MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING OF RUSHWICK PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 7.30 PM AT RUSHWICK VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr Jenkins (Chair) , Cllr Lowe, Cllr Hemsworth, Cllr Staff , Cllr Dovey and Cllr Williams.

In Attendance: Mrs Sharon Dunn (Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer) plus one representative from Corylus Planning & Environmental Ltd.

1. Apologies: Cllr Haywood (Personal) - Accepted and District Cllr Whatley (Personal) - Received

2. Declarations of Interest
   1. Register of Interests: Councillors were reminded of the need to update their register of interest.
   2. To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature - None
   3. To declare any Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda and their nature - None

3. To Consider written requests from Councillors for the Council to Grant a Dispensation (S33 of The Localism Act 2011) written requests to be with the clerk prior to the meeting - None

Notes from Public Question Time are appended to these minutes.

Representation from Corylus Planning & Environmental Ltd

Report from the District Councillor was noted

4. Minutes: Having been previously circulated the minutes of The Parish Council meeting of 09.07.2025 were signed as a true and correct record.

5. Progress Reports: Matters arising None. The Action Plan was reviewed and updated.
   There was discussion surrounding the potential availability of S106 monies, including Public Open Space, money allocated to Rushwick Village Hall and the Cricket Club. The dates when these funds were expected to be spent by. Using some of these funds, the Council highlighted its support for the provision of allotments and offering local support for the benefit of the community. Cllr Hemsworth has arranged a meeting with a representative from the Cricket Club to discuss matters further.

   Now that three bank signatories from the defunct Playscape Committee have been identified and as Cllr Hemsworth recognizing one of the names, he will try to progress the matter further to enable any dormant funds to be returned to the Parish Council.

   Cllr Staff has obtained quotes for two new VAS signs and is seeking approval from WCC Highways at two identified locations (bend at Broadmore Green and by the Whitehall Inn) before progressing further. An update and proposal to feature on the October Parish Council agenda.

6. Parish Lengthsman Scheme: Tim continues to upkeep the Parish and has conducted work this month in Upper Wick Lane, the Bransford Road, Claphill Lane and at the underpass.
   Various requests from Councillors are to be referred to him for action on his next visit to the Parish.

7. Finance
   1. Payment of accounts as per schedule were authorised
   2. Monthly Bank Reconciliation Statement - For Information Only
   3. Conclusion of Audit year ended 31 March 2025 - Reviewed with comments noted.

8. Proposal to investigate the supply and cost of a new Parish Council website following the withdrawal of the MyParish Web Portal from WCC. Cllr Lowe to help progress and obtain a quotation.

9. Reports from representatives: To receive an update
    1. Report from Village Hall Committee: Cllr Griffin-Blugher
    John Leach is now overseeing the Committee as Kay Poole steps back.
    The new defibrillator is up and running.

    2. Footpath Officers report: Cllr Williams
    The dry Summer has limited growth in this parish, so comparatively little path work was necessary.
    The following paths have been inspected and trimmed as required: -
        a. Path 512 (C) - at one end - around the footbridge to the North of Colonel Drive and at the other - at the stile in Claphill Lane.
        b. The path from Bransford Road to Summer Hollow - Path 513 (C). This still needs clearing.
        c. The footbridge at the lay-by near Bransford Bridge. The fence leading to the bridge is deteriorating and will be reported to Countryside Access Services.

    3. Report on Play Area: Cllr Hemsworth - The play area continues to be busy.

    4. School Representative report: Cllr Jenkins
    Mrs. Whetham has been appointed as Headteacher with Miss Lloyd as Deputy Head of School.

    5. Speeding Issues & Crime Prevention Update: Cllr Staff
    Cllr Dovey to write to WCC Highways requesting for an extension to the double yellow lines recently laid at Bransford Road/Grange Lane , as visibility is still extremely poor and hazardous for motorists.

    Cllr Staff in the process of organising dates for further training with the vetted volunteers.

10. Planning: To consider any Planning Applications received before this meeting: -

    Planning Application No: M/25/01366/LB
    Location: Meander Forth Cottage, Tan House Lane, Rushwick.WR2 5SZ
    Proposal: Works to improve the environmental performance, internal condition and functionality of the bathroom ….
    Comments: No objections

11. Update on the Parish Neighbourhood Plan: Cllr Lowe - No progress to report

12. Correspondence for Information: Circulated by the Clerk
- Annual Report - Update from Dame Harriet Baldwin MP
- Town and Parish Survey 2025 - Closes at midday on Tuesday 14th October 2025 - Collative Parish Council response devised from the questions asked - For the Clerk to submit.
- Survey update to Worcestershire County Council's Mobile & Connectivity Problems.
- Worcs CALC inviting views on Survey on Local Government Re-organisation
- WCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan - Comments by midnight on 26 October 2025- Cllr Williams to review
- WCC Withdrawal of the MyParish Web Portal - Please see item 8.

13. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas – None

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm

Signed ……. Chairman…… Date……..

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Phillip Duncan from Corylus Planning & Environmental Ltd, on behalf of Innova Consulting Services, are seeking local views on proposals for residential development at land southwest of Coronation Avenue, Rushwick, approx. 0.8ha. A flier is being sent to approximately 500 homes and businesses within close proximity to obtain views on this outline application (all matters reserved except access) planned for Autumn 2025. The following could be delivered at the site:- 12 dwellings, including affordable housing, access from Coronation Avenue (north), open space and green infrastructure and enhanced Public Right of Way. Councillors expressed their views. Key points concerning allocation (is it within allocation area), affordable housing (quantity and thereof) , parking and access and serious concerns of construction traffic entering the village were expressed by councillors.

The two-week consultation for the proposed development will run from Tuesday 16th September to Tuesday 30th September 2025. Consultation information will be available to view on the consultation website: www.corylusltd.co.uk/rushwick-consultation during the two-week consultation period. Responses to the consultation can be sent via email to landswcoronationavenue@corylusltd.co.uk.

District Councillor – Peter Whatley

This evening (Sept 2nd) MHDC held a special meeting to vote on a recommendation for the quantity of unitary council(s) that will replace the current Worcestershire County Council and all 6 District Councils from 2028. A proposal promoted by the ruling Conservative/ Liberal/ Labour group to have 2 unitary councils, in preference to 1 unitary council, was approved by the majority of councillors.

Sarah Rouse and I did not vote for the proposal because it represents a very poor deal for residents. Consultancy carried out for both Worcs CC and 5 of the 6 District Councils clearly shows that the period before any savings are realised from the reorganisation is 2-3 years if a single unitary is formed, but 7-10 if 2 are formed. It depends on how optimistic you are about both costs and savings. In other words, forming 2 unitaries will not save Council Tax payers a penny for the best part of this parliament and the next. That's assuming the goalposts aren't "whizzed" again. All of this is also before the extra costs of establishing the new Regional Mayor's office are considered. My personal estimate is that in the MHDC area, Band D council tax will rise by 6-12% compared to if the current system was left in place. It is noteworthy that the BBC has also documented that the original proponents of local government reorganisation, the County Councils Network, have revised their forecasts and no longer believe meaningful savings can be achieved. See www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj9wxnlnrxdo

MHDC's ruling group will present the 2 unitary scheme as offering a better chance of local services being kept closer to residents and avoiding the southern part of the county effectively subsidising the northern half. There is some truth in the second statement, but that presupposes that the county council's massive debt is distributed evenly and that neither Westminster nor the Regional Mayor redistribute funding according to need. That is what has happened in the past. The 2 unitary scheme also overlooks the simple fact that all current county services will have to operate for the foreseeable future from existing facilities and with existing staff. In practice, some sharing of personnel will likely be required, with all the joys of contractual arrangements for sharing costs and expenditure that implies. It's analogous to how the UK's railway industry operated during privatisation and the inanities that resulted.

As an aside, it was suggested that having 2 unitary councils would better enable SWDPr to be pushed forward

As a reminder, the timetable for future reorganisation is as follows:

Nov 2025 - final preference from MHDC to the Secretary of State. This will be co-ordinated between the 7 affected councils if possible. It is unlikely there will be unanimity.

By June 2026 - Secretary of State advises what form unitary councils will be. They have the final word on whether 1 or 2 for Worcestershire, or any other preferred arrangement.

April 2027 - elections for "shadow" new unitary/ unitaries. There will be 114 councillors across Worcestershire, 2 each in the current county council divisions. Arrangements for delivery of all current Worcs CC services to be identified and schemes for implementation created/ agreed

March 31st, 2028 - District Councils abolished at midnight. New unitary council/s take over from April 1st

At some point beyond 2028, it's likely that the Boundary Commission will revisit the existing divisions and seek to have fewer councillors overall and/ or more balanced divisions. Another cost to the residents.