MITCHELDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 11th May 2026 at 7.00pm at Mitcheldean Town Hall

Present:

Parish Councillors: Janet Keene (Chairman), Bill Waddell, Jack Brown, Kelli Salone, Lee Cartwright, Kay Wozencroft and Tracey Cruickshank.
Also present: Kate Hearne (Clerk & RFO)
District Councillor Trevor Roach
One member of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence**

- Councillor Harriet Holford
- District Councillor Jackie Fraser
- County Councillor Stuart Graham

2. **Members of the public issues (15 minutes Standing Orders suspended)**

A representative from Brody's Trust attended the meeting to thank the Council once again, and on behalf of Brody's mother, Nikki, for the donation of £770. She also reported that the Trust recently held a pop-up stand outside the library, raising a further £280. Good progress continues to be made with the Trust's plans, and fundraising and awareness-raising activities remain ongoing. In particular, Brody's father has undertaken a gruelling cycle ride from John O'Groats to help support the cause and increase public awareness.

3. **County & District Councillor Reports**

Cllr Graham – Report:

The Clerk read out the report, as seen in Appendix A.

Cllr Roach - Report:

- **UNESCO Biosphere Proposal**

Members discussed the proposed UNESCO Biosphere designation and its potential implications for the Forest of Dean. Supporters highlighted the opportunity to gain international recognition for the area's unique natural, cultural and industrial heritage, including its history of iron mining, free mining and commoning. It was suggested that UNESCO status could help raise the area's profile and support tourism without imposing additional regulatory powers or restrictions.

Concerns were raised regarding governance, local consultation and the practical benefits of the designation. Members noted that some residents felt insufficiently informed and that much of the discussion had taken place through social media. Questions were asked about the value of Biosphere status, how it would be administered, and what impact it would have on local communities.

It was noted that UNESCO designation carries no direct planning powers or enforcement role and acts primarily as a form of international recognition. Members agreed that further factual information and a fuller explanation of the proposal should be provided to parish councils and residents before any conclusions are reached. Cllr Roach agreed to obtain additional information on the proposed governance arrangements. The need for a formal consultation process was emphasised.

Reference was made to a previous consultation event at the Wilderness Centre, which had been open to all parish councils, although attendance was limited.

- **Local Plan**

Members received an update on the Local Plan process. Feedback from landowners regarding potential development sites is expected shortly, following which further analysis and discussion will take place. Concerns were expressed regarding housing growth targets, particularly in the absence of a corresponding strategy for employment growth and infrastructure provision.

- **Carisbrook Development**

An update was provided on the proposed Carisbrook development of 180 dwellings, which is expected to be considered by the Planning Committee next month. Concerns were raised regarding the loss of productive agricultural land and the adequacy of local infrastructure, including schools, healthcare provision and public transport. It was suggested that development should be directed towards less productive land where possible. Cllr Roach advised that he intends to speak against the proposal and welcomed any supporting information from members.

4. <u>Declarations of Interests</u>

None.

5. <u>Requests for Dispensations</u>

None.

6. <u>Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th April 2026</u>

It was resolved to accept the minutes of the meeting which was held on 13th April 2026 as an accurate record of the meeting, and was signed by the Chairman.

7. <u>Planning Matters</u>

P0486/26/PIP - Town and Country Planning Act,1990 (As Amended). Land To The West Of, Abenhall Road, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire. Permission in principle for erection of three residential dwellings in former car park.

Objection due to overdevelopment and lack of adequate parking for the houses, as well as concerns about access to the emergency access to the skittle alley of The Lamb Inn.

8. <u>Resignation of Councillor Andre Edwards</u>

The council noted the resignation of Andre Edwards and that the Forest of Dean District Council had been notified. The Chairman wished to formally record the council's thanks to Andre for his many years of service.

9. <u>Councillors Code of Conduct obligation and changes to Declaration of Interest</u>

Forms

The chairman took this opportunity to remind councillors to remain polite and to not be acrimonious, and to refer to the Code of Conduct for clarification.

10. Playground Annual Inspection Quote

It was noted that there was a problem with one of the swings but this has now been fixed. It was agreed to use this company to do the annual inspection, but to enquire whether they also service the outdoor gym equipment. **Action: Clerk.**

11. Makita Mower

This has been repaired but is about 8 years old and a bigger one would be more beneficial. The cost of a replacement was discussed, and it was agreed that Cllr Cartwright is authorised to spend up to £1500 on a replacement through a trade account so VAT can be reclaimed. If it is any more than this Cllr Cartwright will come back with quotes for consideration. **Action: Cllr Cartwright.**

12. Christmas Lights

- The council discussed the possibility of hiring new Christmas lights from the company that supplies the displays at Gloucester Quays. The quote received was £5,900 per year for a three-year contract, which is more expensive than currently. It was agreed that enquiries should be made to see whether the quoted price could be reduced and whether the company would consider a one-year contract instead of a three-year agreement.
- Members noted that the existing lights are beginning to look dated, although it was acknowledged that selling them would probably not raise a significant amount of money.
- It was noted that the Christmas light placed on the streetlight by the Church (which is the same electricity supply as the Christmas tree) regularly fails. Members considered whether lights should no longer be installed there in future and noted that the display could potentially manage without it. There was also discussion about spreading the lights further out towards the school and towards Townsend. The possibility of seeking donations or sponsorship from local businesses or individuals was also raised.
- Cllr Holford will return with a report and will also check what arrangements and prices other councils are using, and this will be rolled over to the next meeting. **Action: Clerk.**

13. Playground Grants and Quotes

- The council are still awaiting a quote from Wicksteed, and we also need to confirm whether we can get the grant - the Clerk will chase Wicksteed and continue with the grant application. **Action: Clerk.**
- It was discussed that a zipline, slide and accessible items such as a specific swing. However, it was agreed that equipment preferences will be obtained by the public via a consultation. **Action: Cllr Cruickshank.**

14. Pavilion Grants and Quotes

- The council are still awaiting one quote, which will be chased. The possibility of obtaining a grant also needs to be confirmed, so this will be further investigated. **Action: Clerk and Cllr Cartwright.**
- The council discussed ongoing abuse of parking at the playing field car park. It was agreed that the car park will in future be locked overnight and reopened first thing in the morning. Members noted that weekends are the biggest problem, although the car park is also used by dog walkers early in the morning. A notice will be placed on

Facebook to inform residents of the new arrangements. Cllr Cruickshank will prepare laminated signs and Cllr Cartwright will arrange for them to be put up at the site.
Action: Cllrs Cartwright and Cruickshank.

15. Grass Cutting

It was agreed to discuss this at the end of the meeting in the closed section, due to it being relevant to the grounds maintenance contract review.

16. Councillor Reports

- Cllr Cruickshank advised that the Community Centre had recently held its annual meeting, at which she agreed to continue serving as the council's representative. She reported that the Community Centre is going from strength to strength, particularly in terms of bookings and its environmental credentials following the installation of new solar panels. She will continue to report back to the council.
- Cllr Salone said that some children from the area have approached her about having shelters around the park for when it rains. They apparently stand under the shelter at the library at the moment. It was noted that the last shelter built was vandalised. The concern was noted but it was agreed this was not a priority, however Cllr Cartwright will look at plastic roofing to possibly erect ourselves.
- Cllr Brown advised the retaining wall by Vicarage Drive is failing.
- Cllr Keene has been approached to see if the council are happy to have a post-box topper in honour of David Attenborough. Cllr Keene advised she anticipated he council's approval and gave it in advance.
- Cllr Keene advised the Guides are trying to do some new paintings for the public toilets. They are currently negotiating with the FODDC and discussions are progressing.

17. Clerk's Report

- Year-end processed and close-down.
- Preparing for the internal audit.
- Continued work on CiLCA qualification ready for final submissions.
- Dealt with various complaints and correspondence.
- Regular item - dealt with a large number of nuisance calls and emails.
- Posters for Cllr Cartwright.
- Researched Scribe software.

18. Accounts/Finance

a) A schedule of payments was presented and the council resolved to approve the payments.
b) The council received the bank reconciliation for April 2026.
c) The council received the budget versus spend report up to April 2026.

19. SEPARATE BUSINESS

Pursuant to 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it is resolved that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during the consideration of:

The grounds maintenance and grass cutting contracts.

Cllr Cartwright advised about the grass cutting from his perspective and outlined a revised proposal. He advised that the churchyards are too difficult to maintain with the current equipment and resources available and therefore proposed that they be excluded from his contract. Seb was suggested as an alternative contractor for the churchyard areas as he has included the collection of grass cuttings.

Cllr Cartwright reported that, although contracted for 18 hours per week, he has regularly been undertaking up to 25 hours. He proposed increasing the contracted hours by 10 per week and reducing the hourly rate. While his original quotation was based on £25 per hour, the revised arrangement would increase weekly payments by £100, resulting in an effective hourly rate of approximately £19. He advised that purchasing additional equipment would generate savings of around £2,000 in the first year and £4,000 in the second year.

For the sheep field and bank, Cllr Cartwright proposed a reduced maintenance regime, cutting in sections and hiring a ride-on brush cutter several times per year at a cost of approximately £130 per hire through the Ermin trade account. It was noted that parts of the area are too steep for conventional mowing. Members also discussed retaining some areas as 'no mow' zones, as has been done previously.

Cllr Cartwright then left the meeting so members could discuss this impartially.

It was resolved that Cllr Cartwright's contract for the grounds maintenance would continue but he would not be awarded the grass-cutting contract. Cllr Keene would relay this to him. Seb will be contacted by the Clerk and asked to commence the grass-cutting work as soon as possible and provide a revised quotation for the remainder of the year. The Clerk will also contact the third quotation received to advise they were unfortunately successful his time but to thank them for their time and patience. **Action: Clerk and Cllr Keene.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.48.

SIGNED:

DATE: