

**UNADOPTED
MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING

in the Park View Meeting Room, Victoria Park Road, Malvern Link

held on Wednesday 17 December 2025 at 6pm

Councillors

Present

M Birks (Chair)
D Watkins
I Dawson
A Cherry
C Fletcher
C Hooper
J Leibrandt
M Jones
D Ward
K Newbigging
S Austin
C Bovey
D Mead

Absent

E Green (Apologies)
R McLaverty-Head (Apologies)
J MacLusky (Apologies)
W Whittaker (Apologies)
L Lowton (Apologies)
N Wanklin (Apologies)

Also in attendance

L Blake, Town Clerk
C Porter, Operations Manager
J Winkworth, Minute Clerk
Malvern Gazette Reporter
Thirteen members of the public

The Mayor welcomed Councillors and Visitors to the Full Council meeting and informed everyone that there would be a change to the order of the agenda in light of the matters being raised during the Public Participation section.

After the Public Participation element, item 4 will commence and after that the agenda will change and item 12 will be brought forward in relation to the Petition against Malvern Hills Bill, follow on with item 10 which relates to Councillor Allowances, then move onto item 11 and then revert back to the original agenda and continue on with the remaining items from 5 onwards.

126. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from Councillors Emma Green, Ronan McLaverty-Head, Julie MacLusky, Wayne Whittaker, Lou Lowton and Nathan Wanklin were **NOTED**.

127. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Mead declared he was a member of Malvern Hills Trust Board and Councillor Karen Newbigging declared that she is an allotment holder.

128. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes from the meeting of 12 November 2025, be approved and adopted as a correct record.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Mayor welcomed the members of the public to the meeting and confirmed that two people had notified the Council in advance that they would like to speak and the

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Town Clerk informed Full Council that there were two further members of the public who wished to speak also with regards to the Petition against the Malvern Hills Bill.

Cllr Clive Fletcher left the room at 6.08pm.

Katharine Harris

Mrs Harris was the first speaker and was representing Malvern Environment Protection Group.

Katharine addressed the Council on the following points with regards to the Malvern Hills Bill.

- The Malvern Hills are not merely a landscape they are a public trust. The proposed Hills Private Bill threatens to dismantle that Trust, replace it with a system less accountable and less democratic and potentially damaging to the Hills it claims to protect.
- Precept payers elect representatives to the board and can be assured that their money is used solely to maintain and protect the landscape. The new bill abandons that principle.
- Funds raised specifically for the care of the Hills had been diverted without mandate towards a Private Bill that might cost over a million pounds.
- 45% of the Trustees have been silenced, including two recently elected Trustees. All 45% have been barred from receiving information from debating or voting in respect of the Bill allowing the other 15 to vote things through unopposed.
- The Bill would repeal all existing acts, concentrate power to a reduced board of 12 Trustees, and potentially exclude representatives to the communities who pay the precept.
- The Malvern Hills belongs to the public, any attempt to turn a publicly funded, democratically governed body into a private charity, with diminished accountability must be resisted. This Bill does not protect the Hills, it endangers them.

Mrs Harris urged Councillors to ratify their petition.

Cllr Clive Fletcher returned to the room at 6.10pm.

Robert Berry

Mr Berry was speaking in a private capacity at the meeting and addressed the Council on the following points:

- Mr Berry applauded MTC for lodging the petition with parliament in respect of their objections in the way in which the Malvern Hills Trust propose to constitute their Board as presented in the draft Bill. He felt that there are important democratic principles at stake and proposals in the draft Bill seek to undermine these principles.
- The new proposals seek to continue with the levy yet remove the right for each parish to elect its own board member which does not seem fair or correct or indeed true to the original intentions of the Act.
- If the Bill is adopted as currently drafted, it will be technically possible for the Board to be constituted entirely without any levy payers as trustees.
- There is also no provision for democratically constituted bodies, such as Malvern Town Council, the District Council or indeed the County Council, to nominate a board member.
- Two weeks ago, the Trust's Parliamentary agents challenged the right of all the individuals, the ordinary members of Malvern who as levy payers have petitioned to appear before the Select Committee that will scrutinise the Bill. The trust, in effect, seeks to strike out 80% of the petitions lodged via a technical parliamentary

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procedure. This is after zero engagement with the petitioners who are levy payers since they lodged their petitions in February.

- Levy payers fund the Trust to the tune of 50%.

Therefore, Mr Berry urged MTC to unanimously ratify its petition, and he looked forward to the Council as representatives of levy payers of Malvern, presenting concerns to the Select Committee in the new year.

Andrew Myatt

Mr Andrew Myatt spoke in a personal capacity and noted the following:

- The Bill is presented as a consolidation measure by the Trust. For those who do not read it closely, it may appear as just that. For those, who raise concerns, heard it many times, are accused of spreading misinformation, however, when you examine the Bill closely it goes well beyond consolidation.
- The Trust can set up its own voting system, and it also reduces the influence of elected trustees.
- The Petition submitted by Malvern Town Council is measured, reasonable and grounded in democratic accountability. The Town Council's position is clear; it supports a Board of 12 Trustees but only on the basis that all Trustees are democratically elected.

Mr Myatt therefore asked the Town Council to confirm its petition against the Bill, and reaffirm the position, it has already set out on behalf of the residents of Malvern.

Graham Crisp

Mr Crisp was the final speaker of the Public Participation section and made the following comments to Councillors:

- A fortnight ago, individual petitioners were given notice from the Malvern Hills Trust Parliamentary Agents that their right to be heard will be challenged. It is not clear how things will turn out but it is possible that individual petitioners, of which there are many, will not be heard.
- The promoter, which is the Trust, will challenge any organisation which has petitioned if the organisation has not demonstrated that it is sufficiently representative of the interests that it reports to represent or it has not taken a formal decision to oppose the Bill.

If the Bill is passed, it will make the Malvern Hills Trust less accountable, Mr Crisp urged the Council to act on behalf of the levy payers of Malvern by ratifying the petition.

The Mayor thanked the speakers for their concise presentations.

129. PRESENTATION FROM DEBORAH FOX, CEO, MALVERN HILLS TRUST

Deborah Fox thanked the Town Clerk for the warm welcome earlier in the week when they met to discuss matters regarding the recent travelling encampments that had occurred this past year Town Council and Trust land.

During the year, the Trust has completed many improvements to areas of Trust land including pathways, tree works along the A449 and the installation of a new marble plinth at St Anne's Well.

The Spring and Summer were dry, and Rangers took care of approximately 30 manmade/BBQ fires and day to day they empty over 50 bins.

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Dogs worrying livestock has been an issue to reflect on with one grazier losing 10 sheep this year. It is vital to keep dogs on a lead around sheep.

The CEO had also served notices on travelling camps numerous times throughout the year. Rough sleepers were also asked to move on and were referred to Street Link.

There had been a very long growing season, and two new robot mowers have been on loan to assist with this.

A traditional Cherry Orchard has been purchased on Castlemorton Common, along with two portions of woodland in Little Malvern.

Staff and Volunteers have worked many hours this year in hard-to-reach areas. Recently a group of volunteers met to plant donated trees to refresh the land management plan the Trust have in place.

The CEO covered the Malvern Hills Bill briefly within her report and then took questions from Councillors accordingly, in particular regarding the role of the CEO in relation to the Malvern Hills Trust Board and recent letters sent by the Trust's legal team to residents regarding representation of their petitions.

The Mayor asked, as a matter of public interest, how much the Trust's legal team were charging and the source of the funding. The CEO agreed to forward a copy of the accounts once available.

130. PETITION AGAINST MALVERN HILLS BILL

Report CL04/25 was received and accepted.

It was **RESOLVED** that Malvern Town Council would oppose the Malvern Hills Bill in its published draft form. This is a validation requirement of Section 239 of the Local Government Act 1972, and a resolution will ensure Malvern Town Council's right to be heard at Select Committee, as required.

It was further **RESOLVED** that the Mayor and Town Clerk would attend the Select Committee on behalf of the Town Council and would be authorised to continue to engage with the parliamentary process to represent the Council's views.

All of the public participants bar one member of the public left the meeting room at 6.45pm.

131. PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS ALLOWANCES

Report CL01/25 was received and accepted.

Full Council were asked to consider the Parish/Town Councillor Allowances for 2026/27 and agree any actions to be taken including budget provision if required.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to reject the opportunity to take on Parish/Town Councillor Allowances at present.

132. BUDGET 2026/27

Report CL02/25 was received and accepted.

Due to the cancellation of the Policy and Resources committee meeting not being quorate on Wednesday 10 December 2025, the Emergency Decision Making Group met on Monday 15 December 2025 to discuss the recommendations included in the First Draft Proposed Budget report including the recommendations as listed in Report CL03/25.

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The Town Clerk informed the meeting that a lot of work had been put into keeping any precept increase as low as possible but with inflationary factors and several large projects putting demands on the budget, it had been difficult to reduce it any further without affecting day to day running costs which are needed to ensure good service delivery.

Information, had, however been received from Malvern Hills District Council regarding an increase in the Council Tax Base. This increase would mean that although the overall precept would increase by 9.3%, the amount paid by a Band D household would increase from £77.52 to £83.30 or by 7.5%.

Following a detailed discussion, Full Council **RESOLVED**:

- i) The re-forecast for 2025/26, which results in an overspend against budget of £3,044. This amount will be taken from general reserves at year end.
- ii) The proposed budget for the financial year 2026/27 showing a net expenditure of:
£1,038,276 not taking into account any movements in Earmarked Reserves and other funding
£948,459 taking into account movements in Earmarked Reserves and other funding
- iii) The precept for 2026/27 would therefore be set at £948,459. This reflects an increase of 9.3% from the precept level in 2025/26 and an increase of approximately 7.5% for a Band D Council Tax Charge.

This would mean that the total Band D Council Tax charge for Malvern Town Council in 2026/27 would be £83.30 per year and therefore £1.59 per week.

133. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair paid tribute to a former Mayor who had sadly passed away recently, Mr Graham Myatt, on 22 November 2025. The Mayor wished to note the Town Council's condolences and send best wishes to the family.

Mr Myatt's son was present at the meeting and commented that his late father was very proud of his time on the Town Council and he would have been very proud of the discussions tonight with the culture and way the Town Council works being exemplary.

The Mayor apologised for not including her events calendar this month. Visits to many care homes will be taking place in due course before Christmas Day.

There will be an extraordinary meeting taking place on 14 January 2026 to discuss matters that need to be moved forward.

The remaining member of the public left the meeting following this agenda item.

134. UPDATE ON TOWN COUNCIL OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The Town Clerk updated the Council on the Town Council operations and activities to date.

The Christmas Light Switch-On had gone well and approximately £3,000 was raised at the event; with a special mention to Arcos who raised £750 on their tombola stall. It was felt that the event format worked well and the grotto had been busier than in the previous year.

The Town Council are currently out to tender for the Play Area at Victoria Park with the response from contractors being very encouraging.

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The Town Council have received compliments with regards to the recently installed Park Lights along the pathway to Pickersleigh Road.

A new bench has been installed within Victoria Park for the Dog Walking Group.

A new noticeboard has been erected within the Park area also, just outside the Community Hub Building.

An application has been submitted to MHDC for funding towards a Community Builder Officer. We hope to have an update on this matter soon.

135. REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE

The Mayor noted that the Council were in receipt of three County Councillor reports which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

136. TOWN COUNCIL WARD REPORTS/REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Karen Newbigging had recently attended the Children and Young People meeting where they had heard from a Gypsy Romany Charity's provision of awareness sessions in the New Year for a better understanding.

Useful information would be emailed regarding support over the Christmas period.

The District Council held a Youth Assembly regarding food production, allowing more space on an allotment site for a school to use. Cllr Newbigging asked for suggestions for further sites that could possibly be used.

Cllr Newbigging had forwarded ward profiles to all Councillors to assist.

The Mayor had visited Youth Partnerships and had received a request for them to visit a Council chamber and get a real-life experience to aid their understanding.

Cllr Hooper confirmed that there had been no meetings of the CALC committee to report on.

137. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

None.

138. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report CL05/25 was received and accepted.

Minute 36 – Review of Complaints Policy

The Mayor queried the clarity of recommendations from the Review of the Complaints Policy.

It was **AGREED** to return this item to the Policy and Resources Committee for further discussion.

Cllr Karen Newbigging left the room at 7.52pm.

139. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OPERATIONS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report CL06/25 was received and accepted.

Cllr David Mead, Chair of Operations and Planning presented the recommendations from the meeting held on Wednesday 19 November 2025.

Minute 60 Asset Renewal and Refurbishment Budget 2026/27 and Minute 61 Vehicle and Machinery Replacement Fund 2026/27

These minute items did not require any further debate as they had been discussed under Agenda item 11, Budget 2026/27.

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Minute 63 – Britain in Bloom

It was **AGREED** that the Town Council should enter the Town into Britain in Bloom 2026.

Minute 64 – Lengthsman Scheme

It was **AGREED** that the Town Council should appoint an additional lengthsman for Malvern Town to carry out duties under the lengthsman scheme run by Worcestershire County Council.

Minute 67 – Review of Football Pitch Policy

It was **AGREED** that an amendment would be made to the Football Pitch Policy to item 5.4 and it should read as follows:

‘No club shall allow any member or person associated with the Team to clean football boots inside the changing rooms or showers. Changing rooms and shower areas should be left in a reasonably clean and tidy condition after every match and training session. Failure to comply with this condition will result in withdrawal of use of facilities and payment to the Council of additional cleaning charges, which will be levied at £50 per hour.’

Cllr Karen Newbigging returned to the room during this agenda item.

140. DEVOLUTION PANEL

The Mayor informed the committee that they are still able to comment on Devolution – for further information see the weekly memo.

Under Standing Order 3X, Councillor David Mead proposed that the meeting be extended until 8.10pm. A vote was taken and the extension agreed.

141. SALE OF LAND AT ELGAR AVENUE, MALVERN

Report CL07/25 was received and accepted.

Following a brief update from the Town Clerk, the Council **RESOLVED** to fund an additional £7,500 towards the cost of consultancy fees required to produce reports in support of an outline planning application for housing on this site.

142. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT

It was **AGREED** that the date of the next meeting of Full Council would take place on Wednesday 11 February 2026 at 6.00pm.

The Mayor pointed out that there was also an Extraordinary meeting taking place on Wednesday 14 January 2026 at 6.00pm to which all Councillors are welcome to attend.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

143. ROSE BANK GARDENS UPDATE

The Town Clerk gave an update on Rose Bank Gardens.

The meeting finished at 8.10 pm.

.....(Chair)