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Pauntley Parish Council
Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
MONDAY 27th April 2026, 6.30pm
Pauntley Village Hall, Brand Green

Present: Cllrs Paul Eastabrook; Jo Barratt; Patricia Kucharski; Andrew Robbins; Nick Fowke

In attendance: Rachel Freestone – Clerk

Gill Moseley – County Councillor

Public: 23

1. Chairmans Welcome:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the meaning and relevance of the Annual Parish Meeting.

2. Apologies for absence:

Apologies had been received and accepted from the Gloucestershire Crime Prevention Officer, she hopes to attend the ordinary meeting in July.

3. Minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting:

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 28th April 2025. **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 attached as **Appendix 1.**

18.50 a member of the public arrived.

The Chair asked for the views of those present on the VETS scheme. Cllr Kucharski added that there needs to be 10 volunteers on the system of which 5 need to be a landline, very few have landlines. *A MofP commented that they only have a landline and the VETS system gives sense of security when alone.* Cllr Kucharski informed that since 2017 only taken 2 calls. *A MofP had used it but did not get any replies. A MofP had called 999 in the first instance and First Responders had been very quick.* Cllr Fowke added that did consider First Responders Scheme as so rural and VETS was chosen instead. *A MofP asked if we still need defibrillators? Yes.* **Action:** to add to the Agenda of the PC Annual Meeting in May for Cllrs to make a decision.

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

County Cllr Gill Moseley reported.

Local Government Reorganisation – general consensus of parish and town councils that one unitary would be the best option. Gloucestershire as a whole would benefit from being a whole county. The two other options submitted to Central Govt. were Greater Gloucester with the rest of the county and an East/West divide. Central Government have reduced the minimum number of residents from 500,000 to 300,000. Now a wait and see as Govt will decide from these 3 options by mid 2026 but may also reject all the options. So far, all the Districts and the County have worked well in partnership.

Liberal Democrats have been in administration for a year. They have a Political Assistant to help develop policies and they have put together a report which she will share with the Clerk to distribute.

County Council finances – they have a 3 year plan but also £30 million less per year allocated in their budget, they will need to find savings from somewhere. They have passed a budget.

Highways department receives the most complaints. Hopes everyone uses 'FixmyStreet', it is not

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always successful but at least is recording. An extra £15million has been given to the Highways budget. There will be more resurfacing and patching rather than just potholes in hope don't reappear so frequently. Improved monitoring as standards have been poor. Ringway contractors have responsibility to repair again at their cost if fails. Road signs have been cleaned.

Road Safety. They are keen to roll out the 20mph limits as know reduces accidents. TRO's are the most expensive part, but local areas can share the cost. The areas with fewer accidents will be placed further down the priority list for TRO's, the order of implementation will be statistically driven. Expressions of interest have been received.

The Robin bus is a useful means of transport. Bookable by phone, app and website. A few in the room have used it and think it is great. Please help those who may not be confident to book themselves. County bus route map been created shows all the routes in the County can be found to download online.

Economy – totally neglected as far as investment in jobs. If going to have 1000 more houses in Newent, need 1000 more jobs. Recognised now as lowest growth District in the County.

Three new special schools being built. Three new care homes being built for the county.

There is a new library in central Gloucester and 10 more fire engines for the county.

A MofP commented that the Govt white paper suggests that SEND children should go into mainstream schools. County Cllr Moseley offered to put them in touch with Cabinet member responsible for Children's Services for further information.

She was thanked for her time.

- 6. To receive a report from the Gloucestershire Constabulary Crime Prevention Officer:** In her absence there was none.

The Chair commented that crime statistics for Pauntley were unremarkable with 3 records last year and none this year.

- 7. To receive a report from the GRCC Rural Housing Enabler:**

Sarah Walker was welcomed and she introduced herself. Her role is part funded by the Districts and 7 housing associations with the aim to be Rural Housing enabling. She works with communities to meet needs to keep rural communities sustainable. All our District Councils have been given huge housing targets with all looking at their Local Plans. Know housing is coming. However, there are lots of high numbers which are not necessarily meeting needs. Her job is to assess need. She passed around a brief survey to be completed at the meeting. What are the issues, do we need affordable housing? There is an aging population who bought their homes but now living in larger homes may not need. New ideas are coming forward which include older person shared ownership with down-sizing bungalows. Her surveys are completed by people who actually live in the communities, Pauntley is due one and it will create a big picture. The findings come back to the parish council. It is a copyright document and is not released to developers or available online. Forms are sent by post and need as many people as possible to complete them, the average return is approx. 20%. If want affordable housing where suggest? To be able to take sign up for the housing, have to live and work in the area for at least 6 months, have immediate relatives in the parish, be students returning or have family still in the parish. Forms will be sent at the beginning of June. *MofP asked if their survey relates just to Pauntley?* They can look at greener housing projects and environmentally friendly housing.

County Cllr Gill Moseley commented that as a District Cllr also she hadn't heard about it. The survey will be sent to all the smaller villages which aren't included in a Development Plan.

FoDDC have been rigorous in not building in open countryside/outside settlement boundaries.

However, if don't build big settlements may need to relax controls as need to find numbers. There has been a call for sites, they are waiting to see if any new development sites come out in responses.

She was thanked for her time.

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8. To receive a report from Pauntley Village Hall:

Cllr Kucharski read her report on behalf of the Pauntley Village Hall Committee attached as Appendix 2. She added that the committee are open to suggestions for fundraising events. They would like to set up a Whatsapp group to inform those interested in upcoming events.

9. To receive a report from Pauntley Church:

Derek Bartlett, Church Warden reported on behalf of St John the Evangelist Church shown as Appendix 3.

A MofP asked about the bells. Yes they are still going and they ring them at every wedding.

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

There was none.

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

Mandy Hampton as Footpaths Officer reported shown in Appendix 4.

Clerk reminded everyone that can use FixmyStreet to report footpaths. The Footpaths Officer added that would like a stand at the summer fete to promote local walks. The Ordnance Survey App is brilliant. *A MofP thanked her for all her work. A MofP asked for a local Bridlepath to reinstated and then would look at improving the surface.* To send details to the Clerk.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

Signed.....Date

Chairman

Meeting closed at 8.25pm.

Appendix 1 – Chairmans Report

This is the 6th of these meetings that I have attended since I first joined the PC back on 1st June 2021. We referred to the gathering as the “Annual Assembly” in those days and that year it took place just outside the back doors here, in the bright evening sunshine, which was fortunate for an outdoor meeting that didn’t start until 7:30 p.m. I recall that there were 5 parish councillors in attendance plus ONE member of the public and no Clerk. We even had to have an Acting Chair for the evening. At that time, we were slowly moving away from the various and varied Covid restrictions which had been in place, with its many challenges including limiting the frequency and size of gatherings that were allowed to be held. The school’s report, the county councillor’s report, the Chairman’s report and the Village Hall report had to be read out by those of us in attendance. The Police report was circulated too as a paper document, but with very little context provided (I suspect we’ve gone full circle with that again tonight).

I was asked by a neighbour to raise the issue of noise nuisance following an unannounced clay pigeon shoot that had taken place at the back of our respective properties less than a week before, by participants who, it transpired had actually gone into the wrong field and should have been a considerable distance away from anyone’s back garden. So, suitable assurances were subsequently received from the lessor and calm was restored.

Anyway, 5 years have now lapsed since that day and I am delighted that we have managed to draw in quite a few more bodies tonight compared to 1st June 2021 and hopefully we have managed to generated a bit more interest in local matters.

Topics I was planning on covering this evening in my address include:

- Proposals for local government changes in England and how they are likely to impact us here;

- Government targets concerning new homes;

- A very quick canter through a few other areas of potential interest by way of an update

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHANGES IN ENGLAND

If we can start with one of the challenges facing local government at the moment and one which has been occupying a lot of people's time over the last 12 months or so. I did raise it last year but it's worth highlighting again as it will impact all of us in the very near future.

Local Government is reorganising in England with a strong push towards unitary authorities, i.e. merging borough or district councils with county councils in a bid to drive efficiencies and reduce the administrative burden on council tax payers by coming together, certainly in our case, under one or possibly two new umbrella organisations within the existing county framework with the aim of replacing 7 separate sets of bureaucracy with 1 or possibly 2 new larger bodies.

For Gloucestershire County, there have been three main proposals put forward by the various council bodies involved in the discussions, unless you include the Forest of Dean DC's lack of a coherent proposal other than hoping that it will go away. Two of the options involve splitting the county into 2 units, either as East & West Gloucestershire authorities or as an enhanced and expanded Gloucester City Council, plus everything else going into a Greater Gloucestershire Council.

The other option, and possibly the likely favoured option, and the one supported by the current County Council, will be to combine the whole lot into an enlarged Gloucestershire Unitary Authority.

Elections are anticipated to take place in May 2027 in Gloucestershire with a Go Live date of 1 April 2028 as the likely vesting date of the new body or bodies and the dissolution of the existing council bodies (county, district and boroughs).

At the moment, we don't really have much idea about what, if any impact any of this is likely to have on us at Parish level and for any potential changes to the way in which parishioners are to be catered for. It's just a case of waiting and watching until we get a firmer steer from the decision makers. The only thing that I think we can be sure of is that, unless there is a sudden dramatic change in thinking, it will happen in one form or another.

PLANNING AND GOVERNMENT TARGETS

Planning applications are still very much a big thing for us all here, maybe not in terms of the number of applications predicted going forward when compared with those over the last few years, but certainly when it comes to the sheer volume of properties that are being proposed nationally for England and, by extension, the Forest of Dean and neighbouring councils.

Our share of the government aspiration, under Angela Rayner's direction, of building 1.5-million new homes in England over the remaining lifetime of this parliament is 13,200 in the Forest of Dean. The ruling Green Party councillors have proposed two key locations in our midst, involving 3,500 new homes at Glynchbrook on what was classed agricultural, Green Belt land, plus a further 2,000 at Churcham in addition to another 2,500 also at Churcham, but across the dividing line inside Tewksbury BC's patch. These 8,000 homes will go a long way to achieving the government's targets and, the cynic in me would suggest that this wouldn't impact Green support on the council greatly as their district councillors all appear to be based in the south of the Forest and the proposed sites are all located a safe distance away from them all. Perhaps that's just a coincidence though. Yeah, right.

This is still very much an ongoing battle. I attended a talk at Oxenhall Parish Hall less than three weeks ago from our new MP, Matt Bishop, who confirmed that he is against the proposals at Glynchbrook and Churcham and has urged his Labour councillor colleagues to vote against both developments, rather than to continue supporting Green Party proposals. I would hope that that would be enough to make all the difference because the decision was down to a single vote, such that any one councillor changing their mind could potentially do the trick and get this nonsense stopped.

SPEED LIMITS

The struggle to reduce speed limits throughout the parish continues. I have no further updates since last year, unfortunately, other than numerous words of encouragement throughout the county and also, nationally.

I don't know if Gill might be in a position yet to offer any crumbs of hope in a moment, which would otherwise only be possible by asking you all to fork out £15k plus for the necessary Traffic Regulation Order. Just applying for it would mean more than trebling the existing council tax burden of the PC with no guarantees of success.

It was interesting that Andrew Robbins and I were at a meeting last Tuesday with the police in attendance and my opposite number in Dymock was complaining about how long he had been waiting for some speed recording devices to be provided by the Senior Collision Investigator at Gloucestershire Police. I think he was talking about having had already been waiting for several months. I checked my calendar before heading here this afternoon and realised we've already been waiting for them since February 2023. I won't be holding my breath on this particular initiative though.

HILLS FORD RALLY 2025

I mentioned at last year's meeting that we had just objected to the holding of the Hills Ford Rally 2025 event, scheduled for September 2025, purely on the grounds of personal safety. We didn't want to spoil anyone's fun, but the details we were being provided with by the rally's organisers meant that we wouldn't be able to guarantee the safety of any resident, spectator, participant or of anyone visiting the area or even merely passing through. To have given permission would, we felt, be tantamount to accepting a degree of liability in the event of serious personal injury.

As a direct result of our objection, we were informed subsequently by the organisers that they would be re-routing the rally away from this parish.

SOCIAL AND VILLAGE HALL

On the social side of things, we have had a number of successes with various activities and initiatives at this very hall.

I'll try not to steal Patricia's thunder on this, but there have been some very successful things going on here and things which, will hopefully continue into the future. All of this is dependent on high levels of support from the local populace both in terms of attendance levels at events and also from the team of dedicated volunteers that facilitate all of these events and help to keep this place in tip top order.

Anyway, Patricia will update you shortly on what has been going on and what is to come..

VACANCIES

During the year we had resignations from a total of FOUR parish councillors, but managed to recruit two, which means that we are currently still carrying two vacancies on the PC, so if any of you do fancy signing up to join us, we are currently permitted to co-opt individuals onto the council without the need for a bi-election.

In terms of the Parish Council itself, which is also the trustee for the Village Hall, we are expecting there to be an election for new councillors in 2027.

What this means is that if you are interested but are concerned about tying yourself in for a lengthy period of time, you can opt to join us on a "try before you buy" basis, such that, if you do a year as a co-opted councillor and then decide it's not for you, then you can just stand for election at the 2027 local elections. If that appeals, then please feel free to come and have a word after the meeting either with Rachel who can walk you through the admin side of things and send you the necessary forms or, alternatively speak with any of us on the PC who can tell you about their experiences and highlight some of the highs and lows of what the role has entailed.

CONCLUSION

That's really all I have to talk about for this year. I'm happy to take questions about this or anything else under item 10 later on, unless anyone has anything burning which may have arise out of anything I've said.

Appendix 2 – Village Hall Committee Report

The Village Hall Management Committee is into its second year with a change a membership having now two Parish Councillors Patricia Kucharski and Jo Barratt and two members of the community Andrew Stuart and Claire Woodger. Jo leads on finance, within the remit of the committee, Andrew on village hall maintenance and Claire on social media.

This year saw the launch of the new village hall website and work is underway to publicise the village hall to encourage new bookings.

Rachel Robbins is now the village hall booking officer with responsibilities of adding events onto the village hall website.

Regular hall bookings include Newent Girl Guides, Pauntley Play, Spiritual Healing, Keep Fit and Puppy Training,

A village hall volunteer WhatsApp has been set up to communicate quickly and briefly amongst the group.

Village Hall Maintenance

- This year five new double glazed were installed to replace the blown units.
- EDF have provided a new smart meter so that any surplus electricity can be sold to the grid. The smart meter no longer requires manual meter readings and should be more efficient and enable us realise some future cost savings.
- It has been decided to refurb the toilets instead of any major works which would need planning permission and extension work. The refurb will include new toilet seats, new vanity unit in the ladies and painting throughout.
- A very successful weekly volunteer cleaning rota, has been put in place by Claire, saving the village hall on professional cleaning costs.
- Andrew has donated black out curtains so that we can show film evenings in the lighter months. He has also donated a pie warmer for the kitchen.
- Andrew has very kindly donated a robotic lawn mower to cut the grass at the back of the village hall. The mower has been named Maurice in memory of Maurice Elton.
- Michal has laid a concrete path from the Pauntley Play shed to the fire escape.
- Michal continues to maintain the village hall grounds and any jobs needed doing within the hall. Many thanks to Andrew for his tremendous generosity.

Fund raising events

The year saw several new events including a Burns Night and Scottish Dancing. Live screening of international rugby and The Grand National supported by Pauntley Real Ale. Who donated money for the purchase of a TV license. We also joined the Five Villages Film Festival which was very successful.

A summer fete and fun dog show with Pauntley Pop up Pub and live music was held last August.

The Pétanque match against Upleadon was very popular with a return match this July.

Computer clinics run by Andrew.

Village Hall 100 Club 50% raised funds go to prizes remaining 50% contribute to our refurb fund.

Future events

Regular Friday morning coffee mornings and Pauntley walks.

Film nights dates to be confirmed.

Five Village Film Festival dates to be confirmed.

2nd May Bingo Night 7.30

13th June Summer Fete and fun dog show with Pauntley Pop up Pub, live music, bouncy castle, tombola, stalls, games, Gurneys Hog Roast. Doors open 2pm till late.

12th July live screening men's Wimbledon final with Pimm's and strawberries.

19th July Pétanque match against Upleadon

19th September Quiz night with Mike Manning hosting.

8th and 21st November live screening rugby.

23rd January Burns Night with Scottish dancing.

Finance Report

1. Total income of £11,200 including generous donations from PRA, Andrew and a grant from the Warm Space people. These donations make all the difference and allow us to keep the hall in good working order and the outside area smart. A huge thank you as well to all the volunteers who donate their time, cakes and raffle prizes to support the Hall. Hall hire definitely down this year but steps in place to drive this forward next year.
2. Total outgoings of £8846. As with all our own domestic bills, keeping tight on electricity, water and everyday running costs is essential. This year we have had some unexpected costs from things like the Drains and some expenditure on lighting. A special thank you to Michal and to Andrew for all their support in the grounds maintenance; Maurice the automatic mower is also doing a great job!
3. Total nett profits from fund raising this year is £3812. This really helps us with running costs and importantly running events to benefit everyone in the community. We always get such great feedback from people who come to our events.

Appendix 3 - Church Warden of St John the Evangelist Church

When I came to this meeting last year the Leaden Vale Benefice was without a Priest-in-Charge. We still are. The post has been advertised twice, There's been no response We're now on our second interim priest i-in-charge but only until June. We 'll have to wait and see what happens after that . We have 2 Curates at the moment but Molly will be leaving soon, Caroline Dunnnett will of course stay as she lives in Dymock, but we'll mostly be relying on retired Priests and there are a few of us lay people who can take services. We still have our regular two services a month, Holy Communion on the 2nd Sunday at 11am and Evensong on the 4th Sunday at 6pm, that's the 1662 Common Book of Worship which still has a strong following, we often get a couple from the other Parishes come to it.

Locally it's more optimistic as we more or less carry on regardless : numbers in the congregation are slightly up and we have 6 weddings and 2 blessings this summer , which is very helpful income. The Carol Service was very well attended, and everyone enjoyed the mulled wine and mince pies afterwards.

We still have a Team of Mowers to keep the churchyard tidy, so we're very lucky that we don't actually have to pay somebody outside to do that . There are a group of us who clean the church and do the flowers, but we could always do with some more volunteers especially, for example, once a year cleaning and cleaning the brass .

Thanks to Mr and Mrs Hargreaves at Pauntley Court the Chancel has been redecorated and we hope the Nave and the Bell Tower can be done as well later this year. It does look much brighter. Much better
There is a problem with the roof, as with most churches : that'll probably drain our finances but we don't have costings as yet . But when you think the building's been there since about 1180 it isn't really a surprise.

Other than that, we carry on as before.

Appendix 4 – Footpaths Officer

I met with Will Saunders (GCC PROW) a couple of weeks ago and we had a good walk around the Parish.

We reviewed pathways near to “Three Choirs” vineyard. Will has now sent an email asking for footpaths to be reinstated. Also mentioned the possible install of a waymark post for where footpath leaves surfaced road. Still waiting for a response back.

There was a damaged Stile going onto Welsh House lane near the Dymock end this has been passed to a contractor to carry out the stile repair

Will is still waiting permission to access the land on Mr Savages farm to replace the stile and look at some sort of bridge.

We also discussed the small pathway in Bottloes green from the green to the lane down to Bottloes farm. Will will be arranging clearance of the footpath to support access.

Complaints have been received that the lane running across Poolhill between the two lanes has become restricted due to hedges encroaching on the footpath. Will has written to home owners requesting the hedges are cut back. He will review at the end of May.

I have not received any update on the closed pathway at Ketford so assume it remains closed with an alternative route marked.

Please remind parishioners to keep to the footpaths, pick up any dog poo, especially in areas where farm animals graze, and take home. Any gates open or closed when walking should be left as found, farmers leave gates open for a reason.

Happy to discuss any footpath issues with parishioners, always good to have a What3words reference.

