
Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council

Draft Minutes

of the ordinary Meeting of the Group Parish Council on Wednesday 20th November 2024 at 7.30pm in Risbury Village Hall

Present:

Cllr. Ken Bemand
Cllr. Sarah Sneyd
Cllr. Anne Grace

Cllr. Hugh Fowler-Wright (Chairman)

Cllr. Rob Pugh
Cllr. Chris Marston
Cllr. Janette Fullwood

Clerk & RFO: Allan Drew

No members of the public attended.

102/24 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. Tim Yair, Cllr. Derek Silk, Cllr. James Hinton and Cllr. Richard Thomas.

103/24 Declaration of interests and dispensations

None declared

104/24 Minutes of previous meetings

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2024 were approved

105/24 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman announced that-

The Remembrance Day service had been held at Stoke Prior War memorial and the Council wreath was laid by Cllr. Marston. The service was well attended by residents and Stoke Prior school pupils.

He had received a request for a grit bin to be provided at the Gate House, Risbury and there was general agreement that the road slope in that area warranted such a bin. Council agreed that two bins should be purchased along with salt and should all be delivered to the Chairman's address.

106/24 Public participation

Under Standing Order 8, any member of the public may make a statement or give evidence to the meeting on any business to be transacted or any other business, and ask or answer questions. At the discretion of the Chairman such participation may be permitted under the relevant agenda item.

107/24 District Councillor's report

Ward Councillor Bruce Baker reported-

- The recent Parish Council summit had been successful and is an excellent opportunity to meet officers and discuss issues.
- The housing target for Herefordshire had increased to 27,000.
- There is a new support centre in Widemarsh Street for rough sleepers with a fair number being ex-servicemen.
- The waste management team has just won an award as the best in the country.
- The children's advice team has also won an award.
- The registrar office has moved further up St Owen St. with the temporary library now to be situated in the premises vacated.
- Marden Post Office has closed following retirement of the owner.
- The household support fund has £8m available to assist residents in financial distress.
- It is likely that Councils will be combined in the near future.

Cllr. Grace raised the matter of the speed limit on Bowley Lane. Currently there is a 40mph limit in place as far as Butford Organics but after that the national speed limit (60mph) applies. Cllr. Grace has been in discussion with Bodenham Council and there is agreement that the whole of Bowley lane should be 40mph. Cllr. Baker would be happy to support the initiative.

108/24 Planning Committee and planning applications update

(a) To consider for comment new applications to be determined by Herefordshire Council.

Ford & Stoke Prior

233037 Ashwood House Stoke Prior HR6 0LG Application for the discharge of details reserved by condition 3 attached to planning permission 232181 **Comments not required**

Cllr. Bemand queried what had actually been changed to enable the discharge of condition 3 (surface water drainage). The decision notice states that-

Condition 3 – The amended surface water drainage arrangement has been assessed by the Local Planning Authorities Land Drainage Engineer and found to be acceptable. Discharge of condition 3 is confirmed .

It would appear that the Land Drainage Engineer had approved an amended plan which was submitted as 233037. The amended block plan now includes a statement that piping and soakaways will be provided and the two new soakaways are shown on the plan.

Humber

242083 Land at Gob's Castle Risbury Herefordshire. Application for approval of details reserved by conditions 4, 5 & 6 attached to planning permission 213908. **Comments not required**

(b) To note: updates on current planning applications

Ford & Stoke Prior

241366 - Land at Lamb Inn, Stoke Prior, HR6 0NB: Proposed change of use of the Lamb Inn Public House to use as a single dwelling house and retention of external staircase, first floor terrace and railings. **Undecided**

241774 The Dingle Stoke Prior HR6 0NB Proposed demolition of lean-to's and construction of rear extension together with minor alterations. **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.**

This application is due to be determined by Herefordshire Planning and Regulatory Committee. However, at the Committee meeting of 23 October 2024 this application was not on the agenda. The next meeting on 20 November 2024 has been cancelled and there is not yet an agenda for the meeting on 11 December 2024.

200705 Land adjoining Croft Gate Farm Stoke Prior. Proposed new dwelling and garage adjacent to Croft Gate farm. Pending S106 agreement **Undecided**

204437 Plot 1 Land at Old Hall Stoke Prior HR6 0LH Proposed construction of a new self-build custom home and garage **Undecided - on hold due to phosphates**

Humber.

241806 Oak Tree View Risbury HR6 0NQ Proposed Conversion of Building to a self-build dwelling House **Undecided**

241787 Workshop at The Woodlands Risbury HR6 0NN Proposed conversion of a redundant workshop to one self-build dwelling and associated works including the replacement of an existing septic tank serving The Woodlands. **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**

193259 New House Farm Risbury HR6 0NQ Outline planning for proposed housing development on land at New House Farm. **Undecided**

**109/24 General Financial Matters
Report from the RFO.**

Bank balance on 13 November 2024 is £22,442.91

Q2 Bank reconciliation

<u>HFSP CASHBOOK 2024-25</u>							
Date	Details	Receipt	Payment	Classification	Add to Asset Register	VAT	Running Balance
	Balance brought forward	14231.12					14231.12
08/07/2024	Lion Court Podiatry	80.00		Adverts			14311.12
17/07/2024	UK Safety Store		90.20	Road Safety	Yes	20.00%	14220.92
18/07/2024	Barrington Print INV 12734		603.00	Parish Pump			13617.92
18/07/2024	Barrington Print INV 12868		460.00	Parish Pump			13157.92
18/07/2024	Clerk's June 24 salary		260.13	Clerk			12897.79
18/07/2024	Clerk's July 24 salary		259.73	Clerk			12638.06
18/07/2024	HMRC		519.60	HMRC			12118.46
18/07/2024	Autela		81.86	Administration		20.00%	12036.60
18/07/2024	HALC		300.00	Insurance, audit, professional		20.00%	11736.60
20/07/2024	Herefordshire Tree Wardens		30.00	Insurance, audit, professional			11706.60
08/08/2024	HERE AERO CLUB TP65			Adverts			11774.10
02/09/2024	Barrington Print INV 12958	67.50	532.00	Parish Pump			11242.10
02/09/2024	Barrington Print INV 13077		460.00	Parish Pump			10782.10
04/09/2024	Finnegan C Hair by Cher	15.00		Adverts			10797.10
05/09/2024	War & Son TP68	20.00		Adverts			10817.10
09/09/2024	Whiffeldy Ceilidh (CW)		330.00	Community Week			10487.10
09/09/2024	Springfield Storage TP66	200.00		Adverts			10687.10
13/09/2024	M F Freeman TP64	200.00		Adverts			10887.10
20/09/2024	Herefordshire Council	7661.00		Precept			18548.10
23/09/2024	Margaret Brown	695.38		CW Fundraising			19243.48
23/09/2024	Clerk's Aug 24 salary		260.13	Clerk			18983.35
23/09/2024	Clerk's Sept 24 salary		553.33	Clerk			18430.02
23/09/2024	HMRC PAYE Period 5		173.20	HMRC			18256.82
23/09/2024	HMRC PAYE Period 6		391.45	HMRC			17865.37
23/09/2024	SP Village hall 0001/2024/2025		40.00	Hire of Halls			17825.37
23/09/2024	Refund to Hugh FW Verge markers		226.02	Road Safety		20.00%	17599.35
23/09/2024	PGPC 24.02		17.67	Administration			17581.68
30/09/2024	Unity Trust Banl		18.00	Bank Charges			17563.68
							17563.68
Jul-Sep	Sub-totals for period (Horiz.)	8938.88	5606.32				
	Sub -totals for period (Vert)	8938.88	5606.32				
	Balance check	17563.68	OK				
	Reconciliation	OK	OK				

Your Account Statement



For Businesses. For Communities. For Good.

Unity Trust Bank plc
PO Box 7193
Planetary Road
Willenhall
WV1 9DG

1006611510 | 01380

Mr Allan Drew
Humber Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council
The Coach House
Pencombe
Bromyard
HR7 4RL

Date: 30/09/2024

Account Name: Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council

Swift Code (BIC): NWBKGB2L
IBAN Number: GB93NWBK60023571418024

Sort Code: 608301
Account Number: 20430401

Your arranged overdraft limit is £0.00

Go Paperless! Receive your statements online and we'll notify you by SMS or email when they're available to view. Simply log into Your Online Banking and update your statement preferences or give us a call on 0345 140 1000



For eligible organisations, your deposits held with Unity Trust Bank are protected up to £85,000 under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). For more information about eligibility and compensation provided by the FSCS, please visit: [FSCS.org.uk](https://www.fscs.org.uk) or refer to our FSCS Information Sheet and Exclusions List at [unity.co.uk/fscs](https://www.unity.co.uk/fscs)

Contact Us

- Call us: 0345 140 1000
- Email us: us@unity.co.uk
- Visit us: [unity.co.uk](https://www.unity.co.uk)

Your Current T1 account transactions:

Date	Type	Details	Payments Out	Payments In	Balance
03/09/2024		Balance brought forward	£0.00	£0.00	£10,782.10
04/09/2024	Credit	FINNEGAN C	£0.00	£15.00	£10,797.10
05/09/2024	Credit	War Son	£0.00	£20.00	£10,817.10
09/09/2024	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: Whiffeldy	£330.00	£0.00	£10,487.10

Page number 1 of 3

Statement number 064

**For Businesses.
For Communities.
For Good.**

Unity Trust Bank plc is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Unity Trust Bank is entered in the Financial Services Register under number 204570. Registered Office: Four Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2JB. Registered in England and Wales no. 1713124. Calls may be monitored and recorded for training, quality and security purposes. © Unity Trust Bank. All Rights Reserved.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Gold



1006611510 | 01380 | 00001 | 00004 |

Your Current T1 account transactions:					
Date	Type	Details	Payments Out	Payments In	Balance
09/09/2024	Credit	Springfield Storag	£0.00	£200.00	£10,687.10
13/09/2024	Credit	M.F. FREEMAN LIMIT	£0.00	£200.00	£10,887.10
20/09/2024	Credit	HCC CREDITORS	£0.00	£7,661.00	£18,548.10
23/09/2024	Credit	Margaret Brown	£0.00	£695.38	£19,243.48
24/09/2024	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: SPVH	£40.00	£0.00	£19,203.48
24/09/2024	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: HMRC PAYE	£173.20	£0.00	£19,030.28
24/09/2024	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: A M Drew	£260.13	£0.00	£18,770.15
24/09/2024	Transfer	B/P to: PGPC	£17.67	£0.00	£18,752.48
24/09/2024	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: Hugh FowlerWright	£226.02	£0.00	£18,526.46
24/09/2024	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: A M Drew	£553.33	£0.00	£17,973.13
24/09/2024	Faster Payment Debit	B/P to: HMRC PAYE	£391.45	£0.00	£17,581.68
30/09/2024	Fee	Service Charge	£18.00	£0.00	£17,563.68

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

SignedRFO Date.....

Statement number 064

**For Businesses.
For Communities.
For Good.**

Unity Trust Bank plc is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.
 Unity Trust Bank is entered in the Financial Services Register under number 204570.
 Registered Office: Four Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2JB.
 Registered in England and Wales no. 1713124.
 Cells may be monitored and recorded for training, quality and security purposes.
 © Unity Trust Bank. All Rights Reserved.



Council accepted the reconciliation and the RFO and Chairman duly signed the reconciliation.

Budget Monitoring Report Period 7 (October)2024

					2024-25			
			OUTTURN 2022-23	OUTTURN 2023-24	BUDGET 2024-25	YEAR TO DATE	FORECAST OUTTURN	VARIANCE FROM BUDGET
1	INCOME	Precept	12289.00	15000.00	15344.00	15322.00	15344.00	0.00
2		Pump Advertising	575.00	2391.00	2500.00	2362.00	2500.00	0.00
3		Pump Postage	40.00	40.00	40.00	20.00	40.00	0.00
4		Grants	0.00	7729.00	2400.00	6317.63	12981.00	10581.00
5		Other Income	115.12	108.06	500.00	1879.00	1900.00	1400.00
6		VAT Reclaim	0.00	2751.62	2073.00	2097.15	2097.00	24.00
7		CW Fundraising	2070.18	300.45	300.00	695.38	695.00	395.00
8		Other Projects	2080.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
9		TOTAL INCOME	17169.30	28320.13	23157.00	28693.16	35557.00	12400.00
EXPENDITURE								
10	DAY TO DAY EXPENDITURE	Clerk	4403.50	4343.36	4919.00	3313.16	5000.00	-81.00
11		Administration	445.88	411.66	500.00	325.95	500.00	0.00
12		Insurance, audit, professional	887.38	1235.32	1200.00	657.44	1200.00	0.00
13		Website & IT	155.00	451.99	500.00	516.00	520.00	-20.00
14		Hire of Halls	200.00	167.00	200.00	137.00	200.00	0.00
15		Training and development	0.00	229.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
16		Equipment	1065.22	890.50	100.00	0.00	1500.00	-1400.00
17		Maintenance	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00
18		HMRC	733.60	1105.24	1300.00	2453.41	3560.00	-2260.00
19		Other	86.00	579.13	100.00	132.15	200.00	-100.00
20	DAY TO DAY EXPENDITURE	7976.57	9413.56	8869.00	7535.11	12730.00	-3861.00	
PROJECTS								
21	PROJECT EXPENDITURE	War Memorial	5678.00	403.00	60.00	60.00	0.00	60.00
22		Parish Pump	4260.00	5338.88	4000.00	3953.00	5100.00	-1100.00
23		Lengthsman	6271.00	9095.00	5400.00	355.00	7600.00	-2200.00
24		Community Week	1933.00	435.00	450.00	330.00	450.00	0.00
25		Environment Project		0.00		0.00		0.00
26		Road Safety		500.00	2750.00	263.52	2750.00	0.00
27		Welcome pack		516.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
28		Trails Booklet			1000.00	0.00	1000.00	0.00
29		Project B			0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
30		Project C			0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
31								
32	PROJECTS EXPENDITURE	18142.00	16288.28	13660.00	4961.52	16900.00	-3240.00	
33	Reclaimable VAT on the above		2110	2072	1800	299.28	2300.00	500.00
	VAT from 2023-24					0.00		
34	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	26118.57	25701.84	22529.00	12795.90	31930.00	-6601.00	
35	SURPLUS	-8949.27	2618.29	628.00	15897.26	3627.00	2999.00	

NOTES FOR 2024-25 BUDGET	
1	As agreed at meeting 7 February 2024
2	Budget should be easily achieved given current progress
3	Nominal amount
4	Lengthsman scheme updated to include £2376 base grant & £1188 match funded Nominated Task. Drainage grant of £3100 also included. Other drainage grant monies of £3600 has also been allocated but will be paid directly by HFC so has not been included here. £2465 from WM Police now received. (Note: also includes £3852 from 2023-24)
5	Donation of £1479 for purchase of gazebos included.
6	As 2023-24 outturn
7	Now updated with CW results
8	Projects not yet defined
9	
10	Increased due to move to SP26 but no real increase in net salary
11	
12	Increased payment to internal auditor (£50 up to £200).
13	Increased cost for .GOV website (But also includes some billed arrears from Gwent web design)
14	
15	
16	Now shows gazebo purchase from donation (line 5)
17	
18	Increased due to salary award to SP26 and move to higher tax band
19	No election costs nor National events contribution expected
20	
21	Engraving for S. Preece (Price)
22	Prices have risen by about £30/issue. Reducing pages trend not maintained.
23	£5600 grants + £2000 Parish spend
24	Estimate similar to 2023-24
25	No spend last year. Council to agree way forward on this project.
26	Budget raised to £2750 following Police grant
27	Project closed
28	Project completed, invoices awaited
29	
30	
31	
32	
33	VAT reclaim forecast does not yet include any project work
34	
35	

Notes on Budget Monitor Period 7 (October 2024)

The income budget is now somewhat dominated by the amount (£12981) of grant funding (line 4) now available to Council. The breakdown is –

Grant Purpose	Value £	Granting Body
Annual Maintenance Plan	2376	Herefordshire Council
Nominated Task	1188	Herefordshire Council
Drainage	3100	Herefordshire Council
Road Safety	2465	WM PCC
TOTAL	9189	

Note that-

1. The budget monitoring figure includes £3852 paid in April 2024 representing a refund for work carried out in 2023-24. (So net grants for 2024-25 are £12981-£3852=£9189)
2. the £1188 Nominated Task is match funded so Council will contribute the same amount.
3. There is also a further £3600 of approved drainage expenditure for gully cleaning but this will be paid for directly by Herefordshire so will not appear in Council income/expenditure.
4. Council's request for a grant of £1875 for minor drainage works is still under discussion with Herefordshire Council/BB and may yet be granted in whole or part.
5. Other income line 5 has increased sharply to £1879 due to an unexpected donation of £1479 for purchase of gazebos. This has been offset by the same amount of expenditure in line 16
6. The expenditure budget monitor shows an increase in day to day expenditure mainly due to increased HMRC payments caused by increasing the Clerk's salary to SP26. It is some comfort to know that much of this salary increase accrues to the Revenue rather than the Clerk due to crossing a tax threshold!
7. The Project expenditure shows spending on The Pump very much in line with last year. The hope had been that online access and reduced page numbers would bring a reduction to the set budget of £4000. However, this has not happened. Nevertheless the magazine continues to garner praise and the advertising revenues have been successfully managed and may well cover more than half the cost by year end.
8. Lengthsman expenditure is line 23 is high but is offset by grant income. The Parish spend included in this line is £2000.
9. Other projects are progressing and expenditure arrives later in the year as invoices arrive. Currently although YTD figures are low estimates of likely year end expenditure have been included, though project sponsors may alter these if they think necessary.
10. Currently the forecast surplus is nearly £3600 which is significantly greater than originally forecast mainly due to the healthy income stream.
11. In summary the budget is in a healthy condition and the main conclusion is that projects should be moved to completion to provide community benefit.

In addition Council noted that Pump advertising revenue had remained extremely healthy and Council expressed its thanks to Mr Chris Blum who had carried out excellent work to build the revenue to its current level.

Draft budget for 2025-26

Last year the internal auditor registered a non-compliance because the precept was apparently set before the budget was agreed. This was not the case, but the auditor was correct in that the minutes of the budget and precept setting exercise were not sufficiently explicit to make this as clear as the auditor wished. That will not be the case for the 2025-26 exercise hence the reason for linking the two activities in this meeting.

At the January 2025 meeting Council will first finalise the 2025-26 budget and then set the precept.

However, as a first estimate, a draft budget is presented here which can quickly lead to a draft precept. This will give Council an early view of how the political aspects of the precept can be weighed against operational plans such that the right balance is achieved and residents are satisfied that Council is acting in their best overall interests.

Note that the precept entry, line 1, is currently empty (0.00). Essentially the precept is the balancing number between costs and all other income and has yet to be established.

Building on the previously presented budget monitor for 2024-25 following is the draft budget and notes for 2025-26-

						2025-26	NOTES
	INCOME	OUTTURN 2022-23	OUTTURN 2023-24	FORECAST OUTTURN 2024-25	VARIANCE FROM BUDGET	FORECAST (DRAFT) BUDGET	
1	Precept	12289.00	15000.00	15344.00	0.00		
2	Pump Advertising	575.00	2391.00	2500.00	0.00	2750.00	Increased by 10%. May be achieved for 24-25 with currently strong advertising revenues.
3	Pump Postage	40.00	40.00	40.00	0.00	40.00	
4	Grants	0.00	7729.00	12981.00	10581.00	10000.00	Lengthsman & drainage grants will hopefully continue
5	Other Income	115.12	108.06	1900.00	1400.00	0.00	
6	VAT Reclaim	0.00	2751.62	2097.00	24.00	2300.00	
7	CW Fundraising	2070.18	300.45	695.00	395.00	500.00	Estimate only. Under control of CW committee.
	Other Projects	2080.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
8	TOTAL INCOME	17169.30	28320.13	35557.00	12400.00	15590.00	
	EXPENDITURE						
9	Clerk	4403.50	4343.36	5000.00	-81.00	5100.00	Updated to include SP26 + 2024-25 salary award
10	Administration	445.88	411.66	500.00	0.00	525.00	+5% uplift for likely inflation
11	Insurance, audit, professional	887.38	1235.32	1200.00	0.00	1260.00	+5% uplift on likely inflation
12	Website & IT	155.00	451.99	520.00	-20.00	500.00	Cancel unused domains
13	Hire of Halls	200.00	167.00	200.00	0.00	200.00	Current rates maintained
14	Training and development	0.00	229.36	0.00	0.00	250.00	New Cllr. training by HALC
15	Equipment	1065.22	890.50	1500.00	-1400.00	200.00	Nominal amount
16	Maintenance	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	100.00	Nominal amount
17	HMRC	733.60	1105.24	3560.00	-2260.00	3500.00	Linked directly to Clerk's salary
18	Other	86.00	579.13	200.00	-100.00	200.00	Remembrance Day wreath
19	DAY TO DAY EXPENDITURE	7976.57	9413.56	12730.00	-3861.00	11835.00	Costs down mainly due to donations not being forecastable.
	PROJECTS						
20	War Memorial	5678.00	403.00	0.00	60.00	0.00	Project completed 2022-23
21	Parish Pump	4260.00	5338.88	5100.00	-1100.00	5100.00	Maintain 2024-25 running rate
22	Lengthsman	6271.00	9095.00	7600.00	-2200.00	7600.00	Annual Mtce £2376. Nom task £1188 Drainage£2100 Parish budget £2000
23	Community Week	1933.00	435.00	450.00	0.00	450.00	As 24-25 but under control of CW committee
24	Environment Project	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2000.00	Holding position pending sponsors estimates
25	Road Safety	0.00	500.00	2750.00	0.00	1000.00	May be supplemented by further grants
26	Welcome pack	0.00	516.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	Completed
27	Trails Booklet	0.00	0.00	1000.00	0.00	0.00	Completed
28	PROJECTS EXPENDITURE	18142.00	16288.28	16900.00	-3240.00	16150.00	
29	Reclaimable VAT on the above	2110	2072	2300.00	500.00	2300.00	
30	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	26118.57	25701.84	31930.00	-6601.00	30285.00	

Draft Precept for 2025-26

Following agreement of the draft budget it is straightforward to establish the minimum draft precept requirement. (The minimum precept is that required to achieve a balanced budget with no year-end surplus).

From the above draft budget, in summary-

Budget Heading	Value £
Income (excluding Precept) Line 8	15590
Total Expenditure Line 30	30285
Income - Expenditure	-14695

The minimum precept is £14695. Currently for 2024-25 the precept is £15344, £649 above the draft budget requirement.

At the date of writing no information has yet arrived regarding the Council tax base on which the Precept is based.

Further expenditure such as new projects will increase the precept by that amount assuming reserves remain unchanged.

Currently reserves are about £8000 including £2000 for The Lamb.

Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2024-25

Last year for the first time HALC was appointed as the Council's internal auditor. The role of an internal auditor is not primarily financial but rather to assure Council that it is running its affairs using "proper practices". A report from the internal auditor is a statutory requirement and Council must discuss the report and act on any recommendations.

Last year the report recorded one non-compliance-

Requirement	Non-compliance
The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	The precept is set in January while the budget is set in March. The budget needs to be set first. There is no Reserves Policy

The Clerk thought the process was extremely thorough well beyond any similar exercise carried out previously. The cost of the audit is £250+VAT which for the amount of work involved and the reassurance provided is good value. In anticipation this fee has been included in the draft budget.

The Clerk recommended that Council re-appoint HALC as its internal auditor for 2024-25. This recommendation was accepted by Council.

Draft Policy on Council Reserves.

The Council maintains financial reserves to deal unbudgeted (but not unforeseen) expenditure. Reserves currently held are-

Reserves as at-	30/11/2024
Community Week funds	1098.36
By-election costs	1500.00
Emergency Clerk cover	500.00
The Lamb	2000.00
War Memorial	0.00
Flood protection capital fund	3000.00
Total	8098.36

As the non-compliance from the internal auditor mentions (above), although reserves are held and from time to time discussed at Council, there is no policy around why reserves are held, created or ceased. A draft policy has been created and is at appendix 1. Council discussed this draft policy and was satisfied that it was suitable. The policy was then adopted. The reserves (and the policy) will be reviewed as part of the annual meeting process.

Income received since last meeting -

No.	Name	Amount £			Details
1	C M Mercer	150.00			Pump adverts TP72
2	West Mercia Police	2465.63			Grant for traffic surveys on A44
3	Certainly Wood Ltd	150.00			Pump adverts
4	Stoke Prior Village Hall	400.00			Contribution to new notice board
5	T Dines Electrical	200.00			TP69
6	Michael Potter	1479.00			Donation for new gazebos
7	MGL Communications	100.00			Pump adverts
	TOTAL	4944.63			

Payments made since last meeting

With the exception of payments 7, 8, 9 & 10 the following payments were agreed at the 18 September 2024 meeting (minute reference 95/24). Payments 7 & 9 are automatically applied by the bank. Payment 8 was made on Chairman's request (delegated RFO authority) and has been covered by a donation from Duke of Lancashire's regiment. Payment 10 was a refund to the Chairman for roadside markers (and made under delegated RFO authority).

No.	Name	Ex-VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	Clerk's August salary	260.13	0.00	260.13	
2	Clerk's September salary	553.33	0.00	553.33	Includes pay award arrears and hours increase arrears
3	Stoke Prior village hall	40.00	0.00	40.00	Two meetings 6 March (Plng Comm) & 26 June (Council)
4	Pencombe GPC	17.67	0.00	17.67	Shared cost of file folders
5	HMRC PAYE	173.20	0.00	173.20	August 2024 payment
6	HMRC PAYE	391.45	0.00	391.45	September 2024 payment
7	Service charge	18.00		18.00	Bank charges Q2
8	E M Davis Industrial	60.00	0.00	60.00	WM engraving L/Cpl Preece-Price
9	Service charge	5.40	0.00	5.40	Bank charges October 2024
10	Hugh Fowler-Wright	188.35	37.67	226.02	Refund to HFW for purchase of roadside markers
	TOTAL	1519.18	0.00	1519.18	

Payments for Authorisation

No.	Name	Ex VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	A M Drew	1045.46	0.00	1045.46	Clerk's October 2024 salary. Includes increase to SP26+arrears from 1/4/24
2	A M Drew	414.12	0.00	414.12	Clerk's November salary
3	Autela	68.22	13.64	81.86	Payroll. Now 4-monthly billing
4	Gwent web design	186.00	37.20	223.20	Email hosting ((4/7/23 - 4/7/25). Web hosting (.org.uk)
5	DC Gardening Services	355.00	71.00	426.00	Digging out & stoning around SPVH noticeboards
6	SPVH	25.00	0.00	25.00	18 September 2024 meeting
7	RVH	16.00	0.00	16.00	14 August 2024 meeting
8	RVH	24.00	0.00	24.00	20 November 2024 meeting
9	Barrington Print	489.00	0.00	489.00	November 2024 Pump 360 copies
10	Barrington Print	489.00	0.00	489.00	October 2024 Pump 360 copies
11	Tangled Web	330.00	0.00	330.00	Support & hosting 11/24-10/25
12	PKF Littlejohn	210.00	42.00	252.00	External auditor fee
13	HMRC PAYE	833.08	0.00	833.08	PAYE & Employers NI October 2024
14	HMRC PAYE	276.08	0.00	276.08	PAYE November 2024
15	Hugh Fowler-Wright	107.69	21.54	129.23	Refund for Remembrance day Wreaths
	TOTAL	4868.65	185.38	5054.03	

Council agreed these payments.

110/24 Lengthsman & PROW

Council agreed that the flooding at the Heath would be improved if a proper silt trap could be built at the end of the cross-road drain. It was resolved that this work would be the Nominated task for 2024-25.

The Clerk confirmed that grant monies had now been agreed (with the exception of minor drainage works still under discussion).

Cllr. Fullwood informed Council that Mr Ernie Price of Eaton Barn had done a considerable amount of work at Cross Cottage by digging out the ditch and fitting a drain from the end of the ditch to a pond/wetland area towards the River Lugg. The Clerk would write a letter of appreciation to Mr Price.

The unmarked highway sump on the C1110 was mentioned by Cllr. Fullwood and the potential danger it posed to highway users. Cllr. Baker was interested in the problem and the Clerk would provide further information to the Councillor.

Council agreed that all the work contained in the current plan should now progress.

111/24 The Lamb Inn

The Chairman explained the purpose and history behind the previous listing of the Lamb as an Asset of Community Value. Following some discussion the Chairman agreed to talk with Mike Wyldes about organising a community petition to strengthen the evidence in favour of listing. Cllr. Baker was concerned that the evidence could be weakened because the Lamb had not had any community use since the Lamb ceased operating as a pub. Cllr. Sneyd had researched the evidence requirements for listing which were very extensive.

112/24 Current projects

Updates on current projects

Trails booklet Cllr Fowler-Wright

Cllr. Fowler-Wright reported that the Trails Booklet was now with the printers. The back page had been sold for £250. The booklet would be distributed early in the New Year.

Traffic Management Plan Cllrs. Grace & Marston

Cllr. Grace reported that there had been a meeting with Callum Bush (Herefordshire Council), and Ian Connoly (West Mercia Police) to discuss speeding data recorded in June. A further meeting will be held at Cllr. Grace's house to demonstrate the inherent dangers of the entry onto the A44 at that point. Other residents are also concerned. Cllr. Grace will report back on the outcomes from the coming meeting. Cllr. Marston reported that over the week of the survey over 3,000 vehicles could have been prosecuted for speeding.

Environment Cllrs. Yair & Hinton

Neither Cllr. Yair nor Cllr. Hinton were present to report on the project.

113/24 Matters for discussion at the next meeting

Date of next meeting

To note: the next scheduled meeting will be on Wednesday 15th January 2025 at 7.30pm in Risbury village hall

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Appendix 1 Reserves Policy

**HUMBER, FORD & STOKE PRIOR
GROUP PARISH COUNCIL**

**Reserves Policy
Adopted on 20th November 2024**

Introduction

Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior (HFSP) Group Council is required to maintain adequate Financial Reserves to meet the needs of its operations and to ensure financial security. The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will determine and review the level of reserves.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide (JPAG) (March 2020 edition) advises:

“As with any financial entity, it is essential that authorities have sufficient reserves (General and Earmarked) to finance both its day-to-day operations and future plans. It is important, however, given that its funds are generated from taxation/public levies, that such reserves are not excessive.”

Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require local authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. However, there is no specific minimum level of reserves which an authority should hold, and it is the responsibility of the Responsible Financial Officer to advise the Council about the level of reserves and to ensure that there are procedures for their establishment and use.

Types of Reserves

These may be categorised as either General or Specific.

General Reserves

General Reserves are funds which do not have any restrictions on their use. They cushion the impact of uneven cash flows, offset budget requirements, if necessary, or can be held in case of unexpected events or emergencies. Setting the level of General Reserves is agreed with the Annual Budget.

JPAG (March 2020 edition) advises:

“The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a Smaller Authority’s General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE).”

“The smaller the authority, the closer the figure should be to 12 months NRE, the larger the authority the nearer to 3 months. In practice, any authority with an NRE in excess of £200,000 should plan on 3 months equivalent.”

The primary means of building General Reserves will be through a reallocation of funds (underspend on a completed project) and allocation from the annual budget. This will be in addition to any amounts needed to replenish reserves which have been spent in the previous year. If in extreme circumstances General Reserves were exhausted due to major unforeseen spending pressures within a particular financial year, the Council would be able to draw down from its EMRs to provide short term resources.

Earmarked Reserves ‘EMR’

EMRs must be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level should be subject to annual review and justification. They should be separately identified to prevent query from internal and external auditors.

EMRs are held for several reasons and shall only be used for the purpose for which they were created:

- Renewals – to enable the planning and financing of an effective program of equipment replacement and property maintenance/refurbishment. The funds required are built up incrementally over several years when taking into account asset conditions and asset life. They are a mechanism to smooth expenditure without the need to vary budgets.
- Carry forward of underspend on an uncompleted project – expenditure committed to a project but not spent in the budget year. Reserves can be used as a mechanism to carry forward those resources.
- Developers Contributions – proceeds from developers which can only be used for specified purposes.
- Other Earmarked Reserves – these may be set up from time to time to meet known or predicted liabilities.

Where the purpose of an Earmarked Reserve becomes obsolete, or where there is an over-provision of funds, the excess may, on the approval of the Council, be transferred to other budget headings within the revenue budget, to General Reserves or to one or more other Earmarked Reserves.

EMRs will be established on a “needs” basis in line with anticipated requirements and these are to be reviewed annually when the budget is agreed.

Any decision to set up an EMR must be approved by Council. If the EMRs are used to meet short term funding gaps, they must be replenished in the following financial year. However, EMRs which have been used to meet a specific liability would not need to be replenished, after having served the purpose for which they were originally set up.

Management and Control of Reserves

Movements in Earmarked Reserves and General Reserves shall be reported to the Council as part of the quarterly Budget to Actual Report and at monthly meetings if required. The use of Reserves shall be approved by the Council.

The level of General Reserves shall be reviewed on an annual basis during the annual budgetary review and agreed by the Council. The minimum level of General Reserves shall be recommended to the Council by the Responsible Financial Officer. This will form part of the recommendations for the Annual Budget and Precept request by the Council.

The current level of General Reserves to be held by the Council is set at equal to between three and six months of predicted expenditure.

Earmarked Reserves shall be reviewed on an individual basis. This review will also be undertaken as part of the Annual Budgetary Review. Approval for the creation, amendment, cessation or continuation of Earmarked Reserves will be given by the Council.