

CHAIR'S REPORT - MAY 2026
BERROW PARISH COUNCIL

I am pleased to report that the Council is now full with all 7 places in situ. We co-opted Andy Raistrick as a new member as part of last year's Annual Meeting and we were pleased to welcome Alison Faulkner to the group in November last year after she had been to our meeting in September to observe proceedings. Alison brings with her previous experience on a parish council in Berkshire. Our clerk Sallyann has now successfully completed her first year with us having joined us last April. We carried out a review with her in October which went well from all perspectives.

As a result of advice sent through to us from Worcestershire CALC we successfully transferred our email system and website onto a new .gov.uk system and Sallyann is continuing to work on the website to complete all the sections and links. We began to use the new system from the 1st October.

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 were presented, approved and signed off at last year's annual meeting.

At all the meetings the Clerk presents a Finance report which is reviewed and signed off by the council.

After a lot of hard work by quite a few of the group we have pretty much successfully moved the account onto the bank's online system and have at least 3 signatories who have full access online and can approve payments set up by the clerk although this is work in progress still for some of the other potential signatories. This saves the council some bank charges as we were getting charged more for the use of cheques.

In November the Clerk presented the draft Budget for the following year which required some adjustments and a review of the clerk's salary to bring it in line with NALC pay scales. The precept for 2026/27 therefore was increased to £3,250.00 and the budget approved. The first half of this has been paid to us at the end of April.

Jeremy Moore, our very capable **Lengthsman** continues to carry out his duties around the parish which includes clearing of ditches, cleaning of road signs and cutting of verges etc. Grit bins are full and hardly used this year due to the mild winter but Jeremy helps to access more grit when necessary.

The council continue to receive support from the **District Councillor** Jennie Watkins. The reports come either in person when she is able to attend the meetings or via information sent to the clerk.

Our **County Councillor** Tom Wells attends meetings when time allows. He also keeps us 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 with a leaning towards a 2 part model of north and south by the district councils. Tom is to be thanked for his valuable input over the year.

Defibrillators in the parish: Cllr. Caroline Samsonoff has been carrying out the Guardian role for the Rye Cross defib but sadly our other guardian Maureen Patterson who helped her with this one has stood down for this as she is moving so Caroline is now the only one. Caroline also is guardian for the defibrillator on the village hall wall which was installed about a year ago and is to be thanked for doing this role.

The Village Hall: This item will be covered in the report later in the meeting but the hall has recently received a grant from Malvern Hills District Council meaning that a new heating system was installed in February which has been a great success. Cllrs. Caroline Samsonoff and Jan Kennedy are the 2

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representatives from Berrow Parish Council for the village hall committee and with the rest of that team have done a sterling job on improving the hall and running fundraising events. The main thrust is now to encourage people to hire the space to bring in the income. Although not on the committee myself, I have attended quite a few of the meetings in order to offer any input/help that I can.

Any **planning applications** were duly considered and responded to although not that many have come through this year. There is one that is still currently under review, namely Jacks Place, Berrow. 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.

Proposed development at Glynchbrook: One of the biggest and most important issues to occur in recent times in our area is the Forest of Dean's inclusion into their Local Plan of a development of some 3500 houses with associated infrastructure at Glynchbrook. The boundary of this site could well be very close to Pendock, Redmarley and Lowbands and fairly close to Berrow. The many detrimental reasons for this happening have meant there has been fierce and concerned opposition to this from a lot of people. A group of 7 local people from Redmarley mainly headed up a group called United Against Glynchbrook and have worked tirelessly on the Consultation response which meant that a very detailed response against this was submitted the meet the deadline of the 18th March. During the consultation period Berrow Parish Council members attended various residents meetings, drop-in sessions, delivered leaflets to our residents and produced letters that went out to local MPs, councillors, the boards of health and education, Malvern Hills District Council, Worcestershire and Herefordshire County Councils and Ledbury Town Council to name but a few meaning far more people became aware of the situation. We await the outcome of this before possibly moving onto the next phase of Regulation 19 and so on. The main thrust of the group now is to raise funds for this campaign and there is a separate Go fund me website/group set up to do this, any monies donated here are purely for legal, professional fees etc. as much has been spent on this so far and there is still more to be paid for. Many residents have paid individually for the banners and posters that are up all round the area. The UAG group have been holding successful fundraising events with the aim of raising the profile of the issue, raising finances but also to bring the community together and have fun. There are more planned. Phil Waring one of the leaders of the group attended the Pendock Parish Annual meeting last week to update residents along with Tom Wells and I went along to hear this. Both Tom and Jennie have been active in their support on this issue.

Berrow Charities: Again this will be covered in the named agenda item, but the AGM was held last week on the 7th May. The tenant continues to pay the rent to the Charities account twice yearly and funds are donated regularly to worthy causes. The Trustees have agreed to review the mission statement for the 2 charities the Poors Land and Susannah Nanfan Cocks and also to look at the process for giving donations and to whom.

Berrow Benefice news – Rev'd Canon Julie James retired as our Rector last summer and moved out in August – we thank her and her husband Bob for all their work and support whilst she was in post. We are now in what is called a Vacancy and despite advertising twice no applicants have come forward. The advert is due to be re-run after some tweaking fairly soon and we hope to receive some interest this time. The newly installed Bishop Hugh Nelson from Worcester Diocese asked to come to one of our services for his first service in post and chose to come to a service in Berrow in February with a reception in the hall afterwards which was well attended by locals and everyone enjoyed it.

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

Ruth Coates, Chair – 11th May 2026