *To consider for comment:* new applications

#### **Ford & Stoke Prior**

##### **240649 Grove Cottage, Ford Bridge, HR6 0LE. (Listed building consent)**

Remove asbestos clad canopy roof to entrance. Replace with similar profile pitched roof with clay tiles on oak posts into existing stone post blocks. **Undecided**

#### **Humber**

*There are no new applications*

- (b) *To note:* updates on current planning applications

#### **Ford & Stoke Prior**

##### **240279 Land at Hathaway, Stoke Prior, HR6 0LR**

Proposed demolition of existing dwelling and construction of replacement dwelling. **Undecided**

**233624 Railway Meadow Bungalow Stoke Prior Leominster Herefordshire HR6 0LG**

Proposed garden room extension and change of use of land from agricultural use to residential use to provide additional garden space (part retrospective). **Approved with conditions**

**233094 Priory Farm Stoke Prior HR6 0ND.** The construction and retention of a rural worker's dwelling, seminar room and a range of eight stables with ancillary tack and hay store. **Undecided**

**223610 Land north of Bowley Court farm** Change of use from a water storage lagoon to a water and anaerobic digestate storage lagoon (retrospective). **Undecided.**

**200705 Land adjoining Croft Gate Farm Stoke Prior.** Proposed new dwelling and garage adjacent to Croft Gate farm. THIS IS A RE-CONSULTATION FROM A 2020 APPLICATION **Undecided**

Council decided that its comments submitted on 3 April 2020 remained fully valid and there was no need to elaborate.

**Humber.**

**240369 Great Marston Farmhouse, Farm Risbury HR6 0NJ**

Proposed reconstruction of porch. **Approved with Conditions.**

**212600 - Land adjacent to Risbury Cross Cottage, Risbury HR6 0NG**

Approval of reserved matters following outline approval 181648 (residential development of 6 houses). **Undecided - on hold due to phosphates**

**212473 Dev 1 Land adjacent to Risbury Cross Cottage Risbury HR6 0NG**

Proposed permission for the siting of a caravan to provide accommodation on site during the construction of a dwelling on Plot 5 approved under application ref 181648. **Undecided- on hold due to phosphates.**

**211802 - Land at Gob's Castle Risbury Leominster Herefordshire**

Application for approval of details reserved by conditions 3 7 9 10 11 12 13 15 18 19 & 21 attached to planning permission 173687. **Undecided**

**56/24 Community Week Committee**

A report has been received from Margaret Brown, Secretary and Treasurer of the Community Week committee-

**Community Week**

COMMUNITY WEEK IS MOVING TO THE END OF THE SUMMER HOLIDAY IN 2024 AND WILL TAKE PLACE FROM **25 AUGUST TO 1 SEPTEMBER.**

There are also some changes to the habitual pattern, notably the **TREASURE HUNT AND BARBECUE** will be on **TUESDAY** 27 August and the **BARN DANCE** on **FRIDAY** 30 August – both at Eaton Heritage Barn.

The full timetable (as at present) is therefore:

**Sunday** 25 August 12.30 Hog Roast & parish fete at St Luke's Church, Stoke Prior

**Monday** 26 August 11am (Dog) Walk & byo picnic, Great Marston Farmhouse  
7 pm Quiz at Risbury Village Hall (bar open)

**Tuesday** 27 August 6pm Treasure Hunt & Barbecue at Eaton Heritage Barn

**Wednesday** 28 August 6pm Mini Golf & Bowling at The Grove

**Thursday** 29 August AM Open Gardens Risbury  
PM Open Gardens Steens Bridge & Stoke Prior  
6 pm Children's Disco at Risbury Village Hall

**Friday** 30 August 7pm Barn Dance at Eaton Heritage Barn

**Saturday** 31 August Risbury Show, Entries 9.30-11, Viewing & Tea from 3.00 at Risbury Village Hall

**Sunday** 1 September 11.15 Songs of Praise at St Mary's Humber.

The theme for the **scarecrows** will be **The Olympics**.

All offers of help for any part of the week are welcome. Please contact Margaret Brown via Parish WhatsApp group, 01885 400696 or [migsbrown49@gmail.com](mailto:migsbrown49@gmail.com).

### 57/24 General Financial Matters

The RFO reported that-

As at 9 May 2024 the bank balance was £13,564.20.

#### Income received since last meeting as at 9 May 2024

Description	Classification	Receipt £	Date received
We are farming Minds	Adverts	170.00	26/03/2024
J P Ltd TP50	Adverts	400.00	27/03/2024
Francis ND TP51	Adverts	100.00	28/03/2024
Herefordshire Council	Grant refund	3852.00	09/04/2024
Oak Tree Fun TP49	Adverts	150.00	12/04/2024
Herefordshire Council	Precept	7661.00	19/04/2024
Margaret Brown	Postage	20.00	29/04/2024
Grove Golf & Bowl	Adverts	200.00	30/04/2024
Nicola Davies	Adverts	30.00	01/05/2024
Jenny Pipes Morris TP56	Adverts	20.00	02/05/2024
Services for Indep TP55	Adverts	112.50	02/05/2024
Morris MDH TP58	Adverts	40.00	07/05/2024
Price, Jamie TP33	Adverts	100.00	08/05/2024
Woolhouse K&LS	Adverts	150.00	09/05/2024
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£13005.50</b>	

Note that the Pump advertising revenue is £1472.50

#### Payments made since last meeting

##### Minute 30/24

Description	Cost	VAT	Total	
Barrington Print	460.00	0.00	460.00	Feb 2024 Pump
Barrington Print	448.00	0.00	448.00	March 2024. Pump
Clerk's salary	346.73	0.00	346.73	Feb. 2024
Clerk's salary	346.73	0.00	346.73	March 2024. Pay 25 March 2024
HMRC PAYE	260.00	0.00	260.00	Q4 PAYE (to pay on 6 April 2024)
D C Garden Services	1740.00	348.00	2088.00	Grant works
HALC training 7 Feb. 2024	229.36	45.87	275.23	Cllr. training
Parish Noticeboard Co.	440.00	88.00	528.00	2 <sup>nd</sup> payment on noticeboard
Drain Doctor	980.00	196.00	1176.00	Drain cleaning W/Barrow, SP centre, Heath
Drain Doctor	375.00	75.00	450.00	Root cutting Heath
Gareth Higgs tree surgeon	1200.00	0.00	1200.00	Removal of willow tree at W/barrow
Clerk's mileage refund	133.20	0.00	133.20	296 miles @£0.45/mile
Clerk's office	50.00	0.00	50.00	As last year

contribution				
HMRC	325.44		325.44	PAYE Q4 (pay 6 <sup>th</sup> April)
Service Charge	18.00		18.00	Applied automatically
<b>Total</b>	<b>£7352.46</b>	<b>£752.87</b>	<b>£8105.33</b>	

### Payments for authorisation

The following payments require authorisation by the meeting-

Description	£ Cost	£ VAT	£ Total	
Clerk's salary April 2024	260.13		260.13	
Clerk's salary May 2024	260.13		260.13	For payment 25 <sup>th</sup> May
Autela	65.28	13.05	78.33	Quarterly Payroll charge
Barrington Print 12507	460.00		460.00	The Pump printing (April 24)
Barrington Print 12613	460.00		460.00	The Pump printing (May 24)
Parish Online	30.00	6.00	36.00	Annual invoice, mapping services
Zurich Insurance	167.44		167.44	See note below. Annual renewal premium
Risbury Village Hall	32.00		32.00	May 24 meeting
<b>Total</b>	<b>1734.98</b>	<b>19.05</b>	<b>1754.03</b>	

The RFO is in discussion with the insurance company regarding increase in the asset values above the insurance liability. The outcome may be an increased premium. If the increase is reasonable the RFO would use delegated power to pay the invoice (see item 50/24). Renewal date is 1 June 2024.

### 58/24 Clerk's working hours

The Clerk had submitted a report concerning his contracted working hours as follows-

In 2021 the Clerk raised concerns about the number of hours worked compared with the contract. The contract is for 416 hours/year which when holidays are taken account of the working hours are 360 or 30 hours/month. Council at that time was prepared to consider an increase in the Clerk's contracted hours but the Clerk favoured trying to cope with the work within the contracted hours. To a large extent this has been achieved through efficiency gains, particularly in the finance area. However, it would be fair to say that compared with the previous Clerk fewer hours have been worked and inevitably less work has been done. Over the past 2 years however, the situation has changed with more work being passed down from Herefordshire of a grant aided nature. Although this is to be welcomed the inevitable consequence is that more hours are being spent preparing work plans and then supervising contractors who are now working for the Parish Council rather than Herefordshire. In 2024-25 another grant scheme (drainage) will be added to the list.

The Clerk has conscientiously kept a timesheet since April 2021. This sheet reflects the trends as follows-

Year	Hours Worked	Excess Hours
2021-22	380.1	20.1
2022-23	374.7	14.1
2023-24	390.7	30.7

The data shows a reducing trend between 2021 and 2023 due to improved efficiency and the effect of becoming CiLCA qualified which helped improve capability. However, the workload increased during 2023 mainly due to the work involved in administering grants.

The conclusion has to be that the Clerk's contracted working hours should be increased from 360 to at least 390 and to create a margin for work already known to be on the way an increase to 400 hours/year should be considered. This would be an increase of 11%.

Making such a change would be the fair way forward given that this problem was well known prior to 2020. However, the contract offered to the current Clerk was knowingly under resourced. This situation should be rectified, most particularly for the next Clerk who should be offered a fair contract.

It is also worth noting HALC comments on salary scales for a qualified Clerk. The Chairman has already raised this with the Clerk who will provide more information when time allows.

Council discussed the position and unanimously agreed that the Clerk's contract should be increased by hours/year.

The Chairman queried whether the Clerk had received any salary increment for becoming CiLCA qualified and the Clerk confirmed that no increment had been paid. It was agreed that the salary issue would be considered in further detail at a future meeting.

**59/24 Current projects**

*To receive:* any updates on current projects

Trails booklet                    Cllr Fowler-Wright

Traffic Management Plan        Cllrs. Grace & Marston

Cllr. Marston had received an email from Cllr. Grace advising that she had agreement from the landowner at The Luce to erect a warning sign on his land to warn vehicles trying to enter the A44. Cllr. Grace has asked for £75 to cover the cost of the sign though there would be some additional costs for posts, concrete etc.

Council felt this would be a worthwhile initiative and the purchase of a sign was agreed.

Environment                      Cllrs. Yair & Hinton

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**60/24 Matters for information and future business**

No matters of future business were received.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 17 July 2024 in Stoke Prior Village Hall

The chairman closed the meeting at 9.30pm.

Signed.....Chairman                      Date.....