

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 6th May at 6:30pm at Honeybourne Village Hall, Harvest Close, WR11 7RH

The Meeting was chaired by Cllr Heath Jobes, Honeybourne Parish Council Chairman.

In attendance	26 members of public
District Councillors	Hannah Robson & Judith Ciotti
County Councillor	Hannah Robson
Parish Councillors	A Attridge, T Askew, C Clear, G Clelland, B Dubb and A Mathias
Parish Clerk	L Stanton

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present.

2. Apologies

Apologies have been received from Cllrs S Sidwell, S Walsh, Mr Steve Attridge (Chair of Honeybourne Hawks FC) Mrs C Bates (Secretary of Honeybourne Wednesday Club)

3. To receive and approve the minutes of the previous annual meeting held on 14th May 2024.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 14th May 2024 be approved as true record of the meeting.

4. Chairman's report from Parish Council.

a. Chairman's report:

"Good evening, everyone and welcome to our Annual Parish Meeting. I would also like to welcome our newly elected County Councillor Hannah Robson.

The purpose of this meeting is to update you on what the Parish Council has been up to over the past 12 months. It is also an opportunity for the various voluntary organisations within the village to report on all their activities over the past year.

We hope residents would agree we have listened to their feedback or concerns, and where it has been in our gift to be able to resolve, action has been taken. Over the course of this year, we have purchased another new VAS sign to try and help reduce speeding in the village, continued with the programme of enhancing the sports field by improving the soil drainage and additional seeding, welcoming a new football team to the sports field (Honeybourne Hawks), improving our public footpaths accessibility with pedestrian gates instead of stiles, thanks to our volunteer PROW group and purchasing a fourth defibrillator for the village which is located on the exterior wall of Ludify Automotive, retail units on Sycamore Drive and purchasing an additional grit bin for Brickwalk. Some members of the Parish Council along with a number of local residents and allotment plot holders planted a community orchard at the allotment, with trees consisting of a mix of local apple and plum varieties, provided by the Coronation Living Heritage Fund through Worcestershire County Council Countryside Services. The PC also awarded grants to Friends of Honeybourne Station, Honeybourne Village Hall, Honeybourne Village News, Honeybourne Hawks and Honeybourne Wednesday Club to help support these groups with their activities.

One of last year's most significant events was the 80th commemoration of the D-Day landing. We marked the event by lighting a Beacon of Peace at the Village Hall, whilst a live silver band played popular 1940's music and schoolchildren read out their poetry from the village school.

In November GWR ran a Poppy Train, which passed through Honeybourne on its way to the war memorial at Paddington Station. I was invited to present a wreath, on behalf of the Council and residents, to the GWR staff on the train to be laid at the war memorial. I also attended the annual Remembrance Service at St Egwin's church.



The annual Christmas Switch On and Fayre took place on 29th November with a live band, fairground ride and Santa was on hand to meet the children. The lights were switched on by our local MP, Nigel Huddleston. The event was well attended as usual.

Before moving on to planning matters, I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their support over the past 12 months. I'd also like to welcome our newly co-opted Parish Councillor, Cllr Sandra Walsh. Thanks also go to District Councillors Hannah Robson and Judith Ciotti for their continued assistance and support.



Planning Matters

In the past year, the Parish Council has reviewed 14 planning applications covering various projects from simple drop kerbs to industrial developments and home extensions.

For one notable case, we appointed Brodie Planning to help us formally object to plans for converting a garage into a 2-bedroom bungalow. Wychavon District Council (WDC) agreed with our concerns and refused the application.

We've had mixed results with other significant applications. Most recently, at the Wychavon planning committee meeting, our planning consultant spoke to object to the outline planning permission for 24 dwellings on Bretforton Road. I'm pleased to report that the planning committee upheld our objection.

The WDC planning committee also supported our objections to both a self-build house in Westbourne and a proposed 40-home development on Stratford Road. When the applicants appealed these decisions, we won one case but lost the other. The planning inspector refused permission for the Westbourne self-build, which was good news.

However, unfortunately, the planning inspector did approve the 40-home development on Stratford Road. This may have been due to Wychavon District Council withdrawing their objections to this development during the course of the appeal, due to a housing supply shortage in the district. As stated in the planning inspectors Appeal Decision: The Council confirmed that "following a change to the Council's latest Housing Land Supply position they withdraw the reasons for refusal and objections to the proposed development." Put simply, WDC can only demonstrate that they have enough land for 1.1 years of new housing, far below the 5-year supply they're required to maintain. The Parish Council was very disappointed with this outcome and this was first we (Parish Council) knew that our District Council had withdrawn their objection to this application. When I approached our District Council Planning Department, I asked if our District Councillors and planning committee members knew that WDC had withdrawn their objection, I received no clear answer from the WDC Head of Planning.

Other Ongoing Projects

We recognise the ongoing parking issues around the Honeybourne Railway Station and the surrounding residential areas, namely Stephenson Way and the Bovis Estate. Discussions are still ongoing with Wychavon District Council and Network Rail, which is namely around passengers being able to access the platform from the car park safely and quickly. The WDC officer is currently awaiting detailed design and costings and information from Network Rail, which meets Network Rails safety requirements, which is for a level crossing from the car park to the platform. The WDC Officer be presenting a report to the WDC Executive Board in the next couple of months and has assured me, she will keep us up to date on progress as she is well aware of the current parking issues and the concerns residents have raised.

We're also working to improve local Public Right Way footpaths. We've been discussing with Worcester County Council footpath officer about restarting the project to resurface the western section of the path leading to the Leys. The officer is hoping to restart the project this financial year, as she still needs to obtain quotes and obtain permission from the landowner. The Parish Council will continue to liaise with the footpath officer on the project.

Before I end my report on behalf of the Council, I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Alastair Adams who decided not to stand for County Councillor at the recently held elections. Alastair has been an exceptional advocate for our community, consistently going above and beyond in his service to Honeybourne. His tireless efforts, dedication, and unwavering support have made a significant difference to both the Council and residents alike. His guidance on numerous projects and his ability to navigate county-level challenges on our behalf have been invaluable. On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to present a token of appreciation for all his outstanding help, commitment and support to the Council and to all the residents in Honeybourne over the years. Alastair's contributions will be remembered fondly, and he will be greatly missed.

Finally, I would also like to remind everyone about the upcoming 80th VE Day commemoration which will be taking place at the Village Hall on 8th May starting at 6:30 pm with a live Silver

Band and lighting of the beacon at 9:30 pm. Food and drink can be purchased on the night. We hope to see many of you there to commemorate this important anniversary.

Thank you all for attending tonight's Annual Parish Meeting. Your continued interest and involvement in our community affairs are what make Honeybourne such a special place to live. If you have any questions or concerns about anything covered in this report or about other parish matters, please don't hesitate to approach myself or any of the Parish Councillors after the meeting. We're here to serve the community and value your input."

b) District Councillors Judith Ciotti and Hannah Robson Report

The Chair welcomed the District Cllrs Ciotti and Robson and asked if they would like to present their report to council and members of the public.

Report presented by Cllr Robson

"Thank you for inviting us to this 2025 Parish Meeting. It's nice to see you all this evening and we are encouraged throughout the year to see the involvement of residents in their villages through attending Parish Council Meetings or by taking an active part in local events, volunteering and also by contacting us individually by phone or email with questions or problems.

To start with some positive news Wychavon is on track to cut carbon emissions. Thinking first about Wychavon's Council Services considerable progress is being made by achieving funding for low carbon heating systems with solar panels at the Leisure Centres which account for 66% of the council's carbon footprint.

Over the district Renewable Electricity Generation has more than doubled since 2014 and decarbonisation of the grid has also cut emissions. The low carbon industry now employs more than 2,100 people. Travel remains a challenge and the lack of active walking/cycling routes discourages us from leaving the car at home. Our ward was chosen to be part of a pilot study on sustainable local travel e.g. bus, train and community transport and the results are being analysed. Meanwhile some bus services have improved and the Wychavon website now has an excellent page on all the public transport information in the area in one place.

Our commitment for capturing greenhouse emissions by 2025 is 500 tonnes and the further development of Avon Meadows in Pershore, improvements to Coney Meadows in Droitwich and the planting of 13,472 trees through the Trees Call to Action Project with Heart of England Forest have all helped towards this.

Now is your chance to win prizes for taking simple everyday actions to help tackle climate change- see the Wychavon website for details of WYCHRewards.

In April last year Wychavon celebrated its 50th anniversary with a service in Pershore where those present re dedicated themselves to serving their communities. Soon after, at the General Election there was a change of government followed by a White Paper in December setting out a plan for Local Government reorganisation and Devolution. The six district councils and the county council will be abolished and replaced by a single tier of local government. Wychavon has agreed to request 2 options for consideration : a One Worcestershire authority and a South / North two authority option. Negotiations have begun and a final proposal to the Minister is due in November with the new structure in place by April 2028. This compulsory reorganisation is taking up a good deal of time particularly for council employees but the outcome will also impact Parish Councils.

The SWDPR is currently being examined by the planning inspectorate with public examination sessions taken place in February and March 2025. The report is anticipated to be released in autumn of this year. In the meantime there have been massive implications for Wychavon from the National Planning Policy framework update that was issued in December 2025. This saw the requirement for local authorities to calculate their Five year land housing supply figure differently once more and crushed Wychavon's figure, even though Wychavon have been providing housing continuously , through no fault of their own the figure fell. Which has had a

major impact on any appeals in the system and new speculative planning applications which are rife at the moment. This is truly frustrating for elected councillors and officers alike, planning law is dynamic so it can change rapidly with the changes being applied even to applications made under previous legislation. What makes the central government push for 1.5 million homes to be built in 5 years a really bitter pill to swallow, is that, not only are they targeting green fields sites rather than brownfields as should be, there are 1.5 million empty homes in this country and 1.4million houses that have had planning permission granted but not built out in the last 18 years. If these two areas were tackled, we wouldn't be being forced to desecrate our land

Planning matters take up a large proportion of Hannah's time, in Honeybourne she has worked hard, fighting applications alongside the parish council. The extremely frustrating and disappointing appeal dismissal along Stratford road, saddens me, yet again central government is dictating how our local landscape will like and disregarding democracy by disregarding the local communities view. The more recent refusal at planning committee for 24 houses along Bretforton road, was more welcome after a site visit and lengthy discussion the committee went against officer recommendations after hearing from the parish council and myself. I will continue to oppose with the parish council any speculative applications outside of the local neighbourhood plan and I can't stress how important it now is to get that plan updated as soon as possible now it is just over 5 years old to protect the planning aspect within it.

Along with monthly long planning committee meetings and casework that comes in from residents in the parish. Judith attends both Licensing and /Member Conduct committee, which are both interesting and essential. She also deals with most of the housing enquiries and any bin issues.

We attend Full Council meetings in Pershore and these are a list of motions passed Motions passed by Wychavon DC May 2024 to April 2025

1. Creation of staff capacity for Domestic Abuse Coordinator and funding support for the Dawn project
2. Creation of a banking hub for Droitwich.
3. Continue to seek to influence all aspects of government planning policy to include a proper consideration of/provision for infrastructure needed eg Road, active travel, drainage, sewage, schools, GPs, community facilities
4. Lobby government to increase Property Flood Resilience grant
5. Lobby government to halt changes to Winter Fuel payments eligibility. And work to ensure maximum uptake of Pension Credit.
6. Lobby the Secretary of State for Housing and Communities to amend law so that the "Lest we forget " flag can be flown.
7. Motion to reject all forms of racism and condemn any type of antisemitic or Islamophobic abuse in the UK

Our casework which is made up of requests, enquiries and concerns from local residents within our ward covers a variety of areas such as housing concerns, planning issues support with applications or concerns with them, dealing with refuse collection and public bin issues, speeding and road safety where we work with both the police and local highway authority, conservation area protection, and involvement with community projects such as tree planting, litter picking and celebratory events

We're always present and available to talk in person, be emailed or call."

c) South Worcestershire Policing Team

The Chair welcomed PC Trowman and asked if he would like to address the council and members of the public. PC Ben Trowman provided a verbal update on crime statistics for Honeybourne. However, he departed immediately following his presentation, which prevented

residents and councillors from raising questions or expressing any concerns they may have had.

d) St. Ecgwins Church Fabric Team

The Chair welcomed Mrs Paula Staples and asked if she would like to address council and members of the public.

“We started the year with no Team Vicar, limited funds and a long list of repair work that needed to be done on the church.

We have been well-supported by Rev Craig Bishop from Campden who provides regular contributions to the Village News and who performed the village Christmas Tree Light switch on. We are grateful to all who come to Honeybourne to lead services for us. Everyone is always made welcome at church.



Our services for special events (Christmas, Easter, Remembrance) were all well attended, with the Christingle and Crib Services proving popular with youngsters in the village. We were grateful for the excellent participation at the Carol Service at the Village Hall, with readers representing the school and our various village groups.

It has been heartening to welcome families to church for several baptisms recently. Our Children and Youth Team host RE lessons at the school and run Experience Easter and Experience Church sessions for the school children at St Ecgwin's. We are limited with the fundraising we can do, but with the help of the Fabric Team, we held a popular Plant Sale and an enjoyable music evening with 'Give Peace a Chance'. We also engaged with village crafters who came along to produce and assemble a stunning 'swoosh' of poppies from the church porch to the War Memorial for Remembrance.

The Fabric Team continued to meet fortnightly to work with contractors as well as completing various tasks themselves to work through the repairs job list -under the direction of our architect and Diocese.

We have started an initiative to become a recognised Eco Church, looking at our carbon footprint and how we can engage more with nature.

We recognize that people of different faiths (or none) may wish to donate to conserve the mediaeval building, so in August 2024 we created a non-religious charity, the Friends of St Ecgwin's Church who are busy raising funds and applying for grants to support the repair projects. We thank the Parish Council for their kind support for the Friends in the form of a grant.

Each month in the Village News, we publish times of services, a clergy article as well as a spotlight on various features of the church.

Although we ended the year without a Team Vicar, the post is being re-advertised in May. We still have limited funds, but we are actively applying for grants and we have completed a number of jobs from the list.

We have hope for a great future and we would love you to be part of it.”

e) Honeybourne Village News

The Chair welcomed Mrs Judith Mellor and asked if she would like to address the council and members of the public. Mrs Mellor presented her report, highlighting the following:

- The magazine is in its fifth year of being run by a team of five volunteers who all live in Honeybourne. Between us, we write the content, seek and invoice advertisers, do the layout, arrange printing, and handle a large part of the distribution to every home in Honeybourne.
- Our team meets regularly to discuss ideas for content and to review our finances.
- We strive to find a balance between the necessary advertisements that provide our income and interesting content.
- We aim to involve our readers by asking them for ideas for content and by inviting them to join the team. We plan to conduct a survey again this year and act on all feedback that we receive.
- We are very grateful for the support the Parish Council has given to date.

f) Honeybourne Village Hall Trustee.

The Chair of the Village Hall Trustees was not available to attend the Annual Parish Meeting but sent his apologies. His report was read out by Mr Jobes, who is another member of the board of trustees.

Report :

“As chairman of the trustees’, it gives me great pleasure to present the annual report for Honeybourne Village Hall.

This past year has been one of steady progress, renewed community engagement, and forward-looking planning. As trustees, our duty is to safeguard the future of the Village Hall, ensuring it remains a welcoming, inclusive, and functional space for all members of the local community.

We’re pleased to report that bookings over the year increased in comparison to previous years. Regular user groups continue to thrive, and we’ve also welcomed new groups.

The hall hosted several key community events this year, all of which were well-attended and widely appreciated. I am sure many of you will have attended these events. These gatherings continue to remind us how vital the hall is as a social and cultural hub.

I’m happy to report that the Village Hall remains in a stable financial position. We ended the year with a modest surplus, which allows us to maintain a reserve for future capital projects and unexpected repairs. We are conscious of the increasing costs of utilities and general maintenance, and we remain committed to prudent financial management while keeping hall hire rates fair and accessible.

Looking ahead, the trustees are exploring a refresh of our online presence to improve bookings and communication with the local community. We also hope to strengthen our volunteer base and would encourage anyone interested in helping with events, maintenance, or administration to get in touch.

On behalf of the Trustees, I would like to extend sincere thanks to all who have support the Village Hall, our user groups, volunteers, and local authorities. Their time, effort, and generosity are what keep this vital resource running. A special thanks go to our local Parish Council, and to each trustee for their hard work throughout the year.

Let us all continue to work together to ensure the Village Hall remains at the heart of our community for many years to come.

Tim Wild”

Chairman of Trustees
Honeybourne Village Hall
5th May 2025.

g) Friends of Honeybourne Station

The Chair welcomed Mrs Lucia Cuttle and asked if she would like to address the council and members of the public. Mrs Cuttle presented her report, "Over the past 12 months the Friends of Honeybourne Station, an inaugural group of 7 volunteers, have made good progress on establishing the foundations to enable this group to flourish. This includes creating a constitution, appointing committee chair, treasurer, secretary roles, opening a bank account, completing the GWR required Health & Safety training and developing a 12-month plan in conjunction with GWR to enable fund raising. We have 2 key projects to deliver in the next 12 months:

1. Improve the aesthetics of the station
2. Deliver a Honeybourne Heritage Rail Tales & Trails project, as part of the Nationwide Railway 200 celebrations.

The first project will see the installation of 5 planters at the station, which are currently being built in the workshop at HMP Long Lartin; We have a water butt installed and have an agreement with Pebworth Fire station to top up as required. We will be installing a storage unit with equipment that will help to keep the station tidy with regular litter picks. This is in addition to the work already in place by the GWR approved suppliers. In the autumn we will plant spring bulbs along the embankment leading up to the station and will plant seasonal displays in the new planters. We will use one of the existing noticeboards to communicate details of the Friends of Honeybourne station with information on our projects and how to get involved as a volunteer. You may have noticed also that the Station Sign is now much cleaner thanks to this group! We have raised over £4,000 in grants from Honeybourne Parish Council, Worcestershire County Council and GWR to support this effort. We will be exploring additional funding sources over the next 12 months to ensure we can continue to refresh the station with attractive plants, that are bee and wildlife friendly. We welcome donations from local businesses interested in sponsoring one of the planters.

Last week we received the fantastic news that our proposal for a GWR funded Heritage project was successful. This means we will be receiving £10,000 to deliver a creative project to bring Honeybourne's history with the railway back to life, celebrating its rich heritage and influence on our community.

This funding will enable the creation of a Heritage Trail from the station, complemented with heritage story boards to be installed at the station, so that visitors to the village and the wider Honeybourne community can enjoy learning about the history of the railways whilst benefiting from an outdoor walk activity, enriching their mental and physical wellbeing. The proposed points of interest along the Heritage Trail will include the Railway Club, the Railway houses along Stratford Road, Honeybourne Railway workers gravestones at St Egwin's Church, and the start of the old railway line connecting Broadway and onwards to Cheltenham Races.

The Honeybourne Heritage Rail Tales and Trails will enrich the Nationwide Railway 200 celebrations and can be enjoyed more widely through national, regional and local publicity, bringing new visitors to the village and passengers to the railways.

We welcome new volunteers to the group and are particularly keen to hear from individuals who can add content or is keen to be involved with the Heritage project. Anyone interested in being part of the Friends of Honeybourne Station should email the parish clerk (clerk@honeybourne-pc.gov.uk) or luciacuttle@yahoo.com"

h) Community Speed Watch (CSW)

The Chair welcomed Cllr C Clear the leader of CSW and asked if he would like to present his report to Council and members of the public.

Cllr Clear gave a verbal report on the current status;

- The Community Speed Watch initiative is currently in a preparatory phase, with operations temporarily suspended pending completion of essential administrative requirements.

Key Issues

- **Police Vetting Delays:** The Community Speed Watch leader has reported ongoing delays in the police vetting process for volunteer members. A backlog within the police system is preventing the timely completion of required background checks for several volunteers.
- **Training Requirements:** All volunteers, including the group leader, must complete mandatory training with the West Mercia Community Speed Watch coordinator before any speed monitoring activities can commence. This training session cannot be scheduled until all members have successfully completed the vetting process.
- **Operational Impact:** The group remains unable to conduct any Community Speed Watch activities due to these outstanding requirements. Both police vetting and formal training are prerequisites for operational approval.

The Community Speed Watch leader will coordinate with the West Mercia Community Speed Watch coordinator to arrange the required training session once all volunteers vetting has been completed by the police.

i) Honeybourne Hawks Football Club

The Chair of Honeybourne Hawks FC gave his apologies for being unable to attend the Annual Parish Meeting. A report was submitted to the Parish Council prior to the meeting, which was presented by Councillor A. Attridge.

Honeybourne Hawks FC Report :

“Honeybourne Hawks go into next season moving from U10s to U11s in the Ambassador League. Next season will be our 6th season as a team.

There will be significant changes as we move from 7-a-side to 9-a-side with higher regulation in matches. The funding we have received, with thanks to the Parish Council, will enable us to buy bigger goals, more kit for increased squad sizes and bigger footballs. All of these items are essential to comply with FA league rules.

We are currently collecting player registration forms from parents as registration has to be completed with minimum squad sizes by 30th June. We will most likely have at least 2 new players for next season.

The season, as usual, will start in September. In the meantime, we will take part in 2 tournaments in the summer in Crowle and Alcester, and train, on occasion, on a Saturday morning.

Last season we were promoted to Pool 1 after getting to Christmas without losing a game in the league. The second half was more of a struggle for our mixed ability team in the higher pool, but we picked up respectable wins against the likes of Bredon, West Worcester and Alcester Town.

We look forward to the season ahead.”

f) Over 60's Wednesday Club Honeybourne

The Treasurer of the Wednesday Club gave her apologies due to last-minute illness and was unable to attend.

g) Honeybourne Village Fete

The Chair welcomed Mr Mike Wiggett- Jones and asked if he would like to present his report to the Council and members of the public.

“Since last year’s parish meeting we completed the planning and implementation of the second village fete.

Thankfully we were blessed with much better weather and thankfully we were widely supported by the community.

We had a number of local business supporters and we are very thankful for their enabling us to get the project off the ground.

Following the success of last year’s event plans are well underway for this years fete to be held on 19th July.

We have confirmed some attendees and have completed the licensing necessary for the event to go ahead.

We are in the hugely fortunate position thanks to the incredible support from the village that we are able to proceed with this years event without it being necessary to bring in public funds from the Parish council. We have begun finalising the local business sponsors for this years event and would like to thank everyone who has been able to support us as well as the Parish council for their ongoing support.

We have also received another grant from the divisional fund which has secured temporary toilet facilities for the event.

We are always looking to keep the village up to date and will continue to place information in the village magazine, as well as keeping people up to date using our social media channels.

As with all community groups we are always looking for more volunteers to help with the organisation and running of the event as we are a small group of increasingly busy members of the community.

As a not for profit organisation, hopefully with a little good fortune from the weather gods this year we will be able to continue to build on our initial financial base to ensure the future of the event without the need to return to request council support. We also hope to be able to build towards being able to increasingly donate any excess funds to charitable causes.

We were able to give some small donations to our volunteer partners last year including the local adventure scout group and the WI. We were also able to work alongside the local Lions club.

We are thrilled to be able to report that we will be working with more local groups this year and will be working alongside, as well as supporting the Friends of Honeybourne school.

As we have not found it necessary to apply for parish council funding this year, I have attached a copy of our most recent financial report to be attached to the minutes of this meeting.”

h) Honeybourne Public Right of Way Working Group (PROW)

The Chair welcomed Cllr T Askew, leader of the PROW and asked if he would like to present his report to the Council and members of the public.

PROW access

- Continue to tidy PROWs for access
- Members of the group have now completed training on safe use of strimmers and hedge cutters
- Installed footbridge to path adjacent to Maple Close
- Installed metal gate – access to the Leys Playing Field.
- Installed way markers to PROW’s on Weston Road and Station Road
- Took part in Keep Britain Tidy community Litter pick.

Future Work

We need to work closely with WCC for materials and consent to carry out work, particularly with Fiona Argyle, the footpath officer. However, the WCC PRoW team is currently experiencing challenging times with their priorities and resources.

i) Honeybourne Parish Council Christmas Event Working Group

The Chair of the Christmas Working Group has taken a leave of absence due to personal reasons. Cllr B Dubb, the other member of the working group, presented his report to update the Council and members of the public on last year's Christmas event hosted by the Parish Council.

The Annual Christmas Tree Light Switch On event was successfully held on 29th November 2024. This beloved community tradition, organised by the Parish Council for many years, officially marked the beginning of the holiday season for local residents. The event featured a live band creating a festive atmosphere, fairground rides popular with families, Santa Claus walking around greeting children and distributing chocolates, and a children's entertainer dressed as an elf who delighted younger attendees by creating balloon animals and objects like swords. Additionally, the event included a craft fair and a Christmas raffle with prizes donated by local businesses. The weather conditions were favourable, contributing to strong attendance and an enjoyable atmosphere throughout.

The highlight of the evening was the Christmas tree lighting ceremony. Reverend Craig from the local church blessed the Christmas tree, followed by our MP Nigel Huddleston officially switching on the lights. This ceremonial moment brought the community together and set a festive tone for the upcoming holiday season.

A Christmas raffle was held featuring prizes generously donated by local businesses. Residents were particularly pleased with the high-quality prizes, which included generous vouchers for retail outlets and Christmas food hampers. The raffle added extra excitement to the event and showcased the strong support from local businesses for this community celebration.

The craft fair proved to be a significant attraction, with traders reporting brisk business throughout the event. Local residents and visitors browsed and purchased unique Christmas gifts, supporting local artisans and businesses. The variety of handcrafted items available gave shoppers excellent options for distinctive holiday presents.

Food and drink vendors experienced steady business throughout the event. The availability of refreshments enhanced the visitor experience and encouraged people to stay longer, creating a convivial community atmosphere.

The Annual Christmas Tree Light Switch On event continues to be a cherished community tradition that successfully brings residents together to celebrate the beginning of the holiday season. The combination of ceremonial aspects, entertainment, shopping opportunities, and refreshments created a well-rounded experience for attendees of all ages. The Parish Council's continued organisation of this event demonstrates its commitment to fostering community spirit and creating memorable experiences for residents.

j. Honeybees WI

The Chair welcomed Mrs Alison Baumber, secretary of Honeybees WI and asked if she would like to present her report to the Council and members of the public.

“Thank you for inviting us to your Annual Meeting and big thank you from our members for awarding the Grant. A bit about the WI;

The WI in the UK was formed in 1915 to support the production of food during the First World War hence the “Jam and Jerusalem” image.

It has now grown to be the largest voluntary organization in the UK with 180,000 members, and approximately 5,500 WIs. It is open to all adult women to Support, Connect and Empower by providing education opportunities, building new skills, to take part in a wide variety of activities, and campaign on issues important to them and their community. Most importantly it is a warm social setting where friendships are made.

Each year the WI nationally, votes for a “Resolution” to take forward and lobby Parliament. This year it is “Bystanders can be Lifesavers”
The WI framework breaks down into County and local groups and Honeybees is part of the Worcestershire Federation and the Evesham Group. This enables us to meet and build relationships with our local WIs. We meet and take part in Skittles, social meetings and invite other WIs to our monthly meeting.”

The Chair welcomed recently retired County Councillor Alastair Adams and invited him to address members of the Council and the public.

“Dear All

This is my last report to you as County Councillor. I am standing down after 12 years of service. It has been a pleasure working with so many of you over the years.



Here are a few examples of what has been achieved in those 12 years:-

Broadband

When I first stood for election Honeybourne had terribly slow Broadband – most of us were getting 2-4 Mbps – and my first election promise was to improve Broadband. With the County Council’s help and funding, we managed to get Superfast Broadband (minimum 30Mbps) by installing fibre to the cabinet in Honeybourne which gave speeds up to 10 times faster. But although residents in the village were getting Superfast, those on the outskirts in were still struggling with low speeds. Again, with the help and funding from County Council, Gigafast overhead cabling was installed to Broad Marston and Ullington giving these houses up to 100Mbps. And the latest news is BT/Openreach have plans to bring Gigafast to the whole of the area in the next 3 years, including Stratford Rd/Buckle St.

Fighting unwanted planning

We fought the planning application on Sheep Sales field (now David Wilson) and won at Planning Committee. The same happened at Station Rd (Now Bovis Site). Unfortunately both developers went to the Planning Inspector and won at Appeal. However, we did then manage to negotiate with the developers to get better designed houses built that did mirror the style of other houses in the village , and also the village received substantial section 106 money that helped buy the recreational ground and build the sports facilities.

New village hall

We talked with Taylor Wimpey when they wanted to build a new development of 75 houses in Honeybourne to see if they would also build us a new village hall. Although they would not build one, they did give the land free of charge for the new village hall, and they also agreed to install all the services to the hall free. The village hall committee then sold the old village hall and with the proceeds and some wonderful grants the new village hall was built costing over £1million. A fantastic asset and legacy for the residents which will be used for many years as the centre of the village.

Roads and Pavements & kerbs

One of the first issues when I was first elected was Bretforton Rd which was in a horrendous state. After getting the Cabinet member for Highways to attend a Parish Council meeting, and after a lot of chasing, this road was patched, kerbed in places and resurfaced. New pavements have been laid or patched in Stratford Rd, High Street, Harvard Avenue, Westbourne and Dudley Rd. Most of the roads have been either patched, re-surfaced or surfaced dressed, and potholes when they do occur have been repaired promptly.

Speeding

Working with Safer Road Partnerships, mobile speed camera vans now visit the wider area to enforce the speed limits. Also the 30mph speed limits have been extended along Weston Rd, Stratford Rd and Bretforton Rd, and traffic lights fitted on Buckle Street at the entrance to the village. Also entrance gates and VAS (vehicle activated signs) have been installed on the Weston Rd. The Highways engineers have also installed improved signage and some traffic calming measures such as dragon teeth on some entrances. All these have helped reduce speeding.

Zebra Crossing

A new Zebra crossing was installed last year making it safer for pedestrians to cross the Station Rd. Also helps to reduce speeding

New Flashing School Warning lights installed last year

New School warning lights were installed in the High Street to warn drivers of children going to and from school

Drainage & Flooding

Flooding was a frequent event in our area and I have spent considerable time in the last 12 years trying to improve the situation. The biggest success was working with the farmer Ted Mansfield to build a huge upstream flood plain that holds back water coming into the village. This has stopped the regular flooding we experienced several times a year by the Gate Inn – sometimes 3 foot deep. A HUGE “Thank You” to the farmer and local resident, Ted Mansfield who has also written in his will that this huge flood plain must be maintained and kept for the benefit of the village forever.

Also a lot of drainage works has occurred under the Honeybourne bridges on Stratford Rd to try and prevent the deep flood waters that caused 10’s of cars to be written off over the last few years.

PROW Volunteers &

I am a great believer on communities helping themselves, and I have supported the forming of the Honeybourne PROW volunteers that keep the public rights of ways around the village clear and in good condition. It is a never ending task, and I thank everyone one of those volunteers.

Friends of Honeybourne Station

Likewise I have supported the formation of the Friends of Honeybourne Railway Station to keep our railway station looking beautiful and well kept. The station is the first thing visitors coming to our village on the train see, and we want to make them feel “WOW, what a great village”! . First impressions count. So I am immensely pleased to see Honeybourne now has a group of volunteers that help achieve this, once again a HUGE thank you to these volunteers.

Honeybourne Railway Station Parking

Simply there is not enough parking at the station, so over 7 years ago, I persuaded Wychavon to buy some land opposite the station to build a 280 car park. The land was bought, the chicken sheds removed, and the plans drawn up and the money allocated. BUT there was a problem as Great Western Railway wanted £4million to connect some steps to their existing

pedestrian bridge. After 7 years of fighting with GWR to see commonsense, I do see light at the end of the tunnel, and I am hopeful this car park will be built in the near future.

Adopted Roads

Stephenson Way estate was built over 30 years ago and the roads, pavements and sewers are not yet adopted. I have been fighting for the last 12 years to get them adopted, and I do believe the major hurdles have not been overcome, and only last week John Hobbs head of Highways was in discussion with Richard Beech of Taylor Wimpey to agree a commutable sum towards the maintenance of the roads and pavements which hopefully will resolve this issue.

Honeybourne School – Academy and a Primary School

I was really pleased to see Honeybourne school become a Primary School during my time as a County Councillor. I supported them through what was a difficult time when the idea was first suggested by the Head teacher. Worcestershire is one of the few councils that still has some 3-tier schools (First School, Middle School, and High School). When 95% of children in this country are taught in a 2-tier schools (Primary and secondary schools), it seems to me that Worcestershire should also adopt the same 2-tier system; it will bring our schools in line with our neighbouring Warwickshire and Gloucestershire schools and help our schools attract the best teachers.

Divisional Fund

As a County Councillor I have a small amount of money each year to help community groups and Honeybourne has benefitted from this fund; here are few examples;

Honeybourne Bowls Club – new mat and bowls

Old and New Village Hall – various including new tables

Honeybourne Fete Park – flags & signage

Honeybourne School – books

Honeybourne PROW volunteers – tools and some kissing gates

County Council organisation

I was the chairman of Environment Overview & Scrutiny, and the committee looked at ways to improve the efficiency of the council and there were several major recommendations that have been adopted. Here are some behind the scenes improvements; 1. the highway drainage map that is on the WCC website which helps report blocked highways drains, 2. the frequency of gullies cleansing, 3. the ways the public can report issues with the highways network and receive better feedback, 4. improved flood alleviation schemes and traffic calming, and 5. faster building of highways infrastructure like roundabouts, zebra crossings and junctions under section 278.

So a lot has happened, but it is time to hand over the baton to a new County Councillor. It has been a pleasure working with so many of you over the 12 years.

DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER / LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING

On 16th December 2024 the Labour Government published their Devolution White Paper, alongside their National Planning Policy Framework changes. This will be the biggest change to local government and democracy we have seen in our life time.

The elections on 1st May elected the county councillors that will ultimately dissolve the County Council and design the new unitary body.

From my prospective, I think abolishing the county council and the 6 District councils is crazy especially when you consider what else is going on in the world; why throw something else into to chaos? However, I wish them the best.

Update on flood alleviation work

1. Gullies under Honeybourne Bridges - Further jetting has been organised to clear outflow pipes to further improve the situation. Still awaiting confirmation this has been completed
2. Now the dry weather is here the bund in farmers field by the Honeybourne bridges can be extended and completed.

3. Tom Furness has agreed to fit a wide ACO drain at the bottom of Grove Farm drive to prevent run off from the farm onto Stratford Rd which will also help prevent flooding under the bridges.

Highways

1. Also can I remind everyone to try and keep the road gullies outside their houses free of debris so the drains work effectively. Simply remove any leaves or mud with a brush or spade or even with your wellie! By doing this one minute task, it will help minimise road flooding. Thank you.
2. Also can I remind the village lengthsman to spray weed kill on the weeds and grass growing along the pavements and kerbs around the village.

As always, if you have any issues on any Highways matters, please report it on the WCC website http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/homepage/98/report_it

Also remember a photo of the Highways problem is as good as “a thousand words” so always take a photo where possible.

County Council Divisional Fund

The following grants have been paid in 2024/25:-

1. Pebworth School – Grant for some more books
2. Honeybourne Hawks Football Club – new line marker
3. Offenham Rovers FC – Grant for new nets
4. Honeybourne Village Hall – grant requested for some new tables
5. Offenham Village Hall – Sound-proofing panels
6. Pebworth Village Hall – grant for new signage/flags
7. Littletons Tennis Club – grant towards the Pickleball Courts
8. Honeybourne News – grant for trolleys to deliver village newsletter to all houses
9. Honeybourne School – grant for help to use of the village hall for their Christmas play
10. Littletons Tennis Club – grant for Pickleball bats and paint for new courts
11. Cleeve Prior Heritage Trust – grant for some more volunteers’ tools
12. Cleeve Prior Memorial Hall – grant for a new projector screen
13. St Peter’s Church – grant towards the replacement of a notice board
14. Coffee on the Close – grant requested for help with the coach cost
15. Broad Marston – grant towards a defibrillator
16. Littletons Football Club – new goal posts & nets
17. Badsey Belles WI – new branded clothing
18. Friends of Honeybourne Railway Station – tools and new notice board
19. Pebworth in Bloom – New mower
20. Pebworth Rural Cinema/Village Hall – new fridge

So farewell as your County Councillor, but I will see you around the village and in the pub!

Your new County Councillor is Hannah Robson, and her contact details are

hannah.robson@wychavon.net

Tel 07730 262031

County Councillor Hannah Robson mentioned that she will undergo a handover process with Alastair Adams to ensure continuity of service.

Representatives from Downing gave a verbal presentation of their proposal for a solar farm development at Shinehill, Honeybourne. The Chair advised the Downing representative that members of the Parish Council will not be making any comment on their presentation and will only comment on the planning application when received from Wychavon District Council.

Open Forum

Following the reports presented by various groups and the Parish Council, the Chair invited questions from members of the public.

A resident raised concerns about potholes at Weston Sub Edge. The Chair advised the resident that Weston Sub-Edge falls under Gloucestershire County Council and she would need to report any concerns to them.

The resident also raised concerns about an unofficial footpath that has been created between Owl Homes estate and the Bovis estate. She explained to the Council that when she purchased her property, she was led to believe that the two estates would be joined together with a footpath. She also raised concerns that Owl Homes have now left their site and the communal grounds on her estate have not been maintained, requiring residents to cut the grass in the communal areas themselves.

A Councillor responded that the unofficial footpath was created by walkers and was never an official footpath. The Chair advised the resident that the Parish Council has no remit over private land and if she has concerns, all residents on her estate need to write directly to Owl Homes to address their concerns.

The attendees at the meeting asked Downing when the consultation would be taking place in Honeybourne regarding the proposed Shinehill Solar Farm. The representative from Downing advised that the consultation will be taking place at the Village Hall on 28th May 2025 from 4:30 pm – 7:30 pm.

As there were no other questions, the Chair concluded the meeting at 19:30.