



**MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 12th MAY 2026 AT 6.00PM  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CINDERFORD**

**Present:**

Cllr Graham Morgan (Chair)  
Cllr Darren Flower  
Cllr Tim Holder  
Cllr Carol Marsh  
Cllr Di Martin  
Cllr Alison Pflug  
Cllr Jacob Sanders  
Cllr Roger Sterry  
Cllr Mark Turner  
Cllr Emma Walker

**In attendance:**

Emma Bennett, Clerk  
Les Love, Estates Manager  
2 members of the public  
Matthew Bishop, Forest of Dean MP  
Cllr Ray Donaghue, County Councillor  
Cllr Piers Camp, County Councillor

**Apologies received:**

Cllr Chris Brown  
Cllr Stuart Graham, District Councillor  
Cllr Jeremy Charlton-Wright  
Cllr Stuart Graham, District Councillor  
Cllr Lynn Sterry  
Cllr Karen Turner

**Absent:**

Cllr Louise Bent

**1. To receive apologies for absence**

Recorded as above.

**2. Minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting**

The Minutes were accepted and signed as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr Turner, Seconded Cllr Holder. All in favour.

6.06pm Cllr Sanders arrived.

**3. To receive the Cinderford Town Council Annual Chairman's Report**

The Chairman, Cllr Morgan, provided the following report:

*I have great pleasure of commending to you all my report as Chair of Cinderford Town Council.*

*The main issue facing Cinderford is the severe decline in our Retail Premises, the main reason for this I believe is on-line shopping, and a severe lack of parking for the Town Centre.*

*While there is major support for the large Superstore in Dockham Road this has not transpired into the Town Centre.*

*We as a Town Council are doing all we can to help the Town centre repurpose itself, we have purchased buildings such as the Wesley Church and turned into a fine Arts Centre, the former Bank in Market turning into The Music Works for young people, and also acquired the Former Dockham Road Health Centre which has been turned into a fine Volunteer Centre called (Ow Bist) and for this work I pay great tribute to the Staff of this Town Council.*

*In addition to providing Christmas Lights and Flowers in Summer for the Town, we have worked with the Forest Market Towns Manger and our County Councillor cleaning up the Town Centre, also providing new benches in the Triangle, we are also going to put in place Heritage Paving Stones depicting the History of the Town. We have written to major Store Companies through our Market Towns Manager, we are looking forward to the forthcoming Street Market in the Triangle, and I hope Cinderford People will support this much needed Venture.*

*We have lobbied the District Council with regard the major derelict Factories in the lower half of the Town, and it's pleasing to see there will be a new housing development at the former Engelhard site, which has been a scene of anti-social behaviour in the past.*

*We have witnessed a spate of anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre, and we are acting quickly to stamp this out, working with the Police, County and District Councillors and our Youth Providers Music Works and CANDI.*

*I would like to give thanks to our Market Towns Manager for the vital help she has given to Cinderford, and I am sure this will all start to make a difference, the task ahead will not be easy because shopping habits have changed and this is being seen across the Country.*

#### **4. To receive the Annual County Councillors Report**

Cllr Donaghue provided the following report:

*This is my first report as County Councillor, and I'm grateful for the support and encouragement I have received so far. I look forward to continuing to work closely with partners, residents, and community groups.*

*I really enjoy getting the best deal and more input for Cinderford & Ruspidge and I am very happy to advocate for residents whenever I can.*

*I really hope to do my small part in keeping the two areas as a nice place to live as possible and I want to be part of the solutions and not just part of the problems. I am often affected by the negativity that comes with the frustration and bureaucracy. I*

have met with hundreds of residents over the last year and I have been struck just how much they need and deserve hard working services and Councillors. Over the next year I will work hard on whatever comes my way and I am sure there will be issues that are unexpected. Whatever happens or needs to be done, I believe things will improve the more we work hard and work together. I hope to do a lot of work on the state of our roads, the town centre and ASB in the coming months. Below is a summary of the work I have been doing locally.

## **Key Activities Summary**

### **Town Centre Regeneration**

- *Pushed for improvements including jet washing, refreshed road markings, and pavement works*
- *Funded new Heritage Stones to celebrate local history*
- *Worked with local media to promote regeneration efforts*
- *Collaborated with local councils and services to increase town centre cleaning and maintenance activity*

### **Community Volunteering**

- *Joined FixMyStreet volunteers on local improvement projects*
- *Supported a new volunteer and helped plan small clean-ups and vegetation clearance*
- *Became a Flood Warden to support local resilience*

### **Partnership Work**

- *Worked with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC), and partners to address deprivation challenges in the Forest of Dean*
- *Requested investigation into Brownfield Regeneration Grant opportunities*
- *Worked with local councils and services to deliver additional town centre tidying and cleaning*

### **Speedwatch & Road Safety**

- *Helped coordinate Speedwatch sessions and encouraged wider participation*
- *Supported residents interested in receiving speed monitoring training*
- *Attended the Road Safety Group*
- *Founding member of the Highways Panel*

### **Community Petitions & Advocacy**

- *Supported a major community petition for a pedestrian crossing in Steam Mills*
- *Continued working with the High Street Action Group on concerns regarding speed cushions near the hospital*

### **Community Funding Support**

- *Assisted with successful funding bids benefiting:*
  - *Parks*
  - *Youth organisations*
  - *Wellbeing groups*
  - *Community facilities*

### **Police & Community Safety**

- *Held regular liaison meetings with local police*
- *Preparing to join the Community Drugs Partnership*
- *Attended Neighbourhood Watch and Road Safety Group meetings*
- *Worked with partners to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB)*

### **Casework & Local Issues**

- *Supported residents with highways, planning, and policing matters*
- *Participated in multi-agency work on:*
  - *Anti-social behaviour (ASB)*
  - *Trading Standards concerns*
  - *Forest High School updates*
  - *Discussions regarding the proposed Biosphere*

### **Flooding & Infrastructure**

- *Continued work addressing flooding issues in Valley Road and Albion Road*
- *Supported early remedial works and efforts to secure further drainage surveys*

## **5. To receive the Annual District Councillors Report**

Cllr Martin provided the following report:

*There have been three main issues at the Forest of Dean District Council over the last twelve months.*

***The DRAFT LOCAL PLAN*** which is causing considerable controversy due to the increase in Housing figures and finding suitable sites to meet the target figures.

***LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW*** -it has been proposed that there will be shadow elections for a new Unitary Authority in 2027, when a shadow Council will be formed and the FODDC will be disbanded in 2027.

*The Announcement of which option has been accepted will be made in July 2026.*

***BIOSPHERE RESERVE*** -there has been controversy over the Plan to designate the area due to concerns expressed by the Commoners and Freeminers, wanting assurance that their ancient rights will not be affected by the proposal.

*During the year I was involved in a Task and Finish Group working on the Empty Homes Policy, which has now been adopted.*

*The Government awarded an increase of £87,000.00 to the Disabled Facilities Grant, which is always in great demand.*

***THE Local Family Income Tracker (LIFT)*** has assisted the Council in targeting the families in most need to ensure that they are accessing their full entitlement of support.

*Council passed the BUDGET in February which included growth items:*

*Additional funding for a year for a Community Safety Co-ordinator to support the Community Safety Partnership (a Statutory Function)*

*A Town and Parish Officer -to support local Council's to meet the challenges that they face. Cinderford is already working with her to work to improve our Town Centre.*

*Support given to fund the GROWTH HUB Business Manager to promote and enhance our local economy.*

*I continue to chair the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Forum, which remains a priority at the District Council.*

*We have supported several initiatives to increase awareness of where victims can obtain advice and support, with the Council fully participating in November's "Sixteen Days of Action," again supported by Cinderford Town Council lighting up the Tower Orange to draw attention to the issue.*

*There has also been a partnership with the local College, GDASS and Hairdressing/Beauty Salons with the "Cut it Out" Campaign, which involved training local hairdressers and beauticians in awareness raising of how to recognise the signs and support their clients as to where they can obtain help.*

*The initial phases of the PUBLICA Transition of staff to the Forest of Dean District Council has reached completion-this worked involved Councillors in a Task and Finish Group "Repatriation of Services"-chaired by Councillor John Francis.*

*A New PREVENTING HOMESLESS STRATEGY has been adopted*

*Council adopted a "Charter of Rights for Rivers" agreeing that our rivers are now being polluted at an unacceptable level and this needs urgent action.*

*I continue in my role as Financial Inclusion Champion, I have attended several meetings of many Forest and County Groups working in Partnership to assist families experiencing hardship and fuel poverty, providing support and guidance of where they can find help and support. The Cost-Of-living Crisis is hitting people in and out of work and these groups provide invaluable support aided by the District Council Community Team.*

*The Council has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant, with a dedicated officer to facilitate the Armed Forces Support network. This has been highly successful, growing in membership over the last twelve months.*

*I continue to respond to constituents with a diverse range of Casework.*

*I remain proud to be able to assist my community as one of their District Councillors after serving for 37years.*

Cllr Sanders gave a verbal update on affordable housing and the Local Plan.

Cllr Graham, absent from the meeting, had provided the following written report:

*I was elected in May 2025 to the ward of Cinderford East. During the past year, I have been mainly involved locally with the following projects.*

### ***Cinderford Youth Football Club / Forest High School***

*The Club alerted me to the history of what their evidence suggests is some unfair treatment by the FODDC and the Trust of Forest High School regarding the Club's efforts to maintain and expand their premises and provision to the local community.*

*That provision is laudable and valuable to the Town, catering to more than 400 children in their FA-registered clubs, plus the adult teams.*

*The Club had been using the artificial pitch at Forest High School since the early 2000s but the maintenance half of the pitch's construction grant was reportedly and evidentially not used for its intended purpose. The school had allegedly not met its obligations regarding the upkeep of the pitch. To keep the Club going, more than £100,000 of Club funds and huge amounts of time in voluntary work were expended over a period of circa 20 years on the pitch. The anticipated ten-year life span of the pitch surface lasted 20 years before insurance was no longer possible as the FA eventually condemned it. Access to the pitch was sealed after a boy broke his leg playing at the pitch in the evening without permission or supervision after school. It appears that the ambulance took far longer than reasonable to reach him because the accesses to the pitch had not been maintained.*

*The past 20 years had seen several potential resolutions to the Club's issues but none had been thoroughly followed through because, each time, the Trust running the school had not fully or sincerely engage in the process. A 2016 proposed redevelopment of the current ground and its partial relocation to a new stadium on Causeway Road was detailed by FODDC but not actively pursued when the Club requested progress. The advent of significant Biodiversity Net Gain costs in new legislation then precluded the prospect of that development happening.*

*I invited Linda Cohen, County Councillor for Education, to visit the Club's management in Cinderford. She came to Cinderford and shared our concerns at Trusts not being accountable to local authorities. Our joint appraisal was that whilst the Club was of immense value to the community, the treatment of the Club by FODDC and the Trust meant it may take years to achieve progress, if any.*

*Sport England were also against the Club expanding, apparently on the obtuse premise that the Five Acres development, (at that stage not even through the Planning stage and several years in the making thereafter) would meet the Forest's soccer needs.*

*Our opinion was that the Club should continue to engage with all stakeholders whilst also pursuing the more profitable prospect of them going it alone.*

*The Trust's management of the Club's issues appeared to largely reflect the management of Forest High School itself. In short, money was not available to maintain the school buildings, disaffected areas were sealed off from use, assets were sold that restricted the quality of education, activities were removed from the curriculum and parents were withdrawing their children to other schools, compounding the funding issues.*

*Myself and Ray Donaghue instigated several meetings with officials and other interested parties over the next few months that led to Matt Bishop raising the school's issues in Parliament. I understand that there are ongoing collaborations with other local Trusts that enable high quality teachers from better performing schools to help out at Forest High. But I have also been told that whilst this provision was popular with Forest High's pupils, their request for it to be expanded could not be facilitated.*

Ray and I were eventually told by FODDC that the issues with the school were resolved for the future but I have not, for one, been informed exactly what that entails.

The Club's issues appear to have resolved with them finally going it alone. I was pleased to see that FODDC's planners delegated to officials and approved the Club's recent planning application for a new, 3G pitch.

I feel justified in expressing some disappointment in the lack of public record of the events of the last 20 years involving the Trust and the Club. It meant that, to get some appreciation of the matters, I had to engage in many extensive conversations and interviews over a period of several months and raise the matters at Town, District and County levels. The same probably applies to officials and other councillors trying to pick up where predecessors had left off.

Part of the problem, as identified, was that local authorities are not necessarily part of the education picture because the school's Trust reports and is accountable to national government. Issues perhaps do not reach local administrators unless they are already significant and longstanding. And then, local frameworks have little to no power to resolve them.

I hope that this problem of necessary improvement for the school can be treated as an ongoing and monitored project where local government and especially councillors can both watch closely and be kept better informed.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Most of the remainder of my engagement as a District councillor with the community has been recording and reporting anti-social behaviour in the Town. I'm a member of Neighbourhood Watch.

Antisocial behaviour seems a significant and escalating issue causing chronic distress and inconvenience to residents and businesses. The police are aware but do not have the preventative resources to deploy. When they apprehend and process offenders, they are not prosecuted but entered into programs designed to deter and prevent similar misconduct in the future.

There seems a clear dichotomy between the local provision of activities for teenagers against the expectation that they will not engage in anti-social behaviour. The problems of teenage antisocial behaviour arise predominantly on a Thursday evening after they gather at a local club. I understand that the Music Works Bus being deployed after the club reduced antisocial behaviour on at least one evening. I think there is a need to evaluate the results of the police approach and re-assess the value of community projects intended to keep teenagers occupied. Are we facing a deficiency in local provision for teenagers and young adults? Do we need to amend those provisions, or are we having issues with a significant minority of the same offenders to whom any change to their local activity provision would make little to no difference?

I was encouraged when visiting the SkillZone in Gloucester and appreciate its potential contribution for teenagers. But I'm disappointed to then be informed by SkillZone that whilst the space exists to accommodate trips from schools in the

*Forest of Dean, the funding required for their coach transport is not available so few, if any trips, are happening, depriving our children of the benefits of a valuable resource.*

*I am disappointed to note what seems the predictable contribution of FODDC's apparent policy to accommodate persons likely to be antisocial in houses and areas designed for and previously delegated to the Town's older residents. This policy has caused significant complaint and long-term distress to residents in Cinderford East, who I think should have their rights to a peaceful retirement better acknowledged and respected.*

*Meadow Road is a clear example of how antisocial persons were housed amongst an elderly population and caused them months of anguish, worry and sleepless nights. I am somewhat encouraged to see that raising the issue led eventually to strong evidence gathering and action being taken by Two Rivers to remove the problematic tenants, but also that the legal process and the amount of work required to satisfy it are extensive and take some time. I'm currently monitoring another Cinderford area with the same, alleged problem, with the assistance of local residents.*

*Illegal activities, and anti-social behaviour by perpetrators when challenged, are also occurring in Rowandean. The evidence gathering that is stated as a requirement before any measures can be taken cannot be conducted as it places the residents at risk. We seem to be in a Catch-22 whilst the problems are permitted to persist. So far as I see it, the only option is to turn Rowandean into a gated community. Upon raising that possibility, I am told by officials in Highways, at FODDC and GCC, and even councillors from outside Cinderford, that unadopting Rowandean Road as part of the proposed solution is "too difficult" a process.*

*I looked up the relevant laws and process to conclude that whilst there is indeed a series of criteria and actions to satisfy, it is all quite straightforward and probably entails less work by less people across less agencies than have already met together and provided no resolution at all, and seem unlikely to.*

*The assertion that the process is difficult does not seem to be substantiated and is certainly less onerous than leaving the residents of Rowandean in permanent limbo. In terms of legal processes, my opinion is that applying for Rowandean Road to be unadopted seems to be one of the simplest I have seen, and it could probably be done, if the relevant parties were motivated to do it.*

*In the apparent absence of other resolutions that could last, I am disappointed that this proposal is not being scrutinised and to that effect, I have unilaterally written to the outgoing CEO of Two Rivers for her views.*

### **Planning**

*I am part of the Planning Committee at District and attend monthly site meetings and planning application meetings at the FODDC in Coleford.*

### **Full Council**

*I have attended all of the Full Council meetings at FODDC since May 2025. I have attended training on the LGR and biosphere.*

### **Other**

## *Biosphere*

*I have been engaged with researching the proposed biosphere for several months and met with the Commoners in their recent, public engagements. I have also been in talks with several parish councils, including West Dean.*

*The economic report filed in support of the biosphere did not, to my mind, appear to have been prepared by relevantly qualified persons. The arguments it asserted in support were questionable. The production of the report, for such an important change to the Forest, was not put out to tender.*

*The local Green Party and the FODDC administration claim support for the biosphere from two motions that were proposed and voted through at FODDC and GCC. I was of the opinion then and expressed at GCC Full Council in Shire Hall that there was insufficient consultation with relevant parties and insufficient information provided to the public and councillors for both motions to have been raised and voted on.*

*I expressed when debating the biosphere motion at GCC Full Council that none of the Town and Parish Councils had been consulted, nor the Commoners or Verderers. The public consultation relied on by the Greens appears too inadequate to bear the term 'consultation.'*

*I was at that time a member of Reform and encouraged those members to abstain in the vote. All other GCC councillors, most of whom I'm sure had no idea what a biosphere was or whether the Green's economic argument was sound, voted in favour. I believe this appraisal applies to both the FODDC and GCC votes.*

*It is my view that the voting should be void on the grounds of councillors not being adequately informed. I feel that raising these premature motions was an abuse of the democratic process, and that the votes should not be relied upon by FODDC or GCC as part of the justification for proceeding with the biosphere application.*

*The motions, in any case, were only for FODDC to investigate the prospect of the biosphere but subsequent actions by FODDC have gone beyond the scope of what the motions proposed and what the councillors in both chambers voted for.*

*The Commoners have taken the concerns I had into further research and fully engaged with FODDC.*

*FODDC have not, in my view, adequately processed the potential application for the biosphere. Alternatives such as national Landscape or national Park have not been explored. I demanded some training from FODDC before the GCC vote. The trainer could not answer some of the questions we raised. My requests to extend that online training to parishes was refused. FODDC have recently provided belated training in short visits to parish councils that does not compensate for the lack of engagement to date, nor is that training extensive. Meaningful engagement with the parishes was retrospectively refused when I requested it at a FODDC training event. Public meetings have been held in Littledean that the Greens and FODDC did not attend. Questions over commoditising the Forest within the biodiversity net gain industry and the implications for the Forest have not been adequately responded to. Claims that freedom to graze or roam, and restrictions on activities and development will not be affected, are contradicted in the documentation of the biosphere zones. Claims of*

support for the biosphere by a Green councillor have been rebuked by the Commoners and the Verderers. A recent councillor meeting at FODDC where one councillor had submitted a request for the meeting to solely focus on the biosphere was vacated on the grounds that 'there was nothing to discuss.'

The conduct of the Commoners in this project, in contrast, has been exemplary. They approached the prospect of the biosphere with an open mind. Their expertise and historical contribution to local life and its ongoing quality is unquestionably significant. They and West Dean Parish Council have done high quality work to jointly appraise that it would be unwise to continue with the biosphere proposal, and I support their justified conclusions. Likewise, I have switched from an independent but curious view to one of opposing the biosphere proposal.

I am of the opinion that any proposal to place an environmentally-protective program around the Forest of Dean is welcome but must be by established, transparent and statutory process such as a National Landscape or National Park.

### **Working Group**

I remain of the opinion that the recent proposal by myself and Ray Donaghue for a Cinderford Working Group comprising several key, local players to discuss and resolve all types of local issues is a sensible proposal. I'd like to see its rejection reviewed.

## **6. Presentations from Cinderford Community Groups**

None.

## **7. Open Forum**

A resident enquired about shop use and condition. A detailed discussion took place. Roles of the District and Town Council were outlined. The Chair advised the shop conditions were a landlord/tenant issue. Issues are known and being taken forward. Cllr Graham updated on Cinderford's history, the economic impact and the reasons for the decline. Cllr Graham update on the work undertaken by the Market Towns Officer and Town Council.

## **8. Meeting close**

The meeting closed at 6.31pm

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....