

Wootton Rivers Parish Council

Website: www.woottonriverspc.co.uk

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 6th of January 2025

Present:

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| Dean Cowley | Parish Council Chair |
| Clare Bamforth | Vice Chair |
| Steve Rawlings | Councillor |
| Nick Jones | Councillor |
| David Butler | Councillor |
| Julian Beames | Clerk |

8. Apologies:

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| Cindy Creasy | Councillor |
| Shelley Whitehead | Councillor |

9. 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.

10. Agreement of Minutes

The Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings held on the 11th of November 2024 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

11. Report from Local Councillor

Jerry Kunkler was unfortunately unable to attend due to illness but did provide an update via the Clerk. He advised that Wiltshire Council were holding an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on this Thursday 9th of January to discuss providing support to the Heart of Wessex, Mayoral Strategic Authority as part of the Government's Devolution Priority Programme.

(see <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/11203/Wiltshire-Council-to-hold-extraordinary-full-council-meeting-to-discuss-Heart-of-Wessex-devolution-plans> for full information).

12. Report on Actions Arising from the Minutes

12.1. **Trees on Forest Road** – The Chair informed the meeting that following the recent high winds the Clerk had written to Ms Davis to inform her that the trees have now pushed the wall further and it is leaning at a considerable angle towards the parking bays and looks to be in danger of falling over completely. The Clerk reminded her of her liability and asked her to take immediate action to ensure the wall does not present a danger to property or persons and asked her to keep the Council informed of what action she is taking. MS Davis has responded, and a contractor would be undertaking the work in the next two weeks. In the meantime, the Clerk will ask the Steward if he can provide some

cones to block off the parking bays in front of the wall to avoid the area being used.

- 12.2. **Drains and Flooding** - Wiltshire Council were sent emails including video and photos following the last major flooding event in the village. Since then, there has been no further feedback other than that the system was planned to be 'flushed out' which did take place late last year. As there appears to be no further action planned, Jerry Kunkler has offered to intervene and arrange an on-site meeting with Andy Cadwallader to discuss what further action can be undertaken to improve the situation, especially as we experienced equally bad flooding problems further up the village road, during the last flood event. A general discussion then took place with the large number of residents who were in attendance, regarding the problems now being experienced at the Northern end of Forest Road.

The consensus was that with the changing climate and the position of the village in a 'bowl' the current drainage system is being overwhelmed more frequently and we need both short term and longer-term plans to deal with this change. In the short term we need to do everything we can to make the existing system work as well as it can, by ensuring it is maintained, which includes unblocking any drains and gulleys which are silted up and digging out ditches to ensure maximum flow towards the canal. The meeting with Andy Cadwallader will be useful to address this aspect, and to request that the drains are inspected in this area and flushed out if necessary. Landowners will also be approached and requested to dig out the ditches on their land to ensure they are able to take the water flows we are now experiencing.

For the longer term, the Chair is planning to meet for advice with a local farm advisory group who address water run-off issues on the 24th of January. The Chair has also contacted a drainage specialist who could provide expert advice on some of the proposed schemes such as creating ponds to address the issues we are facing. This advice would however come at a cost and the Clerk advised that we should exhaust Wiltshire Council's resources first, before the Parish Council considers spending its funds, as WC is the responsible drainage authority and do have resources which we can access. The Clerk also reminded those present that they should take what action they can to protect their own property such as obtaining sandbags and carrying out other work to prevent water entering their properties in advance of bad weather.

- 5.3 **Recreation Ground Update** - Andy O'Shea provided an update on activities on the Recreation Ground. He has conducted minor repairs to the cricket and golf nets and also to the shed window. The play equipment that was damaged by rot has now either been removed or is fenced off to prevent its use. The main issue which now needs attention is the fencing and gates which need refurbishment to replace the rotten posts and gate. Andy was asked to obtain some quotes for the materials for both, just replacing the posts and also the new fencing, so that this can be progressed in the Spring.

7. **Planning** - There was nothing to report

8. **Finance**

- 8.1. The Clerk reported the Council's bank balances are as follows:

Treasurers account: £1,578.11

Business account: £9,522.11

8.2. There were four payments for the Council to approve.

The HMRC Tax payment £373.20

The Clerk's salary payment of £1,492.80

Wessex Print payment for Contact printing £40.00

Payment to Andy O'Shea for Recreation Ground supplies £15.84

The Council unanimously approved these payments.

8.3. Budget FY2025/26

The Clerk had prepared a proposed budget and circulated this to all Councillors prior to the meeting. The proposed budget was similar to the previous years with adjustments to account for minor changes. The Clerk's salary was proposed to be raised by 2.1% to meet the new minimum wage requirements which come into effect on the 1st of April 2025. In response the Chair proposed; and it was agreed, to raise the salary by 5% to continue to try to keep the salary competitive so that it would attract candidates, if and when the need arises.

8.4. Parish Precept

The setting of the FY2025/26 precept discussed next. Although a balanced budget could be achieved this year without an increase in precept, it was proposed by the Chair that, the precept should be raised by 5% in order to continue to build funds for projects in the village, and also to account for the uncertainty regarding election costs, which are being imposed on Parish Councils for the first time this year.

Some residents present suggested a higher increase to provide additional funds, but after taking these views into account, Councillors still felt that a 5% rise was the right level to adopt. A resolution was therefore proposed by Steve Rawling and seconded by Clare Bamforth to set the Parish precept for FY2025/26 at £5,071.49p. This will result in a Band D property annual increase of £1.81p and a full year charge of £38.10p in Parish Precept.

9. May 2025 Elections

Councillors and parishioners were reminded that there are local Parish Council elections currently planned for May this year and that those interested in standing as Councillors will have to complete the normal formalities to register as candidates. There is a chance that these may be delayed due to the potential Mayoral elections next year, but it has been indicated that Wiltshire Council are still in favour of continuing with the local elections this year whatever the outcome of the discussions on this topic.

10. Correspondence received.

Following contact by the Clerk with Colas Rail about the damage which occurred to verges and the triangle, Colas Rail have undertaken to repair these areas once the on-going railway work is completed. In addition, as a gesture of goodwill for the inconvenience caused, Colas Rail generously offered to donate £1,000.00 to Parish funds, and this donation has now been received.

A new 'Wiltshire Marque' scheme has been launched by Wiltshire Council to promote local food and drink producers and businesses offering local produce. Businesses can go to the website www.wiltshiremarque.co.uk to apply for accreditation and the public can also search for businesses which are members.

A Town and Parish Council Planning forum meeting is being held by Wiltshire Council on the 11th of February to discuss recent planning changes anyone interested can attend online.

11. Matters Raised by Councillors or the public.

Councillor Nick Jones asked why the village tax base for the village has changed and it was explained by the Clerk that this was due either changes in the number of properties subject to council tax or the number of discounts being provided to residents for things such as single occupancy.

The Chair raised the issue of dogs being let off the lead on the village road and the also fouling the area. He stressed that dogs should be under control and owners must clear up after their dogs.

The issue of flooding and potholes at the bottom of Primrose Hill was raised by Roger Geen. Although the ditch which allows water to flow off the road is again blocked and causing the road to become flooded. Steve Criddle will again be asked to maintain the ditch so the water can flow from the grip along the ditch into the pond at the bottom of his land.

12. 2025 Meeting dates

The proposed meeting dates for 2025 are as follows:

10th of March

19th of May

7th of July

8th of September

10th of November

15th of December (budget/precept setting meeting)

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