

05/25-26

Pauntley Parish Council
Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
MONDAY 28th April 2025, 6pm
Pauntley Village Hall, Brand Green

Present: Cllrs Paul Eastabrook; P Kucharski; M Hargreaves; J Barratt; N Fowke

In attendance: Rachel Freestone – Clerk

Public: 17

1. Chairmans Welcome:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence:

Apologies had been received and accepted from Cllrs Chris Philipps and Mandy Hampton.

3. Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting:

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 29th April 2024. **It was RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting. They were duly signed by the Chairman.

4. Pauntley Parish Council, Chairman's Report:

The Chair gave his report firstly paying his respects to the three members of the community lost over the last year. Please see Appendix 1 for the full report.

5. To receive a report from any District Councillors present:

Due to the County Council elections to be held on the 1st May and the pre-election purdah rules, no reports were given.

6. To receive a report from Pauntley Village Hall:

Cllr Kucharski spoke on behalf of the Pauntley Village Hall Committee. It has been a sad period with the passing of Maurice, Geoff and Anne, they will be sorely missed. The rest of her report is attached. See Appendix 2 for the full report.

Lesley Harding from the Pauntley Village Hall Committee expanded on the Village Hall Refurbishment Project. See Appendix 3 for the full report.

A member asked whether it is possible to get the physical statistics for the Solar panels ourselves, struggling to set up the App. Action: Lesley Harding to contact the contractor for help with the App.

A member asked for an indication on the toilets cost? Ladies £19k (more as also accessible toilet) and Gents about £12k.

7. To receive a report from Pauntley Church:

Derek Bartlett, Church Warden reported on behalf of St John the Evangelist Church. Please see Appendix 4 for the report.

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Member of the public – could the electoral role go out on an email to widen the distribution?

8. To receive a report from Pauntley C of E Primary School:

Cllr Eastabrook read a report provided by the school. Please see Appendix 5.

9. To receive a report from Gloucestershire Police:

In their absence there was none, having contacted them by telephone and email this was disappointing.

10. To receive a report provided by the Neighbourhood Watch Team:

Cllr Eastabrook read a report provided by Mark Robinson. Please see Appendix 6.
A member asked whether the NHW scheme invitation could be sent out by email? To be looked in to.

11. Comments and Questions from any Elector of Pauntley Parish.

*A member of the public asked whether there has been any progress with Broadband? A member of the public added that had looked in to replicating the scheme in place at Eldersfield but that wasn't feasible as the environment differs. A member of the public had obtained a private survey to find a cost to bring it from the school to their home and it was £70k. The private surveyor had contacted BT and there is a map of connecting lines, sounds like they are doing something but 20 years on are no further forward. County Council claims are that 98% are connected however focus should be on the 2% or 5000 people who are unconnected. County Council had a scheme to connect to 4G but a big area around Pool Hill can't get 4G. **It was RESOLVED:** Agenda Broadband for the Parish Council Annual Meeting for the new County Councillor to address.*

It was added that BT are removing landlines over the next couple of years. There is nothing to move over to currently.

A member of the public asked about the pot-holes, they are filled and don't last. This is a county wide problem.

*A member of the public asked for help with a hedgerow which is obstructing the road. **It was RESOLVED:** the member of the public to speak to the resident and the parish council to write should they be resistant.*

Member of the public asked if there is a date for the rally decision. This is unknown.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

Signed...*Paul Eastabrook*Date ...27.04.2026.....

Chairman

Meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Appendix 1 – Chairmans Report

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – MONDAY 28TH APRIL 2025

I was wondering about what I was going to speak tonight by way of highlighting the issues arising during the previous 12 months, in addition to challenges facing us all in the coming 12 months. It's certainly worth remembering that we lost a number of dear friends over the last 12 months, including Maurice Elton, Geoff Thomas and most recently our former colleague on the PC, Anne Rawson, whose life we were able all able to celebrate this afternoon. All of the above mentioned served our community well for a number of years and they will all be greatly missed.

Most of the issues mentioned during the previous 12-month summary remain relevant now.

The struggle to reduce speed limits throughout the parish continues, albeit mostly now in the form of online discussion groups and conferences, rather than hard action by government, either nationally or locally. I'm aware that cost plays a huge part in all of this at the moment, to the extent that we would almost certainly be expected to spend up to £15,000 of parishioners' council tax to apply for a Traffic Regulation Order without any guarantee that it would be forthcoming. Even sharing costs with other towns or parishes would still make a substantial impact on our budget which is currently set at £7k for the entire year, to cover insurances, staff costs, hall hire and everything else.

Biodiversity is still just as relevant as it has always been. We are all custodians of this precious environment of ours, and impacts everything we do. Humans and nature often have competing demands and our role sometimes necessitates that we have to make some tough choices in order to ensure that we all play our part in protecting our own part of this planet.

Planning applications are still with us, alongside the need for local scrutiny by ourselves and the willingness to challenge applications where necessary. We now know only too well that we cannot rely on local authority staff to always make sensible and appropriate decisions, nor for applicants to always play fair when submitting applications. This is even more important now where pressures are growing on local authorities to increase housing stock. For me personally, this whole process highlighted the importance of effective communication networks, involving members of the community, parish councillors, local authority planning staff and management, district councillors and even His Majesty's Planning Inspectorate.

I mentioned last year that we had had successes on the planning front and how we managed to get two highly contentious applications overturned, one of which was recommended for approval and the other already approved under an agricultural exemption. Well, guess what happened subsequently as we came into 2024-25? Both applicants launched appeals and we had to start again with our arguments being pitched, this time, to HM Planning Inspectorate. Fortunately, after much deliberation, the Planning Inspector agreed with us in both cases.

Even then, things don't end. Herridge's "Half-a-Barn" is still standing so there is still another process to go through, which is now under way with Forest of Dean's Planning Enforcement team.

Allied to this, I referred last year to the current interrelationships of a town or parish council with its District and County Council representatives.

It transpires that this is particularly relevant to us all at the moment.

The reason I say *particularly relevant* is in the light of pending changes in the way local government operates and is likely to be structured in the future. I think it's probably appropriate if I spend a few minutes just unpacking, as far as possible, the direction of travel on this.

English Devolution

A Government White Paper was issued on 16th December last year by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, entitled "English Devolution". This is essentially about "reforming" local government and sets out the "direction of travel". Without trying to get overly

technical, the “direction of travel” is somewhat vaguer than a “roadmap”. Whereas a “roadmap” reveals a plan or strategy for achieving the desired outcome by outlining the steps and milestones to achieve that outcome, the “direction of travel” merely indicates where we are all headed, i.e. devolution of local government in England ...with the aim of providing greater accountability and responsibility within local communities, “free of the shackles of unnecessary restrictions” – that phrase was lifted straight out of the White Paper.

Currently, we don’t really have a lot of idea about how any of this is going to work moving forward. We don’t yet know if there will be a Gloucestershire-wide unitary authority, or a West Gloucestershire authority for ourselves containing Forest of Dean, Gloucester City and Stroud, with our wealthier neighbours in Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and Cotswold moving into an East Gloucestershire authority. Another suggestion was that the Gloucester City boundary could be expanded to form a new unitary body with some of the existing district or borough councils and the remainder to form a separate body. This would also potentially impact other bodies such as Gloucestershire Police.

Down the chain of command, the way town and parish councils are going to operate is even less clear at the moment. I can only find three separate references to this in the White Paper itself, such as where Jim McMahon, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution talks in his Foreword about “the introduction of quality parish status”.

Section 4.1 “Communities” states “We will also work with the town and parish council sector to improve engagement between them and local authorities”.

Section 4.2 “Local Government” states “We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice”.

None of us here tonight realistically has the faintest idea how this will develop other than the suspicion that we *may*, and I stress *may*, merge with other town and parish councils to form some new super parish. That is purely speculation on my part, however and has no basis to it other than my own naturally suspicious nature.

For that reason, I don’t feel particularly confident about fielding any questions on any of this as I don’t know any answers and, I suspect, neither does anyone else at the moment.

This all seems to fall into the usual government bureaucracy where the politicians decide on what they want to happen and then pass it over either to the civil servants or, in this case, locally elected representatives to make it happen.

Hills Ford Rally 2025

The only other thing that is probably worthy of mention is the Hills Ford Rally 2025, currently scheduled for the weekend of September 13th and 14th. Our last parish council meeting of 2 weeks ago tonight, included invited representatives from the organisers, in the form of the rally’s Clerk and Deputy Clerk.

The meeting itself was pretty lively and quite difficult to control at times. Notwithstanding that, and putting aside considerations about noise, general inconvenience and even the possibility of damage to property, we did have significant concerns over personal safety in an area such as Ketford where speeds were being suggested by the organisers as averaging 73 mph across the entire course.

We did receive all sorts of assurances from the organisers about things including access to property along the route by emergency services and a dedicated medical professional being on-site throughout.

There was also talk about donations being made available to parish councils along the route although this was never properly expanded upon, other than get a form and fill it in. For me personally, that set alarm bells ringing.

A few of us had a quick debrief the next day and became increasingly concerned about the potential for being considered as being actively complicit to the holding of the event, either by supporting the

rally directly or by not raising any objection. People keep reminding me that the organisers have all the necessary insurances in place, should they kill or injure anybody, but that doesn't make me feel any more comfortable with it. If we don't at least spell out our concerns to the relevant authority, i.e. Gloucestershire County Council, then the event will probably just go ahead unchallenged and we can duly consider ourselves liable, whether legally or morally, for any serious injuries arising, essentially on our watch.

We know full well that whatever path we had taken, it would not have been popular with everybody. The strength of feeling at our last PC meeting and subsequent feedback received, was evident for all to see and hear from both sides of the divide.

Thoughts about taking a meaningful survey were duly considered, but then we had concerns not so much over things such as vote rigging, but over who can participate and who can't (Ketford only / Ketford & Pool Hill / Pauntley-wide / individuals or households only). This made the survey concept useful but certainly not definitive and by extension, largely impractical, other than as a very general guide.

On the basis that the decision whether to support or object the event was ours alone, we took what we considered to be the only logical path, by a majority of all councillors.

I'll be happy to take any questions later on in the meeting should anyone raise any of the points covered in my Intro.

Apart from all of the above, that's really all I have to report for this year. Thank you.

Appendix 2 – Pauntley Village Hall Committee Report – 28th April 2025

This has been a sad period with the passing of Maurice Elton, Geoff Thomas and Anne Rawson who worked tirelessly in their support of Pauntley Village Hall. They will be sadly missed.

This year saw the set-up, by The Parish Council acting as Sole Trustee, of The Village Hall Committee. The Committee consists of three Parish Councillors; Patricia Kucharski, Jo Barratt and Chris Philipps and three members of the community; Annie Gray, Andrew Stewart and Lesley Harding. The purpose of the Committee is to have overall responsibility for the management of the Village Hall in accordance with legislative requirements, regulations and guidelines.

Meetings are open to members of the public.

Village Hall Maintenance

- Solar panels have been installed and are in use, although there are issues with the present provider EDF, over the instalment of a smart meter. Hopefully, this will be resolved soon.
- The audio visual equipment has been replaced and sound quality now much improved.
- The kitchen has been treated for mould and painted. The gents toilet will also be treated and painted, but only after the toilets are refurbished.
- The Village Hall refurbishment project will be split into internal and external works. Quotes are being obtained for an exterior terrace and a built-in barbecue.
- Michal Moran now has responsibility for grounds maintenance and other general duties, which are overseen by Andrew Stewart. A huge thanks to Andrew for organising this and his generosity.
- The two trees at the entrance have been cut back, although the remaining height is being questioned with the contractor.
- The new hedge is now fully planted, and conifer trees cut back.

Hall Hire

Andrew Stewart is planning a new Village Hall website to help raise the profile of the village hall and encourage new bookings.

Presently the hall is regularly used by Pauntley Play, a Pilates class, Newent Girl Guides and the Spiritual Meeting group.

Events

We are looking to run more inclusive events, especially for the children/teenagers in the Parish. Once the new website is up and running, our events will be advertised on it.

The old marquee was ruined in last December's storms and a new pop-up tent has been purchased to replace it. Hopefully it will be quick and easy to put up and down.

Events run to-date include coffee mornings and walks, film evenings, quizzes, skittles, gardening bring and buy sale, Christmas party, historical talk, event to mark the anniversary of the D-Day landings and Pop-up Pubs.

The 100 Club draws are held every quarter with three prizes to win.

Events for the future include:

2nd May: A coffee morning in aid of Dementia UK

8th May: VE 80 Day celebrations with Tudor fish and chips, music and Pop-up Pub.

16th May: Computer clinics run by Andrew Stewart first one to be held at the coffee morning

17th May: Friendly skittles

16th August: Summer fete music, Pop-up Pub, Miniyaki Japanese food van, possible fun dog show and something for the kids.

TBD: Film evenings showing golden oldies.

TBD: Race night

Volunteers

Without our wonderful hardworking volunteers, we would not be able to run events to fundraise to pay for maintaining the village hall. So, thank you everybody

Patricia Kucharski - Chair The Village Hall Committee

Appendix 3 – Village Hall Refurbishment Project Report – APM 28th April 2025

We have had a busy year with our plans for the refurbishment of the hall.

Audio Visual Upgrade

In August 2024, River Audio from Stroud installed a new amplifier and speakers to upgrade our audio-visual equipment. They also installed acoustic panels on the ceiling to absorb some of the sound and reduce the echoing which is common in many village halls with hard surfaces. This has made a significant difference to the acoustics for our film evenings and other events. We have also noticed an improvement in sound quality at busy events such as our coffee mornings.

Solar Panel Installation

Later in the year, we were fortunate to obtain a grant from the Rural England Prosperity Fund Community Infrastructure Grant to fund part of the installation of our solar panels and storage battery. A local company, GSM, installed these for us in November 2024. We are currently working with our electricity supplier, EDF, to install a smart meter so we can hopefully sell any surplus back to the grid over the summer months.

Kitchen Refurbishment

Our latest project involved having the kitchen professionally treated and painted with mould-resistant paint, making it brighter and more hygienic. We have also been able to purchase a new cooker, thanks to a generous contribution of £250 towards the cost from Unite the Union Messier Bugatti Dowty Branch.

Future Refurbishment Plans

We have begun considering a larger refurbishment project that includes:

- Improving the toilets
- Installing a patio and built-in barbecue outside
- Hard core re-purposing/topping for outside the front entrance beyond the paving.
- Other repairs and painting

Grants are currently difficult to source, especially for community buildings, so we have decided to break the project down into more manageable units. We have received two updated quotes for the outside work and have identified a couple of possible grant sources for this. If successful with grant applications, we plan to complete this work over the summer before turning our attention to the larger project involving the toilets.

Fundraising Initiatives

For grant applications, demonstrating that we have already raised some funds ourselves is key to success. Some initiatives we can highlight include:

- Village Hall 100 Club: Local supporters purchase numbers, and a draw is made each quarter. 50% of the raised funds go for prizes, while the remaining 50% contribute to our refurbishment fund.
- Pauntley Real Ale Festival Committee Pop Up Pubs: These events raise valuable funds for us.

We continue our other fundraising initiatives to ensure we have a reserve for these projects. We are very grateful to all those who support us and attend our events, helping to raise money for the hall. We also acknowledge the hard work of our volunteers; their contributions are vital to our success.

Get Involved

We welcome community involvement on our refurbishment project team in any capacity. Please let us know if you would like to play a part in shaping the future of your hall.

Thank you for your support.

Lesley Harding

For Pauntley Village Hall Refurbishment Working Group 28.04.25

Appendix 4 - St John the Evangelist Church Report

There's really only two things to report: first I assume you're all aware that our Priest in Charge Rev'd Kat, left us last October so we are again in a Vacancy. The advert for her replacement has been published and there was no response; apparently that isn't unusual, and it will be re-advertised in a month or so. Luckily, we have an Interim priest, David Bowers and 2 Curates Molly Boot and Caroline Dunnett and 2 or 3 retired Priests that we can call upon.

The bad news is that there is a problem with the roof, the more expensive part of any repairs, partly due to the cost of scaffolding. At the moment we're at the stage of obtaining quotes against the specification which we have had to have drawn up – that cost a couple of thousand pounds for starters. We have some funds but whether they'll be sufficient is unknown, so if anyone wins the lottery.....

Every 6 years the Church renews it's Electoral Roll and you should all have a form in with your parish Magazine. It would be helpful if we could get a few more people to sign up, it costs nothing and you're not expected to come to services, (although we'd be pleased if you did) but it will help to show that the Parish Church is still valued by the community.

There is some good news in that our attendance is up slightly; numbers attending Church at Easter were up this year all across the country, and that was true here too. And we have 4 weddings thanks to the Court, which is a bonus not just financially but because they're such happy occasions.

We'd like to thank those parishioners who help out by cleaning, mowing the churchyard, and arranging flowers – we couldn't keep going without them.

Appendix 5 – Report provided by Pauntley Cof E Primary School.

We have again had a very busy and exciting year at Pauntley CofE primary school. Mrs Michelle Kelly was formally appointed as Executive Head teacher over the GPP Federation in September 2024 and Miss Stacey Zimmermann moved from Glebe to Pauntley to take up the post as Assistant Headteacher. In January we welcomed a new Reception and Key Stage 1 teacher, Mrs Jane Shaw.

In October we planned an activity day for World Mental Health day, including mindful colouring, yoga, watercolour painting and mindful outdoor learning. On Armistice Day we all paid our respects with Reverend Molly in attendance and the children sang "Dona Nobis Pacem" (Give us Peace) before we held a minute's silence together by our outdoor ceramic poppy display. This was observed immaculately by our pupils and the collection was impressive.

We hold various fundraising events throughout the school year including raising funds for Children in Need, crazy hair day, break the rules day, Christmas jumper day (Save the Children) and Red Nose day. The PFA continued their fundraising with a Christmas Bazaar which raised much needed funds and children also attended the Newent Christmas Lights Switch On parade through the town, carrying lanterns which raises the profile of our little village school. The PFA then were able to fund a trip for the children to Clearwell Caves, which they explored and visited Santa in his grotto. The Christmas period of celebrations culminated as usual in a wonderful Nativity at St John's Church. Parents, pupils and staff all attend this very special celebration and the children did us proud with their performance, prayers and songs.

We were delighted to accept the offer of a donated Christmas lunch cooked and served by the wonderful Rotary club of Newent in December. Pupils, staff, governors and volunteers enjoyed the feast together. In Spring the school enjoyed our annual daffodil walk and children were later able to make pictures of the flowers they'd seen. Young Voices, a concert performed by primary school children is held annually in Birmingham and children from the Federation had weeks of practice leading up to this special event. They also then performed their songs at the Newent civic event later that month.

We are joined by Reverend Molly for worship regularly which the children love – at Christmas Rev'd Molly brought dressing up costumes and together with the children performed a "scratch" nativity. These visits always have the children engaged and reflective of their faith and they participate in plays and storytelling. At our recent Easter service the children retold the Easter story and sang hymns to a full church.

The spring and summer terms bring an array of sports events in the locality. Our pupils very much enjoy practising beforehand and heading off with our dedicated sports teachers in the minibus dressed in our Pauntley team colours. They have recently played netball and football and look forward to and cricket this summer. Recently they also enjoyed a darts morning at school, with all ages taking part.

The exam season is upon us and children will look forward to some treat days after that period is over – we plan to take the Juniors for a whole day to Croft Farm waterpark to experience sailing and paddle boarding. The Year 6 children will be going on the annual residential to North Wales and Year 4 are heading off to Viney Hill activity centre. The infants meanwhile have a selection of animals being brought into school to tie in with their topic this term.

As the school year comes to a close, we will reflect on our Year 6 leavers and look forward to a healthy intake come September.

Michelle Kelly - Executive Headteacher

Appendix 6 – Report provided by the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

The co-ordinator for The Poolhill Neighbourhood Watch Group is Mark Robinson (The Cottage Poolhill). This is a voluntary role and there are other NHW Groups in and around Newent.

Even though it's called The Poolhill Group, anyone can become a member. The aim of Neighbourhood Watch is:

- Cut crime and reduce opportunities for crime
- Help and reassure those who live in the area
- Encourage neighbourliness and closer communities
- Act as a 'post box' to pass on information from the authorities e.g. awareness of and how to reduce cyber crime / flagging up initiatives for crime reduction / promoting webinars on relevant topics

As co-ordinator I receive information which is passed by email to members of the group. Members of the group can flag or report issues to me which I can then pass back up the line, so other NHW groups can be made aware. You must still use the emergency services to formally report crime, the NHW scheme is just information flow and awareness.

If anyone would like to join our group, I need written permission using the attached form – this covers off consent for me to send emails etc.

Joining a NHW group gives access to a members guide which has significant information on how to prevent crime and keep yourself safe. There are other materials available e.g. window stickers to provide a visible deterrent.

Approved Minutes APM 28.04.25

If you do not have access to email, you can still join the group, but almost 100% of the briefings are electronic. You can receive a hard copy of the members guide, and if you provide a 'phone number, then co-ordinators may call you if there is a serious issue.

Mark's email address – markanthonyrobinson1961@gmail.com