

ORLETON PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Meeting and Ordinary Meeting
Thursday, 21 May 2026 at 6.00pm in Orleton Village Hall

Present: Mark Simmons (Chair), Colin Mitchell (Vice-Chair), Mike Jones, Brian Powell, Mike Tipping, Mark Wetton

In attendance: Ward Councillor Dan Hurcomb

Parish Clerk: Stacy Perry

Members of the Public: 7

The meeting began at 6:07pm.

1. **Election of Chairperson:** Cllr Simmons agreed to continue as Chair, and councillors voted unanimously for him to do so. Cllr Simmons signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form at the end of the meeting.
2. **Election of Vice-Chairperson:** Cllr Mitchell agreed to continue as Vice-Chair, and councillors voted unanimously for him to do so. Cllr Mitchell signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form at the end of the meeting.
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. No **apologies** were received for this meeting.
5. No **Declarations of Interest** or requests for **Dispensation** were received for the annual meeting.
6. **Council Appointments**
 - 6.1. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Nicola Goodman as Tree Officer. Mrs Goodman is a teaching assistant at Orleton Primary School, her family own a local sawmill, and they love the outdoors and nature. The family has recently purchased a home in the village, and she looks forward to becoming more involved in the community.
 - 6.2. It was **RESOLVED** to re-appoint Cllr Jones as the Parish Council's representative to the Orleton Village Hall management committee.
 - 6.3. It was **RESOLVED** to re-appoint Cllr Powell as the Parish Council's representative to the Orleton Recreation Association.
7. **Councillor Liaisons**

Councillor liaison representatives were appointed/re-affirmed as follows:

 - 7.1. Lengthsman Scheme: Cllr Mitchell. The Chair expressed his thanks to Cllr Mitchell for the significant amount of work undertaken in this role since the Extraordinary Meeting [6 May 2026].
 - 7.2. Land Drainage: Cllr Wetton
 - 7.3. Internal Audit: Cllr Simmons
 - 7.4. Road Safety and Highways: Cllr Tipping
 - 7.5. Planning: Cllr Powell with Cllr Jones providing back-up
 - 7.6. Defibrillators: Cllr Jones

8. **General Power of Competence:** It was **NOTED** that the Parish Council does not currently meet the eligibility criteria for the General Power of Competence under Section 8 of the Localism Act 2011. The Council meets the electoral criterion, as all current members were elected (including at an uncontested election), but does not yet meet the requirement for a qualified clerk. The Chair confirmed that achieving competency status is an aspiration of the Parish Council and that steps are underway to enable the Clerk to attain the required qualification.
9. **Asset Register:** The updated asset register was presented for review. It was **NOTED** that a litter bin has been recorded with no location; the dog waste bins need to be added to the register; there is now only one bench on Tunnel Lane and two benches on Halletts Well, one of which is engraved; and depreciation of IT equipment has been added to the register. Councillors **APPROVED** the asset register, subject to the changes noted above. A copy of the revised register will be published on the Parish Council's website.
10. **Insurance Renewal:** Councillors **APPROVED** the renewal of the Parish Council's 2026-27 insurance policy with Clear Councils at a cost of £967.95, noting that this slightly exceeds the budgeted figure of £900. It was further **NOTED** that alternative insurance providers, including Zurich, may be considered ahead of the 2027-28 renewal.
11. **Review and Re-adoption of Policies**
The following policies were reviewed and the following actions taken:
11.1. Code of Conduct: ADOPTED
11.2. Standing Orders: ADOPTED
11.3. Financial Regulations: ADOPTED
11.4. Data Protection Policies: It was noted that the Clerk's contact details in some of these policies require updating; the policies were, however, **ADOPTED**.
11.5. Communications, E-mail, and Media Policies: These policies are not yet fully in place. A minuted agreement exists that communications to local publications are to be approved by the Chair and Clerk before publication. It was **AGREED** to bring completed policies to the July 2026 meeting, given the demands of the audit process in June.
11.6. Risk Management Policy and Risk Schedule: Because these are more than a year overdue for review and outstanding actions remain on the schedule, it was **AGREED** to bring both documents to the July 2026 meeting.
11.7. Reserves Policy: Because this policy was last reviewed and adopted in January 2026, it was **AGREED** to defer the next review to October 2026 to align with the budget-setting cycle.
11.8. Employment Policies: ADOPTED
11.9. Complaint Policy: It was felt that although the right to complain is addressed in Standing Orders, a more explicit and accessible policy is needed. It was **AGREED** to bring this to the July 2026 meeting.
11.10. Smaller Authorities' Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP; formally the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG)): ADOPTED
- Any necessary changes will be made to the adopted policies, and these will be published on the Parish Council's website.
12. **Banking Arrangements:** The existing authorised signatories confirmed their willingness to continue in this role. Regular payments and Direct Debits were reviewed and **APPROVED** as per the attached schedule (Appendix 1).

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

Prior to commencing the Ordinary Meeting, Cllrs Tipping and Wetton declared an interest in respect of agenda items 24.2 and 24.3. As members of Orleton Footpath Maintenance Volunteers both councillors have received personal protective equipment (PPE) purchased by the group.

13. Councillors resolved to **APPROVE** the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2026 with the correction of the word 'installed' which was missing at the end of minute item 10. The approved minutes will be published on the PC's website.

14. Open Session

14.1. Ward Councillor Dan Hurcomb began by announcing that Herefordshire Council has delivered a balanced budget for the year. This was achieved with a 4.99% council tax rise and a £1.8 million transfer from a resilience reserve previously set aside to offset rising adult social care costs. Ward Cllr Hurcomb noted that 25% of Herefordshire's population is aged over 65, the highest proportion in the country, which has a significant impact on the adult social care budget.

He then followed up on two items brought up by residents at the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13 May 2026. First was the outstanding Section 106 money. At present there is no Section 106 Officer, but it is hoped that the position will be filled soon and they will then be able to implement the remainder of the already-devised scheme to install additional speed indicator device (SID) locations. Second, was the council's school transport policy, which applies a 'nearest school by road' criterion that can split villages based on where residents live relative to the catchment school. Ward Cllr Hurcomb is asking for a revised policy that would encompass an entire village rather than drawing an artificial boundary through it. Residents affected by this issue are encouraged to contact him, as wider evidence of impact strengthens the case for change.

Council enforcement officers as well as police have powers to act in relation to parking outside the school because of the low speed limit there. It was suggested that the police be asked to increase their visible presence at these times, and that this be raised directly with the Safer Neighbourhood Team or the police the next time they attend a Parish Council meeting. Also, if there is any Section 106 money left, it is possible that double yellow lines can be extended towards Hallets Well. In the meantime, if residents have any complaints, contact the Parish Council and these can be shared with the police.

Herefordshire Council is still negotiating with the landowner whose land would need to be accessed to carry out the highway flood alleviation scheme.

During a cabinet meeting earlier in the day Herefordshire Council discussed its carbon management plan. Herefordshire was one of the first councils to change to LED light bulbs, and streetlamps, which has saved a significant amount of money as well as emissions. Ward Cllr Hurcomb proudly announced that, as the cabinet member responsible for the ground contract, the inspection vehicles have been switched to electric vehicles. This will save 34,000 litres of diesel a year and the related emissions.

Ward Cllr Hurcomb chaired a meeting for parents and residents to hear from Orleton Recreation Association and Orleton and District Junior Football Club. The two parties remain in a period of transition.

Ward Cllr Hurcomb concluded his report by asking residents to consider replying to the local government boundary review, which is proposing that Richards Castle Parish be moved from Bircher Ward to Mortimer Ward [see agenda item 15]. He will be putting forward an objection on behalf of Richards Castle Parish Council because the natural relationships are between Richards Castle and Orleton rather than Richards Castle and Leintwardine.

14.2. A resident asked the Ward Councillor if enforcement officers would act if double yellow lines are extended and a member of the public reports people parking on them. Cllr Hurcomb replied that enforcement officers tend not to travel outside the market towns, and, in order to enforce, they must give a 15-minute grace period, which is enough time for someone to drop off or collect a child from school. If Herefordshire Council gets consistent complaints, however, they may look at sending an enforcement officer out to monitor the situation.

- 15. Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Proposed Changes to Bircher Ward:** Councillors considered the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's proposal to move Richards Castle Parish from Bircher Ward into Mortimer Ward. Ward Cllr Hurcomb explained that Bircher Ward is currently the second-largest electorate in Herefordshire, exceeding the target threshold by approximately 15%, with forecast growth to around 20% by the next review.

A number of concerns with the proposal were raised, including the significant geographical barrier presented by the Goggin between Richards Castle and the rest of Mortimer Ward; the close community and service connections between Richards Castle and Orleton, including use of the primary school, the village shop, the surgery, and public transport along the B4361; shared highway drainage considerations; the impact on efficient governance given that Ward Councillors currently coordinate across the parish councils that share these connections; and a similar proposal was successfully challenged during the previous boundary review through a coordinated multi-parish response.

Councillors **AGREED** that the Parish Council should submit a response to the consultation objecting to the proposed boundary change. The Clerk will publish a notice on Facebook and the Parish Council's website to encourage residents to submit their own representations. The deadline for submissions is **6 July 2026**.

16. Planning and Licensing

16.1. The following decision by the planning officer was noted:

16.1.1. P260636/FH – The Hop Barn, Millbrook Way, Orleton: Front extension to the first floor. Approved.

16.2. The following licensing application was considered:

16.2.1. Grant of a Premises Licence – St George's Church, Kitchen Hill Road, Orleton:

The church has applied for a premises licence to permit the sale and serving of alcohol. It was noted that the church has previously applied for a temporary event notice each time alcohol has been served. The volume of events has now reached a level where a permanent licence is more practical. Councillors noted that the applicants have already implemented own internal controls to avoid excessive alcohol consumption. Because there were no objections, councillors do not need to submit a response.

16.3. The following planning applications were considered:

16.3.1. P261346/K - Amiss Orchard, Kitchen Hill Road, Orleton, Ludlow, Herefordshire SY8 4HP. Works to trees in a Conservation Area. Councillors reviewed the application to fell a mixed group of trees overhanging the bus stop at Millbrook Way and the highway, where the trees are obstructing the Lengthsman's maintenance work and contributing to blocked drains. Councillors agreed to **SUPPORT** the application but asked the Clerk to note in the response that the replacement planting should not be laurel, which grows rapidly and is difficult to manage, and that a more suitable native species should be chosen.

16.3.2. P261080/L – Listed Building Consent, Orleton, Bircher. Churchyard Cottage Church Lane Orleton Ludlow Herefordshire SY8 4HU. Erection of fence around the boundary and replacement gates. The applicants were present and explained that the fence will be positioned approximately two feet inside the property boundary on two sides, allowing maintenance access between the fence and the church wall, and that hedge replanting may negate the need for fencing on the remaining sides. Councillors agreed to **SUPPORT** the application.

16.3.3. P261191/F - Planning Permission. Orleton, Bircher, Waterloo Farm Orleton Ludlow Herefordshire SY8 4JG. Roundhouse to replace an existing yurt. Councillors noted that the proposed roundhouse has a slightly larger footprint than the existing yurt but that it is not visible from public rights of way and is constructed from natural materials including cob, straw bale walls, and a turf roof. Councillors agreed to **SUPPORT** the application.

16.4. One additional application, received since publication of the agenda, was considered:
16.4.1. P261436/K - Works to Trees in a Conservation Area – Church House Cottage, Kings Road, Orleton SY8 4HN. Several branches have come down in the wind. To make the trees safe but not remove them altogether. T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 - Leylandii - reduce by 30%. T6 - Ash tree - reduce by 30%. T7, T8, T9, T10 - Leylandii - reduce by 30%. T11 - large Leylandii - reduce by 30%. Councillors agreed to **SUPPORT** the application.

17. Clerk's Report

Three grant applications to Herefordshire Council have been submitted for the Lengthsman, Public Rights of Way (PROW), and drainage works schemes. The Lengthsman and PROW grants have been approved, and the drainage grant application has been acknowledged and is under review. Thanks were extended to all those who contributed to the applications.

The deadline for electors to request a by-election to fill the current councillor vacancy falls on the coming Tuesday. If 10 or more requests are received, Herefordshire Council will set a timetable for an election, the administrative cost of which would be approximately £5,000. If fewer than 10 requests are received, the Parish Council will be able to co-opt a replacement.

Work to update signatories on the Unity Trust accounts is ongoing.

Articles approved by the Chair have been submitted to Grapevine and the Parish Magazine.

A Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) training session intended to support the Clerk's progress towards CiLCA qualification did not take place due to insufficient attendees. It is hoped the session will be rescheduled for September.

An online briefing about the new public realm service contract, which commences on 1 June 2026, has been arranged for the following Tuesday. The Clerk is unable to attend, so Cllr Simmons offered to attend on behalf of the Parish Council.

Correspondence received since the last meeting included: a request from a resident that grass in the Memorial Garden be trimmed later in the season; an enquiry about activity at the site in Comberton recently refused planning permission; a report of tree limbs left on the bank of Millbrook Way between the bus shelter and the war memorial following work by OpenReach, with a request for the verge to be cut; and a request from a resident on Green Lane for the verges to be trimmed for the safety of children walking to and from their schoolbus stop. The Clerk confirmed that the last two matters had already been referred to Cllr Mitchell to discuss with the Lengthsman.

18. Community Matters

18.1. Orleton Recreation Association (ORA): Cllr Powell reported that Orleton and District Junior Football Club's tournament passed without incident. Following the club's departure from the recreation ground, ORA intends to advertise the pavilion and recreation ground for wider use. A fence is being installed alongside the zip wire for safety reasons. The contact details for ORA's custodian trustee [i.e., the Parish Council] need to be updated, which the Clerk will follow up on.

18.2. Land Drainage Volunteers: Cllr Wetton reported that no significant drainage work is planned in the near term, which is typical for this time of year. A brief discussion took place about the appropriate declaration of interest for councillors who are also land drainage volunteers, particularly in view of the receipt of PPE funded by the Parish Council. The Ward Councillor advised that the standard approach is to declare where there is any doubt, and that it is for the individual to judge whether a conflict exists. It was noted that no formal list of volunteers exists but that one should be held by the PC for insurance purposes. It was **AGREED** that the insurance position in relation to volunteers should be clarified and brought to the June meeting.

18.3. Orleton Village Hall: Cllr Jones reported that the Village Hall Annual General Meeting and a general meeting were held on 19 May. All officers were re-elected and a new secretary was appointed. Upcoming events include a tabletop sale (14 June), village fete (5 July), motorhome rally (27 August), Bugle Concert Band (19 September), craft fair (14 November), race night (October, date to be confirmed), and a further motorhome rally in December.

18.4. Defibrillators: Cllr Jones reported that all three defibrillators are due for inspection the week following the meeting.

19. Finance

19.1. Bank Reconciliation Councillors reviewed the bank reconciliation report for April 2026 and resolved to **ADOPT** it for publication on the Parish Council's website.

19.2. Councillors **VERIFIED** the following payments made since the meeting on 24 April 2026 under delegated powers or previously approved. *NB: all invoices listed have been examined, verified, and certified by the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).*

Ref	Payee	Description	Amount (£)
19.2.1	Scribe	Inv-18000 (accounting software)	44.40
19.2.2	Wigmore School	Prize donation	50.00

19.3. There were no receipts for the period since the meeting on 24 April 2026.

19.4. Councillors **NOTED** the following transfer made since the meeting on 24 April 2026.

Ref	From	To	Description	Amount (£)
19.4.1	Current Account	Instant Access Account	Repayment of loan covering period before first precept payment	5,000.00

19.5. The following payments were **APPROVED**.

Ref	Payee	Description	Amount (£)
19.5.1	Leo Pest Control	Waste collection SI-110651	91.20
19.5.2	Herefordshire Council	Admin for Parish Election Inv 91784079	115.62
19.5.3	Orleton Village Hall	Room hire for Parish Meeting Inv 12037	37.50
19.5.4	Leo Pest Control	Waste collection SI-110864	91.20
19.5.5	Clerk – S Perry	Salary May 2026	Per contract

20. Donations and Grants Policy: The revised Donations and Grants Policy was reviewed. The principal amendments clarify that the funds cannot cover an organisation's ongoing running costs, they cannot cover retrospective expenditure already incurred, and donations are limited to one per organisation per fiscal year. The policy also makes explicit, consistent with the Code of Conduct, that any councillor who is a member of an applying organisation must declare an interest. Councillors **APPROVED** the revised policy, and it will be posted on the Parish Council's website.

- 21. Flag Policy:** Councillors considered a proposal to amend the Flag Policy so that the Herefordshire flag is flown as the default flag within the existing flying season, except on days of national celebration, commemoration, and other designated flying days when the Union flag or another appropriate flag is required. The motivation for the proposal is to avoid association with the political connotations that have been attached to the flying of the Union flag.

A resident noted that the Parish Council has a lease agreement with Orleton Village Hall for the flagpole that specifies which flags may be flown and may not include the Herefordshire flag. Ward Cllr Hurcomb noted that UK government guidance specifies that the Union flag, and not the St George's flag, should be flown on St George's Day. This would only be relevant if the lease references government guidance, however. Other points noted from the government guidance: county flags may be flown; two flags may be flown from a single pole provided the Union flag takes precedence; and the flying season runs from 1 March (St David's Day) to 30 November (St Andrew's Day). Cllr Simmons proposed that the Flag Policy be approved in principle, subject to review with UK government guidance and the terms of the lease agreement with the Village Hall. Councillors **APPROVED** this motion and a final revised policy will be brought to the June 2026 meeting.

- 22. Matters for Inclusion on the Next Agenda:** No matters were noted other than the ones already discussed.
- 23.** It was noted that the next ordinary meeting will be held on **Thursday, 18 June 2026, at 6.00pm** at Orleton Village Hall.

24. Closed Session

24.1. Pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, it was resolved to pass a motion to exclude the Public and Press from the meeting to discuss agenda items 24.2, 24.3 and 24.4, on the grounds that the matters involve individuals who should not be identified in a public forum.

24.2. Appointment of a Parish Footpaths Officer: Councillors discussed the appointment of a Parish Footpaths Officer. It was **AGREED** to appoint Martin Bradford and Alex Green as joint Parish Footpaths Officers, subject to the clear understanding that they hold no spending authority and that any request for expenditure must be submitted to the Parish Council through the liaison councillor in advance of any commitment being made. It was also **NOTED** that the question of a budget line for footpath maintenance will be considered during the October budget-setting process.

24.3. Parish Council Representative for Public Rights of Way: It was **AGREED** that Councillors Tipping and Wetton will share the role of PC liaison for Public Rights of Way.

24.4. Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) Membership Renewal: Following discussion, councillors **RESOLVED** not to renew membership at this stage, for the Clerk to research other options for advice and training, and to review the item at the July 2026 meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

APPENDIX 1 TO AGENDA

STANDING ORDERS & DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENTS TO BE REVIEWED as part of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

The following are set up as regular payments made automatically through the Parish Council's current bank account with Unity Trust Bank.

Regular payments are included in monthly bank reconciliations; however, they will not be individually specified on each PC meeting agenda unless there is a change to be noted and verified.

Payee	Description	Amount (£)	Frequency
HMRC – Direct Debit	Employer's PAYE	Variable (as advised by Autela Payroll Services)	Quarterly* verified at PC meeting following payment
ICO – Direct Debit	Information Commissioner's Fee	47.00	Annual
Unity Trust Bank – Direct Debit	Service Charge	7.00	Monthly
Microsoft – Card Payment	Office 365	Variable (annual increase)	Annual* verified at PC meeting following payment
Scribe	Accounting Software	44.40	Monthly