

BISHOPSTONE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting
held on Wednesday 13th May 2026 in Stretton Sugwas Village Hall
Web site address: <https://bishopstonegroup-herefordshire-pc.gov.uk>

PRESENT: Cllr. R Morgan; Cllr. Muriel Holmes; Cllr. Serena Crump; Cllr D Hadley; Cllr L Handscomb; Cllr A Russell; Cllr C Draper; Cllr H Birch and Cllr S Keefe.

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs Lesley Hay (Parish Clerk) and Ward Cllr D Hitchiner.

One member of the public.

Chairman welcomed those present to this the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

1.To Elect Chairman.

1.Cllr S Crump was proposed, seconded and unanimously re-elected as Chairman. Cllr Crump signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Chairman form.

2. Parish Councillor vacancies.

2.1 The Chairman accepted, with regret, the resignation of Cllr R Morgan. Before moving on to the official business of the meeting – the Chairman expressed a huge vote of thanks to Cllr Rosemary Morgan for the time; dedication and effort that she has given during many years as Councillor to Bishopstone Group Parish Council.

2.2. The Clerk reminded Councillors with regard to the legally required 6 month attendance rule (not 6 meetings).

3. Elect Vice Chairman. Cllr A Russell was unanimously elected as Vice Chairman.

4. Elect Responsible Finance Officer - Lesley Hay as RFO was re-elected.

5. Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr C Taylor; Cllr N Richards and Ward Councillor D Hitchiner.

6. Disclosure of Interests. Disclosable Pecuniary, Non- Disclosable, Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary interests plus written requests for dispensation – no declarations made.

6.1. All Councillors declared that there were no new or changed interests to their originally declared register.

7. Election of Council Representatives

7.1 Footpath Officers –

Proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed -

Bridge Sollars – Cllr C Taylor

Byford - Cllr M Holmes

Bishopstone – no one officially elected – to be advertised on the Notice Board.

Mansell Gamage - Cllr N Richards

Kenchester – Cllr D Hadley and Cllr S Crump.

7.2 Planning Officers - as per parish

The Clerk reminded those present that notification of all Planning Applications affecting the parishes are emailed to the clerk.

As previously agreed, a Councillor - together with another Councillor (as required) - will arrange to visit all planning application sites. The site meeting will be arranged at a convenient time and will provide an opportunity to discuss the proposed plans with the applicant.

This information would then be reported back to the next Parish Council meeting for discussion and - if required - a comment submitted to the Planning Officer.

8. Ward Councillor David Hitchiner's Report - May 2026

Parish Matters

Speed conditions attached to Bridge Sollars Road.

I will be interested in having your feedback on this subject.

Most of the area of concern is in Madley Parish Council area. I have had some informal discussion with some of their Parish Councillors. Concerns were raised about the need for a limit over the whole length of the road. Weight limits are difficult to enforce due to the need for access by HGV's to farms who need access to the road.

Councillors may also have views of the possibility that traffic may increase on this road if the Southern Relief Road is built and until the rest of a Western Route is completed (if ever). This may be the case because the quickest route from Bishopstone to Rotherwas might be along the Bridge Sollars Road because this avoids the City Centre and the Greyfriars Bridge. I have made enquiries of the Council who have no data on this impact and are rather dismissive about this. I have no concrete evidence myself.

County Council matters.

New Chief Executive

This is a very important appointment especially given the tight financial position. A new CEX has been appointed who has experience of being CEX of a Council with a budget larger than ours. He has been very open about the circumstances of his leaving his previous Council which was after he fell out when a new Leader was appointed. He had been in post for 6 years under various Leaders. The appointment was recommended by the Employment Panel which is made up mainly of the Group Leaders. The current CEX leaves on 25 June. He has led the Council through recovery from the OFSTED inspection and a period of cost cutting. Cost cutting is never easy but he did not shirk from making difficult decisions. He also made some good appointments to senior positions as well as encouraging the development of junior staff and apprentices.

Council AGM

This takes place on Friday 22 May when a vote takes place on the appointment of the Leader, Chair and various Committee chairs. I am not aware of any proposed changes.

New Public Realm Contract

This starts on 1st June. There has been a lot of consultation with Ward Councillors about improving the service and especially the recording of road defects and progress with their repair. The Summer is an opportunity to put a system in place. The winter will be the real test.

Southern Relief Road

The Cabinet approved assessment criteria for the Business Case. The BC should be published in June.

Herefordshire Histories Festival 9th to 25th May.

I would appreciate your support for this Festival. There are more events this year than last. Please have a look at the website.

Cllr David Hitchiner

Bridge Sollers to Madely Road

Following a detail email (circulated) a concerned resident attended the meeting to bring Councillors up to date with regard to his concerns regarding the Bridge Sollers to Madley Road. (also mentioned in the Ward Councillor's report).

To summarise in brief points the issues raised last evening:

- We have no report or visibility of any actions taken following the meeting with Police and Council Traffic Officers last August
- The issue remains that an excessive number of vehicles continue to use the C1098 at excessive speeds
- Average speed across the full length of the road is not a good measure; there are many points where 40mph is still too fast
- I believe there is reason to revisit the 2018 study that recommended no action on the following grounds:
 - DfT guidance on setting speed limits (Circular 02/13) was revised in 2024, changing the approach to determining what the speed limit for a road like the C1098 should be
 - Traffic has increased significantly since the data gathered for the 2018 study and it's likely to continue increasing until/unless a second river crossing is built in Hereford
 - Accidents continue, particularly at the junction with the A438, which is now being tracked as an accident cluster site
- I intend to raise with Madley Parish Council and David Hitchener is supportive

- I also intend to initiate a petition/questionnaire, to gather the views of those living along the road

Personal email addresses

Cllr S Keefe very kindly agreed to liaised with Mark Millmore (Eyelid Productions) with regard to setting up each Councillor with their new personal .gov.uk email address. To remain on the agenda as an on-going item.

Bishopstone Defibrillator

Cllr A Russell very kindly agreed to take over monitoring the Defibrillator in the telephone box in Bishopstone. Cllr R Morgan handed over the documents and will contact The Circuit to remove her name and add Cllr Russell's details as the first line of contact.

8.4 The Chairman closed the Open session

9. The Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 11th March 2026 were agreed to be a true record and it was voted and unanimously agreed that they be adopted and signed by the Chairman.

10.Finance Matters:

10.1. Schedule of Payments for April had been circulated and it was unanimously agreed to pay all outstanding invoices for April 2026.

End of year Bank Balances had been circulated together with copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/2026.

10.2 The Annual Governance Statement for 2025/2026 was agreed and accepted by Council. The External Audit Form was duly signed by the Chairman and the Clerk as Responsible Finance Officer.

10.3 The Annual Accounts for 2025/2026 had been audited and these were agreed and accepted by Council. The External Audit form was completed and signed by the Chairman and Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer.

10.4 The Certificate of Exemption was signed and together with the Contact details will be returned to the External Auditor

The Clerk informed those present that all documentation will be submitted to the external auditor, and will be uploaded onto the website as appropriate and displayed on the village notice boards within the appropriate timescale.

10.5 The Clerk explained that Robert Taplin had kindly agreed to remain as internal auditor for financial year 2025-2026 to enable the Parish Council to appoint a replacement. The Clerk explained that Miss Gwyneth Owen (retired solicitor from Dilwyn) had very kindly

offered to take on the role of internal auditor. It was unanimously agreed to appoint Gwyneth Owen as Bishopstone Group PC's internal auditor for 2026-2027

10.6 It was unanimously agreed to make a donation of £50.00 as a gift for the internal auditor – the Clerk to purchase a voucher and card of thanks.

11. Official documents:

The Clerk explained that there had been no amendments during the past year but that a Transparency Policy and an IT policy had been added.

After discussion, it was agreed to adopt the above documents and to adopt the newly revised Risk Register.

All Councillors present agreed to abide by the Code of Conduct. Email or paper copies are available via the Clerk.

11.1 The annual insurance renewal policy had been received. As there was no increase in the policy, it was agreed to accept and for the Clerk to settle the invoice before the 1st June 2025.

12. Lengthsman/Highways/Footpaths. The Clerk confirmed:

12.1 Lengthsman purchase order received

12.2 PRoW Grants – Purchase Orders received.

12.2.1 PRoW application submitted and approved – Bishopstone BN8

12.3 Drainage Grant applications

12.3.1 Application: Clee House Byford ;C1097 Kenchester triangle;U73025 Kenchester

12.4 It was confirmed that several parishes had already had their litter picking day.

However, there was discussion on future parish' litter picking' days. Cllr S Keefe proposed that this should become much more of a community event – and it was agreed to add this to the November agenda with a view to agreeing a community litter picking day in February/March before the vegetation starts to flourish. This will be advertised on the various Parish Notice Boards with a view to encouraging residents to take part in a community event.

13. Brief update on 'Making space for Nature in our Parish'

Over the past year, the areas of verges where wildflowers have been planted in Byford, Kenchester and Bishopstone continue to be maintained with further plants added to boost numbers. As a council, it would be good to showcase what residents in each of the parishes are doing to increase biodiversity of wildlife. Sarah Keefe will ask each parish for their input and offer wildflowers and advice for any resident who wants follow suit.

14. Planning – App No: 260901 – The Steppes Bishopstone – after discussion – no objections raised.

A late planning application had been received for:

Planning Consultation - 261187 - Land off A438 adjacent Belt Wood, Monnington on Wye, Byford, Herefordshire HR4 7LB

DESCRIPTION: Change of use of redundant mushroom farm to commercial yard.

The description was considered to be somewhat vague – and, unfortunately, there was no detailed information available on the planning website prior to the meeting. It was agreed to wait until more information is available before making an comment.

15. Items for discussion at next agenda (no discussion) Litter picking (November)
Madley to Bridge Sollers Road.

16. Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 8th July 2026 in the Meeting Room.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20p.m. Refreshments were served and enjoyed - with many thanks to Cllr Crump; Cllr Holmes; Cllr S Keefe and Cllr Birch.

Signed:

Date: