

ORLETON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting

Thursday, 15th January 2026, 6.00pm, Orleton Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Ron Gittings (Chair), Veronica Bishop, Mike Jones, David Lane and Brian Powell, Barry Rogers and Mark Simmons.

In Attendance: Ward Councillor Dan Hurcomb

Parish Clerk: Alison Morgan

Leominster Safer Neighbourhood Team: PC Adam Stobbart introduced himself and left prior to the meeting start as no questions or concerns were raised with him on this occasion.

Members of the Public: 64 (approximately; fluctuation of numbers during the meeting)

1. **Apologies:** None received.
2. No **Declarations of Interest** or requests for **Dispensation** were received for this meeting.

*****In consideration of the number of attendees in cramped conditions and requests from the floor, a motion was passed to bring agenda item 9 forward to follow consideration of the Minutes*****

3. **Minutes:** Councillors were asked to consider two versions of the draft minutes from the last meeting on 20th November 2025 for approval. After failing to reach agreement, a motion was passed to defer further discussion on this point until after the Open Discussion session.

9. **Open Discussion:**

9.1. **Ward Councillor Report:** Cllr Hurcomb's report covered a wide range of topics, including:

- No extensions will be given beyond 31st March 26 for works subject to drainage or grant funding to be completed. In addition to smaller sums received during the year, Orleton PC was awarded a £10,000 allocation for drainage projects used to offset the cost of flood alleviation detailed design works. Despite Herefordshire Council (HC) budget cuts in 26/27, grant funding for Lengthsman, Drainage and PROW will continue with details to follow soon.
- Local roads: improvements on the B4361 continue with surface dressing and patching scheduled before the end of March. Work on the B4361 Ashley Moor crossroads to relocate the BT pole and re-profile the verge to improve visibility is also planned in the next 6-8 weeks.
- It is thought some S106 money remains following school safety improvements; once the exact balance is known, additional work and/or assets can potentially be identified.
- The Orchard Farm, Comberton planning application has been re-submitted.
- In a recent Ofsted inspection, HC Children's Services has been re-graded as "good".
- Details of the flood alleviation scheme design are still being worked on by all parties; it is hoped an announcement will be made in February/March 26 regarding delivery funding.

9.2. **Public Participation:** [It was agreed the meeting would be re-opened for public participation at agenda item 6.] Topics raised in this session included:

- An outlet pipe serving the attenuation pond at Captain's Meadow, is obstructed due to accumulation of sediment against the non-return valve. An affected resident is receiving no response from Shropshire Homes, despite multiple contacts; the Parish Council is experiencing similar frustration in its attempts to escalate the matter and will continue to press for a response. Ward Cllr Hurcomb will ask one of the Flood Risk team engineers to inspect the problem while in Orleton for a meeting this week.

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- Residents asked councillors for their views on the Footpaths and Land Drainage volunteer groups. Councillors emphasised there has been **no** proposal to stop volunteers from all activities and that the Parish Council was extremely grateful for work that has been done over the years.
- The Parish Council decision in September 2025 was for volunteers to stop using power tools. Subsequently, more information came to light confirming the PC insurer's new underwriters do permit the use of power tools albeit with a number of caveats which must be complied with for any claims to be valid.
- Residents quoted the article in January 2026 Grapevine which purported to state the PC's intention to 'terminate' the LDV group and to instead rely on enforcement of riparian landowner responsibilities. Councillors stated no proposal to stop the work of volunteer groups has been tabled.
- Residents expressed concern about riparian landowner responsibility if the land drainage volunteer group were unable to continue their work. Ward Cllr Hurcomb explained enforcement does not typically mean Court action and it was again reiterated that there is no intention to stop clearance of overgrown vegetation on the banks of the brook.
- A number of residents requested for an extraordinary meeting to be held before the end of January to reconsider the use of power tools by volunteers. The Clerk read out the stipulation from the adopted Standing Orders. Section 7(a) states that a resolution cannot be reversed within 6 months except by a special motion that requires written notice by at least 4 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with Standing Order 9. Such notice must be received by the Proper Officer 7 clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the meeting. [NB: other stipulations set out in Section 9 may also apply.]
- It was noted that if an extraordinary meeting is convened in this timeframe, it could be possible to also consider the Comberton planning application. The Clerk confirmed an extension is in place from HC Planning to enable the PC to review it at the February meeting, if this proves necessary.

4. Finance & Compliance

- 4.1. **Bank Reconciliation:** Councillors reviewed the bank reconciliation reports for November and December 2025 and resolved to **ADOPT** them for publication on the PC website.
- 4.2. **Budget Monitoring:** Councillors noted the budget tracker report with no concerns raised. The report will be available on the PC website soon.
- 4.3. **Internal Reconciliation Audit:** Results of the completed H1 2025/26 internal review by the second reviewer were noted with no issues raised.
- 4.4. **War Memorial Research Grant:** A report of interim spend was received and considered by councillors. It was resolved to **APPROVE** a request to extend the deadline for project completion to November 2026.
- 4.5. **Reserves Policy:** Councillors resolved to **ADOPT** the revised Reserves Policy in line with budget and precept decisions made at the last meeting.
- 4.6. **Donations Policy:** Councillors resolved to **ADOPT** the revised Donations Policy and application form (subject to removal of a duplicate box from the form), which were updated to reflect recent policy and budgetary decisions.

5. Planning:

- 5.1. The following application was noted:
 - 5.1.1. **P252990/K – Works to Trees in a Conservation Area** – St George's Church, Orleton SY8 4HN: This application was supported and comments submitted by the Clerk between meetings under delegated powers.
- 5.2. The following applications were considered:
 - 5.2.1. **P253481/FH – 4 Mortimer Close, Orleton SY8 4PG:** Proposals to demolish existing chimney, convert garage to ancillary accommodation, cavity wall with rear door and porch to side were **supported**.

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- 5.2.2. **P253672/PA4 – Whitestones Farm, Richards Castle, Herefordshire:** Proposals included in the application to determine if prior approval is required for a change of use of barns to 6 dwelling houses and associated works was **supported**.
- 5.2.3. **P253606/L – Churchyard Cottage, Church Lane, Orleton SY8 4HU:** An application to regularise pointing work carried out to the northwest (road frontage) elevation of the barn was **supported**.

Details of all responses can be viewed on the HC Planning Portal after publication. The Clerk advised the application for land adjacent to Orchard Farm, Comberton has been re-submitted and an extension confirmed for the PC to respond until after the February PC meeting.

5.3. NDP

- 5.3.1. The Government's recently announced ongoing support for NDP's was noted, together with an acknowledgement of those present of the need to update the existing NDP for Orleton. It was suggested an external speaker at the annual parish meeting on this topic would be helpful.
- 5.3.2. **NDP Separation from Richards Castle:** It was confirmed a separation request was sent from Orleton to HC; however, Richards Castle PC has not yet responded pending decisions on the HC local plan. The Ward Cllr will follow up with the RC Chair.

6. Complaint about Parish Council Process

6.1. **Complaint:** The Chair re-opened the meeting to public participation to permit the complainant to speak first. The complainant outlined details of the issue from their perspective, including a timeline of events dating back to July 2025, background and contents of subsequent correspondence with councillors. The focus of the complaint being considered by the Parish Council at this meeting concerns the approved Minutes from October 16th 2025. This document contained a comment, which was offensive to the complainant and which they became aware of after the minutes were published on the PC's website. On receipt of the complaint on 1st December 2025, the Clerk acknowledged receipt, apologised on behalf of the Parish Council by email and agreed to remove the offending comment from the online copy of the minutes while legal advice was sought from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

6.2. Advice & Way Forward:

- 6.2.1. On behalf of the Parish Council, a public apology was given to the complainant by the Chair, together with a commitment that steps would be taken by the PC to avoid a future recurrence of any similar issues.
- 6.2.2. The Clerk went on to summarise the advice received via the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils, as follows: That the Council resolves to strike the sentence – "It was noted the Chair of ORA had verbally accosted the wife of a member and it was hoped an apology was forthcoming" from the approved minutes of the October meeting and to add a footnote to those approved minutes referring to the decision made at tonight's meeting. Thus, the original minute stands, but a footnote at the bottom of the page containing the sentence will refer to the subsequent decision of the PC to strike the sentence. The Chair therefore proposed this motion, which was **RATIFIED** by councillors and acknowledged by the complainant.

At this point, a motion was proposed and accepted to suspend Standing Orders to permit the meeting to continue past the two-hour point (SO 3.x and SO 9.xv).

- 6.3. **Councillor Training:** An in-house training session for councillors focusing on governance matters was proposed and **APPROVED**. The training will be delivered by HALC between 6-8pm on Wednesday, 11th February 2026 in Orleton Village Hall.

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7. Parish Council Communications to the Grapevine and other outside Organisations

- 7.1. In line with general working practices for parish councils and to reduce the risk of legal challenges, incorrect or misleading statements, it was **RESOLVED** OPC should in future ensure all communications to outside organisations purporting to be on behalf of OPC are sent out by the Clerk as Proper Officer of the Council.

8. Community Matters

- 8.1. **Highways:** It was reported an issue with the lights at the school has been reported and is being followed up. Similarly, the status of village gates and SID baseplates is being escalated
- 8.2. **Flood Alleviation, Land Drainage Volunteers & Sandbags:** It was noted the 50 Aquasacs loaned to Brimfield & Little Hereford were reimbursed. Flood alleviation scheme meetings have continued since the last meeting, with another taking place tomorrow, 16th January 2026. Some design issues continue to be reviewed, and the Friday meeting will provide another opportunity to discuss these, as well as walking the ditches, etc. The diameter of pipes and their adequacy was mentioned. ORA has agreed to consider additional attenuation on its land to increase resilience against storm surges. Cohesive attenuation forms part of the scheme with funding options still being determined. Severn Trent is installing flow monitors.
It was **AGREED** to order a top-up of sandbags (pallet of 49) for storage at the Village Hall from Radbournes at a cost of £127.40, including delivery, plus VAT.
- 8.3. **Dog Waste Collection:** A concrete block is causing an obstruction of the waterway. Cllr Lane is liaising with residents to ascertain if the block can be removed; if not, it may be necessary to report to the Land Drainage Authority (HC).
- 8.4. **Orleton Recreation Association:** The refurbished pavilion grand opening takes place on Sunday, 18th January 2026. Negotiations with the Young Footballers Club will continue.
- 8.5. **Orleton Village Hall:** The committee met earlier in January. A busy events programme is coming together, including another motorhome show following success of the last one. Works to the tree in the carpark will not be carried out as a priority. A monthly visit from a van selling Polish street food will start soon.

[Item 9 was moved up the agenda and is reported above.]

10. **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 will be published on the website alongside these minutes.*

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

Ref:	Payee:	Description:	Gross Payment (£)
10.1.1	HALC	Domain & hosting charges	270.00
10.1.2	Leo Pest Control	Waste Collection SI-108431	85.20
10.1.3	Leo Pest Control	Waste Collection SI-108691	85.20
10.1.4	Yatton Farm Services	Inv. 1117 (Estate Maintenance)	552.00
10.1.5	PWLB	Loan Repayment (DD)	1,096.07

- 10.2 The following receipts since the meeting on 20.11.2025 were **NOTED**:

Ref:	Payee:	Description:	Total Receipt (£)
10.2.1	Unity Trust Bank	Interest on savings	239.95

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10.3 The following bank transfers since the last meeting were **NOTED**:

Ref:	From A/c:	To A/c:	Total Transfer (£)
10.3.1	Savings A/c	Current A/c T1	5,000.00

10.4 The following payments were **APPROVED**:

Ref:	Payee:	Description:	Gross Payment (£)
10.4.1	Clerk – A Morgan	Expenses – Printing	5.99
10.4.2	Clerk – A Morgan	Salary Jan 26	As per staff contract
10.4.3	Cllr Gittings	Reimbursement (zip ties)	8.80
10.4.4	Leo Pest Control	Waste Collection SI-108825	85.20
10.4.5	Leo Pest Control	Waste Collection SI-109004	85.20

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

- 11.1. Resident email reporting ingress of water to property (Ward Cllr will do site visit)
- 11.2. Residents' emails land drainage volunteers
- 11.3. Safer Neighbourhood Team: coffee morning 11.02.2026, 11am, Leominster
- 11.4. Grit Bins – acknowledgement from BBLP of enquiry made re cost of an additional bin
- 11.5. Resident email re issue with wall adjacent to pavement, Kitchen Hill
- 11.6. HC Highways re appointment of new public realm contractor, M Group.

12. **Annual Parish Meeting:** After discussion, it was agreed a target date of May would be best and that external speakers should be invited. NDP and Flood Resilience Scheme were suggested topics.

3. **Minutes:** [Resumed] Discussion on the two proposed versions of minutes from the November PC meeting resumed, but agreement was not reached and the minutes were, therefore, not approved.

13. **Matters for next Agenda** – no discussion

- 13.1. Revisit clerk probation appraisal decision (Cllr Lane)
- 13.2. Report on Orleton School (Cllr Rogers)

Please send suggested Agenda Items for the next meeting to the Clerk
clerk@orleton-pc.gov.uk by Tuesday, 10th February 2026

Next Meeting: Thursday, 19th February 2026 at 6:00pm in Orleton Village Hall