

Wootton Rivers Parish Council

Website: www.woottonriverspc.co.uk

DRAFT - Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 18th of May 2026

1. Present:

Dean Cowley	Parish Council Chair
David Butler	Councillor
Steve Rawlings	Councillor
Nick Jones	Councillor
Shelley Whitehead	Councillor
Julian Beames	Clerk

Apologies	
Clare Bamforth	Vice Chair
Cindy Creasy	Councillor

The meeting started with the outgoing Chair of the Parish Council giving his report on the past year

Annual Report for Wootton Rivers Parish Council 2025-2026

Good evening, everybody and welcome to our annual Parish Meeting. Without wishing to tempt fate, I can report that overall, it has been a relatively quiet and stable year for the village; though again with the issue of further household flooding as our greatest concern, requiring significant preventative action. But before I tell this epic tale of gushing drains and mellifluous ditches, let me remind you (as I do every year) of our vision for this parish.

“The Wootton Rivers vision is of an historic, small parish in which the distinctive character, as a tranquil, safe, friendly and flourishing place, is sustained by an engaged and mutually supportive community. The heart of the parish will remain a conservation area, and somewhere to be proud of, by continually enhancing the village ambience and protecting the countryside around it, but also by evolving gradually to reflect changing times and the wishes of the community.”

Though this Vision was written for the Neighbourhood Development Plan, ten years ago, it remains equally relevant to our stewardship of the village today and in the future. I would particularly draw your attention to the bit about (and I quote) “... sustained by an engaged and mutually supportive community.” While the Parish Council provides a foundation of administration and priority setting, the main work of maintaining and enhancing Wootton Rivers is and must be done by its residents and I will single out some particular individuals in that regard in a few minutes. But first, inevitably, to drainage.

I reported this time last year that the flooding issues near to the canal seemed to have been resolved but that significant action was then required to prevent any repetition of the 2025 flooding at the north-east end of the village. This initially involved three areas of action. Firstly, to clear the flow of water into the ditch between the Little House and number two The Fields, and a big thank you to Richard Bradford for completing this successfully at the end of last summer. The second task

was working with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency on creating a holding pond in the fields behind the Little House. This initially went well and a topographical survey was done to scope the task, but the Wildlife Trust failed to get the funding for the work to be done before the winter and it now appears that this work may not, in fact, be required. The third part of the plan was always to scour out the main drainage ditch just to the east of the village, running from behind Clare Cottage all the way to the canal. The first part of this was done at the end of the summer but the key part to the north was only eventually done at the beginning of January, in what turned out to be a classic example of just-in-time management. Not only did the digger reveal two pipes running into the ditch, both larger than expected, but it also then rained heavily and sustainably the very next week; and “Hallelujah” absolutely no flooding resulted. While I would hesitate to say that the problem is resolved, it does appear that our key priority of stopping any further household flooding has been achieved. We still need to do some work below the triangle, to prevent Roger occasionally getting wet feet when collecting his paper, but for the time being at least, our other drains and ditches are working well.

Another important part of Parish Council duties is dealing with planning applications but on this front too, it has been a fairly quiet year. There were plenty of requests for tree trimming or felling but no major applications for new-builds or extensions and only two applications which had potentially worrying implications for the village environment. We approved an application for a new slurry store at Lady Margaret’s Farm but with some misgivings about its height and resulting visibility from some parts of the village. We also approved the felling of the poplar trees below the canal towpath, which had grown unreasonably tall. Though normally in favour of more rather than less trees, we felt that, in this case, the inconvenience caused to some villagers outweighed the environmental benefit.

Another key issue for villagers is the condition of local roads. Though neither missing road-signs nor excessive potholes are problems that a Parish Council can solve, we can ensure that they are reported and that serious issues, like the missing sign to the village on the main A346, are followed up.

We had another year in which the Village Hall has been well used, well maintained and, of course, brilliantly well managed. It has also been a particularly busy year at the Recreation Ground with significant and continuing work both on maintenance and improvements and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents carrying out the first of their annual inspections. The first piece of the new children’s area is already in place, and we hope that this area and the introduction of the refurbished railway hut will both be completed in the next six months.

We have dealt with two other relatively rare occurrences this year; one very unpleasant and one rather pleasant. On the one hand we had repeated visits by hare coursers during the winter, and we must thank the Butlers and the local police for all the work that they did to discourage this ghastly, criminal activity. By sublime contrast we were given a supply of spring bulbs by the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust, which we planted and have proved a delightful enhancement to the triangle and a number of public verges around the centre of the village.

We have had another year of excellent financial management, due almost entirely to Julian’s excellent stewardship, though we should also say that Rob’s careful auditing of the accounts will be missed, when he flies out to pastures new. Though scarcely daring to mention oil supplies, our annual income from the BEAM system was nearly £740; well above what we had anticipated. This was one of the reasons that we were able to achieve the “double whammy” of reducing the payments made by each

household as part of their Council Tax but at the same time improving our financial reserves.

And finally, some thank-yous to those who go the extra mile to keep this village running smoothly. To the Village Hall and Recreation Ground committee, ably assisted by Andy O'Shea at the rec; to Nick Mitchell Briggs for services to communications, the BEAM system and choral singing; and to Julian and your Parish Councillors, for giving up their time and energy on your behalf. And lastly, one of our real, unsung heroes. When it came to the annual village clean-up this year, we all commented on how little litter there seemed to be on the verges and paths. This is predominantly due to the untiring, but largely unseen work of Richard Wojtowicz throughout the year, so a very special thank you to him.

Wootton Rivers remains a wonderful place to live because of people like him, and I know that we can trust every one of you to do your bit in keeping it that way.

Thank you!

There were no questions from the floor, and the meeting was therefore closed.

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1. Election of Chair & Vice Chair

The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council was opened by the Clerk who asked Council Members to elect the new Chair and Vice Chair.

Dean Cowley put himself forward for the role of Chair and being the only candidate was duly elected with the unanimous backing of all the Council members.

Clare Bamforth had put herself forward for the role of Vice Chair and being the only candidate was duly elected with the unanimous backing of all the Council members.

2. Present:

Dean Cowley	Parish Council Chair
Steve Rawlings	Councillor
Nick Jones	Councillor
Shelley Whitehead	Councillor
David Butler	Councillor
Julian Beames	Clerk

Apologies:

Clare Bamforth	Vice Chair
Cindy Creasy	Councillor

3. Declarations of Interest and the granting of dispensations.

Councillors were reminded of the Code for Conduct and the need to declare any interest relating to the items on the agenda. No declarations were made.

4. Agreement of Minutes

The Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings held on the 23rd of February 2026 were agreed by the Council as a true record and signed by the Chair.

5. Report from Wiltshire Councillor

Jerry Kunkler joined the meeting, and he reported that there had been a serious incident of vandalism in Pewsey recently where many vehicles had been damaged. He had been in contact with the local police about the incident but was not satisfied with their response and he would be following up with a complaint to the Area Board about how the incident had been dealt with.

Jerry also mentioned the fact that we had recently been informed that a new steward was being assigned to our area and that this was hopefully a positive step. Everyone agreed that this was positive, but the Clerk did mention that it will be June before we have a Steward visit to the area as all stewards have been assigned other duties including gritting, potholes and verge cutting up till this point in 2026.

Jerry reported that the next Pewsey Area Board meeting will be on the 8th of June in Bedwyn. If we wish to make any applications for grants these need to be submitted prior to the meeting.

The missing sign on the A346 junction was brought up and it was reported by the Chair that a local resident had been advised by Highways that they were still in negotiation with their contractor regarding the use of a new environmentally friendly support post to accommodate the replacement sign. It was stressed to Jerry that this sign has important safety implications on a very fast stretch of road. Jerry agreed to chase the matter with highways on our behalf.

Councillor Butler brought up the issue of the erosion of the road edges which is leading to deep gullies being formed which can lead to vehicle damage if they inadvertently drive in one. Previously these were filled by the Council but due to cuts this is no longer a Wiltshire Council priority.

6. Report on Actions Arising from the Minutes

Drains

The Chair had mentioned in his report that everything was positive in terms of drains and that due to the drain and gully clearance they had continued to perform well.

7. Finance Report

The Clerk had prepared the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025/6, and this had been presented to councillors prior to the meeting for their review.

- a. The clerk then requested that the Council pass a motion to approve and sign the Certificate of Exemption contained in the return. A motion to approve and sign the Certificate was proposed by the Councillor Cowley and seconded by

Councillor Rawlings. The motion passed unanimously, and the Certificate was counter-signed by the Chair.

- b. The Clerk confirmed that the Independent Auditor had completed the audit and had signed off on the accounts. The completed and signed audit form was presented to the Council as confirmation.
- c. The clerk then requested that the Council pass a motion to approve and sign the Annual Governance Statement contained in the return. A motion to approve and sign the Statement was proposed by the Councillor Rawlings and seconded by Councillor Whitehead. The motion was passed unanimously, and the Annual Governance Statement was signed by the Chair.
- d. The clerk then requested that the Council pass a motion to approve and sign the Accounting Statement contained in the return. A motion to approve and sign the Certificate was proposed by the Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Rawlings. The motion was passed unanimously, and the Accounting Statement was signed by the Chair.

The Clerk then informed the meeting that the Wiltshire Council precept for 2026/27 had been received into the bank for the expected amount of £4,642.

The Clerk informed the meeting that the renewal of the Council's insurance had been completed, and confirmation of cover had been received.

The Clerk reported that the bank balances are as follows:

Community Account	£6,630.75
Commercial Instant Access Account	£9,346.30

Approval of Payments

Council needs to approve the following payments already made:

1. Rob Mitchenall	£70.00*
2. MOE Products Limited	£3,256.61
3. Play Safety Ltd. RoSPA Inspection	£328.80
4. Wotton Rivers Village Hall	£216.00
5. Banks Charges	£8.50
6. Idverde Limited	£377.87
7. WALC Subscription	£104.02
8. Ford Fuels (refund)	£737.60
9. Clear Councils Insurance	£516.65

*Payment approved previously in 2025 but not recorded in the minutes

Approval Up-coming payments

1. Rob Mitchenall - Audit Fee	£40
2. Donation to the PCC	£100
3. Donation to PCAP	£100

Village Hall Donation

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had received a donation of £3,256.61 from the Village Hall Committee and that as agreed this had already been used by the Council to pay for the new early years play equipment structure on the recreation ground.

BEAM Payments

The Clerk also reported that the Council received the BEAM payment of £737.60 due from Ford Fuels at the beginning of March. However, two further payments of the same amount were then received in error. One payment, made at the end of March, has already been refunded, and the later payment, received last week, will also be returned. Ford Fuels has apologised for the mistake.

8. Police Report

There were no noteworthy events to report from the quarterly parish report received from Wiltshire Police

9. Correspondence Received

There was no further correspondence to report on.

10. Matters Raised by the Public

None

11. The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on the 6th of July 2026.

Signed as a true record.....Date
Dean Cowley – Chair