

<p><b>MINUTES OF THE WINCHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON MONDAY 15 MAY 2023 AT 7 PM IN WINCHFIELD VILLAGE HALL</b></p>
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**PRESENT** Cllr A Renshaw (Chairman),  
Cllr C Hamm, Cllr L Hodgetts, Cllr R Milnes-James, Cllr K Stewart and Cllr M Williams  
Cllr S Farmer (Hart District Council - HDC)  
PCSO Liz Wallace (from 7.25pm)  
25 members of the public  
Mrs A Ball (Clerk)

**1 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME**

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Crampton and T Southern (HDC).

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Assembly.

**2 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 19 May 2022 were accepted and signed as a correct record.

**3 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman gave the following report:

It had been a very busy year for the Parish Council as work had continued on a number of initiatives. The most important had been updating the Neighbourhood Plan.

This was now at the stage of a consultation by HDC on the Plan which the Parish Council had submitted. The consultation launched on Friday 12 May and would run until Friday 23 June. The inspector appointed to examine the Plan would then consider the comments followed by a referendum, which, if passed, would lead to the Plan being adopted.

Thanks were expressed to Christine Strudwick and her team who had got through a massive amount of work in updating the Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst any large-scale development, such as Shapley Heath, was still opposed, the Parish Council wanted to demonstrate it was not opposed to appropriate small-scale schemes, and following a survey to assess need, the Parish Council had a project to find a small site for affordable homes known as a Rural Exception Site.

Cllr Louise Hodgetts had been working on this with Cllr Meyrick Williams. She had also organised the defibrillators and the Speed Indicator Device (SID), and had been involved in highway and road safety issues.

A scheme to offer trees and hedgerows proved popular and was masterminded by Cllr Kate Stewart who was thanked for her sterling efforts on this.

Cllr Richard Milnes-James had kept a check on the finances during the year and smoothed the way for the village hall to obtain developers' funds, held by HDC, to make improvements to the hall.

There had been two royal events during the year, the Platinum Jubilee and the Coronation, and both had been celebrated by residents with street parties part funded by the Parish Council and HDC.

As in previous years, two litter picks had been held which had been organised by the Litter Pick Co-ordinator and thanks were expressed to her for this. Thanks were also expressed to the Footpaths Warden who regularly walked the parish paths, some of which had benefited from remedial works organised by Cllr Williams.

Councillors, led by Cllr Williams, had developed a good liaison with HCC highways officers, in a year when the laying of a new water main by South East Water and other roadworks in neighbouring parishes had involved road closures and diversions, greatly to the detriment of Winchfield residents and to the condition of the rural lanes.

The Chairman thanked all the councillors on behalf of residents for all their hard work throughout the year. He also thanked the Clerk, whose guidance was relied on. All had played a part in helping to maintain and improve Winchfield as a special place to live.

The Chairman concluded by announcing that after 41 years as a councillor, it was time for him to bow out and he had not stood as a candidate in the recent election. He expressed his thanks for the support of his wife over the years.

#### **4 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES**

Cllr Meyrick Williams gave the following report:

In June 2020 work had started to review the Neighbourhood Plan when a working group of six residents came together. The Covid-19 pandemic had inhibited the opportunities to engage with residents in person but it had been possible to hold five public engagement meetings, deliver regular flyers containing updates on progress and publish information on the WPC website.

The Regulation 14 pre-submission consultation had ended in December 2022. Each of the comments received had been reviewed and an updated Plan was submitted to HDC in March 2023. HDC were running the Regulation 16 consultation from 12 May to 23 June and all were encouraged to respond, even if they had already responded to the Regulation 14 consultation. Once the consultation closed all the comments received would be handed over to an Independent Examiner. WPC would have the opportunity to respond to the Examiner's report and amend the Plan if required. Once this process was completed HDC would call a local referendum, likely in late summer 2023. Cllr Williams asked everyone to turn out and vote. It was hoped that HDC would adopt the Winchfield Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2037 in early autumn 2023.

One of the key elements of the Plan was the climate change and natural environment objectives which included conserving and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity, and support for HDC's initiative to be carbon neutral by 2040. Within the Parish there were two SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and 32 SINCs (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) which included 26 designated woodlands, and the canal conservation area. These covered 21% of the parish.

Whilst this was set as a priority for the Parish Council this was not something that could be achieved without help. It would be important to get young people involved and to set up good links with others doing similar projects such as the Hartley Wintney Climate Action group. A member of the public had come forward and offered to be the local champion and to liaise between these groups.

#### **5 AFFORDABLE HOMES**

Cllr Hodgetts gave the following report:

In November 2020 WPC had engaged with Action Hampshire and HDC to investigate the need for affordable homes in the parish. In February 2021, a Housing Needs Survey identified a need for 6 to 8 such homes.

A Working Group was set up with representatives from HDC, WPC and Action Hampshire, to determine the viability of a Rural Exception Site which would provide rented affordable homes, available in perpetuity, and prioritised to those who had a direct connection with the parish.

In late 2021, landowners in the parish were invited to make the Working Group aware of available land, and several potential sites were submitted.

In April 2022 English Rural Housing Association was selected to deliver and manage the potential homes and was represented on the Working Group.

The HDC planning team and English Rural conducted a preliminary viability and sustainability assessment on the proposed sites and provided advice to the Working Group on their suitability. Subsequently, two sites were shortlisted for public consultation. Full details of these sites could still be found on the English Rural website despite the consultation period being over.

In February 2023, the first in a series of public consultations was held so that feedback could be obtained on the proposed sites and the outline development plans. There had been 238 hits to the online consultation, 47 comments submitted, and three people had registered an interest in the affordable homes.

Ongoing viability activities were still being undertaken on both sites and provisional views had been sought from HDC Planning.

A public meeting would be held on 26th July prior to any decision being made to submit any planning pre-application.

## **6 COMMUNITY BENEFIT SCHEMES**

Cllr Kate Stewart gave the following report:

The Parish Council received payments from the two solar farms in the parish, one had been a lump sum and the other an annual payment. These funds made up the Community Benefit Fund which was used for the benefit of residents on environmental, education or amenity projects.

There were excellent links with Hampshire Highways and as a result, in the last year, the white lines had been repainted at the Hurst crossroads following the SE Water project, the SLOW markings had been painted before and after the Pale Lane turning at the Barley Mow pub and there had been repairs to damaged verges at Chatter Alley. It was hoped that during the coming year there would be further progress on the project to improve road safety on the B3016, repairs to more verges and dragons teeth and possibly village gates to help reduce speeding when entering the village. Consideration was also being given to setting up a speed watch campaign. Everyone was encouraged to report potholes or any other highway issue to HCC via the online reporting system.

On the Speed Indicator Device (SID) it was noted that there were six licenced SID locations across the village, with an additional two sites coming live during 2023. The SID regularly reported a reduction in speed of up to 6 mph between vehicles entering the SID and leaving the SID. The SID was being rotated across the sites available every three weeks with the batteries being swapped weekly.

The SID had been enhanced with a modem device in November 2022 which allowed the collection of data remotely. Both batteries had recently been replaced as they had reached the end of their life. SID reports were uploaded regularly to the WPC website. As a consequence of the recent upgrade to the SID the battery needed changing more often and volunteers were being sought to help with this.

There were two, potentially life saving, defibrillators in the village, funded by WPC and installed at the Village Hall and at the Barley Mow pub. Volunteer guardians checked on these weekly to ensure they were working. Both the defibs had been linked to the National Defibrillator Network 'The Circuit' which linked directly to the NHS ambulance service. Funds had been committed by WPC to ensure the replacement of ancillary equipment such as the batteries and shock pads. Defib and CPR training had been organised by Cllr Hodgetts and was due to take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of June.

Copies of the footpaths leaflet were available at the meeting for members of the public to take home which showed the footpaths in the parish. There had been lots of work over the last year to make improvements to the footpaths including:

- the installation of a French drain and raised path to relieve flooding on footpath 4;

- resurfacing, ditches cleared and pipes laid in the dip on Footpath 5;
- the junction of Footpaths 5 and 6 had been resurfaced and new squeeze posts installed; and
- resurfacing, ditches cleared and pipes laid on Footpath 6.

For the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee, WPC had run a tree planting initiative linked with the Queen's Green Canopy scheme. In December 2023 210 trees and over 405 metres of hedging were delivered to over 100 properties in the village. This project was ongoing and it was hoped more landowners would come forward requesting trees or hedging.

There had been celebrations across the Parish for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and then again for the Kings Coronation. £1,500 had been awarded by WPC in grants to help local groups put on Jubilee events and a similar amount was awarded for Coronation events.

## 7 FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Cllr Milnes-James reported that the main area of expenditure during 2022/23 was on the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

In summary:

	£k	£k
<b>Receipts</b>		
Precept	31.5	
Solar	3.2	
VAT Refund	2.9	
Other	0.2	
	<hr/>	<b>37.9</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Running costs	(6.5)	
Planning/NDP	(42.0)	
Grants/donations	(2.6)	
Jubilee/Coronation	(2.5)	
Community Benefit Fund	(7.5)	
VAT	(9.0)	
	<hr/>	<b>(70.1)</b>
	<hr/>	<b>(32.2)</b>
Opening reserves		74.6
Movement in year		(32.2)
Closing reserves		<hr/> 42.3 <hr/>

Neighbourhood Plan costs were high in 2022/2023 for the update to the Plan but were lower than budgeted for. Spend from the community benefit fund included expenditure on the tree project, improvements to the footpaths and the SID upgrade.

The precept per household for 2023/2024 was unchanged for the third year running which, for an average band D household meant the cost was £94 per year.

## Summary of the 2023/2024 budget:

	£k	£k
Running costs		7.3
Grants and donations	1.1	
Coronation	2.0	
Churchyard maintenance	1.9	
		5.0
Planning/NDP	8.5	
Community Benefit Fund	11.7	
General reserve	3.0	
		23.2
Other		1.3
		36.8

The churchyard maintenance grant had received an above inflation increase in 2023/2024 and there was a new Community Project Fund of £8.5k included in the budget for 2023/2024.

Specific reserves were available for investment in community projects – Community Project funds held by WPC and s106 funds held by HDC. At April 2023 the Community Project Fund totalled £31k comprising of £23k from the solar farms which could be used for “charitable, educational, environmental and amenity purposes.....where possible for promotion of sustainable energy and uses.....not for political, religious or entertainment and hospitality purposes”. There was also £8k in the Community Project Fund.

At April 2023 there was approximately £21k of s106 funds held by HDC for capital projects in the parish. These projects must have a ‘demonstrable leisure and community benefit’. Funding could be supplemented with monies from existing WPC reserves. In 2022/23 WPC supported the Winchfield Village Hall Committee in its application for £25.5k of s106 money for improvements to the hall’s acoustics, AV system, furniture, low energy lighting, signage, website, car park marking and a bicycle rack. Other potential projects not yet advanced included improving access to the canal towpath within the parish boundary, facilitating improvements to Winchfield’s broadband speeds, providing facilities to diversify the use of an existing community building and investing in land made available for use by the community, e.g. a village orchard or community park. Future suggestions for s106 and community projects were encouraged and welcomed.

## 8 OPEN FORUM

The local PCSO Liz Wallace was welcomed and she addressed the meeting, advising that there had recently been some incidents of theft of catalytic converters in the local area, there had been stolen burnt-out cars in Pale Lane and most recently a break-in at the church. In the latter incident nothing had been taken but there had been a significant amount of damage. Forensics had been taken from the scene and it was hoped the culprits would be identified. PCSO Wallace advised that the number of officers in the Hart and Rushmoor area was significantly lower than it should be so she was having to cover a large area but she knew the area well and she encouraged people to get in touch with any issues.

It was noted that WPC had been contacted about being involved with the Hartley Wintney Twinning Association as the five parishes of Hartley Wintney, Heckfield, Mattingley, Rotherwick and Winchfield were twinned with Saint-Savin in France and Malle in Belgium. A volunteer was sought to lead this on behalf of WPC.

A representative from the group ‘Villages Oppose Warehouses’ was present at the meeting and he was invited to speak. He advised that his group was leading the campaign against the proposal to create a warehouse distribution hub at Lodge Farm, North Warnborough. Whilst this proposal was in North

Warnborough it would have a big effect on all the surrounding villages particularly with regards to roads and traffic. There would be 1400 vehicle movements every day, which would largely be HGVs, and five enormous warehouses, each 20 to 30 metres high. Junction 5 of the M3 would need to be completely re-built and the Odiham bypass would need to be widened to three lanes on each side of the road. HDC had refused applications relating to the site so far but this had not gone away.

The Chairman wished the speaker and his group well with the campaign.

Cllr Williams addressed the meeting advising that many in the public gallery were in attendance to express their sincere gratitude to the Chairman for his outstanding and unstinting service to Winchfield. He advised that the Chairman was well respected for his integrity, discretion and leadership. He had served as a councillor for 41 years, 25 of those as Chairman, and he had never missed a meeting which was a most notable achievement which richly deserved recognition for the commitment and contribution. All of this was achieved whilst also busy farming and editing local newspapers and as a Vice-President of Hampshire County Cricket Club and President of Eversley Cricket Club.

The Chairman had also been a stalwart campaigner against inappropriate development in the village such as Withy Bed Copse, Potbridge and what became over a period of many years the HDC Shapley Heath Garden Community project – Winchfield would have been subsumed.

The Chairman had welcomed and encouraged development, where appropriate, including Beauclerk Green, on a brownfield site, where a huge industrial plant had been proposed. This battle was won and 48 homes were built. The Chairman encouraged the community to accept the siting of two solar farms in the parish which would provide WPC with £80,000 over 20 years, monies which were being used to enhance the footpath network and other projects that will benefit the whole community. The Chairman's commitment to the production of the inaugural Winchfield Neighbourhood Plan in 2017 resulted in an overwhelming vote of confidence in favour of the Plan.

Cllr Williams reported that the Chairman's greatest achievement had undoubtedly been that in 41 years on the Parish Council, through his efforts and the efforts of others, Winchfield was still recognisably the same place. Growth and change had been enabled but the same fields and woods, the same air of calm remained much as when the Chairman had come to live in Winchfield in 1976.

Cllr Williams expressed on behalf of the Parish Council and the whole community his thanks to the Chairman for his untiring dedication and service to the community.

It was noted that letters had been received from the CEO at the Hampshire Association of Local Councils and from Ranil Jayawardena MP thanking the Chairman for his service.

The Chairman thanked his fellow councillors, advising that WPC had always been a good council where he had made many friends, which had made his job much easier and very fulfilling. He thanked Cllr Williams for his words and for all who had attended the meeting to wish him well.

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.58 pm.**