

Little Comberton Parish Council

2026/1

Parish Council Meeting - Minutes Wednesday 14th January 2026, 7.30pm Village Hall

Parish Councillors Present: N Jamieson, C Rabbette, D Smaylen, D Smithson & N Smithson.

District Cllr B. Hardman, County Cllr A. Hardman.

Clerk/RFO: Nicola Harding

In attendance: Two parishioners

1. Apologies

Received from Cllr Schmitz.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

3. Parishioner's Comments

A question was raised regarding the status of Wychavon District Council's five-year housing supply, given the inspector's conclusion of the South Worcestershire Development Plan pending in early 2026. Although once ratified, planning inspectors have confirmed that the three South Worcestershire Councils will have enough land to resist inappropriate housing development in the future, offering greater protection to communities, further government changes are predicted, which could likely result in a 'tilted balance' effect in the Autumn towards planning approvals.

4. Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 12th November 2025

Proposed Cllr N. Smithson, seconded Cllr Smaylen, all in favour to approve the minutes as a true record.

Further to a previous report relating to a traffic collision at the junction of the B4084 with Cooks Hill & Wick Road, as reported at the November 2025 meeting, Cllr Rabbette noted that vegetation had now been cut back in the area, although some time after the incident. Cllr A. Hardman confirmed that he had inspected the area with WCC's Senior Highways Liaison Manager and requested the landowner's permission to flail the hedging. The landowner will also be requested to cut back the trees in order to further improve visibility at the junction.

5. Progress reports from Parish Activities - brief updates:

a. Lengthsman: Updates were shared from the latest December timesheet received. Work undertaken on verge grips and gullies has maintained the drains and footpath clearance and sign cleaning has been undertaken. Cllrs revisited the phone box item regarding refurbishment of the exterior paintwork. An approximate quotation had been provided by the lengthsman, excluding materials, however it was suggested that this may be a suitable project if there were any willing village volunteers available. It was agreed to make an approach and circulate a message to the village in the first instance, and the lengthsman could be approached to complete the task in the Spring, should volunteers not be available.

Action: Cllr N. Smithson & Cllr Jamieson.

b. Highways: white lines reinstatement – An update had been received from WCC Highways and shared with the Council, confirming that the incomplete lining was due to Severn Trent works in the vicinity when the line painting was being completed. The street works team have been requested to re-attend and complete the task in the Spring.

Action: .

Street Market: A meeting will be held in the near future to discuss the next event in May 2026. It was confirmed that the date clashes once again with the Velo cycling event, therefore the Council has been requested to liaise with the Local Policing Team to discuss traffic management on the day. As a police drop in session is planned for Saturday 17th January, 2pm at Great Comberton Village Hall car park, it was suggested that this may be a suitable opportunity to discuss this further, depending on Cllr availability.

Action: Cllr Rabbette/Cllr N. Smithson. Footpaths/PRoW: Footpath # 513b has been successfully cleared and well reinstated.

Cllrs revisited the 'double hedges' footpath issue which had been previously raised by a parishioner concerning groundworks to lay a roadway along the bridle path. Although the footpaths team have confirmed they have no concerns in respect of the public bridleway access, it was proposed to liaise with the Parish Footpath Warden to check further.

Action: Cllr Jamieson to make contact with Footpath Warden.

Permissive Footway: Next steps and solutions were discussed regarding Cllr D Smithson's draft proposals for a permissive footpath inside the hedge along Pershore Road near Portas Cottages, to enable safer access for these residents entering the village on foot. It was agreed that in the first instance, contact needs to be made with the farming tenant of the adjacent field, in order to outline the Council's proposals and seek potential permission from the landowner.

Action: Clerk to make contact with land agent and forward tenant's contact details to Cllr D. Smithson.

c. Trees: Wick Road replanting – three of the trees infested with mistletoe have been removed and a parishioner has offered a tree donation as one of the replacements. The Clerk awaits advice sought from a local tree surgeon regarding suitable species to replace and will pursue ahead of the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to pursue advice from the tree surgeon and share with the parish tree warden.

Following a discussion at the November 2025 meeting, it had been confirmed by a Cllr that following hedge removal many years ago in fields on either side of Wick Road which had caused local concern, the fence had been widened by the landowner between the normal highway verge and field boundary, to enable an avenue of trees to be planted along Wick Road, which was completed soon after. To the best of the Cllr's knowledge, the parish council has not had to apply for a licence when a tree has had to be replaced in the verge along Wick Road, or a new tree planted in a gap, as the marginal area between the highway verge and the fences along Wick Road is wide enough to accommodate large field trees. The trees are periodically cut back by the owner of the adjoining fields, with the Parish Council taking responsibility for inspecting the trees and undertaking any significant works. There has therefore not been a question of the County Council being asked to maintain them, and only a metre-wide verge strip on the side of the highway is cut as part of the routine mowing schedule.

Attention was also drawn to hanging branches on trees near the bench along Wick Road. It was agreed to seek advice from the tree warden.
Action:

Following a request for the Council's consideration of the removal & re-siting of a tree off Wick Road, due to its size and proximity to National Grid wires, it was noted that as this tree may have been planted by a parishioner, that this should be raised with them as a matter of courtesy before any further action is discussed and agreed.

Action: Cllr Rabbette to liaise and provide further updates.

e. Water testing: Cllr Smaylen provided updates regarding testing in the parish and is liaising with another village volunteer and those in Great Comberton. A new kit has been obtained and suggested areas to test locally were discussed and agreed.

f. Parish Council owned emails & Website transition: updates had been received from Great Comberton Parish Council regarding quotations from email and website providers specific to the Council sector. Next steps were considered and following a discussion, it was agreed that the Parish Council would initiate the Council owned email transition in this financial year, in line with legal requirements set out in the 2025 Practitioner's Guide regarding Council data & Digital compliance. The website transition will be set up in early Spring during the next financial year and this expenditure has been accounted for in the draft 2026/27 budget, as reported under Finance items 9d/e.

g. Airband pole removal: following a request from the Parish Council to the local MP for possible intervention with this ongoing issue, although a response had been received in September 2025, it was noted that there had been no subsequent updates. It was agreed to make new contact to request further intervention and to copy in the local Ward member.

Action: Clerk/Cllr B. Hardman.

6. Severn Trent sewage issues

Following recent drainage issues affecting a number of villagers when the main sewer was blocked by tree roots, it was noted that Severn Trent had attended and these blockages have been partially resolved, with further scheduled works pending. Given the possibility that there might be more demand in the future, Cllr Jamieson has investigated the local drainage system further, using Severn Trent plans obtained. A summary of findings was shared, as it was discovered that the village sewage and water system is antiquated, with limited pipe capacity for the number of homes serviced, a problem typical within villages nationally. Cllrs agreed to share these concerns to remind villagers of collective actions that can be taken to protect the local water waste system. District Cllr Hardman suggested that a log of any issues is kept, alongside photographs, as evidence to build up a case as data is essential and the problem is prevalent in the District. This was agreed in the short term, ahead of requesting a check of the sewers and establishing any planned upgrades with Severn Trent as a longer term solution.

Action: Cllr Jamieson to summarise findings and circulate to villagers. Issues to continue to be reported to the Parish Council for logging, Cllr Jamieson to liaise with a Severn Trent manager within the next year.

7. District and County Councillor's reports:

District Cllr Hardman:

- Local Government Reforms: Ahead of the government's consideration and approval of a one or two tiered unitary model for Worcestershire around Easter time, Wychavon District Council is currently considering special legacy projects in the district to be funded ahead of the transition.
- Water testing: It was suggested that the local village testing volunteers might consider linking with representatives from Great Comberton, Beckford & Bredon parishes to share information and compare wider data obtained. Cllr Hardman agreed to liaise with Cllr Smaylen as testing will shortly be commencing in Little Comberton Parish.
Action: Cllr Hardman/Cllr Smaylen.
- Bredon View Holiday Park: Updates were provided following the recent planning committee meeting held at Wychavon on 8th January. It was confirmed that the current planning application pending for an additional 145 units had been deferred by the committee, given that the description of the development was unclear and the site boundary was not aligned with the site proposal. Further information has therefore been requested and the application is scheduled to be reconsidered by the Committee in February or March 2026.

County Cllr Hardman:

- County Council 2026/27 budget: Exceptional financial support will be required to cover the overspend in Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND). It was confirmed that Worcestershire has the third lowest Council Tax rates nationally, however next financial year the Council Tax charge will incur a 10% rise.

8. Planning

W/25/00444/FUL: Bredon View Holiday Park Estate at, Great Comberton Golf Club, Pershore Road, Great Comberton: the application was deferred by the planning committee on 8/1/26 and will be reconsidered once revised information requested has been provided.

Action: Clerk to notify Cllrs once a new date has been confirmed.

Morgan Elliot: Following a request for the opportunity to meet with Council members directly, all available information received was circulated to villagers on 23rd October 2025 regarding a future application for a small scale development in the parish. A formal application remains pending via Wychavon District Council, at which point final plans & documentation will be available online for consideration & comment.

There are no further updates to report at present, however these will be circulated to the village once received.

W/25/02773/HP:10 Orchard Drive: Demolition of existing conservatory & erection of a single storey rear extension and associated works – comments of support were submitted to WDC on 9th January 2026.

9. Finance

a) Current Balances at 7th January 2026

Treasurer's Account:	£14,270.27
TOTAL	£14,270.27

b) Payments to report since the November 2025 meeting:

RBL Poppy appeal: wreath and donation 2025	£45.00
Hall hire: GCPC	£7.00
Salary: December 2025	£439.40
Salary: January 2026	£439.40
Clerk's expenses: December 2025 & January 2026	£24.00
S Blunsom: Tree removals Wick Road	£360.00

Payments to authorise following the meeting:

Grass-cut (ii) Memorial Garden	£125.00
Grass-cut (ii) Church	£125.00
January VH hire	£13.00

TOTAL **£1,577.80**

Proposed Cllr N. Smithson, seconded Cllr Smaylen, all in favour to approve the payments presented.

c) Bank reconciliation & Budget Review (iii) 8 December 2025: The Clerk had prepared and circulated the third quarterly review of the 2025/26 budget which was summarised and discussed. Cllr D. Smithson signed the latest quarterly reconciliations following verification of their accuracy. The expenditure budget is currently positive and in line with the income budget, pending potential further expenditure before the year end on 31st March 2026 for tree removal.

Action: Clerk to monitor and complete actual figures at the year-end to be reported at the April meeting.

d) Proposal to approve 2026/27 budget & resultant precept request: Suggestions for the 2026/27 budget were circulated in advance of the meeting for the Council's consideration. A discussion ensued regarding the proposed budget headings and resultant draft expenditure budget and benefits of the options presented. Although there remains uncertainty around the timings and implications of Local Government Reform proposals, Cllrs noted that based on information currently available, a positive contingency and safe levels of reserves have been accumulated in recent years to factor into the council's 2026/27 budget requirement, and the following was proposed:

Proposed Cllr Jamieson, seconded Cllr Smaylen, all in favour, to approve a total budget requirement of £8,200, resulting in an 7.1% increase. This results in an actual Band D increase of £3.89, compared with 2025/26.

Action: Clerk to forward the council's request to WDC by Friday 23 January 2026.

e) Proposal to consider and approve quotations for parish council owned email & website: Following a discussion under item 5f, proposed Cllr D. Smithson, seconded Cllr Rabbette, all in favour to approve expenditure of up to £450 for the initial set up costs of parish owned email accounts and domain name in the 2025/26 financial year.

Actions: Clerk to make contact with registrar for formal notification and provide any updates to Cllrs in Little Comberton & Great Comberton. Clerk to forward example council IT policy for information.

10. Correspondence

WCC Streetscape Design Guide	The new design guide is available - current requirements/specifications for planning and delivering highway infrastructure in all new planning applications and submitted schemes will now be assessed against the principles and standards outlined in this document: Streetscape and Street Lighting Design Guides, Worcestershire County Council.
SWDP	Consultation running from 6/1/26-17/2/26 on the main modifications to the Local Plan in the revised SWDP via the link: https://swdp-consult.objective.co.uk/kpse/event/D2696043-2BBF-4809-8CB1-E3F20235BF3C
Cotswold National Landscape	New management plan 2025-2030 is now completed – a copy is available via Home - Cotswolds National Landscape

11. Councillor’s reports and items for future agenda: There were no additional items noted.

It was agreed that Cllr Jamieson & Cllr Rabbette would check availability to attend a future meeting with the Village Hall Committee regarding a proposal at the October 2025 meeting for representatives from the village hall committee, sports & social committee and parish council to formally clarify terms of reference & responsibilities in order to further understand the structure of the hall in working collaboratively.

12. Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 11th February 2026 at 7.30 pm – Cllrs present confirmed their availability.

Signed

Date.....

Chairman