

UNAPPROVED DRAFT1

Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Ordinary Meeting
Tuesday 7th January 2025 at 7.30pm in Widford Village Hall



PRESENT: Cllr Mike Allen (MA) Chair; Cllr Josh Warren (JW); Cllr Mark Rome (MR)

Two members of the public, PCSO Leon De Bruyn

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.35pm.

ACTION

25.001 To receive and approve apologies for absence

1. Councillors: Cllr Ian Collins (away) **ACCEPTED**
2. Others: Cllr Eric Buckmaster, Gilda Deterding

25.002 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

1. Interests

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

2. Dispensation requests:

None

25.003 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 5th November 2024 are a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes

Clerk/MA

25.004 Police report

PCSO De Bruyn attended the meeting and commented further to his written report reproduced below.

The rural police team is under pressure because of officer shortages due to retirement etc. The level of crime has not changed very much in the last year. Incidence of hare coursing and poaching remain high in rural areas. Crop damage caused by vehicles driving on fields and the theft of farm machinery have also increased. Speed checks continue to be carried out in the Buntingford area. Herts Connected continues to be promoted as an excellent way to create a network for information sharing and crime trends awareness. It also helps in setting policing priorities.

Written Crime Report for November:

Anstey: No reports

Albury: 1 x commercial fly tip

Braughing: No reports

Eastwick & Gilston: Theft of motor vehicle

Hunsdon: 1 x criminal damage to crops by vehicle driving on to fields

Little Hadham: No reports

Much Hadham: No reports

Standon & Puckeridge: 1 x theft of motor vehicle; 1 x attempted theft of ladders from motor vehicle; 1 x criminal damage to crops by vehicle driving on fields

Wareside: 3 x criminal damage to crops by driving on fields

Widford: No reports

Other news and updates:

As expected at this time of year, there has been a slight upward trend across the county in crimes such as shed break ins or theft from motor vehicles. Please always ensure doors and windows are always closed and locked, and do not leave any valuables on display or tools in vans.

On two occasions this past month, during evening patrols, officers from the East Herts Neighbourhood Policing Team have been involved in identifying and recovering two stolen vehicles, with arrests being made. Our teams have also been carrying out vehicle speed checks in local hotspot areas, with drivers exceeding the speed limit being spoken to and/or reported to our Cameras, Tickets and Collisions Department.

If you need to report a crime in progress, please call 999, for all other please use 101 or online reporting <https://www.herts.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

The Herts Connected system delivers Hertfordshire police’s crime alerts. Registered local residents can receive the latest crime or emergency updates and alerts, as well as information about policing events in your area. Local residents can get involved in helping to make their local area a safer place, tell us what police should be doing in their area, shape the initiatives that help to keep people and property safe, and tell us what matters are causing local communities harm.

The more residents that register, the better informed and safer our communities will be. We would be most grateful if you could continue to share the link below in any parish communications, and especially on social media, to encourage as many local residents as possible to sign up.

<https://www.hertsconnected.co.uk/>

Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Additional Crime Prevention Advice can be found via this link:

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

The Chairman thanked PCSO De Bruyn for attending and he left the meeting at 7.50pm

24.005 Chairman’s announcements

The Chairman said that Christmas and the New Year had been a relatively quiet period and that he did not have very much to report at the present time.

MA

25.006 Reports by County and District Councillors

District Cllr David Andrews did not send a report.

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

25.007 Planning

1. New Applications:

<p>3/24/1920/HH 3/24/1924/LBC</p>	<p>Ashbourne Manor: Retrospective for demolition of collapsing masonry retaining wall around the garage and reconstruction to match existing, with reinforced concrete structure all concealed behind facing brickwork to match the brickwork removed. Alterations to garage side windows. RESOLVED: No objections</p>
<p>3/24/2232/FUL</p>	<p>The Green Man: Change of use of land to residential, erection of dwelling with basement incorporating solar panels and air source heat pump with associated access, car parking and amenity space. RESOLVED: To object due to inappropriate over development of the site.</p>

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

3/24/0926/FUL: Adams Barn, Hunsdon Road. Change of use, agricultural to residential.

REFUSED

3/24/1844/HH and 1845/HH: 5 Nether Street. Replacement front windows and door

GRANTED

- 3/23/2283/OUT: Land south of Levenage Lane: Outline for 4 dwellings: **APPEALED** Appeal allowed with conditions
- 3/24/1495/FUL: Land at Bourne Lane: Change of use to glamping site Awaited
- 3/24/1356/LBC: Ashbourne Manor. Alterations to property. Awaited
- 3/24/1031/HH: Ashbourne Manor. Extension to single storey garage. Awaited
- 3/19/1045/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. Re 3/24/1495/FUL: It was noted that Cllr David Andrews is pursuing with EH Planning Enforcement actions already taken by developer.
2. Noted: Places for People invitation to attend the Community Working Group session on the Village Masterplan: Eastwick & Gilston Village Hall, 30th January 2025, 18:00 - 20:30

25.008 Finance

1. Report of the Council's accounts to 30th November 2024

	£
Finance Summary to 30th November	
Opening cashbook balance 31st October	41,578.07
Plus: income to 30 th November	263.00
Minus: expenditure to 30 th November	<u>2,134.82</u>
Balance available to Council at 30th November (cashbook balance)	39,706.25
Unpresented cheques/payments	<u>0.00</u>
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 30th November	<u>39,706.25</u>

RESOLVED: that the Accounts Statement to 30th November 2024 be approved.

2. Bank reconciliation 30th November 2024

Cashbook balance £39,706.25 Unity Bank balance £39,706.25

RESOLVED: to agree the bank reconciliation as presented

3. Performance vs budget to 30th November 2024

The Clerk's detailed report on the performance vs budget to 30th November was received.

Income: Budget £17,145 Performance to 30th Nov £18,210 Forecast £18,210

Expenditure: Budget £28,605 Performance to 30th Nov £12,120 Forecast £22,838

The income/expenditure surplus to date is £5,240 against -£11,460 deficit budgeted.

The income/expenditure deficit forecast is -£4,628 against -£11,460 deficit budgeted.

Summary: Opening bank balance 01/04/24 £33,842

Forecast income to 31/03/25 £18,210

Forecast expenditure to 31/03/25 £22,838

Forecast bank balance 31/03/25 £29,214

RESOLVED: The performance report to 30th November 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
H Giles reimburse	Village Archive Find my Past subs	169.99	
H Giles reimburse	Village Archive Google Drive subs	79.99	
Clerk reimburse	MS365 annual licence	79.99	
TP Jones & Co	Payroll quarterly	64.40	10.73
Mrs J English	Litterpicking January 10 of 12	150.00	
Clerk	Expenses December-January	18.65	
Clerk	Salary January	479.96	
HMRC	PAYE January	120.00	
Recoverable VAT included			£10.73

5. Internal Audit fee increase

RESOLVED: To accept Accountancy & Book-Keeping Services fee increase of approximately 20% to approximately £120 for the 2024/25 internal audit.

6. Budget and Precept 2025/26

A revised draft budget, precept and 3-year forecast presented by the Clerk was considered.

RESOLVED: To accept the budget as presented: Income £18,565; Expenditure £29,612; Deficit £-11,047; Forecast bank balance 31/03/2026 £18,167. Expenditure includes provision for a one-off grant of £7,500 towards new play area equipment.

RESOLVED: To set the precept at £17,500 (an increase of £1,000 on 2024/25). Assuming a £500 per annum precept increase for 2026/27 and 2027/28. The Clerk, Chairman and two councillors signed the 2025/26 EHC Precept Form.

Clerk

It was noted that income and expenditure for 2026/27 and beyond must be carefully monitored and controlled. The forecast deficit for 2026/27 is £3,580 and for 2027/28 £3,415

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

- D Andrews: issues relating to glamping site (25.007.3(i))
- Parishioner: Concerns about simultaneous road closures in Hunsdon and Wareside (25.011.2.3)
- Places for People: Invitation to the V1MP Community Working Group 4 (25.007.3.2)
- Community Working Group session on the Village 1 Masterplan.

25.010 Village Reports

1. Village Hall

1. The lighting and emergency exit lighting has been upgraded to LED.

2. Playing Field

1. The Chairman reported that the grass continues to be cut regularly. The Boxing Day hockey match was a great day with a big turn out and raised £120.

MA

3. Allotments

1. Nothing to report

IC

4. Closed Churchyard.

1. No issues reported.

IC

2.011 Highways, Footpaths and byways

1. Footpaths and PRoW.

1. FP1; Stile replacement remains with Nicholas Maddex and will be done in due course.
2. Nether Street kissing gate: repairs to the rotted post, step and rail are in hand with Nicholas Maddex.
3. FP 6, 7, 16, 18: Trimming of overhanging vegetation is on the contractor's to do list.

2. Highways and footways

1. Abbots Lane blocked gully: This has now been resolved.
2. Update on Enforcement issues by Greenacres: Ongoing. No progress noted.
3. Notice of simultaneous road closures in Hunsdon and Wareside: Upon investigation it was noted that the notice was a clerical error by Herts Highways Works Dept and therefore will not happen.

MA

3. Other parish matters and concerns: None noted

25.012 Benningfield Green

1. No current issues noted.

Clerk

- 25.013 **Village Archive**
No report received. Renewal of Archivist’s subscriptions noted.
- 25.014 **Urgent matters** received too late for inclusion on this agenda:
None received.

The meeting was not suspended for further public comments.

25.015 **Items for future agendas:** None noted

25.016 **Date of next Parish Council Ordinary Meeting**
Tuesday March 4th 2025, 7.30pm in the Village Hall.
Noted: Cllr Mark Rome will be away for that meeting.

Clerk/MA

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.00pm.

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

APPENDIX A

E Buckmaster County Councillor Report January 2025

Hertfordshire’s bus network to benefit from further Bus Service Improvement Plan investment

Hertfordshire’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is to benefit from a further £11million following a recent announcement from the Department for Transport (DfT).
Over the last three years the county’s BSIP has allowed the bus network, supported through the Intalink Enhanced Partnership, to grow and develop. The original £29.7million fund has resulted in significant improvements including new services, more frequent buses, changes to fares and ticketing, and updates to customer information points and bus shelters.
This has led to a 18% increase in Hertfordshire residents ditching the car and travelling by bus since 2022, according to figures provided by the DfT.
The funding has been used across a variety of projects. These have included new services and increased frequency to routes into and out of Hertford, Stevenage, St Albans, Hemel Hempstead and Watford as well as the surrounding areas. Rural communities in north and east Hertfordshire and Dacorum have also seen the launch of the uber-style on demand bus service HertsLynx.
A reduced travel offer for all ages has been introduced through the Hertfordshire SaverCard and Intalink Connect ticketing scheme, allowing users to benefit from discounted fares.
Customers are now able to stay in touch with real time service information through the Intalink mobile app as well as 150 new real time electronic departure screens that will be in place by March 2025.
A number of community shelters have been designed and delivered around the county working with local communities. Further shelters are being introduced early next year.

Smallford: £1.4m to look at feasibility of site for solar farm

council officials are to investigate a new site for a solar farm in Smallford
– after surveys suggested the original site considered for the project “must be protected at all costs”.
Hertfordshire County Council had initially earmarked the former Smallford Pit as a possible site for a proposed 22MW solar farm. But on Monday (2 December) a meeting of the council’s cabinet was told that ecological habitats “of extremely high value” have been found there. The council is now looking to develop the solar farm on two smaller council-owned sites, which adjoin the original Smallford Pit site, instead. The proposed solar farm is part of the county council’s commitment to become carbon neutral ‘in its own operations’ by 2030.

Hertfordshire County Council is pleased to announce a landmark achievement in housing development, marking the highest number of new homes built in any year since 2001.

In the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, councils across Hertfordshire delivered 5,387 new homes. This remarkable milestone underscores the County Council's commitment to addressing the housing needs of residents. One of the highlights of this achievement is the focus on affordability. An impressive 30% of the gross new homes are affordable, catering to a range of needs: 864 affordable rent units; 389 shared equity units; 376 social rent units; 16 intermediate units.
Equally noteworthy is Hertfordshire’s dedication to sustainable development, with 68% of these new

homes constructed on brownfield land, showcasing the County's commitment to regenerating underused areas and minimising impact on green spaces.

Looking ahead, the future of housing in Hertfordshire continues to thrive. There are currently 27,448 homes with planning permission set to be built in the coming years, ensuring that the momentum in housing growth is maintained. Large scale projects include Harlow Gilston Garden Town, Hemel Garden Communities, Growing Baldock town expansion and Brookfield in Cheshunt, and it's these developments that will contribute to the county's target to build 100,000 homes over the next decade.

In addition, Hertfordshire Property Partnership (HPP) has secured over £2.6 million in Brownfield Land Release Fund support from the government's One Public Estate programme. These funds will be utilised across seven sites in the county, with two projects already completed and the remaining five expected to deliver approximately 662 homes. All of these projects are integral parts of the ongoing regeneration efforts in Hertfordshire.

Reducing Infant Deaths linked to unsafe sleeping practices

Over the past two years, Hertfordshire's Safeguarding Children's Partnership, NHS Trusts, ICS, midwifery, health visitors, children's services, and family centre services have collaborated to reduce unexpected infant deaths due to co-sleeping. Expectant and new parents can have at least 25 interactions with health, social care, and family support professionals during pregnancy and in the first 3 months of pregnancy. Each of these interactions is an opportunity to discuss safer sleeping and inform parents of key safety messages. A Hertfordshire **Safer Sleeping Framework** has been developed, based on local research that involved nearly 200 professionals. This framework identifies key actions for organisations, services, managers, and frontline staff to ensure the timely and accurate sharing of safer sleeping advice. It highlights simple actions for parents to support safer sleeping practices at home and away.

Hertfordshire's key safe sleeping message is: ***"The safest place for a baby to sleep is in their own clear, flat, separate sleep space, such as a cot or Moses basket. If bedsharing, consider all risks: ensure the baby is on their back, in a clear space, and DO NOT co-sleep if you or your partner smoke, drink alcohol, take drugs, or any medication that makes you drowsy."*** A reminder that Hertfordshire's Stop Smoking service has information and support available at [Stop Smoking Service | Hertfordshire County Council](#). If you would like a copy of the Safer Sleeping Framework, please email dee.debruin1@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

Camera enforcement goes live at the junction of Adderley Road with The Causeway, Bishop's Stortford
County Council are introducing automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) enforcement cameras at the yellow box junction of Adderley Road with The Causeway, Bishop's Stortford, from Tuesday 10 December at 10am.

Yellow box junctions are put in place at busy junctions to aid the flow of through traffic. New signage has been installed on the approaches to the junction warning road users of the cameras and advising to not enter the yellow box unless the exit is clear.

The changes that have been made to the junction in Bishop's Stortford aim to improve vehicle movement and the flow of traffic around the town. A particular focus is on the reliability of bus services which travel through the centre of Bishop's Stortford and onto, or from, destinations such as the hospital and train station.

Drivers will be issued with a warning letter for the first six months for a first contravention and for subsequent contraventions a penalty charge notice (PCN) will be issued of £70, £35 if paid within 14 days. The Department for Transport announced in June 2021 that councils would be able to apply for the legal powers to enforce moving traffic contraventions. This is the third of four initial schemes in the un-attended camera enforcement programme, meaning that a PCN can be issued to drivers who make banned right turns, fail to observe no entry restrictions, drive in mandatory cycle lanes or occupy yellow box junctions

Hertfordshire roads are in good shape says Department for Transport

A report from the Department for Transport (DfT) published (17 December) into road conditions in England for the year ending March 2024, has shown that Hertfordshire's A, B and C roads are in better condition than the national average.

The DfT statistical release, which has been produced annually since 2007/8, shows that in 2024 the number of roads in England classified as needing maintenance was 4% of 'A' roads, 7% of 'B' and 'C' roads, and 17% of unclassified roads. This compares to figures for Hertfordshire of 3% of 'A' roads, 4% of 'B' and 'C' roads and 18% of unclassified roads needing maintenance. The DfT report acknowledges that data for unclassified roads is less robust than for classified roads and can show greater yearly fluctuations. Between 2021/22 and 2024/25, an extra £36.9m of funding has been committed to Hertfordshire's Highways above the annual core budget. This funding has been used on projects covering surfacing and potholes, drainage and routine maintenance. In addition, the council's Invest To Improve (i2i) programme committed £29m to improve the unclassified road network.

The wet and cold weather that has been experienced over the last two years has made the task of

maintaining the county's roads more challenging. The winter season of 2022/23 was a particularly cold one, with our gritters called out on 78 runs compared to an average of 56, while the twelve months to the end of October 2024 saw 45% more rainfall across Hertfordshire than average, with the Environment Agency deeming this exceptionally high, its highest rating.

Highways performance to October 2024

- 14,809 potholes repaired
- £1.6m spent on drainage issues
- £25.3m spent on surfacing
- £2.2m spent on Enhanced maintenance, to include road marking, vegetation cut-back, litter picking on fast roads, pedestrian guard rails and sign cleaning.

This activity is up to October, and the service anticipates 100% of programmes being completed by the end of the financial year, subject to weather etc.

Hertfordshire Transport and Traffic data 2024

Highlights:

1. Traffic increase: Hertfordshire's roads saw a 2.4% increase in traffic in 2023 compared to the previous year.
2. Recovery from pandemic: Traffic levels in 2023 are just 2.6% below pre-pandemic 2019 levels, with major roads (motorways and A roads) nearly back to normal, showing only a 0.1% decrease.
3. Fewer vans and lorries: The number of vans and lorries on the roads in 2023 decreased by 0.8% and 12.4% respectively, compared to pre-pandemic 2019.
4. Cycling: 10.8% of Hertfordshire residents cycled at least once per week in 2023, higher than the England average of 10.1%.
5. Walking: 32.5% of Hertfordshire residents walked at least five times per week in 2023, surpassing the England average of 31.8%.
6. Traffic concerns: A 2023 survey revealed that 75% of people want to see less traffic in their area.
7. Bus usage up: Bus passenger journeys in Hertfordshire increased by 19% in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.
8. Rail travel rise: Rail passenger journeys in Hertfordshire rose by 33% in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.
9. Petrol car registrations: New petrol car registrations increased by 9% in 2023, reversing the previous downward trend.
10. Electric cars: In Hertfordshire, 2.3% of licensed cars are fully electric (UK average is 2.8%)

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service welcomes its newest firefighters

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service welcomed its newest firefighters to the service on Friday 13 December 2024 during a special pass out parade held at Longfield Training and Development Centre.

Six firefighters graduated following an intensive 16 week training course at the parade which was attended by their friends and family, as well as senior leaders and dignitaries. Chief Fire Officer Alex Woodman and Councillor Morris Bright, Executive Member for Public Health & Community Safety at Hertfordshire County Council inspected the trainees on the drill yard, before watching their display drills and presenting certificates to them.

The 16 week training course* included:

- Firecraft (hose running, pump operating, ladder pitching/climbing, knot tying).
- Breathing Apparatus - the most demanding module on the training course (involving irrespirable atmosphere, no visibility, having to use new skills to safely search a room, casualty handling, making rescue from inside compartments).
- Fire Behaviour training (practical branch techniques, theoretical knowledge on fire behaviour – upper and lower limits of flammability, fire phenomena – backdraft, flashover and fire gas explosions, tactical ventilation).
- Road Traffic Collision – cutting/rescue techniques, safe systems of work, vehicle hazards.
- Immediate Emergency Care – trauma training, basic life support (CPR) haemorrhage control.
- Technical rescue – including safe working at height and water rescue.

Wednesday 22 January 2025 is Clean Air Night, when we will be helping to spark a conversation about the health harms of air pollution from wood burning in Hertfordshire.

Up to now, it's been easy to associate the glow of a fire or wood burner with cosiness, but recent evidence shows that air pollution from wood burning is bad for your health. Wood burning smoke contains fine particle air pollution (PM2.5), which enters your bloodstream when inhaled and causes heart and lung disease, diabetes, and dementia.

Clean Air Night is an opportunity to learn the facts about wood burning and share what you've learned with

your friends, family and community to ensure everyone can make informed decisions about how to heat their homes.

We will be taking part in Clean Air Night by sharing messages on social media and starting conversations on wood burning and the health implications, and you can join us!

This Clean Air Night (22 January 2025), get involved by:

- Learning the facts about wood burning and how it harms your health and the planet by visiting the [Clean Air Hub](#) and exploring #CleanAirNight
- Sharing what you learn with your family, friends and community to spark conversations about the harms of wood burning and protect everyone's health

There is some great information on the Clean Air Hub that you may find useful in your role as a councillor when talking to residents. Please see the following website for the common myths that surround wood burning and please do get in touch with us directly on cleaner.air@hertfordshire.gov.uk if you have any questions.

[Clean Air Night FAQ's | Global Action Plan](#)

Hertfordshire County Council responds to Government's proposals for devolution and local government reform

Hertfordshire County Council responds to Government's proposals for devolution and local government reform: County Hall 2022 1200x657-4

Hertfordshire County Council has set out its initial response to the Government's White Paper on proposals for devolution and local government.

Richard Roberts, Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, said: "Our top priority will always be ensuring local government in Hertfordshire can provide the best possible services to our residents and support our businesses to grow.

"As an economic powerhouse in its own right, Hertfordshire now needs its own conversation with Government on these important issues.

"Any proposals on devolution and changing local government structures would need to be evidence based, carefully developed, and subject to consultation before being introduced.

"We have not been actively seeking changes to the structure of local government in Hertfordshire, but the Government is now clear it must be explored so it is the responsibility of all local leaders to carefully consider the options available and assess what has the best potential to benefit our residents and businesses.

"Devolution done well can maximise Hertfordshire's many strengths, enabling our communities and businesses to reach their full potential.

"The devolution of powers and funding to local decision makers could enhance our ability to focus on priority areas such as increasing investment in our roads and public transport, providing better access to education and skills, tackling health inequalities and building new homes while protecting our green spaces. "With an economy worth £46bn and population of 1.2m residents, Hertfordshire is an economic powerhouse bigger than many cities and city regions. We have a track record of innovation and are delivering growth in globally important sectors including biosciences, advanced manufacturing, and film and TV production.

"Irrespective of our structures the essential services provided by local government across Hertfordshire still need to be delivered. It is vital that any changes do not negatively impact the capacity and resilience key service areas such as adults and children's social care. We need to ensure our residents are kept safe and cared for.

"Any proposals must also ensure that communities retain their voice and continue to have a say on the issues most important to their local areas.

"This is an historic moment for our county. The views of residents, businesses, local government partners, and other stakeholders across the public and private sectors will be essential in shaping our approach and any proposals would be subject to consultation following discussions with Government."

Devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from the Government in Westminster to local decision makers.

The county council and district and borough councils worked in partnership to develop a formal Expression of Interest in a devolution deal which was submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 18 September 2024.

Local Government Reorganisation is the change of local authority structures. Hertfordshire has a County Council and 10 District and Borough Councils.

The county council has not proposed or discussed any changes to local government structures with the Government.

CLlr Eric Buckmaster, January 2025