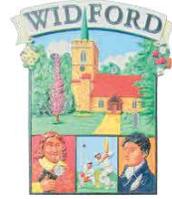


UNAPPROVED DRAFT1

Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Ordinary Meeting
Tuesday 5th November 2024 at 7.30pm in Widford Village Hall



PRESENT: Cllr Mike Allen (MA) Chair; Cllr Ian Collins (IC); Cllr Mark Rome (MR);
Cllr Andy Djemal (AD)

Five members of the public, Cllr Eric Buckmaster

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.50pm. The Clerk apologised for being late due to a road closure at Much Hadham.

ACTION

24.102 To receive and approve apologies for absence

1. Councillors: Cllr Josh Warren (work) **ACCEPTED**
2. Others: Cllr David Andrews, PCSO Leon De Bruyn

24.103 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

1. Interests

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

2. Dispensation requests:

None

24.104 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 3rd September 2024 are a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes

Clerk/MA

24.105 Police report

PCSO De Bruyn submitted the following written Crime Report for October:

ALBURY: 1 x Theft from motor vehicle

BRAUGHING: 1 x Attempted burglary; 1 x Criminal damage; 1 x Theft from motor vehicle;
2 x Fly-tip

EASTWICK & GILSTON; 1 x Residential burglary; 2 x Theft of motor vehicle; 1 x Poaching

HIGH CROSS: 2 x Criminal damage

HIUNSDON: 1 x Theft from motor vehicle

LITTLE HADHAM: No reports

MUCH HADHAM: 1 x Business Theft; 1 x Residential Burglary; 3 x Theft from motor vehicle;
1 x Theft of motor vehicle

STANDON & PUCKERIDGE: 3 x Criminal damage; 1 x Theft from motor vehicle; 1 Theft of motor vehicle; 1 x Burglary

THUNDRIDGE: 1 x Hare coursing; 1 x Theft

WADESMILL: 1 x Residential burglary

WARESIDE: No reports

WIDFORD: 1 x Residential burglary; 1 x Criminal damage

Other news and updates:

Herts Connected has been Live for 7 months with numbers gradually increasing.

Messages are sent out across the communities on this interactive messaging service which provide local residents with an outline of what has been happening in the area. These reports are summarised at each monthly Parish council meeting.

We are encouraging residents to join Herts Connected to keep informed and would ask that this message be regularly relayed to all communities to receive Police alerts.

PCSO Supervisor Leon De Bruyn has also spoken to each Parish now regarding a representative (SPOC) from the Parish to follow EAST HERTS POLICE Facebook page and share with each Social media group in their area.

The SPOC would also join Herts Connected and select 'Local Parish Council' in the Alternative Groups section of Herts Connected when joining.

Please contact Leon on leon.debruyne@herts.police.uk if you have any questions.

The Policing Priorities for Sept – Dec 2024 have been decided for the East Herts Rural area's following the meeting held last month.

BUNTINGFORD – ASB – Norfolk Road Bike Pump Track.

Monday – Sunday between 15:00pm – 18:00pm

EH RURAL – HARECOURSING – Wellpond Green and nearby rural area's.

Monday – Friday 17:00pm – 22:00pm

Saturday – Sunday 08:00am – 16:00pm

As you can see, there has been an increase in criminal across the area's which can sometimes be expected at this time of year. Thefts from/of motor vehicles and burglaries being the most noticeable. Please continue to ensure your property secure and valuables are not left easily in view or accessible.

Document serial numbers and use property markers.

Photograph tools and valuables that may be kept in vehicles overnight if you are unable to remove them. Please consider improved external lighting at residential properties, CCTV and dash cams in vehicles.

On most makes of vehicle, keyless entry can be disabled.

To reduce the risk of theft, ensure car keys (particularly any spare keys) are secured in a secured location using a signal blocking/Faraday pouch when not in use. Hiding the keys in a metal tin can also restrict the signal from vehicle keys.

East Herts has also seen an increase in Fly-Tips and police have worked well with partner agencies with some positive results in these investigations

Your local policing teams are continuing regular patrols in hotspot areas at key times.

Please continue to report suspicious vehicles that may be seen driving around in your area. If you are able to record the MAKE, COLOUR and REGISTRATION number of the vehicle, that would be very helpful.

Additional Crime Prevention Advice can be found via this link:

<https://www.herts.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/>

24.106 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman said he had been round the parish with a contractor looking at the state of the verges; quotes have been provided for doing the necessary clean-up work. Concerns continue about speeding through the village and a 20mph speed limit will be pursued. A proposal has been made to make a car park in a field by the school in the hope that it would alleviate school run drops and also improve safety by children not having to cross the road.

MA

24.107 Reports by County and District Councillors

District Cllr David Andrews sent a report saying that he has expressed concerns about the proposed glamping site off Bourne Lane and that although he is pushing for a Committee hearing, he cannot force one. He asked that parishioners wishing to contact him use his County Council email address (David.Andrews@hertfordshire.gov.uk) rather than his East Herts one.

County Cllr Eric Buckmaster's November report is included as Appendix A at the end of these Minutes.

24.108 Planning

1. New Applications:

NONE

2. **Decision Notices.** For information only, the following were noted:
- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 3/24/0711/FUL: 15 Benningfield Rd. 1 detached building and 1 rear extension to existing. | REFUSED |
| 3/24/1844/HH and 1845/HH: 5 Nether Street. Replacement front windows and door | Awaited |
| 3/24/1495/FUL: Land at Bourne Lane: Change of use to glamping site | Awaited |
| 3/24/1356/LBC: Ashbourne Manor. Alterations to property. | Awaited |
| 3/24/1031/HH: Ashbourne Manor. Extension to single storey garage. | Awaited |
| 3/24/0926/FUL: Adams Barn, Hunsdon Road. Change of use, agricultural to residential. | Awaited |
| 3/23/2283/OUT: Land south of Levenage Lane: Outline for 4 dwellings: | APPEALED 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: **None received**

24.109 Finance

1. **Report of the Council's accounts to 31st October 2024**

Finance Summary to 31st October

	£
Opening cashbook balance 31st July	34,902.43
Plus: income to 31 st October	9,643.04
Minus: expenditure to 31 st October	<u>2,967.40</u>
Balance available to Council at 31st October (cashbook balance)	41,578.07
Plus unpresented cheques/payments	<u>0.00</u>
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 31st October	41,578.07

RESOLVED: that the Accounts Statement to 31st October 2024 be approved.

2. **Bank reconciliation 31st October 2024**

Cashbook balance £41,578.07 Unity Bank balance £41,578.07

RESOLVED: to agree the bank reconciliation as presented

3. **Performance vs budget to 28th October 2024**

The Clerk's detailed report on the performance vs budget to 28th October was received.

Income: Budget £17,145 Performance to 28th October £17,947 Forecast £18,217

Expenditure: Budget £28,605 Performance to 31st Oct £9,854 Forecast £35,372

The income/expenditure surplus to date is £8,093 against -£11,460 deficit budgeted.

The income/expenditure deficit forecast is -£17,155 against -£11,460 deficit budgeted.

RESOLVED: The performance report to 28th October be accepted as presented.

4. **List of payments.**

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

All expenditure made under the General Power of Competence.

Clerk

		Gross	VAT incl
Clerk reimburse	Keyboard batteries	4.50	0.00
ICO	Annual fee	35.00	0.00
Mrs J English	Litterpicking November 8 of 12	150.00	0.00
TP Jones LLP	Payroll July-September	64.40	10.73
Widford PCC	New churchyard grant	850.00	0.00
Clerk	Salary November (including pay award)	600.53	0.00
HMRC	PAYE November	150.00	0.00
HMRC	Employer's NIC	0.00	0.00
TEEC	Domain hosting annual fee	194.39	32.40
Clerk	Expenses October-November	18.65	0.00
Recoverable VAT included			£43.13

5. National pay award 2024/25

The Clerk presented the National pay award scale for clerks, backdated to 1st April 2024.

RESOLVED: To agree paying the new SCP23 scale backdated to 1st April 2024.

Clerk

6. Draft Budget and Precept 2025/26

The Clerk presented a comprehensive draft budget for 2025/26 with forecasts for 2026/27 and 2027/28. The draft was considered and adjustments made for final consideration and approval at the January 2025 meeting. It was agreed that the quoted cost of verge cleaning would be spread over the next three years

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

- HAPTC: Funding Available for War Memorial Conservation: Apply by 31st October 2024 (24.112.3.1)
- HAPTC: NALC National wage award 2024/25 (24.109.5)
- Herts police: Action over concerns regarding parishioner safety concerns (24.112.3.2)
- HAPTC: Consultation on enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at parish council meetings (24.112.3.3)

24.111 Village Reports

1. Village Hall

1. A grant for LED lighting has been received. Pub evenings are planned for November and December. Darts and sausage rolls evenings are also planned.

2. Playing Field

1. The Chairman reported that the grass is now being cut regularly and is looking good. The hedges will be trimmed in the near future and the electricity supply is being maintained.

MA

3. Allotments

1. Everything is good; all tenancy payments have been received. There is an energetic allotments WhatsApp group.

IC

4. Closed Churchyard.

1. The final cutoff the year was done last week and the churchyard cleaned up for the Remembrance Day service.

IC

24.112 Highways, Footpaths and byways

1. Footpaths and PRoW.

1. FP1; Stile replacement is with Nicholas Maddex and will be done in due course.
2. Nether Street kissing gate: repairs to the rotted post, step and rail are in hand with Nicholas Maddex.
3. FP 6/7: Overhanging vegetation has yet to be cut back.

2. Highways and footways

1. A quote has been received for clearing the following footways:

MA

- (i) Wareside to Widford £2,880
- (ii) The church to the Green Man £2,130
- (iii) Nether Street to Levenage Lane £1,770
- (iv) Levenage Lane to rise cottages £2,170

It was agreed that, although the cost is high, there is a lot of work to be done following years of neglect by County. It was agreed to undertake the work in stages rather than all in one year and this will be reflected in the budgets for the next three years

2. Abbots Lane blocked gully: This has not yet been rectified. Cllr Eric Buckmaster will chase Ringway if no action is forthcoming.

- 3. Update on Enforcement issues by Greenacres: No progress. Cllr Eric Buckmaster will follow it up again; The Chairman agreed to email him with update information. MA

3. Other parish matters and concerns

- 1. War Memorial conservation grant: The partial grant deadline passed on 31st October and was no pursued.
- 2. It was noted that the appropriate authorities had taken action over concerns about a parishioner’s safety.
- 3. It was noted that HAPTC has drawn attention to a consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting at parish council meetings. Th consultation closes on 19th December. The Parish Council does not approve the proposals and it was agreed not to participate in the consultation.

24.113 Benningfield Green

- 1. No current issues noted.
- 2. Licence renewal: Noted that this has been paid.

Clerk

24.114 Village Archive

No report received.

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

The meeting was not suspended for further public comments.

24.116 Items for future agendas

- 1. Budget and Precept for 2025/26 to be finalized at the January 2025 meeting

Clerk

24.117 Date of next Parish Council Ordinary Meeting

- 1. Calendar of Meetings 2025: **RESOLVED as drafted**
- 2. Tuesday January 7th 2025, 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Clerk/MA

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.07pm.

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

APPENDIX A

E Buckmaster County Councillor Report November 2024

More than 100 children have been helped by Hertfordshire County Council’s emergency foster care scheme since it launched in 2022.

But more foster carers are needed in Hertfordshire to provide this vital emergency care and support to children and young people in their moment of need.

When a child or children need to leave their family home or care provider at short notice, they need someone to look after them until the best and most appropriate longer term care can be found.

Emergency foster carers provide children with somewhere safe and nurturing to stay for about 10 days. This allows time for the crisis to calm and for the child, family and professionals across social care, health and education to consider how best to meet the child’s needs.

This innovative scheme has led to more than a fifth of the children placed in emergency care being able to return safely to their family home.

Free bus travel in Hertfordshire thanks to Bus Service Improvement PlanTen thousand (10,000) free bus tickets are now available to use across Hertfordshire, thanks to Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding. The offer allows residents and visitors to use the new Intalink Connect ticket, exploring Hertfordshire with its All Zone Daily Ticket which provides unlimited all day travel.

Intalink Connect offers flexible ticketing using multi-operator bus travel. The county is divided into 14 zones, and passengers can buy tickets for single-zone travel, two adjacent zones, or across all zones in the region, including some points beyond Hertfordshire’s borders. A free ticket can be claimed through the

Intalink App, using the discount code CATCHBUS24. A maximum of one ticket per Intalink App account is available.

The £29.7million BSIP fund has led to significant improvements across Hertfordshire's local bus network including new services, more frequent buses as well as the launch of schemes such as our uber-style on demand bus service HertsLynx, which currently operates in north and east Hertfordshire and Dacorum. Hertfordshire County Council is kicking off its popular slipper swap events, giving residents the chance to throw away old, tired slippers and pick up a brand new non-slip pair.

The slipper swap events taking place this autumn and winter are the result of a collaboration between Hertfordshire County Council's adult care service and library service.

The free, drop-in events in libraries offer older residents and people with disabilities free anti-slip slippers in addition to professional advice and support to keep them safe and well over the colder months.

Occupational therapists will be available to speak to at most events, along with community partners.

Attendees will also be able to collect a free Warm in Winter gift bag, provided by Small Acts of Kindness, and get information on the Carers Library Card and the Home Library Service.

Bishop's Stortford Recycling Centre to Get a Revamp Hertfordshire County Council will shortly be carrying out improvements to Bishop's Stortford Recycling Centre, which will result in a significant increase to its capacity.

Once the work is complete, there will be more than twice the current amount of parking spaces and an increase in the number of recycling containers to both improve the facility's capacity and reduce queuing.

The works will require the Centre to be closed from Thursday 24 October for approximately 8 weeks. Full site closure provided the most effective way to deliver the changes required.

During its closure the nearest Recycling Centres to use are:

- Ware Recycling Centre, Westmill Road, Ware, SG12 0EL
- Hoddesdon Recycling Centre, Pindar Road Industrial Estate, Hoddesdon, EN11 0BZ

Full details on opening days and times plus further information on each one can be viewed at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hwrc

Eric Buckmaster, Executive Member for The Environment at Hertfordshire County Council said: "We are excited to be creating a new and improved experience for residents using Bishop's Stortford Recycling Centre, one that will offer them a quicker and more efficient way to recycle.

"The changes at Bishop's Stortford form part of a £50m investment in waste related projects across the county, supporting our ambition to send zero waste to landfill by 2030. We are creating a new Shredding Facility at Waterdale, together with improvements to its existing Waste Transfer Station, another new Transfer Station in Ware, while similar Recycling Centre improvements are also taking place at Berkhamsted."

New Ware Library opens its doors

Hertfordshire County Council is pleased to announce that Ware library has reopened today, 14 October, in its new central High Street home – just three minutes stroll from the previous site.

The new library features more modern and accessible facilities, a fresh look and feel and a vibrant and expanded children's section. The team worked quickly to move 12,000 books, 10 computers, 2 self-service kiosks, a photocopier and public printer so that disruption was kept to a minimum for the 5,500 Ware residents that use the facilities every month.

The refurbished library boasts a single-level, accessible layout with improved public and staff spaces.

Enhancements include new furniture, carpets, and flooring, as well as energy-efficient lighting, heating, and insulation. Key features include:

- Brand New Roof: Ensuring a safe and comfortable environment.
- Pod-Type Enquiry Desks and Help Points: For easy access to information.
- Accessible Toilet and Baby Change Facilities: Making the library family-friendly.
- Expanded Children's Area: Featuring a bespoke 'Gazebo' seat, suspended 'clouds', and a river bed-themed carpet.
- Dedicated Young Adult Area: With seating and graphics chosen by the 15 young volunteers who work at the library.
- Public PCs and Hublets: Samsung Galaxy tablets available for use within the library.
- Comprehensive Services: Including scanning, photocopying, and printing, with Wi-Fi printing from personal devices (charges apply).

Support for those who need it most Last month the government announced that it was extending the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further six months until the end of March next year. Since the launch of the grant in October 2021, we have been using this funding to support residents to deal with the rising cost of living. On Thursday 17 October councillors will discuss plans for how we will spend this £6.17million of additional funding.

The plans set out proposals that will see us continue to work with a range of partners across the county to

make sure we can get the right help to those who need it, at the right time. This targeted approach will mean that residents can be supported and get assistance from the county council, local district and borough councils, and a range of other community and voluntary sector organisations. The proposed offer of support includes:

- Supermarket food vouchers for families receiving benefits-related free school meals for the October half-term, Christmas school holidays and February half-term next year. The number of families eligible for this support has grown by nearly a quarter since this funding began in 2021.
- Our Welfare Assistance Scheme, helping households on low incomes facing an immediate financial crisis, including providing outreach clinics to support the those who are unable to access our online support.
- New 'Winter Essential' and 'Winter Tangible' schemes, providing supermarket vouchers, heated blankets, warm bedding and clothes to families in crisis, known to our social care teams.
- Support for food banks and help with energy costs delivered by district and borough councils and Hertfordshire Community Trust.
- Support for homeless persons and survivors of domestic abuse.
- £150 vouchers for new pensioners registered for Pension Credits.
- £50 vouchers for care leavers over the age of 19, identified by our Care Leavers team.
- Further funding for our Money Advice Unit and Citizens Advice to enable them to continue offering financial and debt support.

NB. The Fund has now been extended by the government for a further year.

Council considers new flood protection scheme for homes

Flood Action Week takes place from Monday 14 to Sunday 20 October and with recent localised flooding seen across parts of Hertfordshire, the county council has repeated its call to residents who have a property that has been or is at risk of flooding.

The county council is specifically interested in hearing from those residents who want to find out more about measures to prevent future flooding taking place.

A previous Flood Resilience Scheme was available to properties that were often in locations where only a few homes were at risk of flooding. Properties that met the criteria for support had the chance to receive a grant of up to £6,000, which was put towards measures such as flood barriers, flood doors and smart airbricks. Recommendations were made by an independent surveyor and installer.

Since July, the council has been investigating the demand for any future scheme which would support homeowners to ensure that their properties are protected as much as possible.

If demand for a new scheme is evident, the council is committed to exploring the feasibility of a new scheme with the ambition of offering grants to homeowners.

Eric Buckmaster, Executive Member for Environment at Hertfordshire County Council, said: "Over the last couple of weeks, parts of the county have seen some of the worst, and most concentrated rainfall in living memory leading to localised flooding which I know must be devastating for those affected.

"While the previous scheme and funding has been used, we really want to hear from residents who want to take steps to prevent flooding in the future. We'll then use this feedback to investigate and if necessary, shape a future scheme for the benefit of residents."

Community input to boost Hertfordshire's biodiversity "exceeds expectations" Over 300 potential sites identified across the county, where natural habitats can be enhanced, created or protected.

Running over the summer, the events called on residents, charities and businesses to inform its Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), in an effort to better understand where biodiversity and natural habitats could be created, enhanced or protected. Over 300 sites were put forward across Hertfordshire, providing valuable insight which can now be taken forward by technical experts to form the LNRS strategy.

HNRP is entering the next phase to develop the strategy. Technical experts, wildlife groups and landowners will analyse the insight gathered, alongside ecological data, to help shape a joined-up strategic approach to maximise nature recovery in Hertfordshire.

Running alongside 47 other regions across England, the expert analysis will inform a detailed map of priority areas for biodiversity enhancement, to guide future restoration efforts. The user-friendly and engaging map will be shared publicly to highlight areas of habitat and biodiversity priorities.

Councillor Eric Buckmaster, Chair of the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership, said: "From small allotments to sprawling fields, the insight has helped to 'fill the gaps' in our understanding of the county, creating a patchwork of potential sites across Hertfordshire. Following technical input, the resulting map will be able to identify areas for initiatives, ranging from supporting wildflower meadows and tree planting, to river and wetland restoration."

Recycling Centre Reuse shops Community Donations Outreach Progress. Ensuring equality of opportunity to participate in the Community Donation Scheme is a key focus this year and there has been a lot of outreach activity.

This quarter we presented the scheme to professionals at; Families First Support meetings in North Herts, East Herts and St Albans, Welwyn Hatfield Healthy Hub Partner drop-in, as well as to district and borough colleagues through WasteAware. This has been useful in ensuring that our colleagues who work with families in need know how to access the scheme.

In July we directly approached 50 schools, targeting those located in the areas of highest deprivation within Hertfordshire. We introduced the scheme, the availability of free educational talks and workshops and the offer of free composters. So far, we have received Community Donations requests from 6 of these schools, wicker baskets have been the most popular items!

This quarter we have fulfilled 43 community donation requests, a 53% increase on the same period last year.

A key improvement this quarter is that we have fulfilled requests from 25 different organisations, compared to just seven in Q2 2023. Recipients include schools, charities and individual households supported by HCC and district and borough services. Demonstrating that our outreach work has increased access to the scheme.

The process for applying to primary, junior and middle schools in Hertfordshire opens on 1 November 2024.

If your child is due to start primary school or move on to a junior or middle school next year, make sure you apply for a place in good time.

The easiest way to apply for a school place for September 2025 is to visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions and complete the online application form. Online applications can be amended at any time before the closing date, and you can access your school offer before allocation letters are received and accept your school allocation online.

Last year, 99 per cent of parents applied this way and found the system quick, easy and secure.

Cllr Eric Buckmaster, November 2024