West Ilsley Parish

Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in West Ilsley Village Hall on Tuesday 14th May 2024. Commencing at 8:15 pm.

Council Members Present:
Councillor Graham Woods (Chair), Councillor Alan Bloor, Councillor Katy Morris, Councillor Tim Pearey, Councillor Rachel Hudson, and Councillor Jonathan Rayfield

Officers Present:
Sarah Marshman, Clerk/RFO

In Attendance:
District Councillor Carolyne Culver
6 Members of the Public

Minutes

1 Receive apologies for absence
Apologies were received from a member of the Tennis Club.

2 Approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2023
The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2023 were approved by those present at the meeting. The Chair signed the Minutes.

3 Report from the District Councillor
West Berkshire Council is currently facing financial challenges.

Carolyne has been Chair of the Scrutiny Commission since May 2023. The commission holds the Council Executive to account. Recently Thames Water attended to discuss flooding and sewage. The commission is responsible for providing recommendations to the executive for potential improvements.

Carolyne's casework over the last year has included subjects such as speeding, potholes, planning applications, mouldy and damp homes, the cost of living crisis, anti-social behaviour, traffic outside schools, and SEN.

West Berkshire Council has decided not to issue an abatement notice to Thames Water over the recent issues with sewage surcharging in the streets in areas of the Pang Valley.

Residents are encouraged to use the "Report a Problem" page on the council website to notify the council of any issues or concerns.

Laura Farris
MP Laura Farris could not attend the meeting but provided a letter which was read out. The letter can be viewed in Appendix 1.

4 Report from the Chair

I would like to thank my fellow councillors, both past and present, for their help and support during the year. Thank you to Clive Hooker and Alan Muir for their contribution to the village. Welcome to Katy Morris, Rachel Hudson, and Jonny Rayfield, thank you for giving up your time to help the village.

I would also like to thank Sarah for keeping us compliant with the various aspects required to run a Parish Council.

Thank you, Carolyne, for continuing to represent the village on matters such as speeding, match funding, etc.

Notable items to mention from the past year.

Speed Indicator Device
I am sure residents will notice the SID is being moved between two points in the village on a cadence. Liz Dray is primarily responsible for moving the device which records speeding vehicles through the village. For reference, the recorded speeds are summarised below.

No. of vehicles measured	143,147
No. vehicles below 30mph	97,425
No. vehicles 31mph to 40mph	40,902
No. vehicles 41mph to 50mph	4,665
No. vehicles 51mph to 60mph	130
No. vehicles over 60mph	15
No. vehicles over 70mph	7
No. vehicles over 80mph	3

Flood Warden
Clive Hooker has stepped down as Flood Warden for the village. Clive oversaw various improvements over recent years. Thank you, Clive, for your work in this area. A replacement flood warden will be discussed at a Parish Council meeting.

Village Hall
The Village Hall Management Committee continues to do a great job managing and fundraising for the Village Hall. The Parish Council part funded the replacement windows which will help save energy costs moving forward and reduce maintenance costs for the village hall.

Cataloguing Project
Two volunteers have spent many hours cataloguing various historical village documents. Following a successful open day at the village hall the documents will soon be placed under the care of the Berkshire Records Office.

Finance
As per the finance report the Parish Council is maintaining a healthy bank balance and did not raise the precept again this year. Funds are being earmarked for future projects and unexpected spend.

West Ilsley Recreation and Social Association (WIRSA)
It is still the intention of the Parish Council to allow the Village Hall Management Committee to focus solely on the running of the village hall. The current constitution has some requirements which won't allow this at the present time. The intent of the Parish Council is to allow the formal formation of a village hall management committee and the formation of a committee to run the WIRSA for the benefit of the village.
I had hoped to have made more progress in this area during the course of the year but the process is fairly detailed. A request to change the current constitution was made to the Charity Commission in December and at this time is has not been processed yet. Further updates will be provided during the course of the coming year.

5 **Annual finance report from the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer**
The Clerk gave her report - see Appendix 2.

6 **To receive reports from Village Groups and Organisations**

West Ilsley News – see Appendix 3
Tennis Club – see Appendix 4
Evergreens – see Appendix 5
All Saints' Church – see Appendix 6
Village Hall – see Appendix 7
Downland Volunteer Group – see Appendix 8

7 **To receive questions from members of the public**
The visibility for vehicles exiting the Village Hall was highlighted as an issue.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9:14 pm.

Appendix 1: Letter from Laura Farris, MP

Hello everyone,

I'm sorry I can't join you this evening but am in Parliament.

As you will be aware, heavy rainfall and rising groundwater levels since the New Year have presented a number of complex flooding issues across my constituency, not least here.

There has been a concerning lack of urgency from Thames Water in addressing this and what I consider to be a lack of forward thinking in terms of sewer relining in preparation for wet winters. My impression is that they only act on a reactive basis.

Since the New Year, I have raised a large number of constituents' specific cases with Thames Water, West Berkshire Council and the Environment Agency (EA). I have written directly to the Chief Exec of Thames Water, Chris Weston (attached), who is coming into DEFRA this week to account for Thames Water's performance in relation to the Pang and Lambourn.

The agreed action points we have elicited from them so far are as follows:

a. An agreement that they will bring forward their upgrade work to the sewage treatment works at Hampstead Norreys from 2025 to 2024. I would add that I have seen no sign of the commencement of this work yet and will find out exactly what there start date is when we next meet. I attach the letter where they make this commitment.

b. An identification of the 8 storm overflows in the Newbury constituency (you will note that West Ilsley will not be in the Newbury constituency after the next election, so I am including the map which shows storm overflows for the whole of the Pang Valley so you can see what has been identified). It is these which result in sewage being emitted into waterways during times of heavy rainwater. And it is these which Thames Water have committed to overhauling in the coming months and years.

c. I have requested a clear timetable for the work so that residents can see what is being done and when and I will share this with you when I have it.

You may also be interested to know the commitment that Thames Water has made to reduce sewage discharges into waterways by 2030 in their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (attached) and also in this document: pollution-incident-reduction-plan.pdf (thameswater.co.uk)

In terms of West Ilsley (and the surrounding villages) now is the time for Thames Water to urgently undertake the required improvement works which will obviously start with pipe relining.

I will be meeting with Thames Water's Operations Director, next week to raise these points further and will let you know the outcome of that meeting.

Best wishes,
Laura Farris MP

Appendix 2: Annual finance report from the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer

The 2023/24 Financial Year

Income

The total income received from all sources of funding was £19,922. This consisted of:

- Precept £10,700
- Grants towards the Village Hall windows £5,966
- VAT refund for VAT spent during the 22/23 financial year £2,923
- Interest £333

Expenditure

The total expenditure for the year was £20,949. Significant figures included in this total are:

- Replacement of Village Hall windows £10,625
- Total employment costs £4,199
- Flood mitigation £330
- Donation towards the West Berkshire Library Service £130
- Tree works £480
- Insurance £498
- Audit fees £170
- Website/emails £128
- VAT (reclaimable during the current financial year) £2,448

Looking Forward to 2024/25

The precept will remain at £10,700. A Band D household will pay a total of £68.89 for the year, or just £1.32 per week.

The council has agreed to earmark an amount each year towards the potential future costs of maintaining the pond. For 24/25, £1,210 will be earmarked, with the intention that this amount will increase by 10% each year going forwards.

The council has budgeted £1,000 for playground maintenance and £500 for tree works, and the intention is to earmark any funds not spent at the end of the year to ensure the council holds the funds needed for any future work required.

The usual expenses will continue to be involved in running the Parish Council, such as insurance, website costs, play area maintenance, and employment costs.

Appendix 3: West Ilsley News

Editors: We are both happy to continue for the next year, but will also be happy to relinquish the task if a new team volunteers!

Review of WIN: We are very keen for WIN to be as inclusive as possible, and would like to thank one volunteer for another year of printing and delivering the monthly WIN for those households which don't have email or haven't yet joined the email distribution list – this means that every home receives at least the monthly copy.

We continue to encourage more input from village groups, with a focus on news rather than simply advertising notices – we're asking them to let the village know:

1. What happened last month and how many joined in
2. What's happening this month and
3. What might be happening a bit further ahead

Not only might this encourage more people to join in with events if they know what they're missing, but also begins to provide an archive of what's been going on in the village for future residents – ad hoc emails will be lost into the ether, but the monthly WIN is a little more permanent. To this end, we would like to encourage the Parish Council to communicate to the village about their activities which may encourage others to get more involved with the village – minutes and agendas only document decisions and it would surely be useful for residents to know a little more about how they are made and what has been taken into consideration to make those decisions.

Emails: We are happy to forward emails round the village when requested – this is for those items which are too urgent to wait until the monthly edition is published, but we do sometimes hold back emails to go in the monthly WIN and also combine several mails if we have multiple requests so as not to fill in-boxes with too many messages. We are also aware that those not on the email list will miss out on this communication.

Appendix 4: Tennis Club

The WI Tennis committee report that 2023 has been a normal year with plenty of tennis played.

The membership for 2023 was 22 family and 5 singles, virtually identical to 2022. This is pretty constant year on year. The fees for 2024 have remained the same at £45 for a family, £15 for a junior and £25 for a single. Pay and play is also popular. We advertise in WIN and on the village website.

The court is inspected by the committee regularly and is in good playing condition. There are rust marks which affect the appearance cosmetically, but otherwise just a few blemishes here and there. We continue to employ a maintenance company who come annually to provide weed and moss control to the court and surrounding area. The grass is also kept neat and tidy.

We occasionally see people on the court playing football or riding bikes – and we are only able to stop this if we see it. It might become a problem, especially during long cricket matches when spectators are tempted. We will continue to monitor this and if necessary, we may consider locking the court, with only members and paid up players getting access. This would be a shame. So, if anyone sees illegal usage you have our permission to ask them to leave!

The addition of the cricket nets nearby has not affected our membership. Equally, it is good to see the netball club are back on court and use the courts weekly for their sessions.

The online Jezzam booking system continues to work well and we always encourage users to book and equally cancel their sessions as appropriate to ensure all users know when the court is free.

Committee finances are healthy and there is a sinking fund available for major repairs or replacement of the court. Renovating and repainting the court would be about is £3,800+VAT plus some potential fence repairs un-costed. This could be considered but deemed not necessary at the moment. A full resurface would cost £14,800 + VAT.

The committee of 7 meet regularly 4 times a year and each year help out at the village fete and recently have run the teas and cakes inside the pavilion. We shall be there again this year.

Appendix 5: Evergreens

The Ilsley Evergreens coach trip for 2023 started in March with a visit to the New Theatre Oxford to see the Pantomime “Mother Goose”. A truly brilliant and very hilarious performance.

Other visits last year included; Slimbridge Wetland Centre, Berkeley Castle, Cotswold Wildlife Park, Hillier Gardens, Fishbourne Roman Palace, Portsmouth, Evesham and Gloucester. The Annual Christmas Market trip was to Winchester.

The group enjoyed a wonderful Christmas lunch at The Harrow who looked after us very well indeed.

We arranged a few Family Bingo evenings and Coffee Mornings to boost our income but due to the rising costs of the coach hire we had a net loss of £645.

The group membership for 2024 is currently 42 which is 2 less than last year, but we hope that new members (only £10 a year) will join us to enjoy our monthly coach trips which this year include: Kew Gardens, The Savill Garden and Windsor, Bournemouth, A tour of the New Forest including a cream tea in Lyndhurst, Bath, Worcester and a trip to Salisbury Christmas Market.

Our coach trips are open to anyone who enjoys a nice day out in good company. Look out for details in the WIN and other publications.

Appendix 7: All Saints' Church

During 2023, our rector continued to lead the benefice team comprising of three additional reverends, although one has now left, having been appointed to another benefice in October 2023. In spite of the reduction in clergy, the pattern of services on the first, second and third Sunday of each month has been maintained.

The church café has continued during the morning of the second Sunday in the month, moving into the churchyard whenever the weather permits. Coffee, tea, homemade cakes and biscuits are always on offer, for which a donation may be made to support mostly local charities.

We are most grateful for the numerous volunteers within the village who continued to look after the church and churchyard by keeping the grass cut, cleaning the church or providing and arranging flowers for major festivals. As in previous years, a number of volunteers carried out a major cleaning and tidying inside and out, including relaying the pea shingle path, on the Saturdays before the Easter weekend and Remembrance Sunday. The church building is in good order and in November, additional LED uplighting was installed throughout to supplement the work that had been done a few years previously.

Over the year since January 2023, there were 3 baptisms and 1 wedding held in church. In addition to the major festivals during the year, All Saints' hosted special services including some for the entire benefice of nine churches. There was also a well-attended service for King Charles 111's Coronation in May, as well as a Pet Service in September, to which 10 dogs came with sundry humans.

The church held a clay pigeon shoot in March 2023. It was well attended and all had a good time. The annual Harvest Festival and lunch took place at the beginning of October. These, together with the generous support of regular donors and a number of other kind contributors meant that all running costs could again be met from our General fund. We are very grateful for this since churches have to be financially self-supporting with no income from the central church body, something that is difficult for a small village church community.

In spite of fairly low numbers at regular services, thanks to the many members of the community who support the church in so many different ways, our village church continues to play its active role locally and in the wider community.

Appendix 8: West Ilsley Village Hall

West Ilsley Village Hall Management Committee

Summary

In the past 12 months we've had a successful handover of responsibilities from the outgoing Chairperson, who did a fantastic job at enthusiastically Chairing the Committee in its new form from October 2022, to myself. In turn we have taken on a new committee member who has taken over the reins of Secretary in turn from me. We have also broadened the demographic of the committee with a co-opted member responsible for Communications.

Activities since last year's update include:

- Completed much needed maintenance work on the garage roofing. Although this highlighted that a more permanent solution is needed and that is now in our maintenance planner as mentioned below.
- Increased garage rental fees to reflect a more realistic market rate, and also hall rental fees, however the rate for residents stayed the same.
- A successful season of talks and events, with 70 people at the wine talk, 50 at the Uganda school talk and 80 at the owl talk. Money was raised during the events for charity, as well as contributing to the running costs of the hall. The Christmas jumper party also raised a great amount to enable us to cover heating costs while keeping regular village events at a reduced rate.
- Prioritisation and scheduling of maintenance and upgrade of work for the village hall for the next 5 years (table
- A new adult activity class has started, in collaboration with and subsidised by EveryoneActive
- A full set of new windows and backdoor, with window, have been installed.
- A smart meter installed to allow monitoring of electricity usage following issues with meter reading
- A comprehensive communications programme has been initiated, taking learnings from other such community organisations, including regular engagement on Facebook and through the WIN

Plans for 2024:

- New water heaters for kitchen, due to repeatedly being left on, and ladies loos have been purchased and will be installed and wiring upgraded in coming weeks
- Upgrade roofing and combine with solar panels on the south facing aspect
- Potentially also install EV charging points to sell excess power (see survey results attached)
- Events
    - Movie night, a new season of talks (already being planned)

Income and Expenses

	Year ended 31 December 2023	Year ended 31 December 2022
	£	£
Income		
Hire of hall and facilities (note 1)	**3,359**	4,600
Donations and fund raising (note 2)	**4,973**	5,005
Garage rents	**1,000**	1,000
Total income	**9,232**	10,605
Expenditure		
Rent & rates	**171**	170
Heating, lighting & water (2022 figure is wrong - there is an error in the spreadsheet. Estimate at least an additional £500)	**2,415**	1,140
Insurance	**652**	728
Renovations & repairs (note 4)	**1,083**	-
Cleaning and materials (note 5)	**545**	450
Other (note 6)	**574**	638
Total expenditure	**5,440**	3,126
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	**3,892**	7,033

Appendix 9: Downland Volunteer Group

The Downland Volunteer Group (DVG) assisted with 994 trips to medical appointments over the last year. The organisation currently has about 35 volunteer drivers. There is an office in the Compton Surgery, which is open Monday to Friday mornings. West Berkshire Council provides a grant each year. It Is estimated around 2,500 volunteer hours are provided each year.

The DVG was gifted a diesel engine bus in 2018 and has now purchased an electric bus in the last year. The bus provides trips to local shops and areas of interest. Funding assistance for the bus was provided by West Berkshire Council, Greenham Trust and Englefield Trust.

The DVG is always in desperate need of more volunteers, either to work in the office, to drive the minibus or to drive individuals to appointments.