

# **WIDFORD**

## **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH ELECTORATE**

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Widford Parish Electorate  
Tuesday 8th April 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall**

**PRESENT:** Parish councillors Mike Allen, TEN members of the public, CC Eric Buckmaster.

Cllr Mike Allen, being present and the Parish Council Chairman, presided.

Minutes taken by Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council.

**1** The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.30pm.

**2 Apologies for absence**

Cllr Ian Collins; Cllr Josh Warren; Archivist Helen Giles

**3 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate, 9th April 2024 (AMPE)**

A correction was proposed and agreed: that Agenda item 4.5 (the Chairman's Review of the Year) should be amended by adding that Christopher Taylor-Young... "*sadly died during the year.*"

The amendment was duly made and it was then **agreed** by those present that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate held on 9th April 2024 were a true and accurate record.

**4 Review of the year 2024/25 by Cllr Mike Allen, Chairman of the Parish Council**

The Chairman report that a lot had happened during the year. There is an excellent community spirit in the village, but the Chairman reminded the meeting that there are some needy people in the community and asked that everyone keep an eye open for those who might be in need of help.

The drain problem at the Abbots Lane/Ware Road junction has thankfully been resolved by HCC.

An Allotments Tenancy Agreement together with a Policy document that all allotment tenants have signed up to. Thanks and appreciation were extended to Cllr Ian Collins for working closely with the Allotments Group.

Parish church: The Parish Council has been in discussion with the Parochial Church Council (PCC) about improving the state of the church path and other PCC proposals to upgrade the church that will begin in the not too distant future.

Cllr Ian Collins was thanked for his excellent work in clearing problems on some of the parish pathways.

Cllr Michael Ripsher has stepped down from the Parish Council after serving the community for many years. The Parish Council is grateful for his invaluable contribution. However, he is still involved in aspects of village life, including regarding the Widford School RAAC problem.

According to the new Village Hall Chairman, work on the village hall is ongoing.

Quotes have been obtained for clearing some of the very overgrown footways in the parish. The work would be expensive and HCC should be helping with some of the work going towards Wareside while the Parish Council will focus on the Widford to Hunsdon footway.

Some planning applications are controversial and EHC are under pressure to permit development in order to meet housing provision targets and due to the lack of land supply.

An increase in crime is being seen in the area.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk, Cllr Eric Buckmaster, the Village Hall team, Mrs Jo English, and all residents who work to make Widford a great place to live.

**5 Parish Groups reports**

**Village Hall:** New lighting has been installed both inside and outside the Hall. Unfortunately some residents have complained that the new uprights on the front of the Hall are shing into their properties. Mrs Susie Brickwood agreed to discuss the problem with the Village Hall Chairman

**Playing Field:** The grass is now being regularly cut which will make it a much more attractive place for everyone to use.

**Friends of Widford Church and Archive.** Gilda Deterding, Secretary to the Friends' Management Committee, gave the following report:

Since January 2022, the Friends of Widford Church (FoWC, a non-religious village group whose membership is presently around 70) have held annual *Come in from the Cold* winter events in the Village Hall promoting the Archive by supporting/sponsoring curator Helen Giles with presentations through the purchase of items such as

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the mounting of large displays and appropriate display stands, among other things. This way the public has been able to appreciate the history of the village and its villagers in general, life during two world wars, village homes and, in February 2025, its now non-existent public houses.

The late Christopher Taylor-Young, who sadly died in November 2023, was a great supporter of the Archive, lobbying for it to be housed properly within the village and also privately funding Helen's requirements in her curating, recording and digitalisation while it has been housed with care and safety by Frances Luck, where it currently remains. It was to Frances that 20 years ago the late Bunty Smith passed over her extensive Archive – acquired while researching for her book, *A Portrait of Widford*. More material has continued to be added over the years.

District Councillor Dr Roger Beeching gave money to Widford School for the building of an extension to house the Archive, but unfortunately this room ended up being used by the School itself. Christopher T-Y generously bequeathed a five-figure-sum legacy to the Committee, received by FoWC in the summer of 2024, which we believe he entrusted to us to use wisely in support of the Archive and also towards the modernisation of the church building so that there might be a place within it for the Archive to be safely contained and accessed.

### Village Archive

**Update for Widford Parish Council, April 2025:** The Widford Archive continues to go from strength to strength, with more community engagement and interest.

Every month, a piece is written about the Archive in *The Widford News*, which usually includes a photograph or image of an object from the Archive. This is often shared through the Widford Community Hub (for those who don't subscribe to the newsletter).

On 8th February of this year, the Friends of Widford Church and the Village Hall Management Committee hosted another *Come in from the Cold* event. This year's theme was Widford's Pubs. The event was very well attended, with seven large information panels produced by the Widford Archive, objects to handle (borrowed from local museums), bar and refreshments and pub games to play. In addition, the information panels have since been used in the recent village hall pub nights. There were photos of the event, showing the information panels and the pub-related objects for people to handle.

Recent additions to the Widford archive include black and white photographs of the school and the High Street. Another recent addition is an oral history of memories of living in Widford. This was an interview with Frances Luck and is digitally stored in the Archive and on the cloud. It would be great to do more oral history interviews of local residents when time allows.

Progress has been made for the eventual move of the Archive from Frances Luck's loft to the vestry at the church. The PCC are drafting a loan agreement for the Parish Council and the PCC regarding the Archive when it is to be stored at the vestry. Suitable storage cabinets for the archive is currently being explored. Most of the photograph albums have been digitised, as have some of the news cuttings files. When time allows, there is much more work to be done regarding inventory and research. This could be an externally funded lottery project.

Thank you to Widford Parish Council for their continued support for the upkeep of The Archive.

Helen Giles

April 2025

### 6 Rural Police report

The police did not produce a report for the year, but a report covering March 2025 indicated that no crimes were recorded during the month.

The police did make an appeal for people to sign up to Herts Connected. The Herts Connected system delivers Hertfordshire police's crime alerts. Registered residents can receive the latest crime or emergency updates and alerts, as well as information about policing events in your area. Residents can get involved in helping to make their local area a safer place, tell us what police should be doing in their area, shape the initiatives that help to keep people and property safe, and tell us what matters are causing local communities harm.

### 7 County and District Councillors' reports for the Annual Meeting of the Parish

Cllr Eric Buckmaster produced an extensive report, part of which is reproduced below:

At the beginning of the four year term we were still under covid restrictions, and while supporting communities the council continued to deliver key services. These brief descriptions in the following pages give a flavour of the broad range of services. Post Covid has seen an increase in demand for social care and, in common with the national picture affecting all councils, government funding does not meet the actual costs of delivering these statutory services. Rated the highest-performing County Council in England (2023, independent assessment).

#### Unprecedented investment:

A greener, cost-saving future: 120,000 LED streetlights installed, reducing carbon emissions by 27% since 2019. Hertfordshire's firefighters respond to over 10,000 emergencies each year, protecting residents day and night.

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A £17 million investment announced to build a world-class firefighter training centre in Stevenage. Plus £7 million investment to upgrade fire stations across Hertfordshire.

### Education:

92.4% of children now attend a Good or Outstanding school, up from 82% a decade ago.

Top achievers: Hertfordshire pupils rank in the top 20% nationally for attainment. 98% of primary and 94% of secondary pupils received their first-choice school.

Investing in SEND education: £137 million has delivered 764 new special school places, ensuring tailored support for children with additional needs.

State-of-the-art schools: New and upgraded schools, including Bishop's Stortford High School, Buntingford First, Avanti Brook and Avanti Grange.

Modern libraries, modern living:

Libraries in Borehamwood, Letchworth, and Ware transformed into thriving learning hubs.

### Pathways to success:

Step2Skills has helped 4,935 residents gain education and employment opportunities.

**Keeping children in care close to home:** Building 17 new residential places to ensure local placements.

**Increasing SEND funding year-on-year:** Ensuring every child gets the right support.

**Launching a new Carers' Hub:** Providing essential support for families and volunteers.

**Helping fostered children thrive:** Introducing a 'Pathway to Independence' programme, helping 90% of fostered young people transition successfully into adulthood. Hertfordshire's Children's and Adult Social Care services are among the best in the country.

**Outstanding-rated Children's Services:** Recognised by Ofsted as one of the best in the country.

**SEND support:** 38,700 children with special educational needs supported by 130 new specialist staff.

**Keeping children closer to home:** Opened 8 new children's homes, ensuring local placements and stability.

**Championing foster families:** Celebrated 540 dedicated foster carers, transforming children's lives.

**High-quality Adult Social Care:** Adult Social Care rated Good, with Outstanding features.

**Backing unpaid carers:** Supported 40,000 unpaid carers, ensuring families get the help they deserve.

**Providing dignity in old age:** Delivered care to 47,000 elderly and disabled residents last year alone.

**Pioneering independent living:** Launched award-winning 'Inspired Living' technology, helping elderly residents stay in their own homes.

**A lifeline for the vulnerable:** Delivered 583,969 meals to 18,268 residents through the incredible work of HILS.

**Expanding Meals on Wheels and community support:** Reaching 5,000 more residents who rely on these essential services.

**Inclusive opportunities:** 170 adults with learning disabilities supported through Sunnyside Rural Trust, promoting independence and skills.

**Investing £3.5 million in early intervention:** Ensuring families get the right help before crises escalate.

**Attracting and retaining top care workers:** Continuing to invest in wages to guarantee the best care for our elderly and vulnerable.

**Roads repaired, journeys improved:** 74,000 potholes filled and over 1,000 highway schemes completed last year.

**Smarter, greener transport:** Herts Lynx on-demand bus service a game-changer for East Herts and Dacorum, cutting travel times and increasing access.

### Major road upgrades:

A120 Little Hadham Bypass completed with flood protection measures.

A602 into Stevenage upgraded.

A new bridge into Hoddesdon Business Park to ease congestion.

Buses on time, more passengers travelling:

95% reliability, best in the region, with bus passengers up 33% since 2022.

**Investing in cleaner travel:** 27 new electric buses with UNO, slashing emissions and improving air quality.

**More walking, cycling, and public transport use:** Up from 40% to 45% since 2018, making Hertfordshire greener and healthier.

### £16 million next year in key road and transport upgrades, including:

£5 million for pothole repairs, tackling damage from extreme weather.

£4 million to resurface 50+ unclassified roads, improving local routes.

£2 million for safety upgrades, including better street lighting and barriers.

£1 million for drainage improvements, protecting homes and businesses from flooding.

**Starting May 2nd: a transport plan for all:** Car drivers, bus users, train passengers, and cyclists will benefit from joined-up travel solutions.

**4,000+ highway improvements:** To enhance road safety and reliability.

**Expanding Herts Lynx:** Into more rural areas to tackle isolation and improve connectivity.

**Rolling out smart traffic systems:** To cut congestion and shorten travel times.

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**Investing in active travel:** More safe walking and cycling routes, connecting towns and villages.

**Flood prevention and drainage investment:** Protecting homes and businesses from extreme weather.

**Hertfordshire's 3,200 roads** are some of the busiest in the country, lifelines for businesses, commuters, and families. We've invested heavily to keep our roads above the national standard,

**Bus network:** Taking full control of our bus network for even better reliability, when funding allows.

**Infrastructure first:** Schools, GP surgeries, and roads must be in place before homes are occupied. Infrastructure secured before development: £77 million from developers for new schools, healthcare, and transport.

**Lobbying for more Government grants** For affordable, energy-efficient homes and retrofitting older properties. New homes must be future-proofed and environmentally sustainable. Leading the Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter to demand sustainable, well designed housing.

**Cutting household bills:** Secured over £100 million to make existing homes warmer and more energy efficient. Everyone deserves affordable, high-quality, energy-efficient homes

**Expanding NHS health checks:** Reaching 120,000 residents to detect and prevent illnesses early.

**Bringing mobile healthcare to more people:** Expanding the health bus into rural communities. Bringing mobile healthcare to the people who need it most.

**Boosting mental health services:** Developing our mental health offer, focussing on young people's wellbeing.

**Investing in healthy living:** Expanding weight loss and mental health support, ensuring residents stay fit and resilient.

**A joined-up approach to family health:** Strengthening connections between family centres, health visitors, and school nurses to give children and parents the best start.

**Keeping people healthy:** Delivered 90,170 NHS Health Checks, helping 12,609 smokers quit and 16,173 adults lose weight.

**Putting children's health first:** School-based healthy living programmes tackling childhood obesity and improving wellbeing.

**Supporting new parents:** 47,000 home visits by health visitors, ensuring families get early support.

**Promoting active lifestyles:** Expanded Hertfordshire Health Walks, with 200+ volunteers leading 100 routes across the county.

**Pioneering health technology:** Award-winning 'Data Inspired Living' initiative helping families and carers feel more confident in managing health at home.

**Easy access to support:** 15,827 residents helped through Hertfordshire's ten local health hubs.

**Setting the gold standard for recycling:** Over 50% recycling rates for eight consecutive years, slashing landfill waste. Aiming to increase recycling rates to 60%, leading the way in sustainable waste management.

**Planting for the future:** Continuing our 1.2 million tree-planting programme, ensuring one tree for every Hertfordshire resident by 2030.

**Investing in green transport:** Installing 50 additional EV charging hubs, making it easier to drive electric.

**Clean energy for Hertfordshire:** Building the county's first solar farm, delivering renewable power for homes and businesses. Reduced Countywide carbon emissions to just under 40pc since 2019, making Hertfordshire greener and cleaner.

**Reforestation Hertfordshire:** Planted 420,000 trees, restoring habitats and boosting biodiversity.

**Protecting nature:** Mapped 300 nature recovery sites, ensuring wildlife and green spaces thrive.

**Strengthening financial safety nets:** Continuing funding for CAB, Herts Help, and the Money Advice Unit, ensuring residents in crisis get immediate support. Every resident deserves to feel safe, supported, and part of a thriving community. We are committed to protecting the vulnerable, strengthening neighbourhoods, and enhancing quality of life, investing in services that truly make a difference.

**Standing up for victims:** £1 million invested annually in tackling domestic abuse, ensuring survivors get life-changing support.

**Backing our voluntary sector:** £16 million funding for 80 charities, delivering Meals on Wheels, benefit advice, and mental health support.

**Fighting fraud:** Seized £2 million in counterfeit goods and recovered £433,000 for victims of scams.

**Helping families through tough times:** Supported 80,501 families via the Household Support Grant.

**Securing financial stability for residents:** Helped 5,000 people access £22 million in benefits through the Money Advice Unit.

### Economy

**Creating 10,000 new jobs:** Attracting investment in cell and gene therapy, agritech, life sciences, digital and AI technologies, supported by expanding data centres.

**Growing Hertfordshire's creative economy:** Supporting TV, film, and media production, building on our £2.5 billion visitor economy.

**Launching a Small Business Growth Fund:** Providing grants for start-ups and expanding enterprises, creating local jobs and innovation.

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**Expanding apprenticeships and training:** Opening new opportunities for young people and career changers, ensuring a highly skilled workforce.

**Securing more inward investment:** Empowering Hertfordshire Futures Business Board to drive economic growth and attract global businesses.

**Backing rural businesses and high streets:** Investing in market towns, local shops, and independent traders, ensuring economic success reaches every corner of the county. Hertfordshire's 60,000 businesses contribute £40 billion to the UK economy each year. We are driving innovation, investment, and job creation, making Hertfordshire a hub for film, bioscience, digital technology, and advanced manufacturing. To support businesses and residents, we are investing in roads, transport, and digital connectivity.

**Protecting businesses through the pandemic:** Delivered £2 million in grants, helping local firms survive and recover.

**Preparing young people for success:**

300 young people completed the Prince's Trust programme, gaining the skills needed for long-term careers.

**Boosting high-growth industries:** Attracted major investment in film production, bioscience, renewable energy, and digital technology, securing Hertfordshire's place as a leader in innovation.

**Strengthening skills and careers:** Worked closely with four outstanding FE colleges, the University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire Futures, and the Chamber of Commerce, driving skills and vocational training opportunities.

**Keeping Hertfordshire connected:** Extended superfast broadband to 98% of homes and businesses, ensuring fast and reliable digital access.

**Championing business growth:** Retained Hertfordshire Futures Business Board, continuing the success of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to secure more inward investment.

**Achieving near 100% broadband coverage:** Eliminating digital exclusion in rural areas, ensuring every business and home is connected.

**Harness technological opportunities:** We must grab the opportunities that automation, digitisation and AI bring.

**The Government's Devolution and Local Government Reform** programme is moving at breakneck speed, creating Mayors and Unitary Authorities across the country. We will stand up for Hertfordshire, ensuring that any changes work for residents, our community, and our future, not for national politics. Hertfordshire County Council delivers 500 essential services, investing £1.2 billion annually to keep our people, economy, and environment thriving. It is essential to deliver reform in a way that strengthens Hertfordshire, minimises disruption, and ensures better services for the next 50 years. Hertfordshire is unique, with thriving businesses, strong communities, and stunning countryside.

## 8 Open Forum

Concerns were raised about the ditch overflowing at Benningfield Road by the allotments with water backing up by the allotments gate. The Chairman said Parish Council will seek to resolve this problem.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

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