

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - MAY 2025
BERROW PARISH COUNCIL

Comings and goings:

Our Clerk Sheelagh Tooze resigned from the post with effect from the 28th February, after being with us for just over 3 years. We therefore had to recruit for a replacement. This is the first time for many years that Berrow Parish Council have had to recruit just for their own clerk. Previously they recruited along with Pendock parish council for a clerk to fill both positions, although on separate contracts.

We therefore advertised the post and were pleased to receive 6 replies, all of very high quality. Having shortlisted, we eventually interviewed 2 candidates and were then very pleased to offer and appoint to Sallyann Gough from Pendock who started with us on the 1st April. This meeting will be her first with us as clerk. We welcome her to the team.

This meant the council ran their March meeting without a clerk and I am very grateful to my fellow councillors for stepping up and helping with all the tasks needed to run a council meeting and also for their help with the recruitment process.

John Dudfield, one of our councillors recently resigned after some 8 years on the council but has remained Chair of the Village Hall committee, which is great news. We thank him for all his support, input and advice over the years and wish him well with whatever project he takes up now.

This therefore means that bank signatories will need to be changed and we are looking at this currently and also with a view to moving to using the online process.

We are also reviewing the email system currently used as a result of advice sent through to us from Worcestershire CALC.

The council can total a maximum of 7 and we are currently now only 5 but we have just had an application from Andy Raistrick to join us and will aim to co-opt him onto the group later in the evening. Therefore there is still 1 vacancy up for co-option.

The Annual Return Governance statements for the last year was reviewed by the group who were happy with the compliance of such and the documents were signed off by the Chair.

The accounts to the March year end for the year 2024/25 were duly presented, approved and signed off. At all the meetings the Clerk presents a Finance report which is reviewed and signed off by the council and shows the accounts to be in a healthy state

In December the Clerk presented the draft Budget for the following year which required some adjustments particularly with respect to the increase in the clerk's hours and also salary to bring it in line with NALC pay scales. The precept for 2024/25 therefore had to be increased to £3000. It had not been increased for some years. The revised Budget was then approved at the March meeting.

Jeremy Moore, our very capable **Lengthsman** continued to meet with the clerk on site, which was very useful and his work included clearing of ditches, road signs, and grit bin issues including finding a supplier for grit who will deliver in bulk meaning both bins are now full. Cllr. Macleod donated a bin suitable for grit which was placed at the village hall and he is to be thanked for this.

The council continue to receive reports from the **District Councillor** Jennie Watkins. The reports come either in person when she is able to attend the meetings or via a report sent to the clerk. Her very proactive reports and input on activities within the district is welcomed and useful. We learnt about the Pendock Primary school crowd funding project for a new outside space etc. and this enabled the Berrow Charities to donate a substantial amount to this. She continues to update us on the work in progress re defibrillators, and the training up of locals to respond to an emergency.

Our **County Councillor** Tom Wells does his best to attend meetings when time allows, and we are pleased to learn that he has just been re-elected in the recent local elections. The polling station for

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Berrow residents is the Village Hall. We were informed about the relatively new bus service Worcestershire on Demand which offers a service to locals. He also informed us of the Government's plans to re-structure local authorities which means that Malvern Hills District Council and Worcestershire County Council will cease to exist in 2 years time. They will be replaced by Unitary authorities and various options/models are being discussed. Tom is also to be thanked for his valuable input over the years.

Defibrillators in the parish: Cllr. Caroline Samsonoff has been carrying out the Guardian role for the Rye Cross defib and has been liaising with our other guardian Maureen Patterson who helps her with Rye Cross. Dan March, the guardian for the Hollybush one reported that the owner of the fence that this one is sited on did not wish to have it there anymore. Dan was very helpful with all of this and removed and brought the defib to the hall. We thank him for all his help. After various discussions on where to re site it, the village hall committee agreed it would be beneficial to have it on the hall wall. Thanks go to Caroline and her husband for organising this installation which has just taken place. Discussion is still needed on where to place the defib that Pendock School have said we can have, it does need a cabinet though.

The Village Hall: This item will be covered in the report later in the meeting but the hall has now undergone an extensive programme of renovation financed by grants awarded during the Covid lockdown. There have been many compliments on the vast improvements to the building. Berrow Parish Council are required to have two representatives on the Village Hall committee who are currently Cllr. Samsonoff and Cllr. Dudfield. Cllr. Jan Kennedy also joined the committee in October last year. John Dudfield is the Chair with Cllr Emily Harris from Pendock parish council as his Vice Chair. Bob James continues to help with project managing any works, and thanks go to him and also to Rev Julie James for her help with many practical issues. Although not on the committee myself, I have attended quite a few of the meetings in order to offer any input that I can.

Any **planning applications** were duly considered and responded to although still quite few in number. . There is one that is still currently under review, namely Jacks Place, Berrow an application for retrospective change of use of land and buildings to a mixed use for a day care centre for adults with learning disabilities, and alterations and extensions to existing barns. Despite enforcement deadlines the works do not appear to have been completed. Cllr Watkins and the planning team continue to monitor this and keep us posted.

The application for the installation of a replacement treatment plant at the Three Counties Park at Sledge Green, has now finally been completed and the residents there are very pleased to have a new system in place.

Berrow Charities: Again this will be covered in the named agenda item, but the AGM was held in March last year. The tenant continues to pay the rent to the Charities account twice yearly in accordance with the lease and funds are donated regularly to worthy causes.

Finally I would like to thank our previous clerk Sheelagh and now our newly appointed one Sallyann and also all the councillors, for their contributions, hard work and support throughout the year.

**Ruth Coates, Chair –
12th May 2025**