

MINUTES OF CHARLTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Held on Saturday 5 April 2025 at 11am in Charlton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Tom Blanden (Chairman), M Bromley Gardner (Clerk); Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall; and 22 members of the public.

1. Apologies. Parish Cllrs Philip Baffour and Jenny Walker.
2. Minutes of Last Annual Parish Meeting. The Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting had been available at the back of the Village Hall for members of the public to read before the meeting started; they were approved and signed.
3. Chairman's Report. Cllr Tom Blanden reported on behalf of the Parish Council.
 - PC met 7 times in 2024, every other month as usual plus one additional meeting to consider a planning application.
 - All 9 Cllrs remained unchanged throughout the year. That is about to change with the elections in a month – more later.
 - A remarkable 27 planning applications in 2024. These have included:
 - Just 1 application that we objected to – subsequently approved by Wilts Council. (Pond Lane BESS northern link to substation.)
 - The late 2022 application by National Grid to expand the sub-station itself to cope with new building and also with the applications for battery storage sites was finally approved by Wilts Council in mid-2024.
 - A BESS at Somerford Farm, refused by Wiltshire Council in 2022, was allowed on appeal.
 - An appeal against Wilts Council's refusal of another battery storage site at Upper Stonehill (which we had objected to) has just been heard and we wait to hear the decision.
 - That leaves the 'renewables' situation in the parish as
 - 2 solar farms permitted (but neither yet built) and
 - 8 BESS sites, plus the one appeal decision awaited (of which 4 currently operational).
 - Precept for 2025/26 – the PC set the precept for this coming year at £9,888. It was deliberately set at the level which means no increase in householder payments, knowing that so many other charges were going up right now.
 - Book Exchange – going well after a settled year.
 - The Footpaths Group – working well under Roy Evans's leadership. This year we will again cut the grass on the south side of the B4040 between the village and the Noahs Ark junction to encourage people to walk that way.
 - In the Best Kept Village competition we gain came 2nd in North Wilts Small Villages (to Hankerton in 1st place – well done to them). We are entering again – Clean Up Day on Sat 3 May.
 - The CSW team continue to do an excellent job – our thanks to all members and to Anne Hodgkins who coordinates the team – Anne will be speaking in a moment.
 - We invested in a 2nd SID, intended to reduce the speed at which drivers approach the War Memorial double bend from the Malmesbury direction. And last year the new road signage and new road painted markings were completed

Chairman – signature and date

by Wilts Council with a 30% contribution by the PC. We also had to repair the original SID but claimed the cost on the insurance.

- We have just bought a 2nd defibrillator, for the rural area of the parish, to be situated at the Pink Lane/Park Lane junction, by the kind permission of the farmer, Mike Rawlings. The electric connection has been fitted and the defibrillator is due to be mounted in position on Monday.
- The lower bus shelter was repaired – an excellent job by Dan Bailey Builders, and the growth behind the shelter was cleared to prevent the problem re-occurring.
- The Perry Green postbox was a remarkable saga but is back and working now.
- WOMAD has ended here, replaced by another festival, named Shindig, which is offering the same free Thursday entrance to the parish (though you will have to drive in not walk in). Shindig also offers exceptionally cheap weekend tickets to the parish, much cheaper than WOMAD's SN16 discounted tickets.
- Finally the Chairman paid tribute to Cllr Jenny Walker who will stand down as a Parish Cllr in early May, having started in May 1987, so served for 38 years.

4. Additional Reports. Additional reports were given as follows:

- Report from Wiltshire Council. Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall.
- Finances. Cllr Marion Adkins, the RFO, handed out and explained details on a summary of the 2024/25 accounts. This showed an end-of-year balance of £15,166 (last year £15,575) although a donation of £1500 by Malmesbury League of Friends towards the purchase of the 2nd defibrillator had been promised and would be received soon in the new Financial Year.
- Emergency Contact Hub. A 7-minute video was shown which explained and illustrated the concept.
- Community Speed Watch. Report by Anne Hodgkins who runs the Group. More volunteers would be welcomed.
- Church Bellringing World Record Attempt. This year would be the 25th Anniversary of the re-hanging of the church bells in 1999 as a Millenium project. On 10 May the aim will be to get the most number of Bellringers ringing for 5 minutes each.
- Recreation Centre Report. Dorian James, Chairman of the Recreation Centre Committee, had sent a written report which was read out.

5. Any Other Business. There were no significant questions.