

Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Ordinary Meeting
Tuesday 9th January 2024 at 7.30pm in Widford Village Hall



PRESENT: Cllr Mike Allen (MA) -Chair; Cllr Ian Collins (IC), Cllr Michael Ripsher (MPR),
Cllr Mark Rome (MR), Cllr Josh Warren (JW)

Eleven members of the public, Cllr Eric Buckmaster (arrived late)

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.35pm

ACTION

24.001 To receive and approve apologies for absence

1. Councillors: None (all present)
2. Others: None

24.002 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

1. Interests

Noted. Cllr Mike Allen: An interest in Playing Field matters, being a trustee. Cllr Ian Collins: has a dispensation in regard to a DPI because his wife has the Closed Churchyard maintenance contract.

2. Dispensation requests:

None

24.003 Approval of Minutes

April 4th 2023 Annual Parish Electorate Meeting: Draft Minutes received for formal approval at the 2024 APEM

May 16th Annual Parish Council Meeting. **RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 16th May 2023 were a true and accurate record.** The Chairman signed the Minutes.

Clerk/MA

May 16th Ordinary Parish Council Meeting. **RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 16th May 2023 were a true and accurate record.** The Chairman signed the Minutes.

Clerk/MA

July 4th Ordinary Parish Council Meeting. **RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 4th July 2023 were a true and accurate record.** The Chairman signed the Minutes.

Clerk/MA

September 5th Ordinary Parish Council Meeting. **RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 5th September 2023 were a true and accurate record.** The Chairman signed the Minutes.

Clerk/MA

November 7th Ordinary Parish Council Meeting. **RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 7th November 2023 were a true and accurate record.** The Chairman signed the Minutes.

Clerk/MA

24.004 Police report

PCSO Leon De Bruyn sent the following report with an apology for being unable to attend:

Crime Report December 2023

ANSTEY: NO REPORTED CRIMES

HORMEAD: 1 x Interfere with Motor Vehicle – Suspects have attended the location and attempted to remove a vehicle from the property. Suspects were disturbed and left the area.

BRENT PELHAM & MEESDEN: NO REPORTED CRIMES

STOCKING PELHAM: CRIMINAL DAMAGE – Unknown Suspects have damaged the down pipe at the cricket grounds in Stocking Pelham

FURNEUX PELHAM: NO REPORTED CRIMES

ALBURY: NO REPORTED CRIMES

LITTLE HAHDAM: NO REPORTED CRIMES

MUCH HADHAM: CRIMINAL DAMAGE – to a fence and concrete post by unknown persons
3 x THEFT OF NUMBER PLATES – in Ash Meadow, the High Street and Station Road.
CRIMINAL DAMAGE of number plates to a vehicle in Windmill Way, Much Hadham.

HUNSDON: CRIMINAL DAMAGE – caused to a motor vehicle parked in St Dunstons Road in Hunsdon. The front near side window has been smashed by unknown persons.

WIDFORD: THEFT FROM MOTOR VEHICLE – A vehicle parked in Medcalf Hill Widford, was broken into and tools removed from within. The window and door lock has been damaged.

WARESIDE: NO REPORTED CRIMES

EASTWICK & GILSTON: NO REPORTED CRIMES

BRAUGHING: BURGLARY – Business premise in Braughing – Suspects have gained entry to the property by smashing a window to an outbuilding to gain entry. They have then taken an off-road motorbike from within the building and left in an unknown direction.

BURGLARY – residential property - Suspects have gained entry to the property by smashing a window.

THEFT FROM MOTOR VEHICLE – Friars Road in Braughing – Suspects have gained entry to the vehicle by smashing a window and have taken a sat.nav from within, before leaving the area.

STANDON & PUCKERIDGE: THEFT FROM MOTOR VEHICLE – A vehicle parked in Rib Close was broken into and items removed from within.

BURGLARY – residential property was broken into by unknown Suspects who have then left the area by means unknown.

CRIMINAL DAMAGE - a gate post and fence was damaged at a residential property in Puckeridge. Suspects have caused damage and then left the area.

3 X VEHICLE INTERFERENCE – 2 offences in Batchelors and 1 x offence in Dawkins Close, Puckeridge. Vehicle doors have been tried by unknown Suspects who have then left the area and have not gained entry to the vehicle.

Other news and updates:

○ SUMMARY –

Hertfordshire police are targeting patrols in the identified area’s where there has been an increase in these crimes.

This time of year there is likely to be an increased risk of hare coursing. Please continue to report suspicious Vehicles that may be seen driving around in your area. If you are able to record the Make and Registration number of the vehicle, that would be very helpful.

Please ensure that area’s around you properties where there are sheds and outbuildings are locked and secured, with sufficient external lighting and crime prevention measures such as padlock alarms, CCTV and perimeter alarms.

Please ensure that all vehicles are locked and secured, dashcams used where applicable and external light at your homes are working. External ‘sensor’ lights are recommended to illuminated the front/ side of your homes should unknown persons approach your property.

PCSO Leon De Bruyn

24.005 Chairman’s announcements

The Chairman wished everyone a Happy New Year. 2023 was a busy time and hopefully 2024 will see things clam down a bit. There had been repots of a sign being posted on FP1. Public Rights of Way Officer Nicholas Maddex confirmed this was not official and that he will be speaking to the parishioner involved. The Chairman urged parishioners to be careful in the icy weather.

MA

24.006 Reports by County and District Councillors

Cllr Eric Buckmaster’s written January Report is included as an Appendix at the end of these Minutes. Cllr Buckmaster did highlight that EHDC has decided to increase 2024/25 Council Tax by the maximum 4.99%. Reserves will have to be dug into in order to balance the budget. He explained that new bin arrangements will be implemented in 2025.

24.007 Planning

1. New Applications:

3/23/2283/OUT: Land south of Levenage Lane: Outline for 4 dwellings

RESOLVED: To object on the following grounds:

- 1. It is contrary to the 2018 East Herts District Plan Policy GBR2 Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt by not meeting the permitted development criteria. It is effectively backfill.
- 2. Levenage Lane is identified as Bridleway 4 on the Definitive Rights of Way Map and therefore cannot be used for vehicular access.
- 3. The junction with the B180 would be dangerous with inadequate sight lines to ensure traffic safety.

3/23/2271/OUT: Land adjacent to Wilmoor: Outline for 2 dwellings and new access.

RESOLVED: To object on the following grounds:

The proposed development conflicts with the permitted criteria for a Group 2 Village as set out on the East Herts District Plan 2018. Specifically:

Policy VILL2 II:

It does not meet the criteria for limited infill development.

Policy VILL2 V:

- V. (c) It is not in keeping with the character of the village.
- V. (d) It represents a loss of open space important to the setting of the village.
- V. (f) It unacceptably blocks vistas.
- V. (g) It is significantly detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

There are also concerns about increased parking on the highway and the addition of another vehicular access on to Ware Road conflicting with the nearby Bell Lane junction.

2. Decision Notices. For information only, the following were noted:

- 3/23/0098/HH & 0099/LBC Westbury 46 Bell Lane: Demolish detached garage, build extension. **GRANTED**
- 3/23/1745/HH 4 Lambs Gardens: Replace flat roof with pitched roof. **GRANTED**
- 3/21/2668/FUL: Ash View Stables: Additional capacity on existing site. *Awaited*
- 3/19/1045/OUT Land North of the Stort Valley & A414, Gilston: Outline planning *Awaited*

3. Other planning matters, including items received too late for the agenda

- 1. Late planning applications: None

24.008 Finance

1. Report of the Council’s accounts to 31st December 2023

Finance Summary to 31 st December 2023	£
Opening cashbook balance 1 st November 2023	40,708.70
Plus: income to 31 st December	0.00
Minus: expenditure to 31 st December	<u>3,081.63</u>
Balance available to Council at 31st December (cashbook balance)	37,627.07
Plus unrepresented cheques/payments	<u>0.00</u>
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 31st December	<u>37,627.07</u>

RESOLVED: that the Accounts Statement to 31st December 2023 be approved.

2. Bank reconciliation 31st December 2023

RESOLVED: to agree the bank reconciliation as presented

3. Performance vs budget as at 31st December 2023

The Clerk’s detailed report on the financial performance vs budget to 31st December was received.

Income: Budget £16,645 Performance to date £16,300

Expenditure: Budget £27,847 Performance to date £15,448

The year-end forecast is for expenditure to be £29,234, the additional sum being approximately an extra £1,000 for tree surgery and £1,600 for the Coronation event.

The income/expenditure deficit is forecast to be £12,559 against £11.202 budgeted.

RESOLVED: The performance report to 31st December be accepted as presented.

4. List of payments.

RESOLVED: to approve the list of payments as presented by the Clerk

Clerk

All expenditure made under the General Power of Competence.

		Gross	VAT incl
Mrs J English	Litterpicking January 10 of 12	150.00	0
TP Jones & Co	Payroll quarterly	64.40	10.73
Robert Edwards	Tree work, closed churchyard (TBC)	1,440.00	0
Helen Giles reimburse	Archive: "Find my past" subscription	169.99	0
Helen Giles reimburse	Archive: Google Drive subscription	79.99	0
Clerk reimburse	SLCC membership shared 1/3rd	76.33	0
Clerk reimburse	MS365 licence shared 1/2	40.00	0
Clerk	Expenses Dec/January	18.20	0
Clerk reimburse	Cartridge Monkey printer ink	99.88	16.64
Helen Giles reimburse	Archive: O/S map etc	76.19	0
Clerk	Salary January approx. TBC	462.65	0
HMRC	PAYE January approx. TBC	115.80	0
Recoverable VAT included			£27.37

5. Additional bank signatory update

Cllr Mark Rome is being added as a Unity Trust Bank signatory

MR/Clerk

6. Budget and Precept for 2024/25

The Clerk presented a draft budget for 2024/25 and draft projections for 2025/26 and 2026/27 with assumed precept increases of £500 a year (approximately 3%). It was noted that if current income and expenditure levels are maintained, the projected bank balance at the end of each financial year slides from £23,500 in March 2024 to £4,100 in March 2027 and therefore future budgets will have to deal with this slide. The minimum recommended bank balance is about £11,000 (50% of annual expenditure).

Clerk

The Council considered increasing the 2024/25 precept by £500 to £16,500 (3.125%). This would increase the council tax on a band D house by £1.33 to £55.72 (2.45%) against an EHDC council tax increase of 4.99%. **RESOLVED: That the Precept for 2024/25 be set at £16,500.** The Chairman, the Clerk and two councillors signed the EHDC Precept Form.

7. Pensions Regulator

It was noted that the Council's re-declaration of workplace pensions was submitted to the Pensions Regulator in September.

24.009 Correspondence: The list of correspondence was noted as it appeared on the Agenda:

- Parishioner: Concerns about possible closure of FP1 (24.011.1)

24.010 Village Reports

1. Village Hall

1, 2: A report was noted with regard to conducting a village poll for future plans for the Village Hall. Cllr Michael Ripsher is attending a VH meeting later in the week and will report back.

MR

Minutes of the 15th November AGM were received.

2. Playing Field

The PFMC is seeking a grant to lay a permeable surface for car parking.

MA

3. Allotments

RESOLVED: The Allotment Users' Code of Conduct was approved as drafted. Cllr Ian Collins to produce a form for tenants to sign.

IC

4. Closed Churchyard.

On behalf of the PCC, Jill Buck submitted a report and request that the Parish Council help maintain the footpath through the closed churchyard. The Parish Council determined that it would consider the request and its implications at the March 2024 Council meeting. The Clerk agreed to send a copy of the report to Cllr Eric Buckmaster

IC/MA
Clerk

who said he would speak to Rights of Way Officer Nicholas Maddex about it.

Clerk

24.011 Highways, Public Rights of Way, and other Parish matters

1. Footpaths and PRoW.

A parishioner questioned a sign that appeared to indicate that FP1 would be closed. The Chairman said that Rights of Way Officer Nicholas Maddex has confirmed that the sign is unofficial and that he will have a word with the land owner.

MA

2. Highways and footways

1. Update on general clean-up of verges, gutters and overgrown footways: Cllr Mike Allen said he would follow up with those who had agreed to undertake the work.

MA

2. Update on road safety concerns and Enforcement issues by Greenacres, Ware Road: It was noted that the olive trees have been removed but have been replaced with laurel that would potentially have an even greater negative on vehicular visibility.

IC

3. Other parish matters and concerns

Water running off fields onto the highway is a safety concern, especially in icy weather. It was noted that it is landowners' responsibility to keep ditches clear to avoid run off.

MA

24.012 Benningfield Green

1. Ongoing parking issues: No current issues reported. It was agreed that the Clerk should send the 2023/24 licence, albeit belatedly.

Clerk

24.013 Village Archive

It was noted that Helen Giles had requested grant funding for several items and that these were approved under Finance, 24.008.4

Clerk

24.014 Urgent matters received too late for inclusion on this agenda:
None received.

The meeting was not suspended for public comments

24.015 Items for future agendas

A late message was received from Ian Brett: The trustees of the Widford Relief in Need Charity have now secured possession of the field known as Poores Land and have entered into a formal contract to lease the land to a local farmer. A full report will be made at the Annual Meeting of the Parish.

24.016 Date of next Parish Council Meeting

1. Tuesday 5th March, 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Cllr Michael Ripsher sent apologies in advance that he will be away.

Clerk/MA

2. 2024 Calendar of Meetings. Agreed as presented. The Clerk to circulate to the Village Hall and Magazine.

Clerk

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

Signed.....Dated.....