

DRAFT1

Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Ordinary Meeting
Tuesday 26th March 2024 at 7.30pm in Widford Village Hall



PRESENT: Cllr Mike Allen (MA) -Chair; Cllr Ian Collins (IC), Cllr Mark Rome (MR),
Cllr Josh Warren (JW)

Eight members of the public, Cllr Eric Buckmaster

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.30pm. It was noted that the March meeting called on 5th March and again on 12th March were both postponed due to being inquorate.

ACTION

24.017 To receive and approve apologies for absence

1. Councillors: Cllr Michael Ripsher (MPR): Away **APPROVED**
2. Others: Cllr David Andrews

24.018 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

1. Interests

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

2. Dispensation requests:

None

24.019 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 9th January 2024 were a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes.

Clerk/MA

24.020 Police report

PCSO Karen Broad sent the following report:

Crime Report February 2024

ANSTEY: no reported crimes

HORMEAD:no reported crimes

BRENT PELHAM & MEESDEN: no reported crimes

STOCKING PELHAM: 1 X Attempted Burglary

FURNEUX PELHAM: 1 X Criminal Damage

ALBURY: no reported crimes

LITTLE HADHAM: 1 X Theft of Motor Vehicle

MUCH HADHAM: 3 X Burglary non Dwelling; 1 X Criminal Damage: 1 X Vehicle interference:
1 X Theft: 1 X Burglary

HUNSDON: 1 X Theft of Motor Vehicle: 1 X attempted Burglary

WIDFORD: 2 X Attempted Burglary; 1 X Non Dwelling Burglary; 1 X Vehicle Interference

WARESIDE: 1 X Burglary

EASTWICK & GILSTON: no reported crimes

BRAUGHING: 1 X Criminal Damage

STANDON & PUCKERIDGE: 5 X Theft from Motor Vehicle

Other news and updates:

Burglaries seem to be on the increase, this is dwelling and non dwelling, so please make sure you leave your properties secure and valuables are not left easily in view or accessible, mark

your property with a marker pen or look on line for other methods of identifying your items, take photo's of jewellery and upload to your email or the cloud so it can be accessed from any of your devices, if you just save it to a device and it is stolen so are your pictures.

There have been a couple of incidents of suspects trying vehicle doors to see if they are unlocked. Please ensure all doors and windows are closed and secured when unattended, particularly overnight.

Keyless car thefts nationally continue to be trending. On most makes of vehicle, keyless entry can be disabled. Alternatively, ensure car keys, particularly any spare keys, are secured in a signal blocking/Faraday pouch when not in use. Hiding the keys in a metal tin can also restrict the signal from vehicle keys.

Your local policing teams are continuing regular patrols in hotspot areas at key times. Additionally, we are actively increasing the numbers of residents in East Herts signing up to the OWL Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. <https://www.owl.co.uk/herts/>

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/>

PCSO Karen Broad

Cllrs Ian Collins and Cllr Mark Rome also reported the following to the meeting:

17th February: We have 5 incidents of theft and suspicious activity in the last 5 days. These may not have been reported. If possible, can we get some police attention after midnight in Widford and Hunsdon.

Sightings are of 2 men wearing hoods or balaclavas and gloves.

4th February: There have been 2 dog attacks in 2 days - one in Widford, one in Hunsdon. This first incident was where a lady was bitten on the face the second one a large dog has attacked another dog. Seems to be too much of a coincidence not to be related. Both incidents have been reported to the police.

24.021 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman had nothing to report.

MA

24.022 Reports by County and District Councillors

Cllr Eric Buckmaster's written March Report is included as an Appendix at the end of these Minutes. Cllr Buckmaster also spoke about working with the EA on flood management, particularly dealing with holding back water at Stanstead Abbots. He also mentioned the 20mph S&V studies in Roydon Road and Stanstead Abbots. He confirmed that Nicholas Maddex will make a small contribution to the Closed Churchyard footpath if the Parish Council will also make a contribution. Regarding the issues along Ware Road past Greenacres, the church, and the coalyard, Cllr Mike Allen agreed to send Cllr Buckmaster and Cllr Andrews the report reference numbers for following up. Cllr Buckmaster also touched on pupils' transport issues that will have to be addressed if Widford and Hunsdon schools become a federation.

24.023 Planning

1. New Applications:

3/24/0384/FUL: The Doe Shed: Change of use, agricultural land and building to residential 2-bed house.

RESOLVED: To object on the same grounds as previous 3/22/0146/ARPN and it is outside the village boundary:

Clerk

2. Decision Notices. For information only, the following were noted:

3/23/2283/OUT: Land south of Levenage Lane: Outline for 4 dwellings: **REFUSED**

3/23/2271/OUT: Land adjacent to Wilmoor: Outline for 2 dwellings and new access.

REFUSED

3/21/2668/FUL: Ash View Stables: Additional capacity on existing site.

GRANTED

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

1. Late planning applications:
 - 3/23/2283/OUT Land south of Leverage Lane: **Notice of Appeal received**
 - 2. 3/23/24/0544/VAR Westbury: Removal of conditions 3 and 9 to 3/23/0099/LBC **RESOLVED: No objections**

Clerk

24.024 Finance

1. Report of the Council's accounts to 29th February 2024

Finance Summary to 29 th February 2024	£
Opening cashbook balance 1 st January 2024	37,627.07
Plus: income to 29 th February	7.72
Minus: expenditure to 29 th February	<u>3,255.62</u>
Balance available to Council at 29th February (cashbook balance)	34,379.17
Plus unrepresented cheques/payments	<u>0.00</u>
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 29th February	<u>34,379.17</u>

RESOLVED: that the Accounts Statement to 29th February 2024 be approved.

2. Bank reconciliation 29th February 2024

Cashbook balance £34,379.17 Unity Bank balance £34,379.17

RESOLVED: to agree the bank reconciliation as presented

3. Performance vs budget as at 29th February 2024

The Clerk's detailed report on the financial performance vs budget to 29th February was received.

Income: Budget £16,645 Performance to date £16,308

Expenditure: Budget £27,847 Performance to date £18,936

The year-end forecast:

Income: £16,683

Expenditure to be £26,968,

The income/expenditure deficit is forecast to be -£10,015 against -£11,202 budgeted.

RESOLVED: The performance report to 29th February 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
Mrs J English	Litterpicking March 12 of 12	150.00	0
Widford Village Hall	Hall hire 2024	150.00	0
Clerk	Expenses February-March	25.40	0
Clerk	Salary March	462.65	0
HMRC	PAYE March	115.80	0
Clerk	Reimburse stationery	1.20	0
Unity Trust Bank	Quarterly service charge	18.00	0
Recoverable VAT included			£0.00

5. Additional bank signatory update

Cllr Mark Rome is being added as a Unity Trust Bank signatory

MR/Clerk

6. Internal auditor for AGAR 2023/24

RESOLVED: That Steve Vine of Book-Keeping & Accountancy Services be appointed as the internal auditor for the 2023/24 AGAR.

Clerk

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

- Ian Brett: Widford Relief in Need Charity - Poors Land lease
- Jill Buck (PCC): Churchyard footpath - improvement needed (24.026.4.3)
- Widford School: Merger with Hunsdon school (24.027.3)
- Allotments: Proposal to erect a large greenhouse (24.026.3.2)
- Cllr David Andrews: B1004 Ware Road closure 22nd February

- FP18 overhanging foliage (24.027.1.1)
- Concerns over vulnerable adult

24.026 Village Reports

1. Village Hall

1. No report – March VHM meeting was cancelled.
2. Hall hire prices for 2024 was noted and **RESOLVED to accept price increase.**

2. Playing Field

Grass cutting is being organised and electricity costs are being looked to see if they are viable. Next meeting is in May. MA

3. Allotments

1. Tenancy Agreement: The new Tenancy Agreement has been agreed by allotment tenants. IC
2. Proposal to erect a large greenhouse on allotment plot 15. Guy Hessing presented the proposal to the Council. It was initially considered this would be a communal space, but that is clearly not the case. A small amount of asbestos has been removed from the site. The cost for erecting the greenhouse would be £200 plus materials. It was noted that there has been one objection to the proposal. Cllr Ian Collins abstained from voting and it was **RESOLVED by 3 votes, with one abstention, to approve the erection of the greenhouse.**

4. Closed Churchyard.

1. No issues were reported.
2. It was noted that the tree work has been completed at £300 cheaper than estimated.
3. PCC request for help to maintain the footpath to the church.
Nicholas Maddex has said he will make a contribution if the Parish Council does likewise. Cllr Eric Buckmaster also said he would contribute from his locality budget. The estimated cost is £5,604 incl VAT (£4,670 net). This was agreed in principle and is to be confirmed at the May Parish Council Meeting. Clerk
4. Sharon Collins has agreed to the same maintenance contract as 2023. ie £310 x 4 payments, May to October. **RESOLVED: that Sharon Collins maintain the closed churchyard for a total of £1,240 for the year, plus any extraordinary expenses.** Clerk

24.027 Highways, Public Rights of Way, and other Parish matters

1. Footpaths and PRoW.

1. FP18 overhanging foliage: Cllr Ian Collins to check with Nicholas Maddex. IC

2. Highways and footways

1. Update on general clean-up of verges, gutters and overgrown footways: It was agreed to wait until the weather is warmer before chasing the work to done. It is to be considered whether to undertake a one-off action to kick start the clean-up. MA
2. Update on Enforcement issues by Greenacres: No update available. Cllr Eric Buckmaster said he is aware of the need to press forward with the matter.

3. Other parish matters and concerns

1. The probable merger by federation of the Widford and Hunsdon schools was raised earlier in the meeting with Cllr Eric Buckmaster (24.022). It was further mentioned that parking, nursery provision and transportation between sites are problematic and that a “soft start” time might be an option. MR

24.028 Benningfield Green

1. It was noted that the 2023/24 licence had been sent and that payment was made on 18th March. It was agreed that parking on the Green continues to be a problem and that letter be sent to address the problem. The Chairman agreed to draft a letter for approval. MA/Clerk

24.029 Village Archive
No report received, but it was expected that the Activist would give a report at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate in April. **Clerk**

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

8.03 pm: The meeting was suspended for public comments

A parishioner raised concerns about the erecting of a 2m high fence at a property in Bell Lane. The fence line would dangerously reduce the width of the road and take out the passing place. It was believed that pedestrian safety would be compromised. It was felt that Herts Highways should preserve the integrity of the highway and the verge – the ownership of which is contested. Issues in Bell Lane are long standing and have not been resolved. Cllr Eric Buckmaster agreed to take up the matter with HCC. A possible 20mph limit was also mentioned.

8.15pm: The meeting was restored to order.

24.031 Items for future agendas

1. It was agreed that a Widford Relief in Need Charity notice regarding the Poors Land lease would be included on the agenda for the Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate. **Clerk**

24.032 Date of next Meetings (all in the Village Hall)

1. Tuesday April 9th 7.30pm: Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate (this is not a Parish Council meeting) **Clerk/MA**
2. Tuesday May 7th: 7pm Annual Parish Council Meeting. Followed immediately by: **Clerk**
3. Tuesday May 7th at approx. 7.30pm: May Ordinary Parish Council Meeting. **Clerk**

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.12pm.

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

APPENDIX

Cllr Eric Buckmaster report for March 2024

Council commits to providing additional support for care leavers

Hertfordshire County Council has secured £600,000 funding, from the Department for Education, to extend its successful Lifelong Links programme to care leavers.

Lifelong Links helps children in care by bringing important people in their life together and helping them to reconnect with each other. This established and successful programme also helps children in care find out more about their family history. Now, care leavers will also be supported to strengthen their social connections and support groups.

Councillor Fiona Thomson, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families at Hertfordshire County Council, said: "Stable support from family and community can be the most important factor for enabling young people to successfully transition into adulthood. It can be difficult enough when you have this support but many of our care experienced young people don't, and the challenges they face navigating adult life on their own can be very daunting.

Luton Airport proposed expansion

Luton Rising, the owner of London Luton Airport, has for a number of years now been progressing its ambition to grow the Airport from a currently consented throughput of 19 million passengers per annum (mppa) to 32 mppa.

In February 2023 it submitted its application to Government for permission to do so. The application will be determined by Government, rather than locally, because it is of such a scale to be classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, for which Government is responsible for making decisions.

Over the six-month period August 2023 to February 2024, the application has been examined

by an Examining Authority consisting of a Panel of five members appointed by Government. Much of that examination has taken place in writing, supplemented by oral Hearings at which interested parties could make their views on the application known in person to the Examining Authority.

Work starts on new multi-million pound Waste Transfer Station

A groundbreaking event at a new state-of-the-art Waste Transfer Station (WTS) took place Monday (26 February). The new facility, located behind the Ware Recycling Centre, is set to be completed by January 2026.

The multi-million-pound investment highlights the Council's commitment to effectively manage waste arising from an increasing population. The WTS will receive kerbside waste and recycling materials from the surrounding areas, some of which currently has to be transported across the county to a facility near Watford. Delivery of the new WTS will result in reduced lorry miles on our roads and increased resilience in waste operations, while the bulky waste shredding facility inside the building will ensure early delivery of the council's ambition to send zero waste to landfill by 2030.

The new WTS will be powered by electricity generated by landfill gas from the former neighbouring landfill site and will feature solar panels fitted to the roof of the main building. It will be equipped with modern noise and odour controls, ensuring minimal impact on the surrounding areas.

For further information on recycling and waste in Hertfordshire

visit: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/recycling-and-waste/recycling-and-waste.aspx>

LGBTQ+ foster carers urge others to consider fostering

Members of the LGBTQ+ community are being urged to be the difference in a child's life by becoming a foster carer.

Hertfordshire County Council has launched a campaign to dispel the general misconception that LGBTQ+ residents cannot foster. The council is calling on residents from the LGBTQ+ community to apply to foster or simply find out more about fostering.

Rona from Hemel Hempstead is a transgender foster carer who has been fostering with Hertfordshire County Council for 24 years.

Rona, who is currently offering supported lodgings to a care leaver, said: "I was quite apprehensive of becoming a foster carer but I was accepted with open arms. It was really lovely. There were no barriers."

Nationally, there is a severe shortage of foster carers from the LGBTQ+ community, and out of 350 fostering households in Hertfordshire, only 10 of them are from the LGBTQ+ community.

This is a stark contrast to adoption, where 1 in 5 adopters in the country are from the LGBTQ+ community.

Anyone who applies to be a foster carer with Hertfordshire County Council receives generous pay and allowances, as well as comprehensive local training and support.

If you are aged over 21, have a spare room, and want to find out more, visit

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/fosterwithpride , text FOSTERING to 62277 or ring 0800 917 0925.

Secondary school places announced for 2024

94 per cent of children have been allocated a place at one of their preferred secondary or upper schools by Hertfordshire County Council.

Of the 14,731 Hertfordshire children who applied this year, 77 per cent gained a place at their first preference school.

98% of parents and carers in Hertfordshire applied online and will be emailed the school place their child has been allocated today (Friday 1 March). Families who made a paper application will be sent a letter by first class post.

Whilst overall applications were down slightly on last years' figures by 241, applications from various areas across the county remained high. Nine schools across the county are offering a total of 252 additional places, to ensure that as many pupils as possible are allocated a local school, and satisfaction rates remain high.

All applicants who have not been offered their first preference school will automatically be placed on the continuing interest list for any Hertfordshire schools named higher on the application form than the school offered. Parents and carers are advised to accept the school

place offered. Accepting the place will not impact upon the appeals or continuing interest processes.

Parents and carers have until 15 March 2024 to accept their school place.

More information about the allocation process can be found online at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissionsoptions

World’s first pothole preventing robot passes first test with flying colours

An autonomous robot, developed by tech company Robotiz3d and academics at the University of Liverpool in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council Highways Engineers, has passed its first test outside of a lab environment, on the roads of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire yesterday (6 March).

Using state of the art imaging technology the team working on the project have now developed the first Autonomous Road Repair System (ARRES). The project was funded by Innovate UK and other investors.

The ARRES PREVENT robot characterises cracks and potholes and other defects in the road using Artificial Intelligence (AI). It then automatically fills the cracks to keep out surface water, which in turn helps to prevent potholes forming. It has the potential to save time and money as well as reducing the disruption potholes cause to road users.

The brand-new technology could revolutionise the way Hertfordshire and the rest of the world deal with potholes and issues with road surfaces in the future.

The new prototype vehicle has now successfully completed its first live trial in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire where cracks were filled to prevent potholes forming. The next step will be further trials to refine the vehicle ahead of full production of the ARRES PREVENT robot alongside work on a larger version of the machine capable of fixing a wider range of defects. This piece of kit is the first of its kind in the world and has been in development since 2020.

CLlr Eric Buckmaster, March 2024

