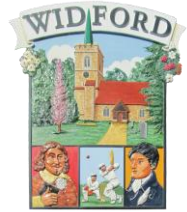


UNAPPROVED DRAFT1

Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Ordinary Meeting
Tuesday 4th March 2025 at 7.30pm in Widford Village Hall



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

Four members of the public, HCC Cllr Eric Buckmaster

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

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

ACTION

25.017 To receive and approve apologies for absence

1. Councillors: Cllr Josh Warren (away); Cllr Mark Rome **ACCEPTED**
2. Others: Cllr Eric Buckmaster, Gilda Deterding

25.018 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

25.019 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 7th January 2025 are a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes

Clerk/MA

25.020 Police report

The following reports were submitted by Herts Neighbourhood Police:

Crime Report January 2025

ALBURY No reported crimes

BRAUGHING 1 X Business burglary 1 x Garage burglary

COLLIERS END 1 X Garage Burglary

EASTWICK & GILSTON No reported crimes

HIGH CROSS 1 X Outbuilding burglary 1 x Theft from a vehicle

HUNSDON No reported crimes

LITTLE HADHAM 1 X Theft from motor vehicle

MUCH HADHAM 2 x shed burglaries 1 x burglary of an unoccupied property

STANDON & PUCKERIDGE 1 X Theft from a motor vehicle; 1 x criminal damage to motor vehicle; 1 x attempted burglary; 1 x dwelling burglary; 1 x shed burglary; 2 x garage burglary

WADESMILL 1 x Theft of number plates

WARESIDE 1 X Theft of number plates; 2 x shed burglaries; 1 x attempted shed burglary

WIDFORD no reported crime

Crime Report February 2025

ALBURY No reported crimes

BRAUGHING 1 X Criminal Damage to a vehicle; 1 x Theft of Fuel from a Lorry.

COLLIERS END No reported crimes.

EASTWICK & GILSTON; 1 x Criminal Damage to Garages 1 X Storage Unit Burglary

HIGH CROSS; 1 X Theft of Number Plates; 1 x Interference of a Motor Vehicle

HUNSDON No reported crimes

LITTLE HADHAM 1 X Theft from motor vehicle 1 X Garage Burglary 1 X Shed Burglary

1 x Wildlife Crime, Dogs worrying livestock.

MUCH HADHAM No Reported Crimes.
 STANDON & PUCKERIDGE 2 X Theft of Number Plates
 THUNDRIDGE 1x Theft of Motor Vehicle.
 WADESMILL 1 x Theft of Parcel from front door. 1 X Attempted garage Burglary
 WARESIDE 1 X Theft of number plates; 2 x shed burglaries; 1 x Theft of Parcel from front door;
 1 x attempted shed burglary
 WIDFORD 1 X Residential Burglary.

Other news and updates:

There has been a significant increase across the county in crimes of burglaries and vehicle crime. Please always ensure doors and windows are always closed and locked, and do not leave any valuables on display or tools in vans.

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/>

Thank you

24.021 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman said that footways by the coalyard and by Meadow Gardens have been cleared and are much improved. It was noted that this was neither arranged nor paid for by the Parish Council. The Hunsdon route will be focussed on next.

The Chairman said he went to the recent Places for People event at Gilston where the first phase of the first village is underway. Traffic along the A414/5th Avenue is going to be disrupted for the next 18 months or so.

Costings for a new village hall roof have raised considerably, but generally things at the Hall are working well with new lighting now installed.

MA

25.022 Reports by County and District Councillors

District Cllr David Andrews did not send a report.

County Cllr Eric Buckmaster's March report is included as Appendix A at the end of these Minutes. It was agreed to defer Cllr Buckmaster's comments until his anticipated arrival a little later in the evening. It was noted that the report emphasised flood alleviation works in Hunsdon Road would cause road closures for a 10 or 11 day period between 10th and 21st March.

25.023 Planning

1. New Applications:

3/24/2335/FUL	The Old Forge RECONSULTATION: Removal and replacement of the roof to commercial unit with rooflight windows. Insert loft floor front window, new side door and infill rear door linking to the attached barn/outbuilding. RESOLVED: No objections
3/25/0231/FUL	Wilmoor: Demolition of outbuilding. Erection of dwelling incorporating air source heat pump, landscaping and creation of access. RESOLVED: No objections

Clerk

Clerk

3/25/0182/FUL	<p>Youngs Little Acre: Retention of a welfare unit and a turkey preparation and storage building.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To object on the following grounds:</p> <p><i>The proposed development is in direct conflict with policy GBR2-I (a-d). The proposal is lacking in construction material detail, traffic movement plans, environmental statement, sustainable drainage or notation stating specific certification required to undertake the business of turkey preparation at the facility.</i></p> <p><i>Policy ED-I states that “sustainable growth and expansion of existing businesses in the rural area will be supported in principle where they are appropriately and sustainably located and do not conflict with other policies within this Plan”. The proposed development is in conflict with other policies and as noted above does not provide sufficient evidence that a business is taking place in the area, especially in a food handling capacity with the associated certification and health and safety guidelines in place.</i></p> <p><i>The proposed development is in conflict with policy VILL3-III (g) The proposed development does not include sustainable drainage, noise generation study or transport movement proposals and therefore may have a detrimental effect on direct neighbours who currently share the access road through to the B1004 Widford Road.</i></p> <p><i>The proposed facility for continued employment falls outside the remit of VILL4.</i></p> <p><i>In principle the proposed application does not provide sufficient evidence that the business of turkey preparation is being undertaken and the construction of supporting structures is compliant with building regulations and the food standards agency along with environmental considerations of such an activity.</i></p>
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Clerk

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

3/24/2232/FUL 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.

WITHDRAWN

3/24/1920/HH & 3/24/1924/LBC: 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.

GRANTED

3/19/1045/OUT Land North of the Stort Valley & A414, Gilston: Outline planning.

GRANTED

3/24/1356/LBC: Ashbourne Manor. Alterations to property.

Awaited

3/24/1031/HH: Ashbourne Manor. Extension to single storey garage.

Awaited

3. Other planning matters, including items received too late for the agenda: NONE

25.024 Finance

1. Report of the Council's accounts to 28th February 2025

Finance Summary to 28 th February	£
Opening cashbook balance 30 th November	39,706.25
Plus: income to 28 th February	0.00
Minus: expenditure to 28 th February	2,931.20
Balance available to Council at 28th February (cashbook balance)	36,775.05
Unpresented cheques/payments	0.00
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 28th February	<u>36,775.05</u>

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

2. Bank reconciliation 28th February 2025

Cashbook balance £36,775.05 Unity Bank balance £36,775.05

RESOLVED: to agree the bank reconciliation as presented

3. Performance vs budget to 28th February 2025

The Clerk's detailed report on the performance vs budget to 28th February was received.

Income: Budget £17,145 Performance to 28th Feb £18,213 Forecast £18,213

Expenditure: Budget £28,605 Performance to 28th Feb £15,850 Forecast £15,986

The income/expenditure surplus to date is £1,262 against -£11,460 deficit budgeted.

The income/expenditure deficit forecast is -£2,227 against -£11,460 deficit budgeted.

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

 Forecast income to 31/03/25 £18,213

 Forecast expenditure to 31/03/25 £16,116

 Forecast bank balance 31/03/25 £35,939

RESOLVED: The performance report to 28th February be accepted as presented.

4. List of payments.

RESOLVED: to approve the list of payments as presented by the Clerk

Clerk

All expenditure made under the General Power of Competence.

		Gross	VAT incl
Mrs J English	Litterpicking February 11 of 12	150.00	
EHDC	Election recharge 2023	54.15	
Clerk	Salary February	479.96	
HMRC	PAYE February	120.00	
Unity Trust Bank	Monthly service charge february	6.00	
Mrs J English	Litterpicking March 12 of 12	150.00	
Clerk	Expenses February-March	18.65	
Clerk	Salary March TBC	479.96	
HMRC	PAYE March TBC	120.00	
TP Jones & Co	Payroll quarterly Jan-March	64.40	10.73
Unity Trust Bank	Monthly service charge March	6.00	
Recoverable VAT included			£10.73

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

- Eric Buckmaster: EHC Call for Sites report (25.023.3.2)
- HCC: TRO26980 notice of road closure (25.027.2.2)
- HCC: Statement on local government reform (25.027.3.1)
- PCC: Section 106 funding enquiry (25.027.3.2)
- PCC: Village Archive plans for new location (25.029.1)

25.026 Village Reports

1. Village Hall

1. Grants are being explored for a new roof, but as the Chairman mentioned in his announcements, costs have risen considerably.

2. Playing Field

1. The Chairman reported that the grass continues to be cut regularly and the field looking good.

MA

3. Allotments

1. No issues to report. The AGM will be held at the end of April

IC

4. Closed Churchyard.

1. Regular maintenance will commence in March. A direct debit payment will be set up as in previous years.

IC/Clerk

2.027 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, who has confirmed that all which are HCC's responsibility are currently safe.
3. FP 6, 7, 16, 18: Trimming of overhanging vegetation has been done and is looking good.

IC

2. Highways and footways

1. Update on Enforcement issues by Greenacres: Ongoing. No progress noted.
2. TRO26980 various road closure notices, including the B1004, was noted.

MA

3. Other parish matters and concerns

1. The HCC statement on local government reform was noted.
2. The PCC's notice of possibly relocating the Village Archive within the church's renovation plans was noted. There will be further discussions on this as the plans and proposals are progressed. The Parish Council confirmed with EHC that there are no current Section 106 funds available for the church project.

8.33pm: Cllr Eric Buckmaster arrived, with apologies for being late.

25.028 Benningfield Green

1. No current issues noted. It was agreed to remove this item from future agendas until further notice.

Clerk

25.029 Village Archive

The PCC's plans mentioned in 25.027.3.2 were noted.

25.030 Urgent matters received too late for inclusion on this agenda:

None received.

The meeting was not suspended for further public comments.

25.031 Items for future agendas: None noted

25.032 Dates of next meetings (all in the Village Hall)

1. Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate (not a Parish Council meeting) April 8th at 7.30pm
2. Annual Parish Council Meeting Tuesday May 6th at 7pm, followed by:
3. Ordinary Parish Council Meeting Tuesday May 6th at 7.30pm approximately

Clerk/MA

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.14pm.

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

APPENDIX A

Eric Buckmaster County Councillor Report February 2025

New Signs for Acorn Street and Church Lane

The Acorn Street signs were due 12th February. Disappointingly and annoyingly the Traffic Management Van broke down. Church Lane are due 3rd March. It may be possible to do all of it now under one closure.

Drainage Investigation Works 10th of March to 21st March. Please see the attached plan of proposed area to investigate the surface water drainage system under road closure.

We will carry out the road closure in 3 phases

- Acorn Street (from High street to Hempstalls Close)
- High Street (west of Acorn Street)
- High Street (East of Acorn Street)

As states, the dates are 10th of March to 21st March. **This will be Monday to Friday 9:30am to 15:30pm. Road will be opened outside of these hours**

2025/26 Drainage Works

Acorn Street, Hunsdon, SG12 8PG. (Spellers House) Phase 2. Drainage Scheme 24

Hunsdon 3U180/10 Hunsdonbury Lane B180 To C15 Acorn St DRN230001-3 DRS Qtr-1 - -

Acorn Street, Hunsdon, SG12 8PG. (Spellers House) Phase 2. Drainage Scheme 24

Hunsdon C15/15 Church Lane 40mph Signs To U180 Nine Ashes DRN230001-3 DRS Qtr-1 -

Acorn Street, Hunsdon, SG12 8PG. (Spellers House) Phase 2. Drainage Scheme 24

Hunsdon C15/20 Acorn Street Church Lane to Hempstalls Close DRN230001-3 DRS Qtr-1 -

A year of events and activities as Hertfordshire Libraries turn 100

Hertfordshire County Council have announced the first in a series of events set to take place over the next year across all the county's 46 libraries to celebrate 100 years of the libraries service in Hertfordshire.

The programme of events has been created in collaboration with Hertfordshire's residents and library users and includes celebrations of literature and poetry, events for children, young people and families, theatre, comedy and much more. The year-long celebrations have been made possible through a successful funding bid to Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants, for Marking a Milestone: 100 years of reading, discovery and connection.

Celebrations will begin at a launch event on Friday 28 February, marking exactly 100 years since the establishment of the countywide library service. The evening at Welwyn Garden City Library will feature speeches, an interactive session with a local artist, and the unveiling of the touring exhibition exploring the rich history of Hertfordshire libraries.

The events programme has been created in collaboration with residents who were asked what they most wanted to see as part of the celebrations. Responding to feedback from Baby Rhyme Time audiences, 10 libraries will host 'A Tale of Us' in 2025 for new and returning 'Rhyme Time' families. 'A Tale of Us' is a new play for parents, carers and their babies which celebrates the wonder, joys, and challenges of becoming a new parent. Residents who asked for more family theatre events will be pleased that the 'Big Herts Hero Hunt' will tour eight libraries throughout 2025. This interactive theatre show for families explores Hertfordshire's wonderful heritage and invites children to discover the heroes of the future.

And those who wanted to explore the history of Hertfordshire will be able to visit a travelling exhibition from March 2025, alongside screenings of the 'Through the Decades' video commissioned as part of the centenary celebrations which brings 100 years of Hertfordshire's library service to life.

Other events and activities include:

- on Tuesday 4 March
- An evening with comedian and author Robin Ince at Hitchin Library on Thursday 6 March
- A 100-day Poetry Festival launching on Thursday 13 March featuring a poetry competition, interactive poetry workshops and open-mic nights
- A sharing of 'The Tree of Life', a new piece of children's dance theatre by award winning Sanskruti Dance company at Hertford Library on Wednesday 12 March
- In Conversation with John Connolly, multi-bestselling author of the thrilling Charlie Parker series at St Albans Library on Thursday 8 May
- A chance to take part in 'Herts Big Read' where libraries will recommend 10 titles each month to read and vote for your favourite.

provision in Hertfordshire is strong, and pupils achieve well.

An annual review of performance and standards in all Hertfordshire's schools and early

years settings analysed inspection outcomes of schools along with academic outcomes achieved by Hertfordshire's children and young people.

The 2024 school performance data was presented to county councillors at Hertfordshire County Council's Education, Libraries and Lifelong learning panel on Friday 31 January. Hertfordshire is rising above the national average in relation **to schools judged to be good or outstanding at their last inspection, with 91.9% of schools achieving this rating compared with the national average of 90.4%.**

Importantly, all schools maintained by the local authority have achieved a good or outstanding rating and no schools in Hertfordshire were judged to be inadequate by Ofsted in the last year.

The data analysis also indicates that, at every key stage, Hertfordshire's children and young people are achieving better educational outcomes than the national average, placing Hertfordshire County Council in the top 40% of all local authorities. The achievements of Hertfordshire's young people, at key stages four (GCSEs) and five (A Levels) are in the top 20% for most headline measures.

Changes to car parking charges and revenues for Sawbridgeworth and Stanstead Abbots as agreed by East Herts Executive

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Hertfordshire County Council Leader statement on local government reform

Like all councils in two-tier areas, Hertfordshire County Council has received a [statutory invitation from the Government](#) to submit proposals for the reorganisation of local government structures in the county. The letter sets out the criteria to be considered and the timescale, including for initial plans to be submitted in March and full proposals in November.

This follows the publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December last year which set out the Government's intention for all areas of the country to be covered by an elected Mayor and all two-tier areas like Hertfordshire, to be reorganised into single tier unitary authorities.

Cllr Richard Roberts, Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, said: "As the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council I am ambitious for our county and our country.

"Hertfordshire is England's county of opportunity and I am determined to make sure it continues to be a great place to live, work and invest.

"My priority remains to ensure that any changes benefit Hertfordshire's residents and businesses, maintains our excellent local government services, and enables strong democratic accountability to our communities.

"The Government's plans represent the biggest transformation of local government and public services for half a century. The impact will be felt for generations to come and the timescales they have set present a significant demand on all councils in Hertfordshire.

"With financial and staffing pressures on every council in the county I am concerned about the need to now balance continuing to provide high-quality services with the significant work required to prepare proposals for new council structures.

"I also recognise there are currently differing views on the future model for local government in Hertfordshire. I am committed to working together with district and borough councils to find the best way to protect and enhance services to our residents, support our businesses to grow, and provide value for money.

"All 11 councils in Hertfordshire, with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, are already collaborating to develop a shared evidence base to inform the options available to our county. We will now carefully consider the Government's request and jointly develop our response.

"This work is at an early stage and the views of residents, businesses, local government partners, our colleagues, and other stakeholders across the public and private sectors will be essential as it develops. We are also committed to providing updates at every step.

"I have not been actively seeking changes to the structure of local government in Hertfordshire, but the Government is now clear that keeping the status quo is not an option.

“Unlike some areas, Hertfordshire County Council did not ask Government to delay this year’s elections nor apply for the fast-track devolution priority programme. This was to allow as much time as possible to gather and analyse the necessary information to develop proposals and build consensus where possible. It was also to ensure that the local democratic cycle was not interrupted at this vital and historic moment for our County. The negotiation of this significant change with the government requires a depth of understanding, engagement and delivery based on an honest electoral mandate and we will uphold that with elections on May 1st

Almost £900,000 confiscated from counterfeit AirPods seller: Seized AirPods cropped Hertfordshire County Council’s Trading Standards service has successfully applied to have £897,841.43 confiscated from Mr Adam Owen, of Oaktree Meadows, Horncastle, the owner of an online retailer offering counterfeit AirPods for sale.

Luton Crown Court ordered the money to be confiscated under proceeds of crime legislation, following Mr Owen’s conviction in January 2024.

Following a successful investigation by county council Trading Standards officers, Mr Owen pleaded guilty at St Albans Magistrates Court on 22 November 2023 to offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994, namely that his company ARO Commerce Ltd which traded as Geekswag.co.uk had both sold, and also had in their possession for future sale, approximately 10,000 units of counterfeit Apple AirPods.

Mr Owen received a two-year suspended prison sentence and 180 hours community service in January 2024. He now has three months to pay the confiscated sum or serve a default prison sentence of up to seven years.

The majority of the confiscated money will go to the Home Office, but a portion of the funds will go to the county council to offset the cost of the prosecution, and compensate six victims for their losses.

Countryside Management Service - 50 Years.

In 2025 the Countryside Management Service (CMS) celebrates 50 years. Throughout 2025 selected projects and activities will be amplified to draw attention to this significant anniversary. The Team plan to use the Investing in Volunteers Celebration planned for the 13th February ’25 as a jumping off point for this birthday celebration.

The Countryside Management Service came about at an interesting time for the country. 1949 had seen significant, post-war government initiatives – the NHS, National Insurance and for the environmental sector, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (the genesis of the Public Rights of Way system and powers to declare Local Nature Reserves). Further forwards came the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1968 giving Local Authorities the power to create Country Parks.

It is this back-drop that prompted Hertfordshire County Council in partnership with the Countryside Commission (today Natural England) to experiment with the concept of countryside management. This experiment focussed on the urban fringe of Hertfordshire and Barnet – the “Green Belt Management Project”. The Hertfordshire County Structure Plan was being authored at the time; Hertfordshire was seeing unprecedented growth, Dutch Elm Disease was leading to landscape decline due to widespread tree felling and, with more leisure time and mobility the population sought to explore their local countryside but found Public Rights of Way (PRoW) impassable.

The experiment expanded more widely across Hertfordshire, eventually becoming county wide. The 1st Structure Plan 10 Year Review references the success of this expanding initiative including the creation of recreation sites, clearance of PRoW, woodland management, tree planting and other conservation improvements. It noted also that the promotion of this activity was encouraging others to follow suit. One specific quote highlights the public participation opportunities this new Service presented. “Particularly encouraging has been the large number of volunteers who are willing to help.”

The Service has continued to evolve its model to become a shared service (HCC hosted and part funded by some District and Borough Councils) delivering through discipline-based Teams. More recently merged with the Public Rights of Way service to become Countryside & Rights of Way. This to maximise opportunities for delivering Land Management,

Community Engagement, Rights of Way improvement and Walking for Health for Hertfordshire residents. The original objectives have been simplified to “Engaging communities in improving their environment for Wildlife and People”. The outcomes appear more relevant today than they did at the CMS inception 50 years ago.

Youth COP for schools

On 11th February I helped host a Youth COP (Conference of Parties)

We have already been receiving positive feedback and thanks from participants and exhibitors. The enthusiasm from the students continued throughout the day and the careers fair/ seminar was busy with students having worthwhile conversations.

We welcomed:

- 25 secondary schools
- 4 further education colleges
- Approx. 115 students
- 21 exhibitors (businesses, organisations, educational institutions)
- Organised in partnership with North Hertfordshire College and University of Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire

The day included the EnRoads Climate Simulation module that enabled students to see the impacts of decision making by nations, Developed and Developing Countries, big business, and the competing interests that can result in progress being much slower than it needs to be to contain global warming.

Cllr Eric Buckmaster, March 2025

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