West Ilsley Parish

Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in West Ilsley Village Hall on Tuesday 20th May 2025.
Commencing at 8:15 pm.

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

Officers Present:
Sarah Marshman, Clerk/RFO

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

Minutes

1 **Receive apologies for absence**
There were no apologies received.

2 **Approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th May 2024**
The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th May 2024 were approved by those present at the meeting. The Chair signed the Minutes.

3 **Report from the District Councillor**

West Berkshire Council continues to face financial difficulties and has received £16 million in financial support from the government. Most of this funding has been placed in reserves, but as it is a loan, it will need to be repaid.

Approximately 70% of the council's budget is allocated to children's services and adult social care.

Plans are underway to introduce three-weekly black bin collections, with research suggesting this could increase the recycling rate. A start date for this change has yet to be confirmed.

Local government reorganisation was announced just before Christmas, aiming to devolve powers from central government to elected mayors. A strategic authority will bring councils together under a mayor, and West Berkshire Council (WBC) is likely to merge with South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWH).

Local Developments: The former Institute site in Compton has been demolished and decontaminated. Homes England is seeking a developer to take on the site. A new planning application will be submitted soon to prevent existing planning permission from lapsing.

The Baxter site is also under review. In total, around 200 houses are planned for Compton, representing nearly a one-third increase in the village's size.

The Parish Council in Compton is funding a pop-up library in the Village Hall, which is available to residents of the surrounding villages.

The leisure contractor had proposed offloading the Downland Sports Centre, but following consultation by West Berkshire Council, this plan was opposed. Efforts should be made to increase usage to prevent this issue from arising again.

4 Report from the Downland Practice

The practice continues to navigate ongoing challenges with resilience and determination. While concerns remain, the team remains committed to delivering quality care.

The practice is currently fully staffed, with continued interest from prospective joiners. As a rural surgery, the recruitment pool is smaller, but a strong legacy and dedicated team contribute to its stability.

Training and Services:

- The practice remains a training facility, hosting two GP Registrars every six months. This reflects a commitment to rural general practice and integrating its values into local training schemes.
- Additional training is provided for dispensers, pharmacy technicians (to free up the pharmacist), prescribers, spirometry, and contraceptive services.
- Patients experience shorter wait times of approximately 3–6 weeks through offering these services, compared to hospital waiting times of around nine months.
- Providing more services locally helps reduce the need for residents to travel, ensuring the practice remains integral to the community.

Pharmacy and Investment:

- A new Pharmacy Manager has made a significant positive impact, taking on dual responsibilities as both practice and pharmacy manager. Feedback from patients indicates noticeable improvements, particularly in pharmacy services.
- The practice remains committed to keeping the Compton surgery open and continues to invest in improvements.
- An application has been submitted for funding from the £100 million initiative to improve general practice nationally. The Downland Practice is one of eight Berkshire practices in the running.
- The practice hopes to introduce dispensing machines (Amazon-style lockers) soon, allowing patients to collect most types of medication 24/7 using a secure code.

Challenges and Financial Matters:

- Funding remains an ongoing challenge, with an additional £48,000 in National Insurance costs.

- Adjustments to one of the two primary funding streams, such as new percentage targets for specific vaccinations, have resulted in a £15,000 loss this year.

Future Considerations:

- The planned increase in dwellings in Compton and Hermitage may raise the patient list by 5% if all developments proceed.
- Given the surgery's vast but sparsely populated service area, Compton will require at least one doctor and one nurse for one day each week to accommodate the expected rise in patient numbers.

In summary, the practice remains dedicated to its mission, delivering quality healthcare while acknowledging areas for improvement. Support from the local parishes remains strong.

5 Report from the Chair

A special thank you to Graham for his dedicated service over the past 10 years on the council, including two years as Chair and prior to that as Deputy Chair. He continues to provide valuable support with IT matters.

Traffic remains a significant concern, particularly regarding management, speed reduction, and volume control. Discussions with West Berkshire Council (WBC) are ongoing.

Thank you to Justin for stepping into the role of Flood Warden. Work is underway on the necessary approvals to purchase pumps to help manage flooding concerns.

Thank you to the Clerk and our District Councillor, Carolyne, for their continued efforts and contributions.

Financial Reserves:

- The Parish Council has agreed to provide the earmarked reserves (EMR) for the Village Hall to assist in funding the roof repairs and installation of solar panels.
- A small excess has been recorded this year, with plans to continue rebuilding reserves over time.
- Approximately £1,000 per year from EMR is allocated to pond maintenance, with any remaining funds contributing to VH reserves.

A warm welcome to Georgie, the newest member of the Parish Council. It is hoped that the council continues to represent the interests of the village. Ideas and suggestions from residents are always encouraged.

Consideration is being given to a community gathering for the 80th anniversary of VJ Day. The war statues will remain in place until then.

6 Annual finance report from the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer

The Clerk gave her report - see Appendix 1.

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

West Ilsley News – see Appendix 2
Tennis Club – see Appendix 3
West Ilsley Cricket Club – see Appendix 4
Evergreens – no report received
All Saints' Church – see Appendix 5
Village Hall – see Appendix 6
Downland Volunteer Group – see Appendix 7

8 **To receive questions from members of the public**
No questions or comments were put forward.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9:28 pm.

Appendix 1: Annual finance report from the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer

The 2024/25 Financial Year

Income

Total income for the year was £13,519, sourced from:

- Precept: £10,700
- VAT refund (from 23/24 financial year): £2,448
- Interest: £371

Expenditure

Total expenditure amounted to £9,136, including:

- Employment costs: £4,279
- Play area maintenance and inspection: £1,399
- Donation to West Berkshire Library Service: £130
- Tree works: £725
- Insurance: £590
- Audit fees: £170
- Website & emails £282
- VAT (reclaimable in 25/26): £533

Reserves

At the end of the 2024/25, the council held reserves totalling £42,633, divided as follows:

- General reserves: £15,999
- Earmarked reserves: £26,634
  - Village Hall £11,849
  - Play Area £5,475.00
  - War Memorial £2,000
  - Gazebo £4,000
  - Pond/Flood Mitigation Works £3,310

Looking Forward to 2025/26

The precept will rise to £11,000, equating to £71.44 for a Band D household (£1.37 per week).

To plan for future maintenance, the council will earmark £1,331 for pond upkeep, increasing this by 10% annually.

Budget allocations for key areas include:

- Playground maintenance & inspection: £1,400
- Tree works: £850

Unused funds from these budgets will be earmarked to ensure sufficient resources for future maintenance. Additionally, routine expenses such as insurance, website costs, employment, and play area upkeep will continue.

Appendix 2: West Ilsley News

Efforts continue to ensure the monthly West Ilsley News (WIN) reaches 100% of properties, either via email or, for those without email access, through printed copies delivered to their homes.

The editorial team remains committed to their roles and is happy to continue overseeing the publication.

Ongoing collaboration is in place to maintain and support the email distribution system effectively.

Appendix 3: Tennis Club

The past year has been positive, with membership levels remaining stable at approximately 25 families and five individual members, alongside frequent ad hoc usage. Membership fees are set at £45 for families, £25 for a single adult, and £15 for juniors per year.

The court continues to be regularly inspected by the committee and was recently repainted at a cost of £3,288, funded through membership subscriptions and fundraising efforts. Weed and moss control have also been carried out.

To prevent misuse of the court for activities such as football and cycling, a padlock has now been installed.

The nearby cricket nets appear to have contributed to an increase in membership. The netball club has resumed use of the court, and Compton Netball Club has expressed interest in using the facility.

Bookings are managed via Jezzam.

Financially, the club remains in a healthy position, with a sinking fund allocated for future repairs.

Consideration was given to installing a freestanding practice wall, but the high costs make it unlikely unless there is significant interest and sufficient funds can be raised.

The committee remains at five members and will be hosting teas at the upcoming fete.

Looking forward to seeing everyone on the court soon!

Appendix 4: West Ilsley Cricket Club

Current Position

The cricket club continues to go from strength to strength, both in terms of the number of members and the standard of cricket.

Senior Cricket:

This year, we are very excited to be able to put out two sides on a Saturday in the Cherwell league. It is approximately 11 years since we had sufficient numbers of players to do this, and marks a significant milestone in the club's journey over the past 5 years.

Our 1st XI has made a good start to the season following promotion to Division 5 in the Cherwell league. We have two young captains, Matt Fowler and Matt Dray, who lead young sides containing many players who have come through the youth cricket system at the club, supplemented by a few wise old heads and new players who have come to the club from elsewhere in the region.

Wednesday night T20 cricket remains very popular amongst the players and spectators alike. Ed Ryder captains this team.

The women's cricket also continues to grow in strength and depth, now fielding hard ball and soft ball teams. Again, it is especially pleasing to see young players who have progressed through the junior cricket system at the club now representing WICC at an open age level.

As per my recent circulation, there will be a home game every Saturday through the summer (except fete weekend), and any home support is always welcome.

Junior Cricket:

The Friday night mini cricket continues to be very popular. Demand for places has far outstripped supply, which is something we are looking to review next year. The number of places is limited by the number of adult facilitators/coaches that we can sign up.

WICC also has U9, U11, U13, and U15 boys and girls teams playing in the Berkshire league this year. There are still places available for these teams, so if your child would like to join, please contact James Briggs (boys) or Roseanne Pilditch (girls).

Challenges faced:

Despite the successes above, we continue to face significant challenges in the following areas.

Volunteers: The club is almost entirely run on the good will and hard work of a small number of volunteers. Despite strong growth over the last few years, we are only ever one resignation of a few key individuals away from non-viability. In order for the club to continue to survive, we need to continue to grow the number of people willing to help out. This could be in any number of ways, from cutting grass, serving beers, running the BBQ, or helping with the ground. If anyone in the village is able to support this in any way, please contact James Briggs or any committee member.

In particular we need more adults/parents to support the All Stars/Dynamos programme in order to allow us to increase the number of places available next year. Again, if you may be able to help next summer, please a contact James or any committee member to find out more.

Finance: The club is strongly of the belief that ability to pay to play cricket should be as small a barrier to the sport as possible. As a result, we continue to keep subs as low as possible. Cricket, however, is a loss-making activity, and in order to maintain the facilities and standards at the club, we are always looking to drive more income from other sources. This includes the bar, BBQ, pitch hire, and sponsorship. Whilst this allows us to operate more or less at a net neutral financial position, we are frequently required to undertake larger expenditure which can threaten our financial position.

Mowers: An example of this is the ongoing maintenance of the gang mowers that the club volunteers use to cut the grass at the recreation ground, not solely for the purpose of cricket, but for all users of the ground. These are currently old and likely to reach a point in the next year or so, where they can no longer be resurrected. Replacement of these mowers is likely to run to many thousands of pounds. Depending on the exact specification and whether as a new or refurbished model can be obtained, this is estimated in the range of £12-18k. The club would like the PC to consider whether it could contribute 50% of the cost toward the replacement of these mowers when this becomes necessary, in recognition of the fact that keeping the grass at the field at a useable length is for the benefit of all members of the parish, including those who use the ground for dog exercise, sports and recreation, as well as maintaining a tidy appearance. The cricket club will then be able to continue to provide the requisite volunteer time to keep the grass cut. This need to replace the mowers is likely to become unavoidable in the next 12 months.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the other committee members and the volunteers for the endless work, time, and effort they give to help make the club the success it is. As many other clubs around the country have found, the continued existence of a cricket club in the village should not be taken as guaranteed.

James Briggs

Chairman WICC

Appendix 5: All Saints' Church

During 2024, our rector Revd. John Toogood continued to lead the benefice team, comprising Revd Douglas Dales and Revd. Lady (Denise) Brown. 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 and when the weather is warm enough, it is enjoyed outside. Coffee, tea, homemade cakes and biscuits are always on offer, for which voluntary donations help support charities, most of which are local.

Over the year, a number of volunteers within the village continued to look after the church and churchyard with grass cutting, cleaning the church or providing and arranging flowers for major festivals, for which we are very grateful. As usual, the biannual major cleaning and tidying inside and out took place for the Easter weekend and Remembrance Sunday. The church building is in good order and in 2025, we have plans to carry out flint repairs and repointing. We have also instructed a repair to the broken cross on the porch roof. In 2024, the top graveyard had become heavily overgrown with shrubs and an outside contractor was brought in to clear it and trim some branches overhanging the path to it.

Over the year since January 2024, there were 2 weddings and 1 funeral held in church, as well as a graveyard funeral. In addition to the major festivals during the year, All Saints' hosted special services including one for the entire benefice of nine churches. There was a Christingle Service in January and a Pet Service in July, to which 14 animals brought along their humans.

The annual Harvest Festival and lunch took place at the beginning of October. The Clay Pigeon Shoot again proved to be a popular event, bringing in people from outside the village.

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.

Ian Fewtrell-Smith

14th May 2025

Appendix 6: West Ilsley Village Hall Management Committee

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities and achievements of the West Ilsley Village Hall Management Committee (WI VHMC) over the past 12 months. Thanks go to members of the committee for their time and commitment to maintain the village hall and provide a hub to bring members of the village and surrounding area together, as part of its mission:

"WI VHMC aims to provide a safe, accessible, well-maintained and well-presented village hall, to be used for social, recreational and educational activities with facilities which will be to the benefit of (West and East) Ilsley residents and the hall's users. WI VHMC will endeavour to meet the hall's annual running costs from the income from activities, including private or commercial events, providing this is in keeping with the interests of our own community. WI VHMC will seek funds from donations, fund raising and grants to cover the cost of major capital projects to ensure the village asset is maintained and well presented."

The 2024 AGM was pushed back to January 2025 to avoid the busy October to December period in the village hall calendar, and will be maintained in the period January to March to better reflect on the activities of the main village hall season (October to March).

The regular hall hiring activities in 2024 continued to cover running costs, with additional events providing further funds for improvements, which will need further progress in 2025. The major planned improvement is the hall roof and solar panels, which we have now secured enough funding to proceed.

Committee Members Update

We are very pleased to have welcome two new members to the committee, with Steve Coles joining as Projects Manager and Emma Dweck as Secretary. Pete Kirkpatrick continues as Treasurer, Jo Kirkpatrick expands her remit as Events and Bookings Manager, Tegan Woods continues as Communications Manager, as does Matt Yarnall as Chairperson.

Thanks to Amanda Hagen for her commitment over the past 12 months as Secretary, including major support at events such as the bonfire night.

Thanks to Louise Beaumont for her great efforts over the past 3 years, bringing the bookings system up to date with Martin, introducing the card reader (which has made a major difference to us all in the post-cash age!) and running the bookings and heating on an hour-by-hour basis!

2024 Activities and Achievements

- Garages: Following remedial work on the roof leaks, rent was increased to £300 per year. Some garages have continued to leak, however, so these will be comprehensively upgraded following the main hall roof maintenance. Apologies go to the tenants for the continued leaks, and sincere thanks to Dries for all his time and expertise on addressing the issue.
- Bank account is in the process of being moved over to current treasurer, with improved access using digital banking. Thanks to Pete and Will.
- Final front windows installed, and sticking kitchen door fixed.
- Event reports are now provided to the WIN by Tegan, with promotion and photos on new Facebook account. Thanks to Tegan and Amanda for setting up the social media accounts and communicating events throughout the year.

- There was a successful season of village hall events in 2024 with a new quiz which kicked off the events, a very well attended talk on Owls by Geoff Wond and again a well-attended talk on 'Nutribabble' by Steve Coles, with plans for further from him. The Christmas jumper party was a great way to end the year with friends. Thanks to Jo for organising and invariably hosting with Pete.
- The bonfire night was well attended, with a great display from a new pyrotechnic team. Thanks to Pete, Jonny, Lois and Justin Pilditch, as well as the ticket team, Jo, Amanda and Louise, the bbq team, Dewi, Roger, Nigel, Alan Bs and WICC bar staff, and the bucket shakers. Particular thanks to Pete for all the background work on getting the fireworks, contacting the various authorities and insurance company etc.
- Regular events were continued, with St. John's, Lois's pilates classes and Emma's sound baths, with the first Everyone Active classes, which have been well attended. Thanks to Louise and Tegan for your work with Everyone Active.
- Smart meter now installed. Thanks to Pete.
- The card reader had its limit extended. Thanks to Louise for her persistence.
- Clear out of cupboards and new glasses acquired. Thanks to Jo.
- Tony's old bookcase is being trialled as a library in the porch and so far has been very well received!

2025 Plans

Major improvements:

- £31,449.34 secured from 3 sources (thanks to **Greenham Trust**, **West Berkshire Council** and **West Ilsley Parish Council**), and combined with village hall raised funds will not only ensure the village hall roof will keep the elements out for another 20+ years, but it will provide free power from the sun for the village hall, as well as accessible power for villagers and visitors in the form of the electric vehicle charging point
- Electrical point improvements for kitchen and loos.

Matt Yarnall

Chairperson on behalf of

West Ilsley Village Hall Management Committee

Appendix 7: Downland Volunteer Group

As many of you are aware the Downland Volunteer Group (DVG) was set up in 1986 to assist residents from the Downland villages to attend their medical appointments. Our financial year runs from April to March. In the last financial year, we made **1,337** such trips, an increase of **34%** over the previous financial year. We believe the increase is due to the efforts of the NHS to reduce the backlog that has built up and the publicity the DVG received in February 2024 when we launched the new HandeBus – the first all-electric community transport vehicle in West Berks. Of those **1,337** trips, **69** were from this village i.e. about 5% of the total

The DVG is made up of volunteers. We have 52 volunteers, driving patients to their appointments, working in our office in the Compton surgery, and driving the HandeBus. From data we keep to help claim grants from West Berks and the Dept of Transport our volunteers gave **3465** hours of their time for free. Our car drivers travelled **31,133 miles ,** the HandeBus carried **1011** passengers covering **158** trips and covered **8184** miles supporting the Downland community in this last financial year.

As I have mentioned, the all-electric HandeBus was launched in February 2024. Its focus is to help mainly the older members of our community to go shopping. Unlike a bus service, this is a taxi-type service with the driver nearby where they shop and who helps load and carry the shopping to their front door. Often referred to as a social club on wheels, it also encourages residents who often live on their own to get out and socialise with friends and neighbours. The Handebus also does day trips to places of interest nearby.

With the increase in demand for our service, we are constantly looking for new volunteers. Last year three of our volunteers stepped down, each having given over 25 years of service to the DVG. We are most grateful to them for the support they have offered to our community over such a long period. I believe it also reflects that the DVG is regarded as a key support for many residents in their time of need.

If anyone can spare a few hours a week or a month, we would like to hear from them. As an example, taking patients to their appointments at the surgeries in Chieveley or Compton normally takes around 2 hours of your time. To the West Berks hospital in Thatcham is usually 3 hours depending on the department they are attending. These three locations account for nearly 50% of the trips covered by the DVG. If you would like further details about the Downland Volunteer Group you can contact us by email dvg.office@btinternet.com or our website www.downlandvolgroup.org

Charity Commission No 1112181