



Marden Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 19th May 2026 at 6.00pm in the Community Centre.

Minutes

Present: Cllr Kate Ryan (Vice-Chair Parish Council)
Richard James (Parish Clerk)
Paula Barrett (Marden Village Trust)
Mike Williams (Marden Recreation Ground)
Chris Morgan (Marden Consolidated Charities)
5 x Members of the Public

1. Welcome by the Chair.

The Chair opened the meeting at 6pm sharp and welcomed everyone for their attendance.

2. Receive Apologies.

Apologies were received from;
Mr David Bennett (Chair of the Parish Council)
Cllr Peter Hamblin (Ward Member)

3. Approve the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting.

The minutes were approved.

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

Kate Ryan presented the following report on behalf of the Chair of the Parish Council.

Our parish precept was increased last year to £80,000. Right now, £44,000 of this is used to repay the Public Works Loan associated with the new Parish Hall project. This year has seen a 2.1% reduction in the amount individual households pay and is expected to reduce further over the next few years as homes at Cherry Orchard are sold.

The new Parish Hall is the largest community project for quite some time. Construction started in October last year and the building is now about 60% complete. Many thanks must go to our Architect(s), Citizen Housing and S J Roberts for their help in delivering a hall that meets local needs and within budget.

The original target was for S J Roberts to handover the building to the Parish Council on the 3rd July. Unfortunately, the bad weather over the winter led to a loss of nearly 30 construction days and as a consequence the handover date has

now been moved to the 20th August. We will still hold a community celebration event on 30th August 2026 to formally open the new hall.

It is hoped that the planned village green will be available in late 2027 or early 2028. There will be no additional costs associated with the development of the village green as it will be funded by Citizen Housing as part of the agreement to let SJ Roberts use the land for the site compound throughout the duration of the main site build.

It has taken just over ten years to reach this stage, and the new hall will be a long-term asset owned by the community of Marden. The target is to make the hall available to the current community from the 1st September. A new online booking and invoice system will be available soon.

The main services and activities the Parish Council provides each year (paid for from the current base precept of £36,000) are:

- a.** Planning: we are asked for our views on planning applications in the parish. We can comment on behalf of residents, but Herefordshire Council makes the final decision. We use the policies and settlement boundaries in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) to guide our comments.

Our NDP, like many others, is currently out of date and combined with Herefordshire Council's inability to demonstrate a five year land supply means that it carries reduced weight in the overall decision making process.

We are concerned that changes to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will adversely impact rural parishes like Marden. With our current Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) out of date the parish is more open to speculative development. Our only real argument against over development is that the parish can no longer be classed as "sustainable".

As Herefordshire Council updates its Local Plan, it will confirm the revised housing target for 2021–2041 and publish the results of the "call for sites". This will allow the Parish Council to prepare a new NDP that fits with the updated Local Plan and the NPPF. The development of a new NDP will be a major activity for the Parish Council during 2027 and 2028.

- b.** We help look after the closed churchyard at St Mary's. We also gave a small grant to Amberley Chapel, towards its recent repairs.
- c.** We support News & Views by paying the printing costs which are partially offset by the receipt of advertising income.
- d.** Keeping in touch: we run the Parish Council and the "Marden Links" community websites, we manage a Parish Council Facebook page and this year we produced The Handy Marden Parish Welcome Guide for people who are new to the parish.
- e.** Community events: our volunteers run community events during the year, with donations from some events helping to fund aspects of the new hall. Over the

past year we held a Christmas Cracker, quiz nights and a race night. With the new hall opening in September, we have more events planned in order to introduce the new space to the community

- f. Marden Links Hub: volunteers run afternoon sessions twice a week. In winter, one session becomes the "Winter Warmer" soup lunch. The Hub is also used for other community activities, sewing classes and social prescribing sessions being examples. The new hall will give the team more space and will provide more options for daytime activities during the week.
- g. Repair Café: is run on the 1st Saturday of every month and in the last year has gone from strength to strength. The number of volunteers, and associated skills, has increased over the last year. Bookings have increased and most months we are full to capacity.
- h. Community Garden: the garden has continued to grow and improve over the last year, and the official opening event went very well. Thank you to the landowners for leasing the land to the Parish Council, and to the volunteers who have turned an unused area into a space enjoyed by many parishioners.
- i. Litter picks: we organise two litter picks each year with help from volunteers and workers from S&A. Thank you as well to the people who help keep parts of the village tidy throughout the year.
- j. Infrastructure: we still have significant problems with roads, bridges, drainage and flooding. Heavy rain again this winter caused major disruption for people in Marden and the nearby villages. Our Lengthsman contract (helped by a Herefordshire Council grant) supports day to day work and some short-term measures. However, many larger repairs are beyond the parish budget. We will keep raising these issues and working with Herefordshire Council to seek funding and longer-term solutions.

Our extensive footpath and bridlepath network remains one of our best assets.

In the year ahead, the major areas we will focus on:

1. Getting the most from the new Parish Hall, supporting a full programme of events and activities.
2. Developing a plan, in conjunction with Herefordshire Council and our new footpath officer, to maintain the high stand achieved throughout our extensive footpath and bridleway network.
3. Using S106 money from the Cherry Orchard development to improve road safety, extend the play area and resurface the tennis court.
4. Updating the Neighbourhood Development Plan so it reflects local needs and fits with the emerging Local Plan and the NPPF.

Finally, thank you to all councillors and working group members who volunteer their time, and to our Clerk for making sure the Council runs properly and within the rules. Thank you to the parishioners who volunteer as part of the parish support network and to our Tree Warden. Most of all, thank you to residents for your support. We have a busy year ahead.

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

Mr Mike Williams presented the following report.

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.

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 continue to engage the services of a local grounds contractor to undertake strimming and supplementary mowing to ensure the facility is well presented throughout the year. Costs for this work has totalled £1390.00 over the last year. The play equipment receives a formal inspection annually and Trustees undertake interim inspections. The equipment remains in generally good condition.

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. As reported last year, our 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.

It is important to acknowledge that the whilst the capital investment in new play equipment is welcome it also brings with it an increased responsibility and cost to maintain and ultimately replace which will require the Trust to seek financial support.

Periodic access to the Playing Field is sought formally by Shared Access, operators of the telecoms mast. This is to enable them to maintain the equipment. Insurance cover for the facility is provided at an annual premium cost of £770. Income from football pitch hire totalled £840 for the period April 2025 to March 2026.

There are currently no teams using the facility as the Ladies team folded and we currently have no Teams expressing an interest so hire income will be down for the next period. Water costs totalled £90 and electricity costs totalled £1067. Balance at the bank is £8358 with £255 held as cash, total £8613.

6. To receive a report from Marden Village Trust.

Mrs Paula Barrett presented the following report.

The Marden Village Trust are still looking after all the booking for the Community Hall, it relinquished its lease back to the Herefordshire Council back in September

2025. The New Marden Parish Trust Charity has been set up, which will take over the running of the new Parish Hall from September / October 2026.

The Marden Village Trust will be shortly holding an Emergency General Meeting to transfer the assets to the new Marden Parish Trust.

7. To receive a report from Marden Consolidated Charities.

Mr Chris Morgan presented the following report.

The Annual General Meeting of Marden Consolidated Charities was held in the Hub on 20th March 2026. The audited accounts were approved. It was noted that no grants had been made in 2025-26.

Three new trustees were approved by the meeting: Mrs Paula Barrett; Mrs Lesley Hayward and Mr Chris Morgan. It was noted that Mr John Ashcroft and Mrs Jean Price were retiring after many years of service and best thanks of the meeting were extended to them both. It was further noted that Mrs Jane Keating would retire once the administrative hand over had been completed. The new authorised signatories will be Mrs Lesley Hayward and Mrs Paula Barrett. They will replace Mrs Jane Keating and Reverend Paul Roberts.

It was further noted that the Reverend Paul Roberts would be retiring shortly as a trustee. The best thanks of the meeting were extended to Mrs Keating and Rev. Roberts. In future Mrs Lesley Hayward will be the correspondent with the CCLA and authorised signatory. Mrs Janet Hewlett will additionally remain an authorised signatory to CCLA.

It was agreed to review the safeguarding policy.

8. Open session for the Parishioners.

Q1. Are both the tennis courts going to be resurfaced.

A1. No, one was resurfaced a few years ago, so it will be just the bad one court.

Q2. As the Parish got 2 tennis courts.

A2. No, the one was turned in to a MUGA a few years ago, as tennis has decline over the last 5 years.

The meeting was closed at **6.32pm**

Signed
Chair to the Parish Council
18th May 2027