
Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council

Draft Minutes

of the ordinary Meeting of the Group Parish Council on Wednesday 21st May 2025 at 7.30pm in Stoke Prior Village Hall

Present:

Cllr. Ken Bemand

Cllr. Richard Thomas

Cllr. Tim Yair,

Cllr. Clare Harris

Cllr. Rob Pugh

Cllr. Hugh Fowler-Wright (Chairman)

Cllr. Sarah Sneyd

Cllr. Janette Fullwood

Cllr. James Hinton

Cllr. Anne Grace

Ward Councillor Bruce Baker, Clerk & RFO: Allan Drew

Two members of the public attended.

First business

30/25 Election of Chairman

Cllr. Fowler-Wright was nominated and seconded and there were no other nominations for Chairman. Cllr. Fowler-Wright was re-elected unanimously and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

31/25 Election of vice-Chairman

Cllr. Hinton was nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations and Cllr. Hinton was re-elected unanimously

32/25 Apologies for absence

Cllr. Marston had sent his apologies

33/25 Declaration of interests and dispensations

None received

34/25 Minutes of the last meeting

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2025 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.

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

The Clerk reported he had been asked by the PCC via Ms Jackie Potter to raise the matter of Council making a contribution to the cost of servicing the church clock at St Lukes, Stoke Prior. After some discussion it was resolved that Council would offer to contribute half the cost of the service on the condition that the clock became fully functional again. The Clerk would write to the PCC.

35/25 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced that-

Mr Chris Blum wished to step down from the position of Advertising Manager for The Pump. Council recorded its thanks to Mr Blum who had done an excellent job bringing in revenue particularly over the past year. A replacement was required and Councillors should pass on the details of anyone showing an interest to the Pump Editor (editorpump@hfspgroupparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Mrs. Margaret Brown, who had carried out sterling work in the Parishes over the years (joint editor of the Pump, distribution of the magazine, chief organiser of Community Week, treasurer of Risbury Village Hall and many other activities), also wished to retire from these duties. Council recorded its thanks for all the hard work she had put in over the years and recognised how difficult it would be to replace her.

36/25 Public participation

Members of the public present had nothing further to raise at this point but if appropriate would do so under relevant agenda items

Annual business – previous year

37/25 Annual reports 2024-25

- a) *To receive:* a report from the past-Chairman-County Planning has still been held back by phosphate threats to the river Wye catchment area and slow decision making by planning and enforcement officers. The latter seriously impacted on the whole eventual acquisition of The Lamb. Nevertheless, at last, thanks to Mike Wyldes sterling persistent endeavours it now seems the community will regain its 'asset' of a fully open, functioning and hopefully thriving pub. Possibly in conjunction with a Community Benefits Society. The Government's very substantial increase in housing targets has scuppered Herefordshire Council's Draft Local Plan meaning until at least January 2028 HF&SP is likely to face some potentially unwanted, yet significant, planning applications.

The Trails booklet has been completed and given to every household and become part of the attractive Welcome Pack. Suggestions are always welcome on how to improve the Welcome Pack.

The parish website has been further developed.

The Transport Safety Group has established itself as an efficient meaningful data gathering and policy formulating organisation. What can be achieved is always challenged by costs, regulations and procedural delays but the TSG gives the GPC the best platform from which to start any traffic related projects.

The Pump newsletter continues to thrive thanks to numerous volunteers – especially distributors and the main editor Vicky Quinn Fraser. However, Chris Blum the Advertising Manager has moved away and we require a replacement to avoid significant financial losses.

Flooding has disrupted road traffic and has caused some major property damage. GPC reserve funds have been increased to help match fund future available grants as well as drive flood related projects such as recording and mapping the GPC drainage infrastructure.

A review of the existing Community Resilience Plan is well under way and will look to incorporate more relating to dealing with the impacts of flooding. A separate Flood Group is likely to be established.

Our valued Lengthsman resigned and we are seeking to find a replacement.

Overall despite an under staffed and under funded Herefordshire Council we seek to fire fight or more often flood fight whatever comes our way.

It would have been good to have named all the volunteers throughout the group parish but it would be a very long list and at risk of unwittingly missing someone – many volunteers do so quietly and often effectively unnoticed. However, it is clear that the sense of community and local quality of life exists and is considerably enhanced by the very many who give of their time, ability and not infrequently money to keep the many valued aspects of community life thriving – Community Week, two Village halls, three Churches, The Pump newsletter, PROW wardens, Area Emergency Wardens etc. Finally thank you to my fellow Counsellors – for those of you who have taken a lead on various projects or aspects of parish functioning, and of course to all of you for contributing to meetings.

- b) *To receive:* a report from the Clerk
2024-25 was a year where Council moved forward in a number of areas, but there were also some set-backs. Last year I reported that the Localism agenda was really starting to take hold with Parishes being funded to carry out tasks normally the preserve of Herefordshire Council.

That trend has accelerated, with grant funding from Herefordshire extended from PROW & Lengthsman work to now include simple drainage improvements. Total funding in these areas is now in the region of £10,000 for the year, with the grant schemes likely to carry on for the next few years at least. In fact the contract for the Lengthsman grants is already issued for 2025-26 and will probably be signed off by Council at this meeting. This is quite a step forward since, in past years, it has been July or later before this stage was reached. This means we can get on with work during the summer when the weather is more clement.

It is clear that drainage is an important concern with residents and at the meeting in SPVH on 11 December many voiced their concerns and highlighted the amount of work required to deliver flood prevention and mitigation. Council was reasonably optimistic that a significant impression could be made on the drainage issues – funding and plans were in place – but then a major set-back, the Lengthsman contracted to carry out the work resigned in January 2025 leaving us without the means to move forward. Although a contractor was found to carry out some work this was a small amount of our full plan and so far no-one has been prepared to take on the contract for Lengthsman work. However, some improvements have been made at Wheelbarrow Castle and at Risbury in the area of Low Brook. The search for a permanent Lengthsman continues!

Three Councillors carry out lead roles for drainage. Cllrs. Pugh and Bemand for Humber Parish and Cllr. Fulwood for Ford & Stoke Prior. Their help has been invaluable especially during the time when there was no Parish Lengthsman. A fourth Councillor – Cllr. Thomas – is often on hand advising and actually carrying out some work when the need catches his eye (and he has his shovel handy!)

Another consequence of the 11 December meeting was that Council decided to increase the precept for 2025-26 to create a substantial £10,000 reserve to deal with flooding. This reserve is ring fenced so will only be used for such work and puts Council in an excellent position to apply for match funded grants as and when these arise.

As a final piece of the jigsaw Cllr. Yair has attended a number of Flood Group meetings organised by Herefordshire (who have the lead for such matters) and this input will help guide the initiatives Council will take over the coming years. It seems likely that the long running Environment project lead by Cllrs. Hinton & Yair will merge with the Flood group.

Although drainage was perhaps the key topic for the year other important projects have gathered pace. Cllrs. Grace & Marston have built an extensive network of contacts in other Parish Councils to tackle road safety issues, primarily on the A44 Leominster to Bromyard, but increasingly into other hazardous roads and lanes in the Parishes. This Traffic & Road Safety group secured a £2,500 grant from the Police & Crime Commissioner to undertake traffic surveys on the A44. The grant enabled the collection of traffic data to justify a case for a speed limit reduction along parts of the A44. Other Councils have been involved, including Leominster Town Council, Monkland & Stretford (who contributed over £1,000 to the costs of the survey) and recently Bodenham where safety concerns about Bowley Lane have come to the fore.

Another completed project was Cllr. Fowler-Wright's creation of a set of footpaths and bridleways, described in excellent detail and illustrations by a beautifully crafted and informative booklet, Parish Walks. In producing this booklet, Cllr. Fowler-Wright was assisted by a team of residents and Councillors. This project, focussing on recreation and local history, is rather more uplifting and lighter than the serious matters of road safety and drainage and shows the wide range of activities that Council undertakes.

During the year two Councillors – Cllrs. Collins & Silk – resigned and were replaced by Cllrs. Sneyd & Harris. Council thanks those that left for their service to the community and welcomed the newcomers. Cllr. Sneyd has taken on footpaths in Ford & Stoke Prior and Cllr. Harris has become Council's representative on Risbury village hall.

The Pump goes from strength to strength and is now over three years old and has received much acclaim both within the Parishes and also further afield in neighbouring Parishes and villages. During the year a significant milestone was achieved. The advertising management, first held by Judith Burt and then Chris Blum, essentially achieved its budget for advertising sales. £2,487 was received against a budget of £2,500 and Chris is to be thanked for his great efforts over the past year. During the year the Pump cost £5,300 to produce so advertising now pays for nearly half these costs. Of course this success has been driven by Vicky and her hard-working team of volunteers who are all due our thanks.

- c) *To receive:* reports from representatives on the Village Hall Committees.
Risbury Village Hall

In July last year we held an extraordinary general meeting to amend our Constitution. This was prior to our successful application for a Premises Licence for the serving of alcohol, which was granted in October. Naturally we have held several Pub Evenings this year, including one after our carol singing in the village street and a replacement for our Burns Night Supper. We have now introduced a regular slot for a Pub Evening on the last Friday of the month.

Regrettably the Oktoberfest had to be cancelled because of the indisposition of some of the musicians. We have, however, held two 'special' events: Our Big Breakfast in March and a VE Day celebration Cream Tea in May, which were both very well supported. A raffle at the latter event raised over £200 for the British Legion. We have also introduced regular coffee mornings on the second Wednesday of the month.

Work to the fabric of the hall this year has been repair, rather than improvement. We have reroofed the porch and redecorated the interior of the porch where water had penetrated.

Two committee members, Tonya Hales and Vicki Rolfe, have left due to other commitments, but we were delighted to welcome Carol Bowen and Clare Harris (our new Council representative) to join us. However, we would be very pleased to see yet more volunteers for our committee, so we can continue with a busy programme.

d) *To receive*: reports from PROW officers.

i. **Bridleways – Mr Iain Cholerton**

Mr Cholerton had produced his usual detailed and informative report which is published on the Council website. He also highlighted a number of issues which would benefit from immediate attention Suggested main action points for the PC in summary:

- Request Lengthsman clear undergrowth in summer months from the road at Witsetts to SP 28.1
- Replace a rotten gatepost at HU10.2
- Contact the landowners of Sheepcote to request they make good the approach to gate PG 11.2 which is flooded and muddy.
- Determine if encroachment onto SP 17 at Trap Cottage is legal and take appropriate action if it is not.

Mr Cholerton has produced his usual excellent report on the state of the Parish bridleways. It is a comprehensive report and is available on the Council website.

ii. **Ford & Stoke Prior footpaths – Cllr. Sarah Sneyd**

Stoke Prior and Ford Footpaths Officer Annual Report May 2025

Unfortunately, various commitments have meant that the inspection of **all** the footpaths in Stoke Prior and Ford is not fully complete; nevertheless, several have been walked in the last few weeks. The remaining footpaths will be inspected over the next two months. All will aim to be re-inspected before the 2026 report.

PROW	COMMENTS
SP1	Impassable following a landslide. There is no signage or entry to the path readily accessible or visible from the C1110 opposite the Lamb. <i>Action is required to clear the route and install signage accordingly.</i>
SP2	Initially, from the access road on C1112 at The Woodhouse, the FP is well signed, and stiles and gates are accessible. Nevertheless, upon reaching, traversing, and exiting the woodland area, the path becomes impassable, and the route's signage is missing. <i>Action is required to clear the route.</i>



SP4

Initially, from the access road on C1112 at The Woodhouse, the FP is well signed, and the landowner of this section is congratulated on the accessibility and clear routing through their property.



There is a broken post supporting the gate out of the walkthrough.



Once in the open fields, the footpath cannot be followed easily as signage stops, and there is a padlocked gate preventing further access.



Action is required to ensure the route is well signed and accessible, and the broken post should be replaced.

SP7

This footpath is clear, well-signed and has no defects.



SP9

This footpath is clear, well-signed and has no defects.



SP31

This footpath is initially well sign-posted, wellmaintained, and accessible; the landowner of this section is congratulated on the accessibility and clear routing through their property.



As the footpath enters farmland, the stile and bridge both have significant undergrowth surrounding them that needs clearing. The bridge immediately after the stile is illdefined and potentially hazardous. A much-needed handrail is present, which aids navigation.



Action is required to clear the undergrowth and ensure the bridge and handrail are adequate and low risk to footpath users.

From this point, signage is minimal, and there is no clearly defined route across the fields or around the woodland until just before crossing onto the golf club land, where there were two signs in the hedgerow. This section of the footpath was planted at the time of inspection.



On accessing the golf club land, over this stile, all signage ceased, and there was no clear route. This is where the footpath joins the FD4 path, which leads down to the end at Ford Farm on the C1113. There is a notice stating the footpath has changed route and that way markers are to be followed. However, no way markers were evident.



Action is required to improve the signage along the route, particularly across the field and around the edge of the woodland, to the point where it meets FD4. A clear path needs to be created across the field to ensure walkers are aware of the route to follow.

FD4

Upon accessing the golf course, where FD4 begins, a notice is displayed stating that the footpath has changed route and that way markers are to be followed. However, no way markers were evident.



Action is required to improve signage across the golf course.

SP3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 32A & 33

These footpaths have not been inspected since the current Parish Council Stoke Prior Footpaths Officer took over the role. However, there have been no reports of defects, accessibility issues, or poor signage from residents in the parish.

Sarah Sneyd

Footpaths Officer, Stoke Prior & Ford 16.05.2025.

iii. SUMMARY OF HUMBER FOOTPATHS DEFECTS FROM MAY 2025 REPORT

Persistent Defects

Despite Previous Alerts the officer highlights that many of the issues noted in previous reports (particularly in 2021, 2023, and 2024) remain unaddressed. Both landowners and the Lengthsman have not made sufficient progress on the repairs. The lack of a clear, coordinated action plan is emphasized, with a recommendation for the Parish Council to assign responsibilities and possibly mobilize a volunteer group to handle minor tasks such as vegetation strimming, while reserving more technical repairs (like fixing stiles) for professionals.

Structural and Safety Concerns on Specific Routes

HU3 (Humber to Humber Close, Steens Bridge): This path is described as “passable with major defects.” Key problems include:

A damaged and unsafe stile/gate at the southern end that requires repair.

A section between the stile and Bridge 2 where the path margin is insufficiently maintained, risking complete impassability.

A dangerous Bridge 2 with rotten planks, which has been problematic for several years.

Overgrown stiles (4 and 5) and a completely broken stile (6) near Humber Close that have been identified since 2021.

HU6 (Stirbridge Farm to Humber Close, Steens Bridge): The route is “passable with difficulty.” Major issues include:

A badly broken stile (Stile 1) and another completely broken stile (Stile 6) that makes access problematic.

Even though some segments have improved, the field margin between Stile 9 and Humber Close remains overcropped.

PG12 (Marston to Holly Brook): This path is labelled as “passable with extreme difficulty.” Critical hazards include:

An undefined, hazardous route through a wooded area between Stile 4 and Stile 5, which needs clearance of undergrowth, removal of saplings, and clear waymarker posts.

Fallen trees between two gates that obstruct the path, and a completely impassable official route through woodland due to wire fencing, despite the existence of an alternate lane that legally cannot be waymarked.

Signage and Waymarker Inadequacies In several instances, necessary signage is missing or inadequate:

At HU13, the fingerpost sign at Gate 1 needs straightening and a support, along with vegetation clearance.

At HU7, although a new pedestrian gate has been installed, there is no waymarker post to properly identify the Public Right of Way (PROW).

General Maintenance and Vegetation Problems Across multiple paths, overgrown vegetation is a recurring problem:

Paths have sections that are either overgrown to the point of making the route difficult (such as the cropped margins along HU3 and HU6) or completely obstruct the passage (such as between stiles on PG12).

Fallen trees and excessive undergrowth continue to pose safety risks and contribute to the poor condition stated in the report.

Lack of Progress on Recommended Diversions and Safety Measures

Where alternative safer routes have been proposed—such as a diversion around a water treatment plant or the administration of warning signs—the report notes that little to no progress has been made. Residents have even started using unofficial alternative routes, which further complicates ensuring safe navigation on the designated PROWs.

Overall, the document serves as a call to action for a more systematic and accountable approach to maintaining footpaths. The ongoing lack of remedial work on critical infrastructure and the recurring nature of the defects underline an urgent need for the Parish Council to step in and establish a well-defined maintenance and improvement plan.

The Clerk reported that Herefordshire grant funding is already published for 2025-26 and that he would welcome a short note from the PROW officers with a brief description of the key issues along with a location and, if possible, a photograph. Any further information provided along with these comprehensive reports will be worked into a program for the new Lengthsman to tackle as an early priority.

e) *To receive:* a report from the Community Week committee

The following report has been provided by Margaret Brown

We had a very successful week and the weather, on the whole, was not too bad – at least all outside events were able to go ahead. It was lovely to see so many people from all over the group parish (and all ages) at one or other – or even most – of the various events. The entries for the Scarecrow Competition, which was judged by our District Councillor Bruce Baker, were of a very high standard. Many thanks to the setters of the quiz and treasure hunt and all those who contributed so much to organising each event. It was great to have so many people actively involved in this.

We plan to move Community Week back to early August in 2025, because combining it with the Hog Roast and Risbury Show meant too much work for the organisers and too many events in a short time for everyone.

In addition to Community Week, the group also ran the Risbury Show, which was very well attended this year and the Pumpkin competition.

38/25 Statement of Accounts and Annual Return for 2024-25

i. *To receive:* a report from the Responsible Financial Officer

- The poor winter weather played a large part in the finances of the Council during the year. The drainage problems moved centre stage driven by high and concentrated rainfall over several months. Council concluded that it was prudent to increase the precept to create a drainage reserve of £10,000. The precept rose from £15,344 to £22,696 a rise of 48%. Such a rise reflects the level of residents' concerns around flooding and it is noteworthy that as far as is known there have been no complaints about such a significant increase.
- The precept accounted for almost exactly 50% of all income the Council received. This level is a falling share of total revenue year on year and demonstrates the rise in grant income and Pump advertising.
- Overall, grant funding of £6317 was nearly double that of 2023-24 . The result would have been even higher had the Legthsman been available to spend the extra funding that could have been obtained.
- Due to the high expenditure in 2023-24 the VAT reclaim was significant at £2097.
- As a result of all the above factors there was a year end surplus of £2300 compared with an expected deficit of £1644. This result was due mostly to reduced spending on Lengthsman activities.
- 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	2025
Transactions	72	62	74	49	82	122	121	117

This level of financial activity is very similar to the previous two years and has again 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

ii. To approve: the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS				2024-25		
		OUTTURN 2022-23	OUTTURN 2023-24	BUDGET 2024-25	OUTTURN 2024-25	VARIANCE FROM BUDGET
1	Precept	12289.00	15000.00	15322.00	15322.00	0.00
2	Pump Advertising	575.00	2391.00	2500.00	2487.00	-13.00
3	Pump Postage	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	0.00
4	Grants	0.00	7729.00	2400.00	6317.63	3917.63
5	Other Income	115.12	108.06	500.00	3104.00	2604.00
6	VAT Reclaim	0.00	2751.62	2073.00	2097.15	24.15
7	CW Fundraising	2070.18	300.45	300.00	695.38	395.38
8	Other Projects	2080.00	0.00	0.00	250.00	250.00
9	TOTAL INCOME	17169.30	28320.13	23135.00	30313.16	7178.16
EXPENDITURE						
10	Clerk	4403.50	4343.36	4919.00	4969.68	-50.68
11	Administration	445.88	411.66	500.00	1025.14	-525.14
12	Insurance, audit, professional	887.38	1235.32	1200.00	1294.64	-94.64
13	Website & IT	155.00	451.99	500.00	553.49	-53.49
14	Hire of Halls	200.00	167.00	200.00	210.00	-10.00
15	Training and development	0.00	229.36	0.00	0.00	0.00
16	Equipment	1065.22	890.50	100.00	654.93	-554.93
17	Maintenance	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
18	HMRC	733.60	1105.24	1300.00	3557.73	-2257.73
19	Other	86.00	579.13	100.00	1738.87	-1638.87
20	DAY TO DAY EXPENDITURE	7976.57	9413.56	8869.00	14004.48	-5135.48
PROJECTS						
21	War Memorial	5678.00	403.00	60.00	60.00	0.00
22	Parish Pump	4260.00	5338.88	4000.00	5350.00	-1350.00
23	Lengthsman	6271.00	9095.00	5400.00	355.00	5045.00
24	Community Week	1933.00	435.00	450.00	496.67	-46.67
25	Environment Project		0.00		0.00	0.00
26	Road Safety		500.00	5000.00	4958.98	41.02
27	Welcome pack		516.40	0.00	0.00	0.00
28	Trails Booklet			1000.00	821.00	179.00
29	Project B			0.00	0.00	0.00
30	Project C			0.00	0.00	0.00
31					0.00	
32	PROJECTS EXPENDITURE	18142.00	16288.28	15910.00	12041.65	3868.35
33	Reclaimable VAT on the above	2110	2072	1800	1966.97	166.97
	VAT from 2023-24					
34	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	26118.57	25701.84	24779.00	28013.10	-1100.16
35	SURPLUS	-8949.27	2618.29	-1644.00	2300.06	3944.06

NOTES FOR STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2024-25	
1	As agreed at meeting 7 February 2024
2	An excellent result with budget essentially achieved
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 and £1225 from Monkland PC included.
6	As 2023-24 outturn
7	
8	Trails project £250 for advertising in the Parish Walks booklet.
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	Salt boxes and sandbags
17	
18	Increased due to salary award to SP26 and move to higher tax band
19	Now includes gazebos from donation line 5, wreaths
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. Spend much reduced by Lengthsman resignation
24	Estimate similar to 2023-24
25	No spend last year. Council to agree way forward on this project.
26	Budget raised to £5000 following Police grant. Traffic Data invoices now included.
27	Project closed
28	Project completed, invoices now included.
29	
30	
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The RFO reported that despite some set backs the year had ended fairly well with a small surplus. Not as much Lengthsman work had been achieved as hoped but a few tasks had been completed.

iii. To approve: the Bank Reconciliation Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025

Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council

Financial Year 2024-25

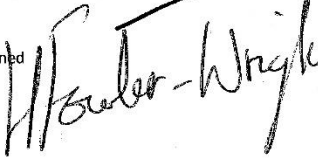
Bank Reconciliation Statements as at 31/03/2025

Prepared by Allan Drew (RFO)	Date:	09/04/2025	£	£
Balance from Bank Statements				
Unity Trust current account dated	31/03/25	Balance as at 31/03/2025		3920.91
Petty cash in hand		As at 31/03/2025		<u>0.00</u>
				3920.91
Less unrepresented items				
			0.00	<u>0.00</u>
Plus receipts not banked/cleared				
			0.00	<u>0.00</u>
				<u>0.00</u>
		Net balance at 31/03/2025		3920.91

The net balance reconciles to the cash books for the year to 31/03/2025 as follows:

Balance in current account cash book				
Opening balance at 01/04/2024			1620.85	
Add: receipts to 31/03/2025			30313.16	
Less: payments to 31/03/2025			<u>28013.10</u>	
		Net balance at 31/03/2025		<u>3920.91</u>
Balance in petty cash book				
Opening balance at 01/04/2022			0.00	
Add: receipts to 31/03/2025			0.00	
Less: payments to 31/03/2025			<u>0.00</u>	
		Net balance at 31/03/2025		<u>0.00</u>
All Cash Books		Net balance at 31/03/2025		<u>3920.91</u>
Difference				0.00

Signed:  RFO Date 09/04/2025

Countersigned:  Councillor Date 21/5/25


(and cllr)

Council was also provided with the relevant bank statements to confirm the details shown on the reconciliation. The Chairman and an independent Councillor (Cllr. Yair) then countersigned the reconciliation.

iv. To consider: the Internal Audit Report and checklist

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior Group Parish Council

<https://hfspgroupparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2024/25 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No	Not covered
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			✓
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).		✓	
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).		✓	
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 23/04/2025, 28/04/2025
 Name of person who carried out the internal audit: HALC Audit Services

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: HALC Audit Services
 Date: 28/04/2025

If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

*Note: if the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned, or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

The RFO explained that the non-compliances noted on lines M & N were due to the Council website not having been properly updated with the details following completion of the Limited Assurance Review for 2023-24. (The details of the unaudited accounts were correctly published in June 2024). The RFO was unable to explain why the website had not updated but speculated that it might have been that the second SAVE command for the new website had been omitted. The corrective action is now to check on an independent device that the website has been properly updated.

v. To approve: the Annual Governance Statement for year ended 31 March 2025

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

HUMBER, FORD & STOKE PRIOR GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, that:

	Agreed		Yes' means that this authority:	
	Yes	No		
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.	
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.	
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.		✓	during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.	
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.	
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.	
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.	
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.	
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	has met all of its responsibilities where as a body corporate it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

*For any statement to which the response is 'no', an explanation must be published

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

21/5/2025

and recorded as minute reference:

38/25 (e)

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair: *[Signature]*
 Clerk: *[Signature]*

Information required by the Transparency Code (not part of the Annual Governance Statement)		
	Yes	No
The authority website/webpage is up to date and the information required by the Transparency Code has been published.	✓	

WWW.HFSPGROUPPARISHCOUNCIL.GOV.UK

Both Council and the Internal Auditor were satisfied that, with the exception of line 4, the internal control mechanisms were satisfactory and the Chairman signed the Governance Statement.

vi. To approve: the Accounting Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

HUMBER FORD & STOKE PRIOR GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	3,827	1,621	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	15,000	15,322	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	10,740	14,991	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	5,448	8,527	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	22,498	19,485	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	1,621	3,921	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	1,621	3,921	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	18,945	19,544	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

[Signature]
Date 09/04/2025

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

21/05/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

38/25 (f)

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

[Signature]

The Accounting Statement could be reconciled to the Council cash book and statement of accounts and so were shown to be correct. The Chairman then signed the Accounting Statement 2024-25.

vii. *To approve*: the Period for Exercise of Public Rights for the year ended 31 March 2025

When all financial aspects of last year have been completed and agreed (which should be during the Annual Meeting) a Notice of Public Rights must be posted. This Notice informs all citizens that they have the right, on reasonable notice, to inspect all the financial information from the previous year. The Notice runs for a period of 30 working days and must include the first 10 working days in July.

The RFO recommended that this year the period runs from Tuesday 3rd June 2025 until Monday 14th July 2025 inclusive. Council agreed this recommendation.

ix. To note: the accounts for 2024-25 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.

39/25 Forward Plan for 2025-26

Over the past five years the number of reviews, checks and required new content for the Council has grown significantly. As a direct result the scope and length of this Annual Meeting has increased accordingly. The Chairman has now concluded that a meeting of this length and complexity is no longer an effective way to run Council business.

Apart from matters of governance and annual financial results there is no legal requirement to cover all the other matters at the May meeting. The Clerk proposed that nearly all remaining business from the May meeting can be managed at meetings throughout the rest of the Council year. To enable this process a Forward Plan has been created to show which elements of Annual Business will be covered at which meeting

The draft Forward Plan for 2025-26 follows. Council felt that this approach made for easier management of Council business through the year and the Plan was adopted for the remainder of 2025-26.

HFSP GROUP PARISH COUNCIL – DRAFT FORWARD PLAN 2025-26

Meeting	May 2025	July 2025	September 2025	November 2025	January 2026	March 2026
Topic	Governance	Policies & Procedures (1)	Policies & Procedures (2)	Finance (1)	Finance (2)	Risk & Insurance
Annual Items	First business. Annual reports. End of year. Internal audit. AGAR. Notice of Public Rights.	Standing Orders. Non GDPR Policies. Committees & Membership.	Financial Regs. GDPR Policies. Roles of Councillors.	Draft budget. Projects. Reserves. Banking.	Final budget. Precept. Projects for coming year.	Assets. Risk register. Insurance policy cover. Meeting dates for coming year.
Recurring Items	Qtr. 4 + Annual Bank Reconciliation. Ordinary business.	Qtr. 1 Bank Reconciliation. Ordinary business.	Ordinary business.	Qtr. 2 Bank Reconciliation. Ordinary business.	Qtr. 3 Bank Reconciliation. Ordinary business.	Ordinary business.

Ordinary Business is-

Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Approval of draft minutes, Chairman’s announcements, District Councillor’s report, Planning applications, General Financial matters, Lengthsman, PROW, Drainage & Flood Group, Current Projects

NOTE: Exceptionally for May 2025, assets, risks and insurance must be covered since the insurance renewal date is 1st June 2025. Meeting dates for 2025-26 also must be agreed. From July 2025 the Plan can be followed as shown.

b) *To receive and approve:* an updated Risk Assessment and Management document

HUMBER, FORD & STOKE PRIOR GROUP PARISH COUNCIL - RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT Updated (in italics) April 2025

Risk scores – Low 0-3 Green: Medium 4 – 6 Orange: High 7 - 9 (Red)

Area	Risk	Impact	Likelihood (1-3)	Impact (1-3)	Risk	Notes	Control (<i>and agreed improvements</i>)
Assets	Damage to or theft of physical assets in public places.	Cost of repair and replacement	2	2	Medium (4)	The Council has limited physical assets (see Asset Register), and does not own its own premises. Public Access Defibrillator at Risbury Village Hall, and Clerk's laptop taken to meetings.	Insurance policy through Zurich Municipal includes sufficient All Risks cover (£20,000) from 01/06/25.
	Damage to or theft of physical assets and supplies in Clerk's home		1	2	Low (2)	Only items of significant value are the laptop.	Fire alarms and locks fitted to premises. Zurich insurance policy cover includes all assets for All Risks.
	Deterioration of physical assets		2	1	Low (2)	Benches installed in 2009 – no regular maintenance required. Defibrillator installed at RVH.	Other street furniture inspected regularly by Lengthsman or Clerk and any repairs to be funded from reserves. Weekly checks of defibrillator made by Clerk and recorded.
Finance	Loss of investments and savings	Financial loss	0	3	NIL	<i>Current account with Unity Trust (balance of up to £10,000)</i>	All balances covered by government bank guarantees.
	Loss or theft of cash or cheques		1	1	Low (1)	All cheques banked promptly. Small sums of petty cash (max £100) sometimes held.	Cheques insured for £250,000, cash for £5000 in transit or in a safe; cash for £500 not in a safe at Clerk's or councillor's premises or at events.
	Loss of income		1	2	Low (2)	Most income is precept from Herefordshire Council or delegated funding. The Pump advertising collection has been strengthened	Insurance not required, as main income is precept, levied by statute. RFO monitors Editor's collection of advertising income;
	Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty		1	1	Low (1)	Only small cash sums handled routinely. Community Week is only event handling sums over £100. Most Pump advertising paid by cheque or BACS.	Receipts obtained/issued for all cash transactions. Cash banked within 48 hours using paying-in slips.

						Fidelity Guarantee Insurance in place (£25,000 from 1 June 2018) adequate for level of risk	
Errors in financial controls and records or financial loss through dishonesty or fraud by Council officers or councillors.			1	2	Low (2)	Invoices, cheques, cash books, receipts and bank statements managed by RFO. <i>Currently nearly all payments made by internet banking, requiring two authorisations (nominated councillors).</i> Limited number of payments made by direct debit where no alternative given.	Bank reconciliations prepared by RFO, reported to Council with bank statements and signed by nominated councillor each quarter. All receipts & payments recorded on numbered vouchers. Invoices/vouchers inspected and countersigned by cheque signatories. List of payments authorised by Council and signed off by Chairman. Two signatories on cheques. Internal audit of cash books, receipts, statements etc undertaken in April. Fidelity Guarantee Insurance in place (£25,000) against fraud by RFO/Clerk or councillor.
Non-compliance with VAT Regulations	Financial penalties and loss		1	2	Low (1)	Council not VAT-registered but can reclaim non-business VAT.	VAT accounted separately in cash books and accounts. VAT reclaim for previous financial year made each summer.
Poor budgeting to underlie annual precept	Inadequate finance for required functions		1	2	Low (2)		Precept estimation is now on a more robust footing and improved spreadsheet automation has made budgeting system much less prone to human error.
Non-compliance with borrowing restrictions	Penalties and requirement to cancel or repay borrowing		1	0	Nil	No borrowing at present.	If borrowing required, a business plan will be prepared and submitted through HALC for approval, and all borrowing conditions complied with.
Misuse or loss of debit card	Financial loss		1	0	Nil	Council does not hold a debit card	Fidelity Guarantee Insurance in place (£25,000 from 1 June 2018) adequate for level of risk.

Public Liability	Legal liability arising from Lengthsman work	Financial loss and reputational damage	1	3	Low (3)	Minor highway maintenance work undertaken through independent contractors under delegated powers from Herefordshire Council. Council and contractors required to have £5m liability insurance.	Public liability insurance of £10m, and contractors required to provide to Parish Council a copy of insurance certificate of £5m liability insurance. Contractors asked to confirm in writing they have undertaken required training and have appropriate equipment.
	Legal liability arising from accident at events or activities		2	3	Medium (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.
	Legal liability as consequence of asset ownership		1	3	Low (3)	Few physical assets, unlikely to give rise to liability, with exception of public access defibrillator.	Public liability Insurance in place (£10m). At least annual inspection of physical assets for safety/maintenance by Clerk, reported to Annual Meeting. Defibrillator registered with WMAS and inspected weekly/monthly by Clerk; no liability if checked and ok.
	Libel or slander by councillors or employees		1	3	Low (3)		Official council publications/documents approved by Clerk and Chairman or nominated councillor. Insurance (£100,000) in place from 1 June 2018.
	Negligent act or error by employee or councillor including unauthorised disclosure of personal data		1	3	Low (3)	GDPR in force 25 May 2018..	Officials' Indemnity insurance covered under Public Liability cover from 1 June 2018. GDPR compliance Action Plan in place.
Employer Liability	Non-compliance with Employment Law	Financial penalties	1	2	Low (2)		Membership of HALC and SLCC to keep up-to-date with requirements.
	Non-compliance with HMRC	Financial penalties	0	2	NIL	Autela handles all HMRC issues	.

	requirements						
	Safety of staff, councillors and public at meetings or events	Legal action with financial loss and reputational damage	1	3	Low (3)	Meetings held on hired premises covered by premises' insurance.	Employer's Liability insurance (£10m) in place.
<i>Personal Accident</i>	<i>Assault on staff or others carrying cash</i>	<i>Financial loss and harm to staff</i>	1	2	Low (2)		Personal Accident (Assault) cover provided under Money insurance. However no cash handled by Council in last 3 years. (New risk established at meeting 17 May 2023)
	Accident to staff or councillors whilst carrying out duties	Claim for damages and harm to councillors	1	3	Low (3)		Personal Accident insurance in place.
Legal Liability	Council acting beyond legal powers	Challenge to actions, with consequential financial loss and reputational damage	1	3	Low (3)	Limited range of activities and responsibilities. Council has General Power of Competence, to be renewed at Annual Meeting in 2023.	All expenditure items have specific legal authority identified in payments schedule. Clerk clarifies legal position on any new proposal. Legal advice to be sought where necessary.
	Inadequate Minutes and documents recording authority to act		1	2	Low (2)	Council meets two-monthly. Committees meet as required,	Draft minutes circulated to members and approved at next meeting. Minutes made available to press and public on website
	Inadequate document control		1	2	Low (2)	No important legal documents or leases/deeds held. Minutes on numbered pages in loose-leaf minute books.	Minutes signed/initialled by Chairman. Electronic copy of minutes since 2010 on computer and off-site back-up.
Councillor or propriety	Conflicts of interest by councillors	Challenge to actions, with consequential financial loss and reputational damage	2	3	Medium (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. All Councillors reviewed and updated their register of interests following May 2024 Annual Meeting 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.
	Gifts and hospitality to councillors		1	2	Low (2)	Legal requirement to declare gifts and hospitality received	Code of Conduct provided to all councillors.
Legal expenses	Costs of legal proceedings	Unexpected financial loss	1	3	Low (3)		Legal Expenses insurance in place (£100,000 from 1 June 2018)
Staffing	Loss of services of Clerk/RFO temporarily	Inability to act or meet legal obligations; loss of financial controls.	2	2	Medium (4)	Council's sole employee and officer. Often away on other business.	Use temporary qualified Clerk service from HALC. Seek to appoint Deputy Clerk to act temporarily from time to time, at least to clerk meetings or undertake essential tasks. Deputy Clerk briefed and trained by the Clerk in main aspects of the Clerk and RFO roles.
	Loss of services of Clerk/RFO permanently		1	3	Low (3)	Council's sole employee and officer.	In interim, use temporary qualified Clerk service from HALC. Appoint any Deputy Clerk as Acting Clerk with assistance from HALC, or pay HALC to provide a qualified person to be Acting Clerk with the Deputy Clerk supporting. Advertise for permanent replacement.

The register has been fully revised including a correction to the scoring system. The scoring system uses Risk =Likelihood x Impact. Impact and likelihood are scored on a scale of 1, 2 or 3 where 1 is low and 3 is high. So risk is evaluated from 1 to 9. On the register 1 – 3 is categorised as Low, 4 – 6 as Medium and 7 – 9 as High. Note that this method can only result in risks scored as 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, & 9.

There are assessed to be no RED risks following mitigating actions for all risks listed. The main issue for insurance purposes remains the Community Week activities which are rated AMBER and will require a risk assessment before the Community Week place but after the nature of all the events has been decided.

In these circumstances the Clerk was able to advise Council that the insurance cover proposed for 2025-26 was adequate to cover the mitigated risks identified in the register.

Council should review the register and make any changes it thinks necessary

- c) *To receive and consider:* the RFO's report and recommendations on Insurance
 The purpose of the insurance review is to establish that the risks identified from the register, along with mitigating actions are suitably covered by the insurance policy. The main area of concern in recent years has been the cover for property, that is the fixed assets of the Council. The Clerk has secured a policy update from Zurich which has increased the cover for property to £18,000 but has asked for that to be further increased to £20,000. (Current estimated value of property is £18,393).

Apart from property cover and public liability all other cover levels are the same as previously. (Public liability has increased from £10m to £12m).

Property, all risks	£18,000
Money – cheques & in safe	£250,000
Money – elsewhere (in custody / not)	£5000 / £250
Employer liability	£10,000,000
Public liability	£12,000,000
Fidelity guarantee	£25,000
Libel and slander	£100,000
Personal accident compensation	£20,000 /£50 per week
Legal expenses	£100,000

These cover levels are satisfactory for a Council of this size and activity.

The premium however, from 1 June 2025 renewal, has increased from £167 to £472. In view of this price increase other quotations are being sought. The Clerk requests that he is granted delegated authority to renew the insurance with a supplier he thinks best fits Council's needs, up to a maximum of the Zurich renewal premium of £472.

Note: after the meeting the Clerk was advised by the alternative insurer that they could not offer a competitive quotation. The insurance was therefore renewed with Zurich for the premium of £472

41/25 Dates of meetings for 2025-26

Under the normal rules (third Wednesday of each alternate month from May 2025 the following dates were agreed-

Wednesday 16 July 2025, Wednesday 17 September 2025, Wednesday 19 November 2025, Wednesday 21 January 2026, Wednesday 18 March 2026, Wednesday 20 May 2026 (Annual Meeting) all at 7.30pm.

In line with past arrangements the May 2026 meeting will be held in Risbury as will the January 2026 & March 2026 meetings. The July, September and November 2025 meetings will be held in Stoke Prior Village Hall.

Ordinary business

42/25 District Councillor

Cllr Baker reported that-

- Herefordshire Council would be introducing a scheme over the next 12 months to collect garden waste and food waste. The food waste would be collected free of charge. Garden waste would be collected for a charge of £60/year. Neither scheme would be compulsory. Additionally small domestic batteries and electrical items can now be accepted as waste by placing in a plastic bag and attaching to the bin.
- The road re-surfacing scheme continues for 2025-26. It is planned that £12.5m will be spent compared with £11m in 2024-25.
- The drainage problems continue but the grant to Parish Councils to carry out simple local drainage works will be continued.
- OFSTED has completed a further inspection of Children's Services and it is understood that the service will be rated GOOD. Adults' Services will be inspected later in the year.
- The contract to create a transport hub at Hereford Station has been let.
- There is a re-cycling scheme at Hereford Crematorium which removes any metal parts from bodies prior to cremation. Last year this generated £24m in scrap metal sales and was donated to charities.

- A scheme to help elderly people stay longer in their own homes has been launched. This involves an on-line virtual house which can highlight risks and help elderly people cope better with these risks. There is more information at this site [TEC Virtual House showcases a range of assistive tech for people with various health conditions - AT Today - Assistive Technology](#) or you can visit the virtual house here- [Care providers and housing options – Herefordshire Council](#)
- The Government's Devolution proposals have quietened of late, perhaps due to the work of the Boundary Commission which will report on changes before the 2027 election.
- The Avian flu housing order has been lifted.
- Major road works are planned for the A49 south of Hereford. (However, despite considerable searching no detail about timing or location could be discovered on the web).

43/25 Planning Committee and Planning updates

To consider for comment: new applications to be determined by Herefordshire Council

Ford & Stoke Prior

251098 Land adjoining Croft Gate Farm, Stoke Prior.

Application for approval of details reserved by conditions 3 & 4 attached to planning permission 20070

Note: Condition 3 (Orchard management) has NOT been discharged. More information requested.

Condition 4 (Materials) has been discharged.

Humber

No new applications

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

Ford & Stoke Prior

242476 Railway Cottage Stoke Prior HR6 0LQ

Proposed external insulation and render to gable end and back of house. **Approved with Conditions**

250389 The Dingle Stoke Prior Lane HR6 0NB

Application for variation of condition 2 of permission P241774/FH to allow minor alterations to the design to raise the height of the roof. **Approved**

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. **Refused**

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. **Approved with Conditions**

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.**

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

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. Pending S106 agreement.

Undecided

44/25 General Financial Matters

To consider: Purchase of a replacement computer in preparation for Windows 11
Windows 10 goes out of support in October 2025. In many cases a new machine will be required for current users due to Windows 11 supporting a limited list of hardware. Both Pencombe & HFSP require new machines.

It is worth considering buying locally to obtain local support if required. The following suppliers are in Hereford, have support capability and are easily accessible if necessary.

The following machines are pre-loaded with W11

Machine	Price ex VAT	Supplier	Notes
HP 255 G9	£375	CSS Computers Hereford	Current supplier to HFSP. Provides expert support when required
ACER Aspire 3	£340	Currys, Hereford	Mainstream supplier with enough expertise to solve common problems
HP 250 G9	£575	John Finch Computers, Hereford	Support capability but rather expensive.

Council already subscribes to Microsoft 365 which can be transferred to a new machine.
Security/Anti-virus, software is prudent Norton, McAfee, AVG etc £21.00+VAT/year

In total about £400+VAT is required for a new machine and software suite. Council granted the Clerk authority to order a machine and software within the £400+VAT limit from whichever supplier he believes will provide the best value package including support capability.

Note: the supplier chosen is CSS Computers of Hereford who have supported the Council in previous years.

To consider: opening an interest bearing deposit account for reserves/surplus funds
Following recommendation from the RFO Council agreed to open a 90 day notice deposit account with the Hinckley & Rugby Building Society. The account bears 3.4% interest and the RFO had completed all the account opening paperwork. It was agreed that the signatories on the account would be –
The RFO
Cllr. Fowler-Wright
Cllr. Yair

Note: that account is now open and contains £5001.

To consider: Salary award to the Clerk for 2023-24
The Clerk provided details of the annual salary award for 2024-25 which was effective from 1 April 2024. This award for the Clerk is an increase of £0.62/hour or about £283/year. Council agreed that the award should be paid to the Clerk and the Chairman signed the authorisation to Autela.

To approve: the authorisation of payments

The RFO reported that the bank balance on 15 May 2025 was £15390.41

Payments made since last meeting.					
No.	Name	Ex-VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	A M Drew	414.21	0.00	414.21	February 2025 salary
2	A M Drew	414.21	0.00	414.21	March 2025 salary (payable 25 March 2025)
3	Barrington Print	448.00	0.00	448.00	Inv 13625 Feb 2025 Pump. 360 copies x32 pages
4	Barrington Print	460.00	0.00	460.00	Inv 13741 March Pump 360 copies x36 pages.
5	Humber Parish Rooms	24.00	0.00	24.00	Room hire 19 March 2025
6	Humber Parish Rooms	24.00	0.00	24.00	Room hire 15 January 2025
7	A M Drew	584.08	116.82	700.90	Refund for Lengthsman advert Hereford Times
8	A M Drew	37.49	7.50	44.99	Refund for Office 365 software
9	HMRC	276.00	0.00	276.00	PAYE February 2025
10	HMRC	276.00	0.00	276.00	Paye March 2025
11	HALC	637.20	127.44	764.64	Subscriptions 2025-26
12	Enviroloo	166.67	33.33	200.00	Hire of toilets for Community Week
13	Autela	85.28	17.06	102.34	Payroll (4 months)
14	Bank service charges	6.00			
					Financial year end
15	Alex Davidson	300.00			Lengthsman Low Brook, Risbury
16	Alex Davidson	600.00			Lengthsman Wheelbarrow Castle
	TOTAL	4753.14	302.14	4149.28	

Income received since last meeting –			
No.	Name	Amount £	Details
1	Broxton	250.00	Pelli Tec advert for Parish Walks
			Financial year end
2	HCC Creditors	11348.00	Precept part 1
3	JP Ltd	400.00	TP78 Pump advert
4	Radway Bridge	210.00	Pump advert
5	Grove Golf & Bowl	400.00	Pump advert
6	Matthew Newman	17.50	Pump advert?
	TOTAL	12625.50	

Payments for Authorisation					
No.	Name	Ex VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	A M Drew	552.21	0.00	552.21	Clerk's April 2025 salary
2	A M Drew	552.21	0.00	552.21	Clerk's May 2025 salary payable 25 May 2025
3	Barrington Print	460.00	0.00	460.00	INV-13951 May 25 Pump
4	Barrington Print	460.00	0.00	460.00	INV-13858 April 25 Pump
5	Geosphere	30.00	6.00	36.00	Parish online mapping services
6	HMRC PAYE	178.98	0.00	178.98	01/04/2025 PAYE
7	HMRC PAYE	178.98	0.00	178.98	01/05/2025 PAYE
			0.00	0.00	
	TOTAL	2412.38			

Council agreed that these payments should be made.

45/25 Lengthsman & PROW

To receive: update on appointing a new Lengthsman for 2025-26

The candidate for Lengthsman – Alex Davidson - who has done the work at Low Brook and Wheelbarrow Castle has not been able to take on the role permanently. However, the Clerk has been

able to engage the services of Graham Symonds who undertakes groundworks and has the necessary machinery, skills and labour force to carry out the work Council requires.

To receive: update on current Lengthsman activities including participation in 2025-26 scheme
The Lengthsman scheme is as expected being repeated for 2025-26 and the funding is already known at £2376 for the annual maintenance plan and £118 matched funding for the Nominated Task. The Chairman and Clerk signed the Lengthsman contract for 2025-26.

It

To consider: any other works required within the Group Parishes

Cllr. Bemand mentioned the idea of a drain from the region of the Heath across to the Humber Brook. The idea had been considered previously but was too expensive due to the required depth of the trench. However, if the drain was dug from a position further north of the Heath it would catch water coming down the C1110 and provide effective drainage to that area of the highway and surrounding properties.

Cllr. Bemand also thought that a worthwhile project would be drainage on the C1110 from Hollywall to the Mill Pitch. Such a project could be tied in with restoration of the roadside ditch running down the west side of the C1110 towards Hollywall.

46/25 Flood Group

To receive: any update on flood prevention/mitigation initiatives

Cllr. Yair is representing the Council at the regular flood group meetings organised by Herefordshire Council. It was agreed that the Council would form a local flood group comprising Parish Councillors and other residents. Cllr. Yair would lead the group and recruit other group members. Cllr. Yair also provided the following briefing from a recent meeting-

Community Flood Equipment

I have submitted an EOI to Herefordshire Council for Community Flood Equipment. Options available include:

- Sandbags
- HydroSnakes
- Safe storage
- Other simple equipment e.g. temporary portable flood barriers, shovels, torches, high visibility PPE, resilience stores, etc

Waiting for response to the EOI.

Community Flood Signage Scheme

The Community Flood Signage Scheme (CFSS) allows trained volunteers to close roads during times of flooding. The scheme promotes road safety but also stops vehicles creating bow waves that can cause further damage to property. The scheme is administered by Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) on behalf of Herefordshire Council.

(BBLP will continue to attend highway flooding incidents and close roads, as necessary. The CFSS supplements this work and allow members of the community to close roads during times of flooding possibly sooner than BBLP may be able to attend otherwise).

Where MAY BE eligible for a CFSS?

- Locations where roads are frequently affected by severe flooding. For example:
 - Roads become impassible.
 - Driving through the flood water creates bow waves which can cause damage to nearby properties.
 - There is a clear risk that drivers could become stranded.
- Only locations where there are a sufficient number of willing volunteers will be eligible to ensure the longevity of the scheme.

Where IS NOT suitable for a CFSS?

- Unlit A-roads with a 60mph speed limit.
- Locations:
 - with limited numbers of volunteers.
 - that are not frequently or severely affected by flooding.
 - with no viable turning points for vehicles near to the proposed closure point/s.

Community flood signage scheme requests are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Initial information required to consider the eligibility of a CFSS:

• A map indicating where 'road closed' signs are proposed, such as roads that experience flooding in your local area.	✓
• Photographic evidence of the road(s) during a period of flooding to demonstrate flood extent.	✓
• The speed limit on the road(s).	✓
• A named contact, including full name, phone number and email address, role in community (for example Ward Member, parish councillor, flood group representative, village hall volunteer).	
• The number of volunteers willing to participate in the scheme.	
• Where you intend to store the equipment (such as road signs, personal safety equipment).	
• Confirmation that all volunteers are prepared to undertake in-person training	

Potential Sites to consider in Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior:

- 1) Ford Bridge
- 2) Wheelbarrow Castle
- 3) Bowley Lane / Risbury Mill
- 4) Bowley Lane / The Heath
- 5) (Humber Close)
- 6) (A44 Tick Bridge)
- 7) Any others?

The Chairman commented that these initiatives would tie in well with the Community Resilience Plan. He invited other Councillors to join the Flood Group if they wished.

Cllr. Yair had visited the "Flood Mary roadshow" (an initiative by Ms Mary Long-Dhonau OBE) where useful advice was distributed. The emphasis of the roadshow was to help individual householders take simple steps to make their properties more resilient. Such advice is highly complementary to the more broadbrush projects being considered by Council. An article in the Pump incorporating Ms Long-Donau's advice would be published as winter approaches.

47/25 Current projects

To receive: any updates on current projects

Traffic & Road Safety Cllrs. Grace & Marston

Cllr. Grace had received no support from Herefordshire for the campaign to implement a 40mph speed limit along the full length of Bowley lane. Cllr. Bemand was surprised that the data showed there was so little speeding. There was concern about where the speed checks had been carried out and the Chairman had experimented at one of the check sites. He found it very unsettling to achieve even 35mph due to the road bends/contours and was not surprised that recorded speeds were quite low. On other nearby stretches he commented that exceeding the national speed limit would be quite easy (though he had not actually done this), but there seemed to be no data from such areas. Cllr. Thomas pointed out that even driving within the speed limit could often be dangerous especially in difficult conditions including the poor visibility clothing often worn by pedestrians and cyclists. These problems are greatly exacerbated when the A49/A417 are closed.

Cllr. Grace would challenge Herefordshire on the placing of the speed recording sites but she was not confident that a positive result would be achieved. She also mentioned that she had incurred considerable personal expense by removing a hedge near her property. This was the only initiative Herefordshire and West Mercia Police had suggested - notably neither of them was able to contribute any actions their organisations could take. To finish this work she has asked Simon Hobbs if Herefordshire would be prepared to cover the cost of a traffic regulation order so that the remaining hedge could be removed with a mechanical digger. She awaits a response.

Cllr. Grace felt that the only feasible approach would be average speed cameras on the Steens Bridge area. (Note: However, costs of average speed camera systems is high though falling. Currently a camera system is estimated at £85k but information seems very scarce). Cllr. Fullwood mentioned that Kinnersley Parish had used a smiley face SID but it appears that the class of road of the A44 does not allow such devices.

Cllr. Thomas mentioned that he believed speed cameras are self-funding. This assertion is true for “spot” cameras, but not for average speed cameras which have a much higher level of compliance.

Environment

Cllrs. Yair & Hinton

There was no update on the environment project.

To consider: new projects for 2025-26

Cllr. Thomas mentioned Community Funded Policing which was growing in scale in the UK. (Note: The PCC supports Community Funded Policing which is also described as Neighbourhood Policing. Government has allocated £200m for 13,000 additional police officers. More information including lead roles is available at <https://www.apccs.police.uk/our-work/community-policing/>)

The Chairman asked all Members to consider any possible new projects and bring ideas to the next meeting.

48/25 Matters for information and future business

To note: any other matters for information or future decision.

Mr Matt Lewis, Stoke Prior headteacher, will be invited to the next meeting.

The Forward Plan requires that the following annual business is discussed-

July 2025 Policies & Procedures (1)

Standing Orders, Non GDPR Policies, Committees & Membership

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 16th July 2025 in Stoke Prior Village Hall

Signed.....Chair Date.....