

Minutes of Halwill parish council's October 2025 meeting

Held on 9 October 2025 at 7.30pm In the Baptist Hall

The meeting started at 7:30pm. Councillor Osborne chaired the meeting

Present:

Cllrs V Osborne (VO), L Bryan(LB) and M Harding(MH) P Dixon(PD) following Item 3

In Attendance:

County Councillor L Rowsell(LR), Ward Councillors P Hackett(PH) & S Gibson(SG), 3 members of the public (MoP) and the Clerk

2025/Oct/1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors E Down and J Lawlor

2025/Oct/2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bryan declared an interest in Item 9

2025/Oct/3 Co-option of councillors following the resignation of Councillors Grocock and Wilson

It was **resolved** to co-opt Paddy Dixon as a member of Halwill Parish Council. He signed the declaration of acceptance of office in front of all present having read the Code of Conduct.

2025/Oct/4 Public question time

A MoP asked about Rectory Lane and potholes in general. The MoP has photographed the potholes and brought up the issue with Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP. Sir Geoffrey will raise the case with Devon Highways.

The Chair of the Hall Committee asked if the parish council could give money towards the much needed Hall refurbishment. The Clerk informed the meeting that it will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

See Appendix 1 for a transcript

2025/Oct/5 Order of business and any items to be discussed with the public excluded

None

2025/Oct/6 Clerk's and Councillors' announcements

Councillor Rowsell wished to draw the meetings attention to the proposed solar farm at Holsworthy Beacon and the public meeting which will be held on 31 October. At 11 pm in the Memorial Hall. Our MP will be in attendance. The proposal is for a 2,700 acre farm.

Ward Councillor Hackett thought we might hear a bit more about devolution soon but it will just be more of the same.

Ward Councillor Gibson reported that there things going on regarding the Holsworthy Agni-Centre but we cannot be told what.

See Appendix 2 for a full transcript

2025/Oct/7 To confirm minutes for the September 2025 Parish Council Meeting

The minutes were signed as a correct record by the Chair

2025/Oct/8 Finances

1 Bills for payment

It was **resolved** to pay the following bills

Table 1: Table of bills to pay and cheques to be raised at the September meeting current account

Date	Company	Amount inc VAT	For what
09/10/25	D C Osborne	£402.00	Salary September
09/10/25	D C Osborne	£10.00	Expenses
06/10/25	L&M Cole (clerk paid)	£472.00	Parish Warden
17/09/25	Halwill Baptists Church	£30.00	Hall hire
02/10/25	Halwill Cleaning Services	£45.00	Bus shelter washdown

Current Account Total For month inc VAT: £959.00

Current Account Total for month ex VAT £959.00

VAT for month: £0

2025/Oct/9 Planning

Reference: 1/0713/2025/FUL

Proposal: Proposed garage / workshop

Location: Hill Crest, Halwill, Beaworthy, Devon

Halwill Parish Council does not wish to comment on this application

Reference: 1/0731/2025/FUL

Proposal: Conversion of redundant barn to a dwelling

Location: Agricultural Building At Grid Reference 243365 100277, Halwill, Devon

Halwill Parish Council does not wish to comment on this application

2025/Oct/10 Highways including but not necessarily limited to:

1. Rectory Lane and the sewerage treatment works

See public speaking time

2. Parking in Station Road

Carried over

3. Location of 30mph limit

Carried over

4. Chicanes

No comment

5. Car parks

They are a right old mess.

2025/Oct/11 Active Halwill delegate report

Councillor Grocock has resigned from the parish council and Active Halwill.

Active Halwill are waiting for a date from TDC for pre application talks

Carried over

2025/Oct/12 Progress reports

1. Speed sign

The Clerk has not managed to action this. Councillor Bryan is happy to put up the necessary pole for the camera.

2. Gazebo

Carried over

3. Banking provisions

Progressing – carried over

4. Village signs

The Clerk has asked Pidsignz for proposals for signs to place over the existing signs.

5. Boundary matters

Progressing. Waiting for solicitors to act.

2025/Oct/13 Correspondence

Correspondence received and to be written

None

2025/Oct/14 Next meeting

The next Ordinary Meeting will be on the 13 November at the Baptist Hall

The meeting ended at 20:45

Appendix 1

MoP "We took some photos of Rectory Lake, and about the same time my husband happened to notice that the lane right up at Stowford Cross has been tarmacked partly with a big patch of tarmac which is clearly totally pointless.

And also he was behind a highways lorry that was tarmacking the gateway, a whole load in a gateway which is totally pointless as well, all within hundreds of metres of all the bad roads around Upcott Cross.

So we sent those photos as well, and I had a reply yesterday from his board manager saying thank you for your email of a contact to Sir Geoffrey.

He's very aware of the poor road conditions across his constituency and will shortly be meeting with the director of highways at Devon County Council to discuss this in person. However, in the meantime, he will raise a specific case of Rectory Lane in Halwill following your email and images of this piece of road.

I did also copy in the councillors as well, so I think they're aware of that tarmacking in the lay-by."

PH: "I just find it completely incredible that they're saying they're short of materials, can't afford to do it, and they're dumping tarmac in lay-bys, because that's all it is.

LR: "And it's made worse by the fact that when you talk to the highways, they say we've got no money because we've split the money across three areas now, so that gives you a third, rather than having a full amount, and we can't do anything about it. And this is all you get, and I'm coming up against a grid wall every time. We spoke to the deputy director, and he said, "No, but..." and that's how he kept going on, and he said, "Well, that's it, we've divided money in three."

He said, "A third to Potholes, a third to Main Roads," and he said, "We just haven't got it, it's as simple as that," and that is their argument.

So I imagine, even if Jeffrey Cox goes in, I think they're going to give him the same story. Whether he's got a bit more clout than he can force the issue, I don't know, but good.

PH: "Will the public have confidence in the highways department if they're losing tarmac material. I saw this being done at three o'clock in the afternoon, so they can't say, "Ooh, we have to be back for finishing." They cannot waste material.

LR: "Of course they can't. And the deputy director said, "What you must be aware of is they start at four in the morning," and I said, "Well, so do a lot of people. That doesn't make any difference to them. Why have they actually done things?" He said, "Well, they can't take it back anyway." I said, "No, but if you put it down a pothole, it serves its purpose. They just do not want to know."

And we tried everything that we could think of. So we're in brick wall at the moment. So we're back in again next week, just before we do the HATOC meeting. And we're trying again to see if we can get further, but we're not listening.

PH: "The question I would ask, why do they have to start at four in the morning? Because I'm sure they can't be picking up the tarmac at four o'clock in the morning. And if they do have to start at four o'clock in the morning, and they've got tarmac left on the load, surely run out that tarmac, finish what time they finish, and then have time off in lieu. I was used to starting long hours when I was a jockey. Sometimes I was arriving at work at five o'clock in the morning, so I had to be there.

So it goes with the territory?

LR: "It does, of course it does. We had three of us in there, and we thought, you know, maybe we'll give it a little bit more clout talking to him.

But he just would not let us. We tried everything we could think of. And that's what he says. And then he says, "Oh, the time's run out, and you're kind of ushered away."

Oh, I've got no faith in him at all at the moment, I'll be honest.

PH: "You are a cabinet-led council, led by officers or by the cabinet? Who's making the decisions?"

LR: "Well, at the moment the cabinet is making the decisions, and putting some of them through and telling everybody that we've supported them when we hadn't.

PH: "Which is the thing else we're trying to fight at the moment. That's where we need the oxygen of publicity. Yeah, yeah. It's ridiculous.

PD: "Highways are a rule to themselves, because I've even been on to them about the hedges between Holly Close and the 40 mile hour limit.

And they've come back to me three times and said it's not their problem. And it is their problem. And they haven't been out to look at it, full stop.

As they can see, it's overgrown. You cannot see the sign any more.

Hall Chair: "I was going to ask the same question about the trees down the main road. I live at the bottom of the road there, and buses and lorries, and especially the hay lorries, are taking it off. they're cleaning it, they're cleaning branches off, and of course cars behind, running over these branches, it's horrendous.

But, you know, they've let them, some of them down the bottom end, are even hanging over the pavement on the opposite side. They've let them come that far over the line.

I get having a little bit of a cut in, but I mean, if any of those were to ever fall, it would take out houses, power lines, cars, the lot. It's just dangerous.

Clerk: So it's the responsibility of the landowner to cut the hedges and trees and not highways. However, highways can give people a bit of a prompt, and so highways can get it done and then bill the landowner.

Hall Chair: To be fair, I see them, especially in that area, they cut the grass, they cut the hedges back, they keep it entirely, but they can't get up there.

I don't know if that comes at a private cost to them, because they'd have to get it done, but they've come so far over the road, it's dangerous.

One of them to fall, it's not just going to fall on the road, it's going to take out cars and houses, because they are literally hanging over the pavement on the other side.

Clerk: There's also a TPO on some of those trees, tree protection order, so it's not straightforward to do anything.

PH: There's something in law called *ad medium filum*, which is Latin for 'to the centre line', because the adjacent landowner owns to the centre line of the road. You can't do anything with it, because it's public highway, but you are responsible for that piece of land. And the ridiculous thing is, you should cut back the hedges, you're completely right, but you need something called Chapter 8 to work on the highway, which is a qualification, to actually work on the live carriageway, as it's called. And you can't do it yourself, so you've got to get a contractor to do that.

LR: It's all very tight, isn't it?

PH: It's all in the middle.

Hall Chair: Can I just quickly mention, and I know you're not doing grants, but I just wanted to, as the chair of the parish hall, we're trying to move forward now with our heating project. It's going to cost about £45,000 to lower the ceiling, put in new air conditioning and heating units, and lighting and operating the fire system. So, it's not cheap, and I hope that we could have some money from the parish council for that. And maybe some money for applying for any other grants that you're aware of, or even in touch with councillors. We've got some money already from what was pledged in the Scallywags Preschool, we've also pledged ££750.

Clerk: It'll be on the agenda for next month. It'll be on the budget setting.

PD: Is that an upgrade of the building itself?

Hall Chair: It will be, yes. So, the Platinum Village halls fund, I'm applying to that, but that is only 20%.

PD: But what about the government for heating and things like that?

Hall Chair: Possibly, there might be some environmental funds that I can try because of the solar panels on the roof that will run some of it in the summer.

LB: It's getting insulated as well, isn't it?

Hall Chair: Yes, the ceiling will be insulated, so it should be much more efficient.

PD: That should be covered under a grant as well, shouldn't it?

Hall Chair: Well, it's getting bits and pots of money to pay for bits of it.

Clerk: Are there still vacancies on the Hall Committee?

Hall Chair: There is actually, yes.

Clerk: You could join the Hall Committee, yes. You could apply for the grant then.

Hall Chair: Yes, we have got a vacancy on the Hall Committee, and if you're up for helping with funding applications and things, that would be great. Next meeting?

Clerk: I can't remember.

Hall Chair: Third of November is our next meeting at the Parish Hall. You'll find out how cold it is then.
Quarter to eight.

Clerk: Wrap up warm.

Hall Chair: Are you happy for Don, who is one of the trustees as well, to email me your email details?

Clerk: You will be assigned a .gov.uk email address for Parish Council business, which will be in the public domain anyway. So even if you were unhappy, it's just tough luck. I mean, you'd never get any volunteers if you told them actually what it's like.

Appendix 2

Chair: Item six, clerks and councillors' announcements. Mr Gibson.

SG: Just to make you aware of various things that are going on at Torridge, the main thing being the big debate on trying to secure the funding for the Holsworthy Agriculture Centre at Holsworthy, obviously, with the urban regeneration grant that's been made available. So there's big debates going on, and that's the last council meeting which went on for, what was it, a record three and a half hours?

PH: Yes, 20 past 10.

SG: So that's exercised everybody's minds. I'm not quite sure, as I've been aware on holiday, has there a subsequent meeting?

PH: It was all in part two, so we can't say.

SG: No, no, no, okay. I didn't know if subsequently it had come out of part two.

PH: Well, we came out of part two because you do that to end meetings, and there are things running in the background.

SG: It's still under, it's still restricted information. It's still restricted. Okay, well thank you for putting me right on that.

I did come along to, you mentioned Sir Geoffrey earlier, who had a surgery meeting here at Halwill Junction, it was quite well attended, and I picked up a couple of things on local residents that I'm dealing with from a lady at Chilla. Then I'm trying to think of the name, it's well known, further on out of the village towards Black Torrington, which I can't think of the, I don't know if I have a note of that, of the problem, but I'm dealing with that.

Other than that, it's just business as usual, it's just, I can't think of anything else really.

PH: All I'd add is we're going to find out more about local government reorganisation next Tuesday, but it's just variations on a theme.

We won't really know until next summer, they're hoping to get things organised by the next summer recess, certainly not, we're just moving pieces round the chessboard.

SG: How far down the chain does that organisation go to? Does it go as low as the parish, or just the higher level?

PH: Parish are being dangled a carrot that will vanish like mist in the morning. They're going to have greater authority to deal with certain matters, and they're all going "planning", no it's not. It'll be the same as Cornwall, you'll be working hard to empty your dog-litter bins and clean up the litter, of that magnitude. Stuff you don't want, stuff you don't want, stuff you don't want and can't afford, you'll find yourself...

Clerk: Good news.

SG: There's a Foxhole group. Yes, they were the people that I spoke to.

Clerk: Were they complaining about roads as well? Were they complaining about roads as well?

SG: Unauthorised development

PH: Yes, that's coming from CNR on Monday, we're reviewing that enforcement, planning enforcement.

LR: I'm afraid my news is not terribly good, but I did think of what you needed to know. 31st October at 11am, Holsworthy Memorial Hall, there's a big meeting to do with solar farms. And they are looking at 2,700 acres of land that they want to turn into solar farms. Which they were saying, because I can't imagine that much in acres, and they said well this is going to be twice the size of Barnstaple. And they're looking at it now, that this meeting is being covered by CPR.

Clerk: Is this the one at Holsworthy Beacon?

LR: Holsworthy Beacon, yes. And they said it was 17 farms that would be done, and they've been raised to the ground really to do this.

So it's raised to the ground, not been used for it. Geoffrey Cox I believe is going to attend, is that right?

SG: So I understand, yes.

LR: So I'm obviously going to go on and try and find out a little bit more about it. But it's pretty worrying when you think what it would do to that particular area. Because it's not only the farms, it's going to be the knock-on effect with the animals, jobs, all sorts of things. And I've already spoken to our lot, and said to them this is going to devastate the whole area. I just don't think it

can be allowed to carry on. So they're going to chat about that on the 31st, like say at 11am.

PH: 11am?

LR: Yeah.

LB: What's the reason for it?

LR: Sorry?

LB: What's the reason behind it?

LR: Well they just want to put up these, like I say, these solar farms, because they say it's going to be helpful. The thing is, when we've looked into that, they're talking about so many batteries. It can't be how many batteries it was. They said about 12 batteries will only actively supply enough electricity for 13 minutes. So they're going to have to have hundreds of them. That's why they're looking at this big area.

They're trying to sneak in through the back door, I think, to a certain degree. They're hoping no one will notice it, while they're still keeping us occupied over digital and everything else.

MoP: If there's lots of farms, there must be lots of different landowners.

LR: Well there must be, yeah, and this is something that we're going to ask them when we get to the meeting, because they said it's going to income the 17 farmers.

MoP: So they're quite happy to have it from their land, then?

LR: Well, so it would appear, yeah.

MoP: So now that that won't devastate their farms, is there going to make income?

LR: Well, when we've spoken to some of the farmers, they say, "Well, what else can we do?" You know, I mean, we're getting sort of pushed into the ground. No money in farming.

LR: That's right.

MoP: So they're being solar farmers instead, then?

LR: A lot of money. I mean, I can see it from their point of view. You know, if you're sort of down on your luck, you're going to get all these taxes, everything else that goes with it. I mean, sometimes you just don't have a choice, you know. By the same token, it's got to be looked at, I think, as a whole. I mean, there's got to be more we can do. It's going to affect our food supply in the long run, isn't it?

MoP: Well, if their farms are failing anyway, then maybe not. Why do they need the land?

MH: It won't make the electric any cheaper, will it?

LR: Sorry?

MH: I said it won't make the electric any cheaper.

LR: No, they were saying that what's happening is, with some of the other farms that they've got, that they're actually sending the electricity to different places at very, very cheap prices. But when Devon wanted back, they doubled the price and sold it back to us, which is absolutely disgraceful, isn't it? And they're going to do it while there is that demand, aren't they?

MH: But the sad part is, the grid can't take no more.

LR: It can't, no. And it's disastrous. Yeah, well, there was one guy that we spoke to, he said he got it all fitted up and sorted out and everything, and we thought, well, this year was a bad year, but next year we got to the next year, and we thought, I don't know, that bill is exactly the same. Called around and they said, hmm, alright, right, we haven't connected you up. And apparently this is going on all the time. I thought, we're sorry, it was a mistake. And it's not.

SG: Commercially, it doesn't make any sense at all. Without the government grant assistance aid. And that's being provided to meet the commitment to, I won't say percentage zero target that we signed up to, I don't know how long ago now.

PD: It was Mr. Milliband.

SG: Hmm?

PD: Mr. Milliband. Basically.

SG: Well, I think it was before then, to be fair. Yeah. Yeah. But that's what it's all about. It doesn't make commercial sense unless it's grant aid. And that's always available despite the problems there are in funding everything else with the budgets and that we're all here about simply because to meet a legal commitment to net zero. It's not net zero, actually, that's Milliband, as

you're saying. But it was prior to that. It was, I shouldn't say it, but it was a conservative thing. I think Boris signed up to it. Boris Johnson. Yeah. So it is, and that's until somebody rescinds that, they have to meet that or do what they can to meet that for whatever it means. And solar, wind is another one, of course. But solar is obviously the one that affects the land more than anything. But anyway, that's the drive for it. That's the commercial reasoning, the aid, the government solution for it.

Chair: Mr. Hackett, have you got anything to say?

PH: I haven't, no.

Chair: Oh, well, it's nice to see you.

PH: I don't need to add at this moment.

Chair: Okay, thank you. All right.

Have you got any announcements to make?

Clerk: No.

Chair: "All right.