West Ilsley Parish

Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in West Ilsley Village Hall on Tuesday 19th May 2026.
Commencing at 8:15 pm.

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

Officers Present:
Sarah Marshman, Clerk/RFO

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

Minutes

1 Receive apologies for absence
Apologies for absence were received from the editors of the WIN, the Chairperson of the Village Hall, and Councillor Katy Morris.

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 The Downland Practice
A representative from The Downland Practice had been invited to provide an update but did not attend. It is understood that this was likely due to an email delivery issue rather than a lack of intention to attend.

4 District Councillor
The District Councillor provided an update on activity at West Berkshire Council over the past year.

She noted that she had been re-elected as Chair of the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee, which had recently reviewed several key areas of council policy and performance. This included work on waste and recycling, particularly the impact of the move to three-weekly residual waste collections. Early indications show that recycling rates have increased as a result of the change. The committee also examined the district's Playing Pitch Strategy, which has identified a shortage of sports pitches across West Berkshire.

Water management remains a significant concern. The Councillor reported that Thames Water and the Environment Agency are expected to provide further updates

later in the year. Issues relating to sewage discharge and flooding continue to be monitored closely.

From September, changes to the national planning system will come into effect. Under the new arrangements, the threshold for applications to be considered by the Planning Committee will rise, meaning that only the largest or most complex applications will be eligible. The current system of ten letters of objection triggering a committee referral, as well as the ability for ward members to call in applications, will be removed.

The Councillor also outlined a new housing campaign launched in response to the ongoing loss of social housing stock. Concerns have been raised about the sale of vacant Sovereign properties. When a property becomes empty, a scorecard is completed to determine whether it should be refurbished or sold; however, some of the criteria - such as whether an area is “delightful”, “well-integrated” or “safe” - are highly subjective. She has raised these concerns with the Regulator of Social Housing and is pressing for a more robust and transparent approach. Alongside this, she is seeking clarity on West Berkshire Council’s long-term plans to increase the supply of social housing and will continue to lobby for more proactive measures.

A potential merger between the Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council was also highlighted. A decision is expected before the parliamentary recess in approximately two months.

The Councillor also reported on the 20mph programme. West Berkshire Council issued a press release last week confirming that some schemes would proceed while others would not. She has raised concerns with the portfolio holder, noting that West Ilsley Parish Council had already met with WSP and had been advised that the next stage would be public consultation. The portfolio holder had been unaware that these meetings had taken place. Questions have been raised about the cost of the mapping work undertaken by WSP and about what constitutes an acceptable level of consultation at parish level.

The Councillor also commented on the Environment Strategy, noting that a number of planned actions have been paused or shelved due to financial pressures. The overall local government settlement remains challenging, with central government prioritising funding for areas classified as more deprived. Although West Berkshire contains pockets of deprivation, it is not considered a deprived area overall, which limits the level of support received.

The meeting expressed its thanks to the District Councillor, Carolyne, for her continued support and engagement with the parish

5 Report from the Chair

Flood Mitigation

- The PC engaged with the WBC flood engineering team in October, resulting in some immediate maintenance work to gullies, soakaways and silt catch pits, with an estimated 2-3 tonnes of silt removed from the soakaway at the Barns. The recycler unit jetted for two days between the pond and Bury Lane (including back jetting to the pond from the manhole, which is now fully cleansed and ready to act as an overflow). Gullies and the main carrier pipe have been

cleansed. Two gully lids and surrounds have been replaced. The soakaway has been jetted, as have the four gullies leading into it. They also cleared the small ditch immediately adjacent to the bottom of Catmore Road between the trash screen and headwall to the culvert.
- WBC also agreed to make West Ilsley a high-priority case for their cyclical maintenance programs for gullies, catchpits and soakaways, so we should see a greater frequency of their cleansing.
- Keeper's stables pond was cleared, and our thanks to David for agreeing to take the many tonnes of silt.
- Our thanks to Justin for volunteering to be the Flood Warden and his continued engagement with the Pang Valley Flood Forum, establishing a village WhatsApp group (West Ilsley Dam busters), and sending out detailed analysis of groundwater levels.
- In summary, it seems that the system is adequate provided it is well maintained, both by residents (e.g. clearing drainage gullies of leaves and adhering to riparian way responsibilities) and WBC (e.g. clearing out catchpits and soakaways of silt).

Traffic
- We have had less success engaging WBC regarding traffic issues. A meeting in November with the WBC Principal Engineer, Traffic & Road Safety, has resulted in little action.
- WBC is committed to rolling out a 20mph speed limit to areas with local support, and West Ilsley was a high priority. There was a meeting with the consultants, and we pushed to extend the 20mph limit to the edge of the village, but since then, WBC have suggested this project has been shelved. We may need to gather more local support for this through a survey or petition.
- The enhancement to the gateway to the village, including making the white fence more prominent (denoting village entrance), repainting of white lines at the entrances and up the hill heading east (and throughout the village, including the junction at the bottom of Catmore Road), and repairing the VAS (Vehicle Activated Sign) at the west end have not happened, despite repeated requests for action.
- I took the petition to reduce HGVs coming through the village to an Executive meeting of the WBC. The cost and complications of redirecting HGVs when the A34 is disrupted preclude this option, but they are looking at widening parts of Bury Lane to allow for better passing places.
- The repair to pavements (now with WBC maintenance team), and the possibility of reducing the width of the T-junction at the bottom of Bury Lane to slow traffic and allow for safe crossing (now with WBC projects team), have also fallen into the WBC pit of inaction.
- Further work to be done to get these projects completed, with the help of our District Councillor.

Other items
- The Harrow has been listed as a Community Asset.
- The PC finances are detailed in a separate report, but in short, they are in good shape. The significant contribution this year was from the earmarked reserves for the Village Hall to help with the roof renovation. Our thanks to the VHC for an excellent job in maintaining and promoting this important village asset.
- My thanks also to all those who volunteer to make this village such a wonderful place to live.
- A meeting was arranged at the horse crossing at the east of the village with WBC,

requesting renewal of road markings and signs, but again nothing has been done by WBC, citing a rolling programme of renovation
- Villagers are reminded to use the report a problem page on the WBC website to detail defects with the roads or pavements.

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 – no report was submitted
Evergreens – no report was submitted
All Saints' Church – see Appendix 4
Village Hall – see Appendix 5
Downland Volunteer Group – see Appendix 6

8 To receive questions from members of the public

Residents raised concerns about overgrown vegetation in parts of the village.

A query was also made regarding whether Gigaclear intends to extend its service to the village. The Parish Council will look into this and report back when further information is available.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9:04 pm.

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

West Ilsley Parish Council Annual Finance Report 2025/26

Receipts

During the 2025/26 financial year, the council received a total income of £11,824, made up of:

- Precept: £11,000
- VAT refund (from 2024/25): £533
- Interest: £291

Payments

Total payments for the year came to £23,870. The main areas of spending were:

- Village Hall roof works: £12,961
- Employment costs: £5,077
- Play area maintenance and inspection: £173
- Insurance: £697
- Audit fees: £130
- Website & emails (community and PC): £275
- VAT (reclaimable in 26/27): £2,854

Reserves

At the end of the 2025/26, the council held reserves totalling £30,588, split into:

- General reserves: £11,815
- Earmarked reserves: £18,773
  - Village Hall £0 – reserve fully used for the roof project
  - Play Area £6,682
  - War Memorial £2,000
  - Gazebo £4,000
  - Pond/Flood Mitigation Works £4,641 – increased annually through the precept
  - Laptop replacement £600
  - Tree works £850

Looking Ahead to 2026/27

The precept for 2026/27 will be £11,304, equivalent to £73.41 for a Band D household (£1.41 per week).

To plan for future maintenance, the council will earmark £1,464 for pond upkeep, increasing this by 10% annually.

Budget allocations for key areas include:

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

Any unspent amounts from these budgets will be transferred into the relevant earmarked reserves to ensure sufficient funds for future upkeep.

Routine payments - including insurance, website and email services, employment costs, and play area maintenance - will continue as normal.

Appendix 2: West Ilsley News

Liz Dray and Andrea Cook

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 Alan 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. We are fairly confident that currently, every home receives at least the monthly copy.

Following our request earlier in the year, we received some feedback about the WIN, but we have yet to properly review it and respond. The overall message seems to be "keep at it and put more content in", but we can only put in what we are sent, and unfortunately, we are unable to act as "reporters", so if anyone would like to do that, please let us know.

Appendix 3: Tennis Club

See if Alison can send report over.

Small committee of 6. Meet 4 times per year. 21 family members. Fees remained the same, but the value has increased a little this year. Pay and play is also very popular. Court inspected regularly. Upgraded a year or so ago. Cleaned and moss control yearly. Compton netballers are using the court. Finances healthy, good sinking fund for major repairs if needed. Doing the teas and cakes at the fete as usual.

Appendix 4: All Saints' Church

Throughout 2025, the Rector continued to lead the benefice team, assisted by other members of the clergy team. As has been the case for many years, the regular pattern of services on the first, second and third Sunday of each month has been maintained. Our thanks go to them for their determination to ensure that all nine churches in the benefice have the regular services that they want.

The church café has continued during the morning of the second Sunday in the month, moving into the churchyard when the weather is warm enough. Coffee, tea, homemade cakes and biscuits are always on offer, for which voluntary donations help support charities, most of which are local.

We are grateful for the number of volunteers within the village who continue to look after the church and churchyard with grass cutting, cleaning the church or providing and arranging flowers for major festivals. As usual, the major cleaning and tidying inside and out took place for the Easter weekend and Remembrance Sunday. The church building is in general good order. The plan for flint repairs and repointing in 2025 did not materialise but these will be carried out when the west wall damp is treated. The two limes trees by the lychgate had their crowns thinned.

Over the year since January 2025, there were 2 baptisms and 1 wedding held in church. 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.

The popular annual Harvest Festival and lunch took place at the beginning of October.

The generosity of regular donors and a number of other kind contributors meant that most running costs could again be met from our General fund, although in 2025 payments exceeded receipts by around £2,500. Individual churches are totally independent and all costs must be met with no financial support from the central church body, something that is difficult for a small village church community.

In spite of fairly low numbers at regular services, our village church continues to play its active role locally and in the wider community. Thanks must go to the many members of the community who support the church in so many different ways, in addition to the members of the parochial church council who meet several times during the year.

Appendix 5: West Ilsley Village Hall Management Committee

Chairperson's report

This report provides a summary of activities and achievements of the West Ilsley Village Hall Management Committee (WI VHMC) in 2025. 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 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 2025 AGM was pushed back to March 2026, following the progressive push back since 2024, to avoid the busy October to February period in the village hall calendar and will be maintained annually around March to better be able to reflect on the activities of the main village hall season (October to March).

The regular hall hiring activities in 2025 continued to cover running costs, with fundraising for major improvements to the hall roof, originally initiated in 2022, finally coming to fruition following successful funding applications.

2025 village hall improvement highlights

Village Hall roof: Following the initial proposal to repair the roof by the previous village hall management committee back in 2022, and several years of fundraising, we were very pleased to get started with a full repair of the roof, including replacement of felt, battens and broken tiles, in September. We went with a slightly more expensive quote to use a local roofer and were pleased with the final work. During the project, an unauthorised purchase of new tiles was made that had not been quoted for or agreed. Further to this, it meant we were not able to make use of savings through installation of in-roof solar panels. After extensive discussions, we were able to resolve the situation to reflect purchase of new tiles to replace those that needed replacing.

Considering much of the roof had not been replaced for up to 30 years, we are very pleased to have executed these major works, with a new high-quality roof to hopefully take us to the 2040s and beyond.

Following the making good of the roof, 22 x 450W solar panels were fitted, along with a 10kW battery. This has produced over 4.1MWh in the 7 mainly winter months since installation, i.e. running an oven for 4100 hours (or 170 days), peaking at 69 kW hours in 1 day. 69kW hours is the equivalent power to drive an electric car to the Lake District, all from the sun. Excess power is currently stored in the battery to power the hall and further excess is sold back to the grid.

The aim is to secure further funding to install 2 electric vehicle charging points, to provide a service to village residents, their visitors, as well as visitors to the cricket club and pub. This will also make better use of this excess power.

Thanks go to Steve and Emma for their time and emotional investment in this project, to the West Berkshire Rural England Prosperity Fund Village Hall And Community Building Grant Scheme, the Greenham Trust and the Members Community Bids for their financial contributions and last but certainly not least to the West Ilsley Parish Council for their financial support, guidance and encouragement with this project.

There was also significant work on securing the safe usage of the hall with Pete embarking on and achieving the safe awarding of an Electrical Installation Condition Report, which is a formal inspection of the village hall's electrical system to ensure safety and compliance, along with a Fire Risk Assessment. Both recommended every 5 years.

2025 village hall events

There was a successful season of village hall events in 2025 with 2 talks from Steve (January and October), a talk from Geoff on hares, quizzes, Christmas jumper party and the fantastic return of the Burns Supper and ceilidh. Thanks very much to the speakers, event organisers and to Jo for coordinating the events, and hosting the bar, along with Pete.

The bonfire night was again well attended, with a great display from the now established pyrotechnic team. Thanks to Pete, Jonny, Lois and Justin, as well as the ticket team, Jo, Amanda and Louise, the BBQ team, Dewi, Roger, Nigel, Alan and WICC bar staff, and the bucket shakers. And thanks very much for the very generous donations from the village businesses, particularly Connie at the Harrow, showing how community assets can work together for mutual benefit. Particular thanks to Pete for all the background work on getting the fireworks, contacting the various authorities and insurance company to ensure we're kept on the straight and narrow.

2026 plans

- Improvements and planned works: -

• Continue fundraising for installation of EV charging points

• Repainting of exterior façade and woodwork

• Internal electric facilities upgraded

• Plan upgrade of garage roofing, which will be the next major investment

Village Hall Treasurer's Report – Annual Parish Meeting 19th May 2026

The accounts are prepared on a cash basis. Overall, accounts remain healthy with no immediate causes for concern of the financial viability of the hall.

Renovation projects continued in 2025 and these have been dominated by reroofing the entire hall and the installation of solar PV panels.

Much as with other years in the post-pandemic era, the largest single contributor to income during 2025 remains the regular St John's, although increased usage for other events means that this is a significantly lower proportion of the overall income.

All-in-all, the revenue stream remains strong, which allows us to keep hire costs down for users, at £15/hr for both villagers and external users.

Income from hall hire

Having said that St John's remains the largest single contributor to income during 2025, this is now roughly matched by combined well-being events (such as Pilates, sound baths and Tuesday fitness club). Also, with other major contributors (such as various cycling events) and a general upturn in use of the hall for the likes of arts exhibitions and seasonal fairs, income has increased by around 50%.

Garage rental

There has been no change in tenants for the five garages to the rear of the hall in 2025, with four still being rented out and one used by the village hall for storage.

With the major focus of 2025 being the roof of the main building, no further effort has been expended on fixing the increasingly dire situation of the leaking garage roofs.

During 2024 there were some efforts to improve the condition of the garage roofs, but this was very much a stop-gap and significant work is needed to properly weather-proof the garages in the near future. Ideas and quotes were obtained, but no serious effort has yet been directed at resolving the issue of deterioration to the structures.

Fundraising

Village hall events have continued to prove popular, although the profit margin has reduced as bar prices have not kept up with increased costs, meaning that the money raised from pup-up pub at evening talks, quiz nights and Christmas Jumper party was around half of the previous year's total.

As always, bonfire night was a major success, with last year's new teams settling in to their roles operating the BBQ, the firework display and increasing the available 'extras' that add to the fun of the evening (sparklers, toffee apples, etc...). With broadly similar money raised by 'bucket shakers' the balance was really swung by a substantial donation from the Harrow. Along with maintaining the substantially smaller spend on the fireworks themselves and an improved understanding of costs on the BBQ the new teams were able to improve the overall profit margin in 2025 by around 50%. All that being said, the increased reluctance of the Cricket Club to share out their bar profits has, once again, been upsetting.

In the hope of raising some extra funds, the Village Hall team took on the job of organising the pre-fete party. Although this was a very successful and enjoyable event, attendance was a little

lower than ideal – large enough to ensure that all costs were adequately covered, but unfortunately not large enough to provide the hoped-for profit. However, a successful raffle and auction more than doubled the amount raised, bringing the event to almost on par with bonfire night

Expenditure

As with domestic bills, running costs for the hall continue to rise, although it is hoped that the new solar panels will make a significant difference to the electricity bill (which was already down for 2025). By the close of 2025, no billing information was yet available to truly quantify this difference, although meter readings for the first couple months with the solar panels have shown a drop in usage (kWh) and, of course, a flow going back into the grid.

Most other bills remain broadly similar, although costs associated with cleaning have seen an increase. In part this can be explained by a simple increase in use – more people in the hall means more consumables are being used – not just cleaning products, but also soaps, paper towels and loo rolls.

A major unanticipated cost for 2025 was the renewal of safety inspections. These included the statutory electrical installation condition report, which should be carried out every 5 years, and the recommended fire risk assessment. Together with their associated essential remedial work, these two activities resulted in a more than trebling of last year's spend in this area, although it would probably be fairer to pro-rata them over a 5 year period if a true measure of their impact were required.

Appendix 6: Downland Volunteer Group

The community transport scheme marked its 40th anniversary during the year. A total of 1,293 trips were made for medical appointments, including 98 journeys undertaken for residents of West Ilsley.

The service continues to rely heavily on volunteers. Within the village there are currently three volunteer car drivers and one Handibus driver, and additional volunteers would be very welcome. The Handibus continues to visit the village every other Wednesday, providing an important service for those who need supported transport.

Across the wider scheme, volunteers contributed a total of 3,352 hours over the past year to support residents in accessing essential appointments and services. The charity remains in a strong financial position; however, the key need is for more volunteer drivers to ensure the service can continue to meet demand.