

MITCHELDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 10th August 2026 at 7.00pm at Mitcheldean Town Hall

Present:

Parish Councillors: Janet Keene (Chairman), Harriet Holford, Jack Brown, Kelli Salone, Bill Waddell, Kay Wozencroft and Tracey Cruickshank.
Also present: Kate Hearne (Clerk & RFO)
District Councillor Trevor Roach
County Councillor Piers Camp
Two members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

- Councillor Lee Cartwright
- County Councillor Stuart Graham
- District Councillor Jackie Fraser

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

Andrew Maliphant gave a presentation on the impact of heatwaves and asked how the Parish Council intends to respond. He provided a handout and suggested a roadmap for future action. With the move to a unitary authority, accessible local democracy will become increasingly important. Climate change affects our communities directly and should therefore be recognised as a parish matter, with councils playing a role in local resilience and practical action. Cllr Keene suggested widening the focus to include other severe weather, such as snow and ice, and setting up a group to encourage community involvement. She asked Andrew to lead this but he is unfortunately committed to many other things at the moment. Cllr Brown suggested contacting other clerks and the District Emergency Planning Officer (DEPLO) to identify existing local schemes. Cllr Salone highlighted the needs of vulnerable and housebound residents and suggested a prominent noticeboard could help communicate information. Possible practical measures included Council-funded water butts and identifying what residents need during emergencies. Existing emergency lists held by utilities and other agencies were noted, along with potential GDPR considerations around local information sharing. Cllr Cruickshank and Cllr Salone agreed to work together on a Facebook post to help engage the community.

Susan Mountcastle re-introduced herself to the council, as she will be co-opted back onto the council later in the meeting. She has lived in Mitcheldean for four years and is retired. Everyone on the council introduced themselves to her.

3. County & District Councillor Reports

Cllr Graham – No report (apologies).

Cllr Camp – Report attached as Appendix A.

Cllr Roach – Report attached as Appendix B.

Specifically regarding the Carisbrook Road planning refusal inquiry within Cllr Roach's report, Cllr Keene advised that there should be defendants, as the matter is an inquiry

rather than an appeal, and raised the issue of associated costs. Cllr Roach agreed to seek clarification on these points.

4. Declarations of Interests

None.

5. Requests for Dispensations

None.

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th July 2026

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

7. Planning Matters

- a) P0776/26/FUL - Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 (As Amended). The Lawns, Silver Street, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire. Construction of a hipped roof to replace flat roof on rear extension.
No objections.

8. Playground Update

The Clerk read out an update from Cllr Cartwright in his absence. He has spoken to John of J. Matthew's Landscaping to get a time frame. He has advised that the equipment has been ordered and that we should have it up and running within six weeks. He will make it a priority as soon as he takes delivery of the equipment. The flooring will be safety grass under the run of the zip-line and free pour resin at the base of the embankment slide. Cllr Cartwright has started to take care of the overgrowth around the basketball court. Someone in the past had planted some vines in the areas of the fence adjacent to their back garden which has caused some unsafe damage to the fence. The fence is now safe and he will start to repair the upper netting. He has also removed one Sycamore tree that was interfering with the fence and tarmac, with another one to be removed soon. He has replaced one basketball net and noted that the backboards could do with replacing too. He has also asked John how much it would cost to repaint the lines – he advised he will get back to us on that. He also finally found the collar for the spring on the Chicken Spring Rider and will repair this in the next few weeks. The new gate for the other entrance has arrived this week at Hales so this will also be repaired shortly. The schedule to repaint the old play equipment will commence soon but it has been too hot over the past month or so to do this.

9. Co-option of Susan Mountcastle

It was resolved to co-opt Susan Mountcastle to the Parish Council.

10. Disciplinary Policy

It was resolved that changes were required to the policy due to new legislation that came in this year – the Worker Protection Act. Paragraph 6 will have an addition of neutrality and that alternatives to suspension will be considered:

“Before suspending an employee, the Council will consider whether there are reasonable alternatives to suspension, taking into account the circumstances of the

case. Where allegations of gross misconduct or serious misconduct are made, and where no suitable alternative is considered appropriate, the Council may suspend the employee while further investigations are carried out. Suspension will be on full pay and does not imply any determination of guilt or innocence; it is a neutral measure to enable a fair and effective investigation.”

11. Equality and Diversity Policy

It was resolved that the policy be amended to include, within the opening paragraph entitled ‘Our Commitment’, that the Council will take appropriate steps to prevent discrimination:

“The council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment, avoiding unlawful discrimination, and taking appropriate and reasonable steps to prevent discrimination in the workplace.

This policy is intended to assist the council in putting this commitment into practice. The council will take reasonable steps to identify, prevent and address discrimination and ensure that its employment practices promote equality and fairness. Compliance with this policy should also help ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.”

12. Financial Regulations Policy

It was resolved that no changes were required to the policy.

13. Flexible Working Policy

It was resolved that the policy be amended to reflect that employees have a statutory right to request flexible working from the start of their employment, rather than after 26 weeks of continuous employment.

14. Grievance Policy

It was discussed that informal avenues should be explored before proceeding to formal action. It was agreed that this was adequately covered within the existing policy and no amendment was required.

15. Home Working Policy

It was resolved that no changes were required to the policy.

16. Internet Banking Policy

It was resolved that no changes were required to the policy.

17. Standing Orders

It was resolved that no changes were required to the policy.

18. Councillor Reports

- Cllr Salone reported that Cinderford Town Council had contacted her about getting involved with the jumps project. They are planning to have two jump parks. She will request that the possibility of introducing jumps locally is added to the agenda for the next meeting. She has already secured £250 towards the project and liaise with the Clerk to properly receive this payment into the Parish bank account. The next steps will

- be to prepare a proposal and obtain quotes.
- Cllr Keene reported that an application has been made for a £3,000 community grant, and a more detailed application has now been submitted. The funding would be used to improve the dirt jumps, including accessibility improvements, as well as improvements to the play area.
 - Cllr Wozencroft advised that an individual suspected of drug dealing has now left the village. It was noted that the Co-op will close at 2:00 pm on Thursday 13th and will reopen at 2:00 pm on Friday.
 - Cllr Cruickshank reported that the festival was a great success, with an estimated 1,000 people attending on the field. Thanks were given to the councillors who assisted on the day, including with traffic control. It was noted that the festival is now in a strong position to build on its success next year. Cllr Cruickshank requested that the Christmas lights switch-on be held on the last Friday of November each year. This would also accommodate Santa's availability, as he is unavailable at the originally proposed time. This will be added to the next agenda for discussion. Positive feedback was also given regarding the Community Centre. The Council thanked Tracey for all her hard work in organising and supporting the event. The Council formally congratulated Katy Morgan on her work organising the stalls, and requested that its thanks and congratulations be recorded in the minutes.
 - Cllr Holford advised that the library is currently in need of board members and treasurer.

19. Clerk's Report

The Clerk provided an update on matters arising and ongoing Council business.

20. 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 July 2026.
- c) The council received the bank statements for July 2026.
- d) The council received the budget versus spend report up to July 2026.
- e) The council confirmed the monthly financial check has been carried out.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.36.

SIGNED:

DATE:

Drybrook and Lydbrook County Councillor Report

Parish	Mitcheldean
Prepared by	Cllr. Piers Camp
Date	August 10th 2026

Items of Note

- A first report, and the part of the parish I cover.** This is my first report to Mitcheldean Parish Council and I should be straightforward about why it has taken until now. The Drybrook and Lydbrook county division takes in the Plump Hill part of the parish, polling district ORA, roughly 250 electors who vote at Mitcheldean Community Centre. The remainder of the parish, roughly 1,880 electors, sits in the Mitcheldean county division and is represented by Cllr Stuart Graham, who is the council's principal county member. Nothing here is intended to cut across him. What I can offer is a second county voice for Plump Hill, and weight behind anything where two divisions pushing together is more use than one. As to why you have not seen me before, Lydbrook Parish Council, which is also in my division, meets on the same evening of the month as this council. The clash is more or less permanent and tonight is a rare free date. Rather than let that mean silence, I will send a written report ahead of each of your meetings and I am contactable at any time in between.
- Mitcheldean is on none of the county's four current road programmes.** I have checked each one and the parish does not appear on any of them. The 2026/27 structural maintenance programme covers 55 roads countywide, backed by an extra £15m over three years; eight of the 55 are in the Forest of Dean and seven of those eight are in the north of the district around Newent, Staunton, Redmarley and Kilcot, the nearest being the A4151 at Littledean Hill in Cinderford. The live resurfacing schedule has one Forest scheme, the B4234 New Road at Whitecroft from 17 to 28 August. The pre-surface treatment patching programme running to 30 November covers Hartpury, Upleadon, Redmarley D'Abitot, Oxenhall, Gorsley, English Bicknor and West Dean. The 20mph rollout names Cinderford, Ruspidge, Soudley and Littledean as the Forest areas in its second phase for 2027/28. That is four programmes and no Mitcheldean. I am asking for the road condition scores behind the selection so the council can see where its roads actually rank rather than being told they did not make the cut. Worth knowing alongside it: the council's highways chief has warned of a £15.5m a year gap in road maintenance funding, so the queue is long and getting on it requires evidence rather than asking. If the council gives me its three worst lengths, with locations, I will put them in with a request for their condition scores.
- HGVs, and the county's own signs at Mitcheldean.** The Local Highways Manager confirmed to me in writing on 6 August that the county's signs on the A4136 at Nailbridge and at Mitcheldean direct HGVs towards Ross via the A40. In other words, the county has already decided that the route through Drybrook should not carry

through HGVs, and has signed the traffic this way instead. Drybrook Parish Council reported in June that the advisory route is being ignored, with four large HGVs from one operator, two articulated lorries and several further HGVs counted in a single ten-minute window on 23 July. I asked the county for an automatic traffic count with vehicle classification, a weight restriction assessment, signage and a site meeting. The reply of 6 August answered none of the five. The circularity is worth stating plainly: the council says clear evidence of benefit must be established before a proposal can progress, while declining to commission the survey that would establish it. A follow up with numbered questions has gone back with a deadline of 20 August. If Mitcheldean is seeing the same displaced traffic on the A4136 and through Plump Hill, tell me and I will add it, because two parishes on the record carries more than one.

- **Cinderford fire cover, and a question I cannot yet answer for you.** On 22 July Cabinet approved an eight-week public consultation on creating a wholetime day crew at Cinderford fire station, running through August and September. On call first engines in the Forest averaged around 14 and a half minutes to arrive in 2025, above the county average. The proposal is funded by redeploying existing posts, specifically by reallocating Cheltenham West night posts, within an £827,000 savings requirement over four years, and the final Cabinet decision is due in December. Here is the problem. The Fire and Rescue Service does not publish which settlements sit in each station's first attendance area, so I cannot tell the council whether Mitcheldean and Plump Hill would see any change in response times from this at all. A consultation that does not say which villages are affected is not really a consultation. I have asked for the first attendance area boundaries and the modelled response time change for this parish, and I have asked for it inside the consultation window. If the answer arrives after the window closes, that is a finding in itself and I will report it.
- **Plump Hill has one bus, and it is not the county's.** The only service stopping at Plump Hill is the 72, run commercially by Newport Bus between Chepstow, Lydney, Cinderford and Mitcheldean, with three stops in the hamlet, roughly two hourly, Monday to Saturday. It was only extended into the Forest in June 2024. Mitcheldean itself is better served, with the 24, 33, 35A, 72 and 746. A single commercial operator on a route extended two years ago is a thin margin for the only bus a community has, so I am asking the county what support if any the 72 receives, what notice it would have of a withdrawal, and what the contingency would be. I would rather establish that now than after a timetable notice lands.
- **Your Neighbourhood Development Plan runs out this year.** This is District rather than county business so I raise it only as something worth having on the council's radar. Mitcheldean's made Neighbourhood Development Plan covers 2016 to 2026. On 30 June the District Council withdrew its Local Plan and restarted under the Government's new gateway process, which puts the whole district plan back into drafting. A neighbourhood plan at the end of its plan period tends to carry progressively less weight in decisions, and that weight matters most precisely while the new district plan is being written. Whether to review is entirely the council's call. The pressure has not gone away: government targets still require over 12,000 homes across the district by 2045, roughly 6,000 more than before.
- **Local government reorganisation, the decision is made.** On 16 July the Government confirmed a single unitary council for the whole of Gloucestershire, replacing the County Council and all six district councils from 1 April 2028. On 27 July the name was confirmed as Gloucestershire Council. Elections to the new authority take place on 6

May 2027, with around 110 councillors across the county. The key points for the parish:

- Parish and town councils are not affected by the merger and carry on as now. The proposal includes Neighbourhood Partnerships with devolved budgets, and I will press for the Forest to get its fair share of both voice and money as the detail emerges.
- All county and district services continue as normal until April 2028. Nobody needs to do anything differently.
- Ward boundaries and parish election arrangements are being finalised over the coming weeks. That matters more here than in most places, because Mitcheldean is currently split between two county divisions and the new pattern may well not split it. I will report anything that affects the parish as soon as it is published.
- My focus is the cost of transition. The council projects savings of around £21m a year once the merger is complete, while one off transition costs have previously been estimated at up to £30m, against £900,000 of announced government transition support plus wider capacity funding. August is council recess, so the transition assumptions are being built over the summer without any committee seeing them. I lodged written finance requests before the break so the clock runs across August, including on transition and disaggregation costs and on the school's high needs deficit, which is the single largest un-costed liability the new authority could inherit.
- Separately, six of the county's seven councils have written to Government seeking membership of the West of England Combined Authority as a devolution route. Membership is not cost free, since it can bring precept, levy or match funding obligations that would land on whichever body exists in 2028, so I am asking for the modelled financial obligations before anyone commits.
- **Proposed charges for DIY waste at recycling centres.** The county is working up a proposal to charge for DIY waste, meaning rubble, soil, plasterboard and similar, above a free allowance at all five county recycling centres. As drafted the free allowance would be up to two 50 litre rubble bags per visit, or a single item no larger than 2000mm by 750mm by 750mm, with a maximum of four visits in any four-week period. No final decision has been taken. My concerns are the effect on rural residents, who face the longest journeys to a recycling centre, and the risk of increased fly tipping, the cost of which falls on the District Council to clear. I am pressing for fly tipping levels to be measured before any charge starts and monitored afterwards, and I will report back.
- **A standing weekly highways update for the division.** I met Andrew Middlecote, the Local Highways Manager for our area, at Cannop depot on 28 July and asked for a standing weekly highways update covering works completed, works in progress, works starting in the next three months, reactive defects and outstanding information requests. That replaces repeated chasing with one regular report. I will pass anything relevant to Plump Hill and the A4136 to the council as it lands.
- **Grassroots Funding.** My Grassroots Neighbourhood Fund allocation for this year is now fully allocated, so I am not accepting new applications at present. Grants committed this year include Brody's Trust £2,500, Cinderford Town Council £7,500,

Canopy £1,500, Ruardean Hill Cricket Club £5,000 and Ruardean Woodside Lunch Club £850. To be straight with the council, none of this year's awards fell within Mitcheldean parish. I will let the council know as soon as the next allocation opens.

- **Councillor surgeries.** There is no surgery in August. The next is Tuesday 15 September, then 20 October and 17 November, all 4.30 to 6.30pm at Drybrook Community Hub. No appointment needed, Plump Hill residents very welcome, and anyone can email me at any time.

Highways

Reminder, please put everything on **FixMyStreet** (www.fixmystreet.com); the more the better, as it creates a record of issues being raised. Please review periodically to check items are being addressed properly, and remember to close out items yourselves if they are no longer an issue or have been resolved.

I hold no open Mitcheldean items on my highways log, which reflects the fact that nobody here has had reason to send me any. The table below carries the one live item that touches the parish. I will add whatever the council raises and report progress on each one.

Name	Issue	Notes
A4136 at Mitcheldean and Nailbridge	HGV advisory signing towards Ross via the A40	Confirmed in writing by the Local Highways Manager on 6 August. Whether the signed route is being followed has never been measured. Automatic traffic count with vehicle classification requested and not yet agreed. Numbered follow up sent 6 August with a deadline of 20 August.

News from Gloucestershire County Council

Fix our Roads: 55 roads to be resurfaced.

GCC has confirmed 55 roads in its structural maintenance programme for 2026/27, backed by an additional £15m over three years. Having checked the schedule, no Mitcheldean road appears on it, and nor does any road in Drybrook, Lydbrook or Ruardean. I am pressing for our roads to be included and for the condition scores that decide it.

Summer road closures across the Forest.

The pre-surface treatment patching programme and a rolling series of utility closures run across Forest parishes through to 30 November, with diversions signed on site. Expect intermittent low-level disruption rather than long closures. The current position is on the county roadworks map and I am happy to check any specific date for the council.

Free summer activities and food for eligible children.

The council's summer Holiday Activities and Food programme is running through the school holidays, offering free activities and meals for eligible children. Places fill quickly, so please signpost families who may qualify.

£900,000 for isolation and loneliness work in the Forest.

The Summerfield Charitable Trust has launched a £900,000 programme targeting isolation and loneliness, with Mitcheldean named as one of the areas covered. Worth flagging to any parish group working with older or isolated residents.

Forest of Dean Community Grants Fund.

The District Council's 2026/27 Community Grants Fund is open for applications from not for profit and community groups. Well worth a look for parish organisations while my own Grassroots fund is closed.

£25m investment at the Lucozade Ribena factory, Coleford.

District planners approved a £25m extension to the Royal Forest Factory in July, clearing the way for a faster production line expected to be operational in 2027. Real manufacturing investment and skilled jobs retained in the Forest, and a useful counter to the idea that nothing invests here.

M5 Junction 10, a note from the finance side.

The M5 Junction 10 programme is now budgeted at £407m against an estimate near £250m in 2019, with main construction due to start this autumn. It is a Cheltenham scheme rather than a Forest one, but it is county money and county borrowing exposure, so I am pressing on the cost escalation governance and on what happens if costs rise again. Every pound of contingency drawn there is a pound not available for roads like ours.

I am happy to take up any county related issue on behalf of residents in Plump Hill, and to help where I can elsewhere in the parish alongside Cllr Graham. Please pass cases to me directly and I will keep people updated.

Cllr Piers Camp, piers.camp@gloucestershire.gov.uk

District Councillor Trevor Roach

Report to Mitcheldean Parish Council - Monday 11th August 2026

1. Update on LGR advice to Parish and Town Councils.

At the previous Parish Council meeting, on 13th July, Parish Council Chair, Janet Keene requested the Parish Council be kept informed of LGR progress and preparations pertinent to the Parish Council. On 7th August 2026 "Future Gloucestershire" circulated to all Parish and Town Councils in Gloucestershire the processes and communications they are setting up to engage with Town and Parish councils as the LG transition journey proceeds.

Browser Link sent to all councils:

https://news.comms.gloucestershire.gov.uk/9B5D5B4D373286248636F624962FFC4F1FE6E47DAD1E30719FE3157A30B1D1BE/C19345615A2DE40E7C61223931CF754D/VIB?es_c=C19345615A2DE40E7C61223931CF754D&es_cl=772D87E91051874C72EA5A21BD6C0127&es_id=phcfj6

A pertinent quote from the Future Gloucestershire communication and invite to join the Webinar on 9th September 2026:

"We recognise that uncertainty is challenging and that parish and town councils want more information than is currently available. Our commitment is to be open about what we know, honest about what we do not yet know, and clear about how and when further information will be shared.

Over the coming months we will provide regular updates, publish information as it becomes available, create opportunities for dialogue, and work with parish and town councils to help shape a strong and constructive relationship between local communities and the new unitary council.

In the coming weeks, we will launch a dedicated, online information hub for town and parish council – which we will continually update with the latest updates and frequently asked questions. We will also be holding a webinar with town and parish councillors and clerks **on Wednesday 9 September at 6pm. [Click here to join the webinar.](#)**

2. Carisbrook Road Planning refusal call-in inquiry.

Cllr Roach has prepared a discussion paper to present to the Parish Council to help consider the next step options for Mitcheldean Parish Community representation at the inquiry. The paper illustrates the two options for consideration – a) applying for **Main Party status** under Rule 6 or b) presenting views at the inquiry as **Interested Parties**.

3. Mitcheldean Car Park Toilets reinstatement

Cllr Roach has had discussions with Chief Finance Officer, Andrew Knott regarding the refurbishment and opening of the Public Toilets. AK has stated that the District Council budget provides for the reinstatement and opening of the toilets. However, this expenditure will only be committed if the Parish Council is willing to undertake the ongoing management and maintenance of the toilets.