



Marden Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 20th May 2025
at 6.30pm in the Community Centre.

Minutes

Present: Cllr David Bennett (Chair)

In Attendance:

Richard James (Clerk)

Chris Wathen & Jess Tidball (Marden Village Trust)

Mike Williams (Marden Recreation Ground)

12 x Members of the Public

1. Welcome by the Chair.

Cllr David Bennett welcomed the speakers and members of the public to the meeting.

2. Receive Apologies.

Apologies were received from Cllr's Peter Hamblin (Ward Member) and West Mercia Police

3. Approved the Minutes of the last Annual Meeting 21st May 2024.

The Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on the 21st May 2024 were adopted and signed as a true record.

4. To receive an update on local policing by the Local Policing Team.

The West Mercia Police Local Policing Team gave their apologies but submitted the following report.

Key Incidents

A. Central Heating System stolen from Caravan

- **Date:** Unsure of exact date, reported on 10/04/2025
- **Location:** Burling Gate Farm, Off Road Storage Ltd, Vehicle Park, Marden, Herefordshire, HR13EU
- A central heating system was stolen from a caravan which was being stored in a storage unit in Marden. It is unknown when exactly it was taken. The estimated cost was over £1k. Unfortunately, due to no CCTV, it was not possible to find the thief.

Safety Advice:

Install motion-sensor lighting, put up CCTV signage, install CCTV (or dummy cameras), keep valuables out of sight, mark your property with smart water or UV pen.

B. Telephone Scam

- **Date:** 11/05/2025

- An unknown scammer called a member of the public pretending to be Lloyds bank, asking them to move £6,000 from their savings to their current account, then to withdraw £10,000 from their current account. Thankfully the victim did not withdraw the money.

Safety Advice:

Always be cautious; never share your personal or financial information unless you're sure who you're speaking with. Hang up on suspicious calls, don't click on unfamiliar links, and talk to a trusted family member or friend before making decisions involving money. Protect yourself by using strong passwords, checking your bank statements regularly and screening calls.

C. Boiler Fire

- **Date:** 12/03/2025
- There was a boiler fire at an address in the Marden area in the early hours of the morning. Fire and ambulance attended the incident; police were not required.

Safety Advice:

Important reminder to test your fire alarm regularly, and make sure everyone in your home knows the escape route in case of fire.

D. Accidental 999 call

- **Date:** 11/05/2025
- An accidental 999 call from a member of the public.

Advice:

We understand accidents happen, but you can help avoid accidentally calling 999 by locking your phone screen and avoiding storing it loosely in bags or pockets. Let's keep emergency lines free for those in real need.

E. Other Incidents include.

- 15/03/2025: Two separate reports of a person driving a vehicle erratically/dangerously.
 - 11/03/2025: 5 unknown people asking suspiciously, looking in people's gardens.
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NHW Reminder – Neighbourhood Matters

We're continuing to promote **Neighbourhood Matters (NHM)** – our local messaging service where residents can receive updates, appeals, and advice **directly from the police**.

You can sign up at: www.neighbourhoodmatters.co.uk – it's free and worth doing.

5. To receive a report from the Chair of the Parish Council.

Cllr David Bennett gave his annual report as follows.

Infrastructure Challenges in the Parish

The parish continues to face persistent challenges related to infrastructure, particularly concerning roads, bridges, drainage, and flooding. This past winter, residents in Marden and the surrounding villages experienced significant disruption due to heavy rainfall and the prolonged repair of Moreton Bridge.

While we have worked to mitigate the impact of these issues through our maintenance contract with the Lengthsman, many of the necessary improvements require funding and strategic support that go beyond the parish's financial capabilities. Unfortunately, the implementation of long-term solutions remains dependent on Herefordshire Council.

We remain committed to advocating on behalf of the parish and will continue to seek opportunities to collaborate with the Council and other agencies to address these pressing infrastructure needs.

The main activities that the Parish Council undertake each year that are funded from the current base precept of £42,000 are:

- a. As a nominated consultee regarding planning applications within the Parish, we can provide comments on behalf of the parish, although we are not the decision-maker. The Parish Council follows the policies and settlement boundaries established in the Neighbourhood Development Plan. This year, there was a slight increase in planning applications submitted for Parish Council review, rising from 17 to 20.
- b. Although little has progressed this year, the Parish Council is responsible for updating the Neighbourhood Development Plan made by referendum in 2016. The update began several years ago, but recent government changes have altered the requirements significantly. Herefordshire's housing targets for 2021 to 2041 are much higher, likely impacting the Parish.
- c. We have used the Lengthsman contract to carry out general maintenance of our roads, footpaths & bridleways, and drainage ditches. In the last two years we have received a grant from Herefordshire Council that has partially offset these costs.
- d. We support the maintenance of the closed churchyard at St Marys.
- e. We support the production of News & Views by covering the cost of printing, net of advertising revenue.
- f. In order to further communicate with parishioners, we maintain and manage both the Parish Council and Community (Marden Links) Websites as well as a Parish Council Facebook page.
- g. We fund Community events throughout the year organised by a working group of volunteers. In the past year we held the Parish Fete and a Race night.
- h. We provide a Community Hub run by a dedicated group of volunteers. We currently run to afternoon sessions twice per week and have had some ad hoc uses of the facility. While numbers attending fluctuate from week to week it still remains a popular with a core of parishioners. The Winter warmer soup lunches have again proven particularly popular. Looking to enhance the offering we will be sending a questionnaire to all households with the May N&V.
- i. We run a self-funding and very popular Repair Café each month. Numbers of items for repair continue to increase so we are always looking out for volunteers who feel that can make good use of their skills.
- j. Over the last two years a small group of volunteers, with help from local business, have developed a Community Garden to the rear of the Hub. It has drawn much attention as it has been developed. More and more parishioners are offering donations of plants, tress, equipment and even a greenhouse. The garden will be formally opened at the end of this month with a BBQ and all are welcome.

- k. We organise a twice year litter pick supported by volunteers and workers from S&A. We should also thank a number of individuals who clean areas of the village on an ad hoc basis.

It should be noted that nearly all activities conducted by the Parish Council depend on the assistance of volunteers. The Parish Council sincerely appreciates those who generously dedicate their valuable time to support the community.

The remainder of the precept, £13,500, has been used to fund the development of the new Parish Hall.

Looking to the coming twelve months

There remain two major challenges for the Parish Council

1. The New Parish Hall

You all will have seen the rapid start to the main development at New House Farm. S J Roberts were appointed as contractor by Citizen Housing in January to build the 90 houses.

The contract for the build of the new hall was put out for tender earlier this year. Three contractors bid for the contract and following analysis and advice from our Architect it is hoped to agree an appointment at tonight's Parish Council meeting.

We are still on target to open the new Hall no later than April next year.

The building of a new hall will allow the community to fully the facilities, the Academy to add a desperately needed new classroom and the Preschool its dedicated, enhanced space within the grounds of the Academy.

2. Neighbourhood Development Plan

- The Parish Council and Neighbourhood Development Group reviewed and responded to several consultation papers released by Herefordshire Council in 2022. However, Herefordshire Council has put the Local Plan on hold while it reviews the key objectives for 2021 to 2041.
- This situation has been further complicated by changes in government and their approach to housing targets over the plan period. The Government's target for Herefordshire increased from 16,100 to 27,060, a 70% rise. Consequently, Herefordshire Council no longer has a five-year land supply and must restart the planning process.
- The update/revised Local Plan, Regulation 18 Consultation, indicated a significant shift in evaluating Marden's sustainability. It transitioned from being one of the most sustainable rural parishes with anticipated housing growth to a parish with recognized issues of flooding and limited access to the major road network, thus requiring minimal to no housing development over the plan period.
- Unfortunately, with Herefordshire's Local Plan starting anew and less than a five-year land supply, as well as our NDP being outdated and therefore having limited weight, the Parish is susceptible to speculative and possibly unwelcomed development.
- We have been given a tentative target increase of 58 houses. However, this figure could change before the Local Plan is finalized.
- Herefordshire Council aims to submit the Local Plan for examination by January 2028. The advice for Parishes is to consider carefully before proceeding ahead of the Local Plan.

- In the coming months, the Parish Council will determine the best course of action, developing a timeline and a costed plan. This phase will likely include a public meeting or questionnaire to gauge the views of the Parish. A new working/steering group terms of reference will be developed to move the plan forward.

In Conclusion

A Special Thank You – Sally Postlethwaite

On behalf of the Parish Council and all parishioners, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Sally Postlethwaite, who is stepping down from her role as Footpath Officer after five years of dedicated service. Sally's tireless efforts in maintaining and improving Marden's Public Right of Way network have left a lasting legacy. Thanks to her commitment, our extensive footpath network stands as a true credit to the parish—a fantastic asset for both residents and visitors alike. Sally will be greatly missed in her official role, though she assures us she'll still be out walking the paths, secateurs in hand. We are extremely grateful for all she has done for the community.

Finally, I would like to thank councillors and other working group members who give their time voluntarily, the Clerk for ensuring the Council runs smoothly and lawfully. A special thank you to those parishioners who continue to volunteer to be part of the Parish support network, the Tree Warden and, finally, you, our parishioners, for your ongoing support, we have much to do in the coming year.

6. The receive a report by the Marden Recreation Ground Trust.

Mr M Williams presented the following report.

Business as usual is the best way to describe 2024/25.

The playing fields provides play equipment, a full-sized football pitch, a changing room building with shower and w.c facilities, a multi-use games court and a tennis court. The football pitch is hired for junior football and the use of the field is shared with Marden Primary

Academy during term time and also accommodates Parish fetes and events.

In recent years there has been investment in surfacing, play equipment and court fencing.

Maintenance of the facility is predominantly undertaken by a grounds maintenance contractor under a contract managed by the Academy. Trustees have engaged the services of a local grounds contractor to undertake strimming and supplementary mowing to ensure the facility is well presented for competitive junior football and for community use.

The play equipment receives a formal inspection annually and Trustees undertake interim inspections. The equipment remains in generally good condition. A replacement swing seat was purchased this year and was fitted by Trustees.

The play equipment is well used, and we have the exciting opportunity of adding to the existing equipment when the Section 106 funding associated with the New House Farm development becomes available. Initial thoughts are to provide some equipment for older children, more equipment for toddlers and perhaps some outside gym equipment. The installation of rubberised safer surfacing is also being considered. The tennis court requires re-surfacing, and this will be undertaken as further funding becomes available through the Section 106 agreement.

Periodic access to the Playing Field is sought formally by Shared Access, operators of the telecoms mast.

Insurance cover for the facility is provided at an annual premium cost of £753. Income from football pitch hire is projected to be £1005.00. Grounds maintenance costs for the year total £1354. Utility costs totalled £544. Balance at the bank is £10,948 with £900 of pitch hire fees due and £318 in cash.

7. To receive a report from Marden Village Trust.

Mrs Paula Barrett presented the following report.

There were 6 meetings held in 2024 where matters of a CIO, cleaning, housekeeping, Centre bookings, lease agreements for current facility and future facility. These minutes once approved at the subsequent meeting were then placed onto the Marden Parish Links website for public viewing.

In spite of rising costs and bills the MVT accounts have held up well throughout the year with the MVT committed only to necessary spending.

The MVT has set up a new CIO trust ready for when we have a new facility and change from the MVT / to MPT.

In the near future we as the MVT will be given our 1-year notice to leave Marden community centre and hand back to Marden Primary Academy.

The AGM was held in November where all 5 previous trustees were re-elected with no other offers of new trustees nominated.

8. To receive a report from Marden Consolidated Charities.

The Chair read out the following report on behalf of Mrs J Keating.

Marden Consolidated Charities is a very old charity established in the 17th century to provide grants and one-off help to parishioners in sudden or specific real financial need. There are three main accounts: The Charity of Joan Lingen, The Charity of Blanche Lingen and Marden Consolidated Charities which is an amalgamation of several smaller village charities.

We did not make any grants during the year.

I attach our accounts for the year which have been independently examined by Mrs Eileen Lloyd to whom I am very grateful.

We had £2,627.89 in the bank on 30.11.2024. Our income for the year was £152.97.

The charity is administered by village trustees, and the chairperson is Rev Paul Roberts. The other trustees are Mr John Ashcroft, Mrs Jean Price, Mrs Janet Hewlett, Mrs Jenny Thomas and Mrs Jane Keating. We are regulated by the Charity Commission.

I have been the secretary to over 20 years but now live in Weobley so will not be able to continue in this role and must now resign as Secretary. I will attend the next AGM of Marden Consolidated Charities to hand over the charity to a new secretary and will of course help to ensure a smooth transition. It would be very good to have a secretary actively involved in Marden village life.

9. Open session for the parishioners.

The chair opened up the meeting to the Public for questions.

Q1. Why are the Marden Village Trust Minutes not on the website.

A1. The Marden Village Trust only publishes approved minutes.

A resident asked to address the meeting and made the following statement.

“They would like to recognise all the good which the Parish Council is doing in the village. The Parish Council engages well with all the parishioners and keeps everyone well informed on matters.”

There were no more questions, and the Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and closed the meeting at 7.20pm.

Signed
Cllr David Bennett
Chair of the Parish Council