

# ORLETON PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of Meeting

Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025, 6.00pm, Orleton Village Hall

**Present:** Cllrs Veronica Bishop, Ron Gittings, Mike Jones, David Lane and Mark Simmons

**In Attendance:** Ward Councillor Dan Hurcomb

**Parish Clerk:** Alison Morgan

**Members of the Public:** 1

1. **Election of Chairperson:** Cllr Lane opened the meeting and declared his intention to step down as Chair; Cllr Gittings was unanimously proposed as the new Chairperson and agreed to take over the position. The Acceptance of Office form was duly signed. Cllr Lane was thanked for his hard work during the past year and Cllr Gittings took the Chair for the remainder of this meeting.
2. **Election of Vice Chairperson:** Cllr Lane agreed to be considered and was elected as Vice Chair.
3. **Register of Interests:** All councillors were reminded of their responsibility to review and update their Notices of Registrable Interests within 28 days of a change to their Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, as per the adopted Code of Conduct.
4. **Apologies** – Apologies were accepted from Cllrs Powell and Rogers.
5. No **Declarations of Interest** or requests for **Dispensation** were received for this meeting.
6. It was **RESOLVED** to re-affirm appointment of the Tree Warden, David Batten, who is willing to continue and whose input has been found extremely helpful; appointment of Footpath Officer(s), Village Hall and Recreation Association representatives was deferred to the next meeting in the absence of current incumbents.
7. Councillor liaison representatives were appointed/re-affirmed as follows:
  - Public Rights of Way: Ron Gittings to remain in situ until the end of the current grant funding period (June 2025)
  - Lengthsman scheme: Mike Jones
  - Internal Audit: Mark Simmons
  - Land Drainage: David Lane
  - Highways: Veronica Bishop
  - Planning: to be confirmed at the next meeting. (Brian Powell was proposed or alternatively Mike Jones would cover this area.)
8. **General Power of Competence:** Having considered the briefing paper provided by the Clerk (Appendix 1), it was confirmed OPC meets the eligibility criteria set out in Section 8 of the Localism Act 2011. Councillors **DETERMINED** to formally adopt the General Power of Competence with immediate effect. This decision will be reviewed following the next local elections or sooner should eligibility criteria change.
9. **Asset Register:** The register was reviewed and it was **AGREED** to update it to include new SIDs, the flagpole and newly acquired projector. Low value consumable items would be removed. A copy of the revised register will be published on the PC's website.
10. **Insurance Renewal:** The Clerk had checked with both Clear Councils and Zurich insurers and confirmed neither offer coverage for volunteers to use privately owned power tools when conducting tasks on behalf of the PC. Renewal of the existing Clear Councils policy at a premium of £944.89 was **APPROVED**.

However, the Clerk will continue to review alternative options to ensure value for money is being achieved. In the interim, all volunteer work involving use of power tools has been put on hold, this includes use of cordless drills and screwdrivers. It was further noted that other aspects of risk and governance associated with volunteers performing work on behalf of OPC was being reviewed. Results of this review will be reported back to councillors as soon as possible. A communication of changes will be drawn up to all volunteers by the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk.

11. **Banking:** It was confirmed existing authorised signatories were willing to continue and fully met the needs of the PC at this time. Regular payments and Direct Debits were reviewed and **APPROVED** as per the attached schedule (Appendix 2).

*Ward Cllr Dan Hurcomb joined the meeting at this point.*

12. A proposal was made and the motion **PASSED** to suspend Standing Order 5 relating to the review of policies and procedures at this meeting. The Clerk advised updated versions of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations have been issued by NALC and should be reviewed in a subsequent meeting as a first step; it was noted this would be planned after the end of year audit.

***The above items concluded the annual business of the parish council and councillors proceeded with other matters as per the Agenda.***

13. Minutes of the last meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2025 were **APPROVED** as a true record; they were duly signed by the Chair and will be added to the PC website shortly.

14. **Open Session:**

- A request was received to delay the cutting of the grass bank by the noticeboard until later in the year after wildflowers have died back; this will be checked with the Lengthsman.
- The strategy for removing sandbags given out to the public during flooding was questioned. It was explained the bags were given out free of charge and should ideally be disposed of by recipients. Nevertheless, Cllr Mike Jones may be able to assist if anyone is experiencing difficulty and wishes to contact him.

15. **Finance, Accounting & Compliance:**

15.1 **Bank Balances:** As at 30/04/2025, these were noted as follows:

**Current Account: £30,058.86      Instant Access (Savings) Account: £17,431.53**

NB: the £10,000.00 transfer from the current to the savings account approved at the last meeting will be transacted as soon as the Clerk is granted online banking access (pending).

15.2 **Internal Audit 2024-25:** The Clerk advised the HALC auditing service was booked and scheduled for early June; this should enable the PC to review the annual return documents at the June PC meeting.

15.3 **End of Year Bank Reconciliation:** Councillors reviewed and **APPROVED** the end of year reconciliation report, which will be included with internal and external audit submissions.

15.4 **Mobile Phone:** Councillors **AGREED** the proposal to purchase a mobile for use by the Clerk; the Clerk will research prices for a basic model.

15.5 **Grapevine:** Councillors discussed a proposal to join Brimfield & Little Hereford PC in offering financial support to ensure continuity of the magazine. Councillors fully recognised the value of Grapevine to the local community and wish its future to be safeguarded. However, it was agreed further investigation is required to identify how best the PC can assist. The Chair and Clerk will make further enquiries.

15.6 **Fraud Seminar:** It was **AGREED** the Chair would contact the Village Hall committee to ask them to waive their booking fee for West Mercia police to hold a local Anti-Fraud seminar in July. The PC agreed to assist with local advertising of the event.

16. **Planning:** The following planning applications were considered:

- 16.1. **P250890/F – Boot Inn, Kitchen Hill Road, Orleton SY8 4HY:** Restoration and conversion of the outbuilding (known as Red Barn) to include thermal upgrade, roof lights and wood burner and flue to provide a single space for multiple use with the pub.
- 16.2. **P250891/L – Listed Building Consent - Boot Inn, Kitchen Hill Road, Orleton SY8 4HY:** Restoration and conversion of the outbuilding (known as Red Barn) to include thermal upgrade, roof lights and wood burner and flue to provide a single space for multiple use with the pub. No objections or comments were made on this application.
- 16.3. **P251276/K/K – Works to Trees in a Conservation Area – Churchyard Cottage, Church Lane, Orleton SY8 4HU:** T1 willow tree – willow tree has collapsed partially onto the derelict house and roof. Dismantle collapsed willow tree and remove from house roof. This application was **supported**.

17. **Highways:** The following highways-related matters were discussed:

- 17.1. **Street Banners:** A request was received from the Festivals Committee to use the Lengthsman to put up street banners for village fetes and festivals on safety grounds. It was **AGREED** this would depend on how frequently the service was required and the Lengthsman's price per job, as well as capacity in the allocated Lengthsman budget. Further investigation was therefore required prior to a decision being taken.
- 17.2. **King's Road Signage & Speed:** These issues were raised at the annual parish meeting and are acknowledged by the PC. Improvements to school safety are already planned; Simon Hobbs, HC, may be able to further advise about school parking problems, e.g., the possibility of double yellow lines. If there is a balance of S106 monies, additional signs may be possible near Brook Cottage. The Ward Councillor agreed to follow up with HC. Feasibility of re-siting the SID near the Maidenhead for greater effectiveness on traffic calming was also raised. However, this is dependent on the impact of proposed flood scheme works on the B4361.

18. **War Memorial Planters:** The PC received a request from Orleton After School Club to maintain planters on the war memorial permanently following the recent VE Day celebrations. After careful consideration, it was **RESOLVED** the previous permission was granted for a temporary period only and the planters should, therefore, now be removed. The memorial is an important, listed structure and it is important to retain its integrity. Councillors hope the decorative planters can be located elsewhere in the village.

19. **To receive reports on the following topics:**

- 19.1. **Highways:** It was confirmed work on King's Road should start in August 2025; patching at Comberton will be done beforehand. Traffic lights have gone up due to the state of the road and a decision is pending on whether temporary repairs will be carried out.
- 19.2. **Land Drainage Group & Flood Wardens:** Cllr Lane had received a report written by Amey in 2010 following a Freedom of Information request to HC about flooding in Orleton. This document had not previously been shared with OPC. It highlights defects and sets out a series of remedial options it concluded must be undertaken. OPC, HC and BBLP have revisited many of these same options over the past few years as part of current flood alleviation proposals. Ward Councillor Hurcomb is following up on the report with HC. The latest design is due by July and a response is awaited from James Fishlock.

19.3. **Footpaths:** A number of activities continue regarding public rights of way, including a community walk, led by the Footpaths Officer; a dispute is being followed up on ORL16 at Bircher. It is hoped that while the B4361 is closed in August, it might be possible to persuade Tarmac to re-site the mile marker.

20. **Ward Councillor's Report:** the meeting was re-opened for Cllr Dan Hurcomb to update councillors on the following key points:

- Land Drainage and PROW grant funding schemes for town & parish councils have been signed off; details will be communicated to Clerks in the near future.
- Railings for Green Lane have been put into the annual plan and work should be included in this financial year.
- The Boundary Commission has indicated it intends to review ward boundaries before the next election in 2027.
- Subject to receipt of government funding, HC plans to introduce a food waste collection service from March 2026. A new garden waste collection service, replacing green garden sacks, will be offered at an introductory cost of £60.00 per annum.
- HC's Annual General Meeting will take place on 23.5.2025.
- HC Highways resurfacing works are incorporating drainage improvements, where possible.
- Dan will check on the extent of King's Road to be resurfaced and how this impacts Kitchen Hill Road.
- The noxious odours issue has been taken up with HC's enforcement investigating officer.

***The meeting returned to closed session to continue with remaining agenda items.***

21. **Payments Schedule:** *NB: all invoices listed have been examined, verified and certified by the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The schedule of payments was initialled by the Chair at the time of the meeting and is attached to these minutes.*

21.1 Councillors **VERIFIED** the following payments made since the last meeting under delegated powers or previously approved:

| Ref:   | Payee      | Description | VAT (£) | Gross Payment (£) |
|--------|------------|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 21.1.1 | Pico Genie | Projector   | 32.50   | 194.99            |

[For reimbursement to A Morgan, Clerk]

21.2 Councillors **APPROVED** the following payments:

| Ref:   | Payee         | Description           | VAT (£) | Gross Payment (£)     |
|--------|---------------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| 21.2.1 | A Morgan      | Expenses (Apr 2025)   | 0.00    | 0.00                  |
| 21.2.2 | A Morgan      | Salary (May 2025)     | 0.00    | As per staff contract |
| 21.2.3 | M Bradford    | Footpaths Maintenance | 0.00    | TBC                   |
| 21.2.4 | A Littleworth | Expenses (Mar 2025)   | 0.00    | TBC                   |
| 21.2.5 | A Littleworth | Final Salary          | 0.00    | As per staff contract |

Signed (Chair): ..... Date .....

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|         |                   |                     |        |          |
|---------|-------------------|---------------------|--------|----------|
| 21.2.6  | D Lane            | Toner Reimbursement | 12.49  | 74.94    |
| 21.2.7  | Leo.Pest.Cntrl    | Dog Waste SI-104838 | 14.20  | 85.20    |
| 21.2.8  | Leo.Pest.Cntrl    | Dog Waste SI-105044 | 14.20  | 85.20    |
| 21.2.9  | Yatton Farm Serv. | Lengthsman Inv.1049 | 100.00 | 600.00   |
| 21.2.10 | Yatton Farm Serv. | Lengthsman Inv.1050 | 76.00  | 456.00   |
| 21.2.11 | Yatton Farm Serv. | Lengthsman Inv.1051 | 178.08 | 1.068.48 |

22. **Correspondence:** No further correspondence was noted.

23. Matters for next Agenda – no discussion.

- 23.1. Appointment of Footpaths Officer, OVH and ORA representatives, councillor liaison appointee for Planning.
- 23.2. Use of Lengthsman to put up bunting.

24. The resolution to exclude the public for discussion of confidential staffing matters was not required.

**Please send Agenda Items for the next meeting to the Clerk [clerk@orleton-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@orleton-pc.gov.uk) by Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

**Next Meeting: Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 6:00pm, Orleton Village Hall**