



Marden Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting at 7.30 pm on 16th September 2025 at
Marden Community Centre.

Minutes

Present:

Cllr David Bennett (Chair), Cllr Kate Ryan, Cllr Lesley Hayward, Cllr Rod Lees & Cllr Richard Paske.

In Attendance:

Due to health issues the Clerk was not in attendance and the councillors present nominated the Vice Chair to take notes on the meeting and the Chair would write them up in the standard format and send to the Clerk.

The Ward Member and 1 Member of the Public.

1. To receive Apologies.

To Note – *Apologies were received from Cllr Chris Morgan and Cllr Paula Barrett,*

2. To receive declarations of interest and written requests for dispensations.

To Note – *There were no declarations of interest and written requests for dispensations.*

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 19.08.25.

Resolution – *The draft minutes of the 19.08.25 were adopted and duly signed by the Chair.*

4. Open Session.

The Ward Member indicated that road works at Old School House would likely start later this month, and he would be monitoring closely. A discussion took place regarding the apparent absence of the BB Locality Seward who represents Marden. The Ward Member will meet with the Locality Steward in the near future and will discuss why drive rounds have stopped and what can be done regarding the increasing number of potholes throughout the Parish. The Ward Member confirmed the date for the meeting to present an update of Child services to the surrounding parishes. The meeting will take place in the Marden Village Hall at 7:30pm on 2nd October 2025.

To Note – *The Ward Member report was noted by Councillors*

(Members of Public)

The following questions were raised

Q1. What was the payment made to Lanyard Bowdley.

A1. Solicitor fees for the land transfer and licence to use documents.

Q2. Clarification of the wording of the planning application for the retention of temporary site access.

A2. If the parishioner is unhappy with the use of the word "retention" then the parishioner should contact HC Planning.

Q3. Could someone look at removing the roots that have lifted the path by the hairdressers and make good the tarmac afterwards

A3. The Ward Member will raise this with the Locality Steward when they meet

Q4. What was the architects invoice of £11k

A4. The first of three payments to cover the fees associated with RIBA stages 5 to 7

Three questions were received by email which the Chair agreed to cover under this agenda Item. The questions have been summarised.

Q1. As per the agreement with S J Roberts and the approved letter of intent, can you confirm whether the agreed sum of £30,000 is inclusive or exclusive to the agreed contract build total of £976,421

A1. The contract build sum agreed with S J Roberts is £746,425 and is inclusive of the £30,000

Q2. In the interest of transparency what stage payments will be made to S J Roberts and what the amount will be

A2. On a monthly basis our Quantity Surveyor will assess the labour and materials expended in the prior month, once agreed with S J Roberts the PC will be invoice. The invoice will be approved at the next PC meeting and paid as per normal terms. There are no defined stage payments

Q3. One wonders what the rush is to start the build before funding is in place. Delaying by a few months would avoid the bridging loan costs

A3. In order to completely avoid the need for a bridging loan at least a 6 month delay would be required which would mean the current contract would not be signed. This would result in a need to retender again at a likely cost of up to £10k and an increase in build cost. This has been estimated by our architect as at least 10% of the current contract, £75k

5. Footpaths Officer Report & to Consider actions.

No report this month other than the Ward member has walked the Sutton Wall footpaths with the HC Locality Steward and they deem the footpaths to be adequate.

To Note – The Council noted the update regarding Sutton walls.

6. Finance Matters.

6.1 – Budget Monitoring and bank reconciliation report.

To Note – Council noted the financial summary and bank reconciliation for August 25.

6.2 Bank Accounts – 31.07.25.

6.2a - Unity Main – July - £2,264.46

6.2b - Unity Reserve – July - £584,315.87

To Note – Council noted the Bank Statements.

6.3 - HUB Accounts.

To Note – Council noted the HUB accounts including cash held. £280 cash banked on 8th September relating to Repair Café donations.

6.4 – AGAR section 3

To Note – Council noted the audit final report and were delighted to note that there were no comments made on the accounts.

7. Payments.

	Payments	Net	Vat	Total
7.1	Clerks Salary – September 25	As per Contract		
7.2	D C Gardening – SI-2296	730.00	146.00	876.00
7.3	S Lewis – August Electric for Hub	34.32	0.00	34.32
7.4	PKF Littlejohn – External Auditor	315.00	63.00	378.00
7.5	Signworx – 9266	252.00	0.00	252.00

Resolution – Council agreed to pay all the invoices.

8. Payment made under emergency policy and regular payments.

		Payment	Net	Vat	Total
8.1	D/D	BT – Broadband & Phone – August 25	47.25	9.45	56.70
8.2	S/O	HUB Rent – September 25	450.00	0.00	450.00
8.3	S/O	Community Garden – Rent – September 25	15.00	0.00	15.00
8.4	BACS	Unity Trust Service Charge	6.00	0.00	6.00
8.5	BACS	S Lewis – July Electric	31.01	0.00	31.01
8.6	BACS	C Skyrme – Water – Half year for Hub	44.22	0.00	44.22
8.7	BACS	Lanyon Bowdler Solicitor	4483.00	883.60	5366.60

Resolution – Council agreed all the payments made under emergency policy and regular payments.

9. Planning.

	Application No	Address	Permission sought
9.1	P251091	Land adjacent to New House Farm and Marden Primary School Marden Herefordshire HR1 3EW	Retention of construction site access for 3 year duration whilst adjacent residential development is completed.

Resolution – Council **Supports** this application.

10. New Parish Hall – Update.

10.1 - Update.

The Chair reported that the following key activities had taken place over recent weeks:

1. Land Transfer and Licence to Use Agreement signed 9th September. The land is now owned by the Parish. £5930 received on 14th September from Citizen Housing as a contribution towards the cost of obtaining the temporary entrance.
2. The draft Design and Build contract for a fixed cost of £746425 is with SJR to sign. As of today, they have indicated that with some minor changes they will sign, and work will start onsite on 6th October 2025 with a completion target of 3rd July 2026. 36 weeks plus 2 weeks downtime for Christmas.
3. As of yesterday, the MVT has formally hand delivered a letter relinquishing all the leases on the existing Community Centre. A copy has also been emailed directly to Herefordshire Council's Chief Executive, Senior Lawyer Commercial Property, Senior estates Manager and the Estates Surveyor.
4. Marden Links Working Group has met with the Marden Parish Trust (MPT) to continue discussions on areas of design where we still have influence and the general process of transition from the old community centre to the new parish hall. Some specifics are:
 - a. Kitchen design
 - b. Wall and floor covering colours
 - c. Communication and promotion of the new hall and the trust
 - d. Marden Links WG is currently trialling a hall booking system (Hallmaster) which we will add to the community website. The MPT will look to develop their own website and FB page and will link Hallmaster to it as well. The MPT will be responsible the annual licence cost, currently £295.

Further details are contained in the Parish Hall Newsletter No7 circulated prior to the meeting which will be published on both the Parish Council and Marden Links websites.

To Note – Council noted this informative update.

10.2 – Bridging loan / Resident Loans

1. Unity Bank have shown interested in helping the Parish Council with a project support loan. Based on the current estimated cashflow forecast for the next twelve months the worst case scenario indicates that funding of up to £250k for a max of 9 months would be required. Based on Unity conditions and SJR current spend profile the loan would cost in the region of £15k (includes interest, setup and legal fees). Whatever the cost this would be partially offset by the interest received on the PWL as it is drawn down over the next 6 months. At the current rate of interest (2.25%) this would provide an offset of around £5k.
2. As an alternative, the parish Council is looking at parishioner loans. An article will be in the next N&V requesting expressions of interest. There are several options from loans interest free to loans with interest based on Bank of England Base rate plus a percentage. This process will be run and administered by the Clerk alone as he is the Data Controller under GDPR.
3. A further alternative will be explored to avoid the necessity for short term loan. It is hoped that the Parish Council and MVT with the help / support of the Ward Members will try to arrange a meeting with Herefordshire Council and explore ways of the MVT obtaining early payment of the clawback.

Resolution – The Clerk is instructed to pursue all of the identified loan options

10.3- Newsletter No. 7

To Note – Council noted this informative update and agreed to it be posted on the website.

10.4- The Architect has requested that the Parish Council approve an additional fee of £3420 + vat to cover liaison costs with Citizen housing during the 36 weeks of construction.

Resolution – *Council agreed to this increase in fee but requested that it be invoiced in two equal amounts, one in October 2025 and a second in January 2026.*

11. Working Groups

11.1 Marden Links- The HUB Café, Repair Café and community garden continue to thrive. There will be an event on Saturday 20th September to recognise all the hard work that the volunteers have put in over the last 12 months.

To Note – *Council noted the report.*

11.2 Neighbourhood Development Plan – The chair reported that a number of potential developers had contacted him with proposed plans. One fairly small development at the Farm will be presented at the October Meeting by the developer. A further, larger site, at the Volunteer Inn will be submitted as part of Herefordshire Council Call for Sites which ends on 1st January 2026. Marden's current position, to all developers, is that once Herefordshire Council has advised the Parish of its housing target and the agreed sites to be considered the Parish Council will engage an independent Planning Consultant to analyse a rank site as per defined criteria. The same process adopted for the current NDP.

To Note – *Council noted the report and looked forward to developing an appropriate plan for the full NDP review. Council also requested the Clerk / Ward Member to arrange a meeting (formal or informal) with Herefordshire Council planning to discuss how the parish should proceed in these very uncertain times. Ideally this meeting should involve the other councils in the Ward.*

11.3 Finance & Administration Working Group. The group met to review the draft 2026/27 budget and precept. This was analysed in detail, and the agreed outcome was distributed as papers to this meeting. The Chair confirmed that the full costs and cashflow for the Parish Hall Project had been incorporated in the budget and would be updated for any changes in the coming weeks prior to a proposal for final approval at the October PC meeting. The target is to send to all parishioners as a newsletter and delivered with the December N&V.

To Note – *Council noted and endorsed the draft budget along with the plan to communicate the final draft budget and precept to parishioners prior to final council approval in January 2026.*

11.4 Events – Two events have been proposed for the remainder of this year. 1. There will be a Quiz Night on the 1st November and 2. The popular Christmas Cracker event will return this year and will be held on the 20th December. A proposal to fund this event was made, approval was asked for a budget not to exceed £500.

Resolution – *Council approved a budget of £500 for the Christmas Cracker event and thanked the volunteers who make these events possible*

12. Community

12.1 The chair confirmed that a public meeting, arranged by the Ward Member, will be

held in the Community Hall at 7:30 on Thursday 2nd October. A presentation will be made by Herefordshire Council on Children's Services. All are welcome and it is open to surrounding parishes.

- 12.2 A specific complaint had been received regarding traffic using Walkers Green as a rat run. As we have had several other traffic related complaints the Ward Member will take this issue up.

To Note – Council noted both items and thanked the Ward Member for setting up the meeting and for follow-up associated with the traffic concerns in the parish.

- 13. Grants** – A proposal was put to council to approve a grant for this financial year of £1150 to support maintenance costs associated with the Old Churchyard.

Resolution – Council approved the sum of £1150 for this year but request that evidence of the cost of maintenance be provided in future years

- 14. Action List** – outstanding items were reviewed and updated. It was requested that the Clerk write to Tarmac regarding providing material for the surface of the new parish hall carpark.

15. Future Agenda items

- 15.1 Develop an NDP plan for 2026/27
- 15.2 Develop a Transport plan to use the S106 monies from the New House Farm development
- 15.3 Review new governance documents released by NALC

The Chair closed to meeting to the public at 9:10 to allow councillors to discuss an item of a confidential nature.

16. Employment Matters

- 16.1 Following the published NALC Clerk pay awards for the financial year 2025/26 the Chair proposed that the new rate, which represented a 3.21% increase be adopted immediately and backdated to April 1st 2025.

Resolution – Council approved the proposed increase and that be backdated to 1st April 2025. It was noted that this was within the budget that was set.

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.23pm.

Signed:
Chair of the Council
21st October 2025