Stoke Bliss, Kyre and Bockleton Parish Council
Annual Meeting of Stoke Bliss Parish.

Clerk: Carole Hirst

clerk@stokeblissgroupparishcouncil.org.uk

Monday 11th May 2026 at 7.30pm. 7.30 pm meeting closed

Minutes.

Present: Cllr. Stephens (Chair); Cllr. Turner; Cllr. Powell; Cllr. Whybrew; Cllr. Yarnold, Cllr. Williams, Cllr. Adams, Cllr. Daniel Gregory, Cllr. David Gwilt, WCC Cllr. Bowen. Cllr. Ian Best, Christopher Dean Lloyd.

1. Apologies for absence. MHDC Cllr. L. Bruton,
   ABSENT: Cllr. Rea,

2. Approve the Minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting of the 19th May 25. Cllr. Stephens Proposed and Cllr. Whybrew Seconded that the Minutes be approved.

3. Stoke Bliss Group PC Chair Annual Report (Cllr. Mike Stephens)

As Chair of the Parish Council, I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Parish Councils activities over the past year. It has been a period of continued community involvement, practical improvements, and thoughtful transition within the Council itself.

Executive Summary

I have been a Parish councillor now for 2 years with the last year as the Chairman, during this period we are witnessing much change to the Worcestershire Local Authorities administrative structure due to local Government reorganisation and devolution. As a parish council we can not ignore this impending change and must ensure we are able to move forward and carry out the best we can do for our Parishoner's within our local community.

The Parish Council

We are fortunate to have councillors who have extensive knowledge of our parish and community needs. Along with this experience we have been able to welcome 4 new members to our teams, Concillors Best, Lloyd, Gwilt and Gregory who will I am sure add value to our already committed team. We have managed to forge stronger relationships with the local Police team, in particular PC Lee Durran who now attends our quarterly meetings. With the impending change to local government and "One Worcestershire" we have attempted to understand how this change will effect our dealings with local authority and get closer to Justin Bowen a cabinet member and representative of the Tenbury division, our aim is to strengthen our relationship. Councillors now have specific roles such as police liaison, roads and potholes etc.. and report on these activities at our meetings.

It's fair to say not a lot goes on within our Parish, however we encourage

Parishoner's to make contact with councillors and discuss their concerns, we need this dialogue to ensure we can maintain and improve the needs of our community. A reminder of our website where information of our council activities, councillors and minutes of our meetings and future meeting dates,
'https://www.stokeblissgroupparishcouncil.org.uk'

Acknowledgements
As a council we are very grateful that our Clerk Carole Hirst continues to act as our Clerk and guide us through the statutory requirements to ensure that the council runs both efficiently and within best practice. Carole certainly keeps me in check.

We have an exceptionally good "lengthsman" Chris Bunn who tidies up things around our parish with great efficiency and with minimum fuss, thank you Chris.

I would also like to say a thank you to Councillor Yarnold who has been on the council for many a year, who was up until May 2025 the chair and he continues to be part of our team, many thanks Andrew your experience and knowledge is irreplaceable.

Councillor Warren left the council due to his relocating, I would like to thank Warren for his commitment during his time with the council.

Finally thank you to all the councillors, we are all volunteers, but who's dedication is appreciated within the community.

4. Malvern Hills District Councillor Report– (Cllr. Bruton)

Malvern Hills District Council Report (April 2026)

Cllr Lesley Bruton (Tenbury Ward)

It is an honour to serve as the District Council Member to represent the Tenbury Ward. I care passionately about the community, the town and surrounding area because it's my community and my home for nearly 47 years.

Thank you to all the residents' who have supported me and given me encouragement, which is very much appreciated.

The annual town meeting is a great opportunity to recognise the work undertaken by councils at all levels and the important contributions they make to our communities. Thank you to the Town and Parish Councillors who serve our communities, giving many hours of their time for free and they are the grass roots of local government.

The District Council has provided grant funding in the town through several schemes including the Town Centre Support Scheme, Apprentice Bursary, Tourism Scheme, the Malvern Hills Rural Fund and the Community Facility Legacy Grant Scheme. The Town Council was awarded nearly £90k through the Community Facility Legacy Grant scheme towards new play area equipment.

This year, District Councillors were allocated a £1,000 ward budget to support their communities. I supported Tenbury Primary Academy with £350.00 towards new library books, £300.00 towards camping equipment for Tenbury Girl Guides, £200.00 towards a defibrillator for Stoke Bliss village hall and £150.00 towards the Christmas Lights. It is wonderful to be able support children providing life skills and new experiences.

Flood Risk Management Scheme

We will continue to work with the Environment Agency to support residents and businesses to facilitate the provision of property flood resilience measures. The Heritage team have been working closely with the Environment Agency regarding the protection and measures for the listed buildings in the town.

In addition, I am grateful to the Head of Emergency Planning for his support to the town during flooding events and the provision of sandbags provided by the District Council, which were kindly distributed by volunteers.

Together with the Town Council we will continue to lobby the government to provide the necessary funding for the flood risk management scheme.

Local Government Reorganisation

Malvern Hills District Council voted in favour of submitting a two-unitary council proposal to the Government on the 18th of November.

The proposal 'Transforming Worcestershire' sets out the vision for two unitary councils to be created – one covering North Worcestershire and one South Worcestershire – running all services in their area. They would replace the current six district councils and Worcestershire County Council.

The document has been put together in collaboration with Bromsgrove, Redditch, Wychavon and Worcester councils following the Shape Worcestershire public engagement exercise.

Residents were invited to share their views on the proposals and how councils across Worcestershire should be run in the future.

A final decision from the Government is expected in July 2026. Elections for a new 'shadow' authority – or authorities – would then take place in May 2027, ahead of the new arrangements coming into effect on 1 April 2028.

Council Tax & Budget 2026/27

Council at its meeting held on 27th February, approved a net budget of £6,287,208. The Band D equivalent for the District Council has been frozen at £182.60 (no increase). Following the announcement that the Government is moving towards unitary approach to councils, Malvern Hills District Council is budgeting to end its expected lifetime and believes this can be funded within existing budgets.

Malvern Hills District Council has also committed to investing £2 million into council priorities – Health and Wellbeing, Economy and Environment – as well as over £1.3 million to deliver a household food waste collection service across the district.

Household Food Waste Collection

Malvern Hills District Council will be the first council in Worcestershire to deliver a household food waste collection service.

From 5 October 2026, the council will be rolling out the new service gradually in homes across the district.

Residents will be contacted directly and will be provided with everything they will need. They will receive a kitchen caddy, roll of liners, food waste bin for outside and instructions.

Collections will be every week on the same day as the waste or recycling collection. In Malvern Hills, approximately 37% of waste in an average bin is food.

Community and Local Business Investment

The Executive Committee approved a £1 million allocation to support the implementation and delivery of economic development and business support activities during 2026/27 and 2027/28.

A further allocation of £1 million was approved to support the implementation and delivery of community wellbeing priorities and activities.

Community Recognition Scheme

The District Council has received an amazing 128 nominations for our Connected Communities Celebration.

The celebration is to shine a light on the valuable contributions made by individuals, teams, organisations and businesses across the district. Each one will receive a letter of thanks, a special bin badge or framed certificate.

They will also be entered into a prize draw to win a pair of tickets to a special Community Celebration event, taking place in June.

SWDP Review

The South Worcestershire Development Plan was officially adopted by Malvern Hills District, Worcester City and Wychavon District Councils at meetings held at the end of March.

Crucially the councils can now show they have enough land for housing over the next five years, meaning the ‘tilted balance’ which favours the approval of planning applications unless the harms of a proposed development significantly outweigh the benefits – no longer applies. Instead, housing and economic growth must be delivered according to the policies in the SWDPR and planners are in a stronger position to turn down those that don’t.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Residents are being asked for their views on an ambitious plan to end homelessness and rough sleeping across districts in Worcestershire.

The draft strategy sets out how Malvern Hills, Redditch and Bromsgrove, Wychavon and Wyre Forest District Councils will work together over the next five years to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping. Where this cannot be prevented, the councils aim to ensure it is rare, brief and not repeated.

5. Worcestershire County Councillor Report- Cllr. Justin Bowen

This financial year has been perhaps the most challenging that Worcestershire County Council has ever faced. With a debt of more than £600 million, a budget deficit of nearly £50 million, and just 2 weeks of emergency reserves remaining, the Council was on the bring of a S.114 notice, the Local Authority equivalent of bankruptcy.

This led to drastic measures being needed, one of which was to increase Council Tax by 8.98% for 2026/27.

However, alongside this, work has been going on to address some of the structural problems that had led to this situation.

In the directorate for which I am responsible as Cabinet Member for Children's Services, transformation has taken place to address the £60+ million bill being paid every year to private companies to look after Worcestershire children in care.

Following investment in our Worcestershire Fostering service, alongside a complete restructuring of how the service functions, we've managed to increase the number of our own foster carers by nearly 20%, bucking the national trend of decline and going a long way to reversing a fall of 40% over the previous 5 years. This has helped us save more than £12 million in placement costs, up by 30% on the previous year.

Similar changes are coming to both Adult Social Care and Highways over the coming months, as part of a full Transformation Plan for the Council. More details of this will be announced soon.

With the government also due to announce its decision for Worcestershire under Local Government Reorganisation, the year ahead is likely to be the most important one for our county for decades.

Tenbury Division Matters

This year has again been dominated by flooding, roads and community matters.

Flooding

In October, I attended and addressed the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee meeting where £1.8 million was put back into the programme budget for the Tenbury Wells Property Flood Resilience scheme. This was a huge relief, but of course the work now continues to get the scheme implemented. That is the challenge for the months ahead.

I've also been working with the coordinators of the Tenbury Wells Flood Warden Scheme which will be launched soon. This scheme will be another crucial part of flood defence and will show how our community is doing everything we can to protect ourselves – particularly important when it comes to seeking funding in future. To support this, I've connected the coordinators with officers in Highways so that the scheme joins up with County Council flood planning. This is a big step in making sure flood response runs smoothly. I'll also be seeking funding for protective equipment for the scheme's volunteers. More news on this in the months ahead.

Roads

Speeding traffic remains a major problem on many of our roads. Alongside this, speed limits are often felt to be inappropriate for rural roads. Some progress has been made in specific areas, including funding for new Vehicle Activated Signs in places such as Pensax and Great Witley, alongside improved signage in places such as Abberley.

However, the issue remains that County Council policy is driven purely by data, with no consideration of impact on quality of life. In rural areas we often don't have sufficient data to support changes, and this is something I've been trying to address since my election last May.

So, I'm happy to say that that I've now secured agreement from the new Cabinet Member for Highways that there will be a comprehensive review of policy. I have also secured support from Councillors from other rural areas across Worcestershire. My aim for this year is that we will finally achieve the objective that our community will have a much bigger say on the speed limits on our roads. I will provide updates on this as it progresses.

Potholes have continued to plague our area, although as a community we've made significant progress in getting Highways to act by reporting them. More than 50 reports have been placed on the Worcestershire Portal for both potholes and blocked drains, and where residents have shared their reports we've been able to get Highways to act. We need to continue this proactive approach.

In February, I spoke at the full County Council meeting in favour of £1 million being ringfenced for rural road maintenance and improvements and was delighted that it was agreed for this year. It's the first time I can recall money being specifically set aside for rural roads, although now the task is to ensure we get our share!

Community

This year, I've allocated nearly £10,000 for local projects and organisations, including The Regal Theatre, Tenbury Scout & Guides Group, Teme Valley Wildlife, Stoke Bliss Defibrilator, Great Witley Parish Council, The Shelsleys Village Hall, Tenbury Christmas Lights, Tenbury Primary School and We Are Men United.

Alongside this, I've worked with Worcestershire's Public Health team to secure more than £20,000 to local Health & Well-being projects, including at Tenbury Community Pool, Kyre Riding for the Disabled and Tenbury United Youth Football, amongst many other projects.

Finally, in March and after conversations with local traders, I launched my campaign "Its Time for Free Parking in Tenbury Wells".

I know from when I had my own business that removing barriers to visitors spending time in a town is one of the most important ways of increasing footfall and spending. There are many factors that affect this, but it can be summarised as marketing, parking and signage.

I have therefore written to the leader of Malvern Hills District Council to make the case that Tenbury Wells deserves special treatment when it comes to free parking and requesting that MHDC Teme Street car park is made free at least until September.

Alongside this I have raised with Worcestershire County Council that the waiting time on Teme Street and Market Street be increased from 45 minutes to 90 minutes – providing a balance between allowing longer stays with not clogging up parking. This has been

provisionally approved, and consultation will now take place ahead of implementing a new Traffic Regulation Order.

Together, I think these measures can help provide a desperately needed boost to trade in the town.

There are many challenges facing our rural community, but I believe that over this last year we have made a start in addressing them. I look forward to continuing that work over the year ahead.

6. West Mercia Police – Annual Report.

Martley & Tenbury Safer Neighbourhood Team

Last 30 days of incidents reported to police as at 29/4/2026

Category of Incident	Martley & Tenbury SNT Area (A)	Stoke Bliss (B)	Pensax (C)	Little Witley (D)	Abberley (E)
Anti-social Behaviour - All Categories	8	0	1	0	0
Burglary - Residential	1	0	0	0	0
Unlisted Crime	1	0	0	0	1
Criminal Damage	2	0	0	0	0
Making off without payment	2	0	0	0	0
Public Order	2	0	0	0	0
Shoplifting	1	0	0	0	0
Theft of Vehicle	3	0	0	0	0
Animals & Wildlife	1	0	0	0	0
Concern for Safety	7	0	0	0	0
Missing Person	3	0	0	0	1
Suspicious Circumstances	4	0	0	0	0
Road Traffic Collision with injury	1	0	0	0	0
Highways disruption	13	0	0	1	0
Traffic Offence	1	0	0	0	0
Road Traffic Collision - Damage Only	4	0	0	2	0

The position for the Martley & Tenbury SNT Area as a whole over the past 30 days is shown in column (A) for comparative purposes. There were 54 incidents reported to police during this period. Please note that for data protection purposes some categories of crime are not included in the above figures.

There were no incidents reported to police for the Stoke Bliss area in the same 30 day period.

There was only 1 incident reported to police for the Pensax area during the 30 day period. This was an incident of anti-social behaviour.

There were 3 incidents reported in the Little Witley area over the 30 day period. 1 incident of Highway Disruption and 2 road traffic collisions that involved damage only.

There were 2 incidents reported in Abberley over the 30 day period. 1 incident of ‘Unlisted Crime’ and 1 involving a missing person.

An email has been received to say that PCSO Durrant is leaving on the 20th May for Whitchurch. The Parish Council wrote to PCSO Durrant to thank him for his service.

7. Parish Charities:

Dykes Trust –

A number of cash gifts were made in the year to individuals

Any names put forward by the parish council would be considered

Kyre Hospital Trust – nothing reported

Henry Morris Trust -
At December 2025
The income was £131.00
Distribution was £120.00
Bank balance 31/12/25 was £53.27

8. **Any Other Business**-

Chairman to Stoke Bliss, Kyre and Bockleton Parish Council.
Mike Stephens
Meeting closed at 7.40pm