Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish of Pensax at the Old Chapel at Menith Wood.

at 7pm on Tuesday 12t

h May 2026

1 **Welcome & Introduction:** (Cllr. Gillett)

2 **Attending**, Chair - Cllr. Andy Gillett , Cllr. Marc Pedersen, Cllr. David Abrahams, Neil Withey
Apologies: Stu Meese, Cllr. Douglas Godwin, Cllr. Justin Bowen.

3. **Pensax Reports**:

3.a.i Millennium Green Trust – Neil Withey

Menithwood Millenium Green for the FY 2025/26

MMGT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 12 OCTOBER 2025

The Annual General Meetings for the Menithwood Community Association (MCA) and the Menithwood Millennium Green Trust (MMGT) were held on Sunday 12 October 2025. Both charities were able to appoint Trustees to enable both charities to continue to operate. It was confirmed and agreed the two charities still intended to merge together in 2026. It had not been possible to implement the merger in 2025 because of governance issues with TSB Bank and other pressures on the key Trustee leading on this matter.

Neil Withey was appointed as Chair of the MMGT with Kevin Gittins retaining Chair of the MCA until the new Trust had been set up and the two charities had merged together, at which point Neil Withey will take on the role of Chair for the new Charity.

The new “Menithwood Village Trust” will be set up during 2026. However,

it is not possible to give a precise timescale. Reassuringly most trustees for both MMGT and MCA have decided to remain. However, the MMGT has lost a trustee recently with Tim Wood leaving the area and we are actively seeking new trustees.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES ON THE GREEN

The MMGT trustees organised working parties for late October/early November to undertake essential works before the arrival of Winter these included:

- Clearing Bracken from around the fruit trees in both orchards.
- Mulching those trees with chippings left by National Grid following power line tree clearing on the green.
- Planting of Oak saplings amongst the top hedge.
- Checks and maintenance of the gates providing access and egress to the green.
- Clearing of brush and bracken along bottom hedge
- Replacement of two trees which succumbed to ash die back.
- All tree labels checked and where required replaced or new ones bought and attached (17 in total.

- Trustee Mike Mocket made 7 bird and bat boxes which we installed in the early spring, including Robin box, blue and great tit, bat roosting boxes plus a tawny owl box.

DONATIONS AND GRANTS

The MMGT is always looking for donations from different organisations towards the maintenance of boundary fences and gate, tree replacement, making new bird and bat boxes, etc. following the cessation of the 'Save the Bell' charity the MMGT has received £912.50. We have also received £200 from the Malvern Hills District Council to support the green and ensuring continued access for users.

3.a.ii Menith Wood Community Association – Kevin Gittins

REPORT FROM THE MENITHWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (MCA) FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26

MCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 12 OCTOBER 2026

The Annual General Meetings for the Menithwood Community Association (MCA) and the Menithwood Millennium Green Trust (MMGT) were held on Sunday 12 October 2025. Both charities were able to appoint Trustees to enable both charities to continue to operate. It was confirmed and agreed the two charities still intended to merge together in 2026. It had not been possible to implement the merger in 2025 because of governance issues with TSB Bank and other pressures on the key Trustee leading on this matter.

Kevin Gittins was appointed Chair of the MCA until the new Trust had been set up and the two charities had merged together. He emphasised there were a number of tasks that would need to be completed first before the merged Trust could be created. The most important tasks related to:

1. Resolving the governance issues relating to the TSB Bank, so the Chair had access to the online bank account. (Achieved in March 2026).
2. The two charities use two different insurance companies and two different banks.
3. The two charities have different year end accounting dates.
4. The Trustee details now fully comply with the details included in the Charity Commission records.

The new "Menithwood Village Trust" will be set up during 2026. However,

it is not possible to give a precise timescale. Most of our MCA Trustees have decided to remain on the MCA Committee. Many people in the village are extremely pleased the Old Chapel Hall remains open and used on a regular basis.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE HALL PLUS THE 100 CLUB

The MCA organised a Christmas Carol event, Social Games Evening, Plant Sale and monthly Coffee Mornings. The MCA has also focused on trying to put the charity on a more secure financial basis. The main source of funding for the MCA is "The 100 Club", which was set up over twenty-five years ago by Janet Farmer. The annual cost of a ticket is now £15 a year. The first prize has increased to £30, with a second prize of £10 and the third prize is a bottle of wine.

DONATIONS AND GRANTS

The MCA is always looking for donations from different organisations towards the maintenance costs, particularly repairs to the roof, which is a continual problem. Following the cessation of the 'Save the Bell' charity the MCA has received £912.50. This generous donation will be used to provide a reserve fund for future roof repairs to the Old Chapel Hall. The roof is over 30 years old. The MCA has spent over £1,000.00 on repairs to the roof in the last two years, which appears now to have stopped the leaks. The MCA has also received £200 from the Malvern Hills District Council on 31 March 2026 towards the running costs of the Hall.

WI-FI CONNECTION

The Pensax Parish Councillors will be aware Openreach completed the required external work to instal the wi-fi into the Hall on Friday 27th March 2026. The MCA is immensely grateful to the Pensax Parish Council for agreeing to allocate £900.00 to finance the wi-fi facility in the Hall for a

two-year pilot period. It is hoped this facility will encourage more children and adults to use the Hall and it will lead to more events and activities being held in the Hall.

3.a.iii WCC paths warden Stuart Meese (Former WCC Footpaths Warden)

A vacancy now exists with WCC for this voluntary post as Stu Meese has stepped down

Worcester County Council ……. 'We are not currently installing any signposts; we are short-staffed and currently recruiting for 4 vacancies (1 assistant and 3 senior officers) and therefore concentrating on safety matters.' WCC Paths Officer (West Area), who looks after this region, is now down to 24 hrs a week employment.

Parish Paths Wardens used to have the ability to record action / add detail and report problems, withdrawn from our Countryside PPW Encompass system, and now use the general WCC public reporting portal. '*You will also be aware that we have had to close down the Volunteer Point function because of issues our end'.*

Unfortunately, this has been the ongoing problem for 2+ years. This has led to the abandonment of any action/enforcement on blocked paths graded C, no action to clear heavy treefall and dense undergrowth on paths, and unsafe bridges, and multiple signage problems across the network. There are very few fingerposts now left standing

Whilst small works by volunteers can keep summer vegetation clear, maintain stiles and update signage, the systematic decay of the network by WCC has meant that much of it is no longer walkable, resulting in less action from WCC as they prioritise higher traffic areas for their scant financial and personnel resources.

Pensax Parish Council has in place a programme of offering free gates and installation to landowners whose stiles are coming to end of life or that wish to upgrade to allow family friendly and accessible paths – very few landowners have agreed so far – Most see walkers on their land as an issue rather than as a benefit for the community and do not see a mental or physical health benefit especially with an aging demographic in the parish. Landowners should apply to the clerk. Installation can be done by the landowner or by the Lengthsman.

Extensive issues across the parish's network

- Blocked paths by landowners

- Bridges unsafe

- Overgrowth and tree fall
- Litter
- Waymarking of trail heads (posts) rotten
- Stiles
- Path deterioration/collapse

Actions/Reports 2025-26

A new wood post marking the start of 545c has been removed at the roadside.

The wooden stile on 545c between the common land and the enclosure has collapsed

545c path is mostly unpassable due to overgrowth

Path 568c has been rerouted at the landowner's request

Summer vegetation clearances of stiles on 544c / 547c /548c

A fallen tree blocking 588c, along with a collapsed fence/stile

Reports of animal intimidation (horse) on 560c / 563c

Residents are still able to report a problem via the main website.

Report a problem on a Public Right of Way | Worcestershire County Council

3.a.iv Ward Councillor for MHDC – Cllr. Douglas Godwin

No report received.

3.a.v Ward Councillor for Worcestershire County Councillor

Cllr. Justin Bowen

Worcestershire County Council Matters

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.

3.a.vi Police Report

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.

4. Annual Report of Pensax Parish Council – Cllr Andy Gillett (Outgoing Chair)

Cllr. Andy Gillett– Outgoing Chair

Clerk to the Parish Council

The council continues to retain the service of Carole Hirst as Clerk of the Council and Responsible Financial Officer. Carole continues to ensure that the Parish Council meets its regulatory and administrative requirements. The external audit was carried out by Gill Lungley which found that the records of the council accounts and governance procedures to be well kept but with a few minor suggestions on improvements. Thank you, Carole, for your hard work over the past year.

Precept and Finances

The parish council reserves are improving slowly but we would still like them to be in a stronger position. The main reason for the improvement over the year was the lack of grants not awarded but budgeted for. Due to increasing costs of the council it was decided that an increase in the precept was needed again to ensure that reserves are retained.

The precept was increased by 4% a rise of £1.55 on Council Tax Band D. This should ensure that reserves remain suitable in the coming year but this will stay under review bearing in mind rising costs.

The council still retains a significant amount of Restricted funds from the sale of the Village Hall. Although some of these funds have been allocated to improving the public footpath infrastructure the council is still struggling to allocate funds on capital projects. In the meantime the £170,000 of the funds have been placed on higher interest paying deposit accounts and the interest form these, which is unrestricted, is being used to supplement the annual council budget.

Parish Councillors

There are currently four Parish Councillors and three vacancies. The Parish Council would like to attract others to join the Parish Council in the coming year. Anyone wishing to join the Parish Council should contact the Clerk in the first instance.

Highways and Flooding

There has been quite a bit of work throughout the year on the roads in the Parish predominantly resurfacing work. The Council is pleased to confirm that Worcestershire CC Highways Dept have now carried out work to rectify the frequent flooding at the Junction of Pensax to Stockton Road and its junction with Penn Hall Lane. The Parish Council would like to thank WCC Justin Bowen for his assistance in resolving this matter.

The Parish Council continue to liaise with local police about speeding in the Parish and have this as one of their stated priorities for the police to address.

Highway speed calming measures.

After feedback from the parish and observations of councillors a number of speed calming measures have been agreed.

The parish council has arranged and funded for two VAS signs to be purchased and erected at either end of the village on the B4202. We very much hope these will have the desired effect of reducing speed along the road. The VAS signs have the ability to collect anonymised traffic data and this will be reviewed periodically by the parish council.

In addition, the Parish Council has agreed to purchase Village Speed Calming gates and these will also be located at either end of the B4202 in due course in a further effort to reduce speed along the road by clearly marking that motorists are entering the village. These should be erected shortly.

Finally, the Parish council have agreed to pay for additional Roundels (these are the painted circular markings on the road used to indicate speed limits) on the B4202

We hope that these combined measures will have the desired effect of reducing speed along the B4202 and would like to thank Cllr Pederson for his work on these matters.

Parish Paths

The parish council are keen to ensure there is good access to the footpath network in the Parish and have earmarked some of the restricted funds to provide landowners with new gates to relace styles to improve access for all. Several gates have been funded over the year and we will continue to ty and encourage more landowners to take up this offer. If you would be interested in changing your styles to gates then please get in touch with the Clerk in the first instance.

There does continue to be some problems with the footpaths in the Parish with some of the following being observed by the footpath officer prior to his resignation.

Some are blocked by landowners, some unsafe Bridges, overgrowth and tree fall, litter, waymarking of trail heads (posts), rotten stiles and path deterioration.

Stuart Meese has resigned from his post as WCC footpath officer and there is a vacancy if anyone is interested. Please contact the Clerk for more information.

Funding

The council is in a position to offer small grants to organisations in the Pensax Parish. If any organisations would like to apply for a grant then in the first instance can they get in contact with the Clerk.

We were pleased to be able to award a grant of £900 to Menithwood Community Association to assist with the cost of installing Wifi at the Chappel In Menithwood. We hope this will be able assist the groups and organisations that already use the Chapel but also encourage and facilitate others to do so.

War Memorial

A memorial service was held this year for Pensax and Stockton. It was quite well attended.

If you would like to get involved with the parish council or the community there are vacancies for Parish Councillors and the footpath officer currently so please do get in touch. The outgoing Chair would like to thank his co councillors for their efforts over the last 12 months.

Meeting closed at 7.15pm