

Minutes of Meeting

Thursday, 18th September 2025, 6.00pm, Orleton Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Ron Gittings (Chair), Veronica Bishop, Mike Jones and Barry Rogers

In Attendance: Ward Councillor Dan Hurcomb

Parish Clerk: Alison Morgan

Members of the Public: 2

1. **Apologies** were received from Cllrs Lane, Powell and Simmons.
2. No **Declarations of Interest** or requests for **Dispensation** were received for this meeting.
3. **Open Discussion:**
 - 3.1. **Chair's Opening Remarks:** The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and conveyed a big thank-you to Cllr Bishop, Ward Cllr Hurcomb, Herefordshire Council Highways and Gregg Speller from the S106 team on the successful completion of recent road works in and around the village, which are greatly appreciated.
 - 3.2. **Public Participation:** points raised included:
 - Whether planning permission was required for solar panel installation in a conservation area; residents were directed to Herefordshire Council (HC) Planning Department for definitive advice.
 - Tree maintenance, no TPO, on private land; suggestion to approach the property owner.
4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 17th July 2025 were **APPROVED** and signed by the Chair; they will be available on the PC website shortly.
5. **Finance & Compliance**
 - 5.1. **AGAR 2024-25:** The Clerk advised the certificate of conclusion of the external audit (Section3) was received; no matters of concern were raised. A notice will therefore be published on the website (and noticeboard) prior to the statutory deadline of 30th September.
 - 5.2. **Bank Reconciliation:** Councillors reviewed bank reconciliation reports for July and August 2025 and resolved to **ADOPT** them for publication on the PC website.
 - 5.3. **Pay Scales 2025-26:** Councillors noted the recent Local Government Pay Award, increasing the Clerk's hourly rate from £19.20 to £19.81, backdated to 01.04.2025. Forms were duly authorised by the Chair and the Clerk will forward them to the payroll provider for processing.
 - 5.4. **Orleton Evergreens Grant:** Receipt of the end of project report for the recent celebration tea was acknowledged.
 - 5.5. **Volunteer Activities:** The Clerk confirmed all Orleton PC volunteers, including members of the land drainage group, were covered by the PC's insurance to carry out basic activities at the direction of the PC, which do not involve use of privately owned power tools. It was **RESOLVED** to defer discussion of additional Lengthsman tasks and budget to item 7.2, below.
 - 5.6. **Printing Subscription:** Further to the last meeting, the Clerk advised a subscription plan was taken up for ease and value for money. The initial cost will be £5.99 per month, per 100 pages; if this does not prove sufficient, it can be increased; any unused pages roll forward to the following month. This cost was **APPROVED** and will be added to the regular payments schedule.

Signed (Chair): Date

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- 5.7. **Standing Orders:** Draft updates to the latest NALC model policy were circulated to councillors in advance. Proposed changes were accepted without further revision. The policy was, therefore, **ADOPTED** and will be published on the PC's website.
- 5.8. **Financial Regulations:** Similarly, councillors were given an opportunity to review proposed revisions to the model policy; which were accepted in full. This policy was **ADOPTED** and will be published on the PC's website shortly.
- 5.9. **Communications Policy:** The Clerk outlined the need for a parish council communications policy and it was **AGREED** a draft policy would be written for review at a future meeting. In the interim, the Chair requested councillors to check latest status of works, projects, etc., with the appointed councillor lead for a given area, e.g., Highways, Flood Alleviation, etc., before giving out information to members of the public. This would help to ensure communications are as accurate and up to date as possible, taking into account activity between PC meetings.

6. Planning:

- 6.1. It was **NOTED** representations* supporting the following applications were submitted by the Clerk, in consultation with councillors and the tree warden, since the last meeting under delegated powers:
 - 6.1.1. **P250258/L – Millbrook Cottage, Orleton SY8 4HW:** Proposed installation of flood defences.
 - 6.1.2. **P252158/K – Works to Trees in a Conservation Area – The Farm, Orleton SY8 4HP**
 - 6.1.3. **P252355/K – Works to Trees in a Conservation Area – 9 Millbrook Close, Orleton SY8 4JR**
 - 6.1.4. **P252342/J – Works to Trees covered by TPO – The Old Vicarage, Orleton SY8 4HN**
 - 6.1.5. **P252371/K – Works to Trees in a Conservation Area – The Alders, 7 Millbrook Close, Orleton SY8 4JR**

*Details of all the above responses can be viewed on the HC Planning Portal after publication.

- 6.2. **New Applications:** No further planning applications were received prior to this meeting.

7. Highways:

7.1. Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's):

- 7.1.1. **B4361 Speed Reduction:** This proposal had been brought to the attention of HC Highways and a placeholder recorded while the TRO application is being drawn up. It was confirmed it is not necessary for the PC to confirm the extent of the proposed speed restriction zone - from the existing 40mph past the Maidenhead junction - as this will be determined by HC personnel in accordance with statutory regulations.
- 7.1.2. **Yellow Lines:** Cllrs Bishop and Gittings met with Joe Grice (HC Highways) outside the school, together with the Clerk. The area from the school around the bend to Hallet's Way was highlighted as a safety concern, with the visibility issue further highlighted by several cars parking there during the meeting. HC Highways will consider feasible options for consideration by the PC as the basis for the TRO application in the near future.

7.2. Additional Lengthsman Tasks:

For clarity, this item was discussed under three headings, as follows:

- 7.2.1. **Ordinary Watercourses:** It was confirmed volunteers could remove debris and overgrowth from the banks of Brimfield brook and from other locations, as necessary, using manual, hand-held tools. If this work included use of power tools or plant, it would be necessary to engage the Lengthsman, for insurance reasons. For the current year, costs would need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, subject to budget constraints.

Prior to the meeting, the Clerk circulated HC guidance regarding works on ordinary watercourses to councillors. This indicates clearance of vegetation on the bankside does not require local authority or drainage board consent. Legally, landowners are responsible to clear watercourses on their land. The guidance further states that any 'in-channel' work, including removal of silt and sand from the bed of a water course, requires the PC to contact HC Flood Risk team to obtain consent prior to any such works being undertaken. Based on this understanding, whether it is intended works are carried out by volunteers or the Lengthsman, with the exception of basic clearance, the PC will need to contact HC in advance. If formal ordinary watercourse consent is required, a £50.00 charge may be applied by HC. The guidance also emphasises the need to obtain landowner consent for all works.

Councillors **DETERMINED** that with the exception of basic maintenance (not requiring consent), no further work should be undertaken on or in the brook and other water courses without first clarifying from HC whether or not consent was required. It was, therefore **RESOLVED** it would not be appropriate to request the Lengthsman to undertake additional tasks of this nature at this time.

7.2.2 **Catchpits:** It was **AGREED** these could be cleared by the Lengthsman, on request if they were known to be blocked (subject to available budget for this year). If in doubt, due to their location, e.g., on the highway drainage system, consent should first be checked with HC. Photographs and location maps/details are likely to be required.

7.2.3 **Fire Hydrants:** Concern was raised about ownership of these assets by the Fire Service and potential liability for the PC if it commissioned work on them. Additionally, a fire service levy is already deducted from Council Tax bills covering service provision and maintenance of the hydrants is a statutory responsibility of the Fire Service. Councillors **AGREED** the Clerk should write to the HC Cabinet Minister with responsibility for Fire Service Liaison. The Clerk should explain about the recent silt build-up issue and request that hydrants in the village are automatically scheduled for maintenance following a significant flood event. Contact details should also be requested to report issues directly.

7.3. **Other Highways Matters:** Cllr Bishop additionally reported lining works for the school project are planned to be completed by 21.09.25; the poles for the flashing lights were received but due to a supplier delay for the lights, these works are awaiting a completion date. Tenders for village gates and SID poles are being managed by the S106 team and a balance of available funds should be available soon.

7.4. **Street Signage (Little Furlongs):** An enquiry about replacement of street signage for Little Furlongs was received from Connexus. This issue had previously been considered after the sign was suspected to be stolen. HC Highways inspected and advised signage at this location was not safety critical. As the estimated cost of replacement exceeded £1,000.00, the PC had resolved not to pursue this matter further. The Clerk will advise Connexus accordingly.

8. **Flooding & Land Drainage:** No update available for this meeting in Cllr Lane's absence.

9. **Community**

9.1 **Dog Waste Bin, Green Lane:** It was arranged for the Lengthsman to remove this bin as previously agreed. However, the gardener at Orleton Rise Caravan Park has now volunteered to empty the bin to help keep the area clean. A proposal for the PC to continue funding bin liners at a current cost of £7.99 (incl. VAT) approximately every 4 months was **APPROVED**.

9.2 **Public Toilets:** An issue was raised about the lack of public toilets in the village. After discussion, it was **DETERMINED** installation of facilities was not an option the PC wished to consider further.

9.3 **Orleton Village Hall:** Cllr Rogers advised a meeting had taken place recently; the secretary role is vacant. The treasurer's report highlighted difficulties of increased running costs falling below current hiring income; options to address this are under consideration. Hedges have been trimmed and various upcoming events were noted. Trimming back of the tree in the car park will be mentioned to the committee.

10. **Ward Councillor's Report:** the meeting was re-opened to public participation for Cllr Dan Hurcomb's report, which included the following topics:

- Resurfacing, patching and surface dressing works on the B4361 are in process.
- Work on the B4362 will complete on 19.09.2025. Closure for works in Green Lane, Yarpole is imminent.
- A reminder about submitting applications for drainage grant funding by 28.09.25.
- Following the recent Government funding review, HC is facing a £27m spending shortfall (as opposed to the anticipated £3m).
- Council Tax rises are set to be 4.99%.
- The new public realm tendering process (to appoint successors to Balfour Beatty) is on track for a new contract to become effective from 2026.
- The WSP design and modelling report for the proposed Orleton flood relief scheme has been delayed due the need for additional modelling, etc; it is now anticipated by the end of October.
- Issues concerning empty properties in the village being infested with rats has been referred to the Empty House/Revenue Collection teams at HC for follow-up.

11. **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.*

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

Ref:	Payee:	Description:	Gross Payment (£)
11.1.1	HMRC	Employer PAYE Q1/25-26	1,159.29
11.1.2	M Bradford	First Aid Kit	42.54
11.1.3	Leo Pest Control	Dog Waste SI-106695 & 106964	170.40
11.1.4	Yatton Farm Services	LM Inv. 1083 (Spraying)	444.00
11.1.5	Yatton Farm Services	LM Inv. 1084 (Strimming God's Acre)	84.00
11.1.6	Yatton Farm Services	LM Inv. 1085 (Estate Maintenance)	912.00
11.1.7	ICO	Data Protection Fee (DD)	47.00

11.2 The following receipts since the meeting on 17.07.2025 were **NOTED**:

Ref:	Payee:	Description:	Gross Payment (£)
11.2.1	NEST	Pension (Credit Refund)	81.53
11.2.2	HCC Creditors	Footpaths Claim 24/25	1,819.00
11.2.3	HCC Creditors	Lengthsman Claim Q1 25/26	565.00

11.3 The following payments were **APPROVED**:

Ref:	Payee:	Description:	Gross Payment (£)
11.3.1	Clerk – A Morgan	Salary Sep 2025	As per staff contract
11.3.2	Clerk – A Morgan	Office Stationery & Archive	81.33
11.3.3	Clerk – A Morgan	Dog Waste Sign	13.74
11.3.4	Leo Pest Control	Dog Waste SI-107249	85.20

12. **Correspondence:** The following correspondence was noted:

- 12.1. HC: Parish Summit Invite (07.10.2025).
- 12.2. M Bradford – Footpaths Update.
- 12.3. God's Acre Memorial Garden – letter of thanks and invitation to AGM (23.09.25).
- 12.4. BBLP: Invite to Quarterly Engagement Briefing (on-line) 26.09.25.

13. Matters for next Agenda – no discussion.

- 13.1. To review and update the Reserves Policy.
- 13.2. To review the budget tracker report for the half year to 30.09.2025.
- 13.3. To note results of the internal PC bank reconciliation – H1/2025-26.
- 13.4. To review the Grants & Donations policy and associated forms for adoption.
- 13.5. To consider options for purchasing Speed Indicator Devices

Please send suggested Agenda Items for the next meeting to the Clerk clerk@orleton-pc.gov.uk by Friday, 3rd October 2025

Next Meeting: Thursday, 16th October 2025 at 6:00pm in Orleton Village Hall