

RAMSBURY & AXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council: Alice Charlwood, c/o Council Office, Memorial Hall, High Street, Ramsbury
Telephone: 01672 520045 parishcouncil@ramsbury.org

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 20th May 2024 in Ramsbury Memorial Hall at 7.45pm.

Present

S Glass (SG) Chairman,
D Barnett (DB) Vice Chair
C Morgan (CM)
G Hawes (GH),
L Jauncey (LJ),
M Waugh (MW),

B Murray (BM)
E Hodgson (EH),
H Lloyd (HL),
D Gill (DG)
R Greasley (RG)
A Charlwood (Clerk)

1 member of the public was present
Cllr. James Sheppard was also present

1. Reading of the Notice Convening the Meeting

AC read the notice convening the meeting.

2. Welcome by the Chairman

SG welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. Apologies for absence – were received from D Edwards, M Tester, and A Foale.

4. Adoption of minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2023

The minutes of this meeting were approved. **Prop. LJ; Sec. EH. All agreed**

5. Matters Arising - None

6. Chairman's report

Sheila Glass

Last year was an active year including as it did, among other things, a Coronation which we celebrated with mugs for schoolchildren and cream teas under the tree.

We had the war memorial cleaned and names added - particularly pertinent with the D-Day 80 celebrations upcoming venture, and Bob Foale made a beautiful new gate for the garden.

White gates were installed at Whittonditch as a speed mitigating measure.

The first of what we hope will be a series of capital projects in the village, refurbishment of the redundant toilet block into a community space, was planned and carried out during the year and thanks are due to Roger Greasley and Ron Young for their help. Carty's proved to be excellent contractors and the project was delivered in a reasonable timescale. Ramsbury Community Charity Shop became the first tenant in January, so we are now receiving rent. We are currently investigating improving pavements as the next large project.

We instigated a new form of Christmas lighting in the Square which went down very well, and we shall try to improve it for next year.

The long, wet winter led to flooding in various parts of the village - details of the part we played in helping residents are included in the report from the Chairman of the Emergency Committee. We are continuing to follow up on lessons learned and are making arrangements for next winter. Wilts Council cleared a few completely blocked gullies, and we are continuing to report such problems in order to mitigate problems next winter.

We had two resignations this year. Ron Young resigned as a Councillor. We were very sorry to see him go, and I'd like to thank him for all the work he did for the council over many years. His leaving creates a vacancy which we can fill by co-option but so far we have had no applications for the post. Maureen Palmer resigned as the Parish Council rep on the Parish Charities trustees - this after 25 years. I would like to thank her for those years of service. I'm happy to say that Erica Hodgson has volunteered to take her place and has in fact already attended a meeting of the Trustees.

There were two police surgeries in the Lychgate room in the last year, neither of which attracted any attendees - which either means that no-one has any problems - which I doubt - or that we need to come up with another format, about which I am liaising with Melissa Camilleri our local PCSO.

At meetings we discussed bike jumps, horses on Spring Hill, dropped kerbs at Isles Court, vandalism, 20mph speed limit, parking in the village and dog poo - the old ones are always the best.

In compiling this report, I became aware of one or two items which have dropped off the radar so I will endeavour to remedy these omissions in the near future. We are still working on a village database - Di Barnett is doing a great job recording data as we receive it, but we still have way to go.

Finally, as ever, my thanks to all the Councillors who give their time to keep things running smoothly.

7. Committee Reports

(i) Finance Committee

Erica Hodgson

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2023/2024:

	ACTUALS APR 2023-MARCH 2024	BUDGET ASSIGNED 2023-2024	% of BUDGET
<u>INCOME</u>			
Annual precept and top-up grant	£69,945.00	£69,945.00	100%
Grants, prizes, donations to PC	£0.00	£0.00	
Community Space rental	£600.00	£0.00	
Allotments income	£600.00	£600.00	100%
Sales	£1,053.00	£150.00	702%
Bank interest	£2,286.09	£0.00	
TOTAL INCOME	£74,484.09	£70,695.00	105%
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>			
Capital Projects	£45,005.31	£31,600.00	142%
Committee Expenditure	£1,096.16	£4,055.00	27%
Events Expenses	£1,246.94	£2,030.00	61%
General Administration	£11,376.97	£10,620.00	107%
Grants to village organisations	£5,220.95	£5,430.00	96%
Insurance, legal & professional fees	£2,221.42	£3,950.00	56%
Public conveniences	£3,527.68	£4,450.00	79%
Upkeep of village facilities	£7,568.22	£7,810.00	97%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£77,263.65	£69,945.00	110%

This financial year we applied for and were granted a precept of £69,945.00. In addition to this we received income from the rental of the Community Space, sales of Coronation mugs and substantial bank interest (£2286.09). The precept we requested was equivalent to the one received in 2022, recognising the financial pressures being faced by many people in addition to the healthy funds held by the Parish Council.

Our expenditure this year was significant (£77,263.65), with the majority of this being spent on renovating the Public Conveniences and creating the Community Space. We had ring fenced funds for this project for a couple of years and it fell well within our allotted budget. Not only has this provided the village with an additional space for community rental (currently being rented by the Charity Shop), it will also provide the Parish Council with an income for years to come. We also continue to support funding for the Ramsbury Flyer as a key

village amenity, as well as funding signage work and pavement repairs, as necessary, to cover shortfalls in funding from Wiltshire Council.

We have also continued to fund the requests from many village organisations against our S137 allowance, critical to maintaining some key support networks within the village as well as many of our leisure clubs & amenities. This year we also funded the provision of Coronation mugs to all pupils of Ramsbury Primary School and Pre-school.

Looking forwards, we have agreed a budget for the next financial year and applied for, and been granted, our Precept from Wiltshire Council. We have increased our Precept request by ~9% to £76,380 (cost for Band D Property = £80.91/ Year, £6.75/Month) to enable us to complete additional pavement repairs and refresh our play areas. We have also ring-fenced money for election costs for Parish Councillors, should one arise this year. We continue to hold a contingency fund of ~£15,000.

Given the continued significant economic pressures on local authorities and discussion re. capping precept requests (albeit currently focusing on higher monetary requests than ours), we continue to be concerned that funding for Parish Councils will decrease over the coming years.

(ii) Planning Committee report

Diann Barnett

We have had 53 planning applications over the last year, 15 of which have been tree works in a conservation area. Most have been straightforward, and we have had either no problem or have made advisory comments. Some we have objected to but Wilts Council have approved anyway.

Two planning contravention notices have been served, one on the site of Lamplands, and the other on The Red Lion Axford. Lamplands applied for planning permission; the Red Lion was served with an enforcement notice.

There was a Planning in Principle application for 9 houses in the field north of Newtown Road, which was refused.

42/44 Oxford St, applied to the Planning Inspectorate, appealing against the refusal of a large cartshed/garage. It was refused.

(iii) Rights of Way Committee report

Lynn Jauncey

Footpaths/Bridleways/By-ways:

This year due to severe flooding in the village some of the footpaths have been impassable. Sadly, several trees along the river have fallen due to the flooding - some have already been cleared but, at present, the ones at Mill Lane bridge are too difficult to clear due to the water levels.

In the main all footpaths/bridleways/by-ways have been maintained and, of those that weren't, they were rectified once the landowner was contacted.

We are continuing to keep signage up to date thanks to the public informing us when it's not clear.

Diversion of Pathways

Eastridge Farm are still keeping their application on hold.

Park Farm have submitted a Diversion and Definitive Map and Statement Modification Order for RAMS5, 6 and 8c and LBED20. Various objections from the public have been sent to Wiltshire County Council who are discussing the application on Thursday 23rd May 2024 at the Corn Exchange, Devizes (**NOTE** : This meeting has been postponed to 13th June). The public and Parish Council are allowed to attend and to speak; however, we will not as we had no objections to the proposed amendments.

Circular Walks

To keep the usage of our footpaths up, we've decided to reintroduce monthly circular walks to occur on the first Sunday of every month. The first of these will be the Littlecote loop on Sunday 2nd June 2024, meeting in The Square and finishing in The Square for cream teas. Thereafter there will be a different walk each month.

Boundary Walk

At time of writing, arrangements for this year's Boundary Walk are in hand and we thank all the volunteers on the day... the walk leaders, backstops, Ramsbury Flyer drivers, the scouts for bacon butties, refreshment and tea stop helpers, Ramsbury Royal British Legion cake stop and finish refreshments, and all the people behind the scenes who make it all run smoothly - and of course the walkers! It would be great to beat last

year's numbers! Finally, our thanks go to the landowners who allow us access to land that is not usually walked by the public.

(iv) Play Areas & Seating Committee report

Denise Edwards

After the training I completed in the spring of 2023, I feel more able to look at our equipment in a more effective light.

Lots of potential equipment options have been looked at for our play areas and we are still in talks with various suppliers to find the best price match for our projects.

We aim to firm up our plans for Axford play area before the end of summer 2024 whilst being able to add in additions to the Whittonditch site. We have put out for quotes on works needed such as stump removal.

Our ROSPA inspection was completed late October 2023 which showed no surprises. Unfortunately, some graffiti has recently been added to our play equipment at Whittonditch. This is very disappointing, but it does not affect the play value of the equipment. (NOTE : The parish stewards will be asked to try to remove the graffiti when they next visit).

(v) Allotments report

Denise Edwards

The allotment site is now 14 years old and we have, once again, had interest from potential plot holders all year.

The AGM was held in December 2023 and our funds remain healthy even after the purchase of a mower. The plots have developed, and I believe we have plots to suit most household needs.

(vi) Emergency Committee Report

Alison Foale

The Ramsbury & Axford Parish Council Emergency Plan has been updated and uploaded onto the parish council website.

Wiltshire and Swindon Resilience event

Sheila Glass and Alison Foale from the Emergency Committee attended the first Wiltshire and Swindon Prepared resilience event held in August 2023. The aim of the event was to increase the resilience of all areas across the county by holding exercises, demonstrations and talks from a variety of partners, this included a demonstration on how to deploy aquasacs. The event was well attended with over 200 participants.

Flood Wardens

The Parish Council are trying to find volunteers who might act as Flood Wardens. Flood wardens are the eyes and ears of the community and often called 'flood watchers'. Whether they are out walking their dog or just walking to the shop they can keep an eye out for blocked drains and culverts, tree branches in rivers, and anything else that may cause a flood risk and report them to the appropriate land or property owners. Information about the role has been included in the village diary and Whitton Ways. The Wessex Flood Resilience Team have also provided some useful information about becoming a flood warden which can be forwarded to anyone expressing an interest.

Community Hubs

Sheila Glass and Alison Foale met with Camella Town from Wiltshire and Swindon Prepared on 8th April 2024 to discuss the suitability of the village halls in both Ramsbury and Axford for use as Community Hubs in the event of an emergency. The outcome of the meeting was that both halls would be registered with Wiltshire and Swindon as hubs.

Emergency Warden list

There are a number of gaps in the emergency warden list including – Area 11 (Burdett Street – Jo Withington), Area 6 (Mill Lane –Lizzie Faithful Davies), Area 27 (Scholars Lane/Tankard Street – Catriona Patterson), and the Maslins Close Area.

Residents database

This is an on-going exercise to encourage parishioners to sign up to the resident's database. Axford already has an effective WhatsApp group which covers the village.

Storm Henk

In early January 2024 the parish felt the effects of Storm Henk. Aquasacs were offered to residents on High Street between the fire station and Mill Lane, and the availability of aquasacs was posted on Facebook and the PC

website. In the event, flooding affected Lamplands, High Street, Mill Lane - locations where flooding has previously occurred, but also at other locations including Isles Road.

- **Lamplands** - number 1 significantly affected and the owners moved out. Some water ingress to nos. 2 and 3.
- **High Street** - high water table affected one property. Aquasacs in place by many residents along High Street.
- **Mill Lane** - water extended back to Millbrook House. A resident cleared the storm drains on Mill Lane and Hilddrop Lane and reported them to Wiltshire Council.
- **Isles Road** - run-off from land north of Swan's Bottom affected two properties. The community response was excellent through the street warden for Isles Road. Aquasacs were supplied in response to a request from the warden. There are also ongoing enquiries with Wiltshire Council, Thames Water and relevant land-owners relating to who is responsible for the byway at the rear of Isles Road, where measures to alleviate some of the issues may be possible.

Ramsbury Manor

Ramsbury Manor Trustees have been contacted regarding the grade II listed bridge and weir at the head of the lake in terms of responsibility for inspection, maintenance and monitoring. A meeting is to be arranged later in the summer at the same time as a general progress meeting about various on-going projects at the manor.

Ongoing actions

- Fill vacant emergency warden posts – approximately four areas
- Establish a WhatsApp group for the emergency wardens
- Meet with Trustees of Ramsbury Manor later in the year
- Continue to encourage one or more residents to take up the role of volunteer flood warden
- Carry out the annual update of the Emergency Plan
- Establish routine testing of the generators in Ramsbury and Axford village halls
- Undertake an audit of 'emergency' equipment held in the parish council office and identify any additional need e.g. wind-up radios/torches
- Continue to try and establish who has responsibility for the byway along Swan's Bottom so that any necessary flood mitigation works can be progressed, this could simply be the clearing of ditches
- Disseminate information on the emergency hub concept to the Emergency Committee

(vii) Environment Committee report

Maggie Waugh

Having looked extensively at the need for electric charge points in the village it was concluded that the need does not justify the cost at present. Potential sites have been identified but until the technology develops further, the implementation of charge points in the village is on hold. We will re-evaluate in the future, if and when the need arises.

We have put together an environment document for the parish website to set out our vision for a more environmentally responsible future for our parish. This can be amended and updated as and when the needs arise.

The committee has signed up to attend a series of in-person and online discussions organised by the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy group, to take place during July.

At present we are looking at implementing a community orchard and are in the preliminary stages looking at potential sites and deciding how best to move forward with this.

8. Axford Ward Report

Diann Barnett

All is well in Axford.

Village Hall

We had a Coronation tea party in the Village Hall, and it was nice to meet some of the new people in the village.

The Village Hall is now officially registered as an Emergency Hub, hopefully never to be needed.

The play area behind the Hall is due some new equipment during 2024.

Traffic

There is an ongoing problem with speeding and safety through the village, which sadly occurs in many villages. The lack of parking leads to a long stream of cars parked creating a single-track road and does nothing to alleviate the problem - both with cars going faster to get past them and pedestrians not having a safe place to walk. Both situations have no quick fix but are a work in progress.

There was an incident with the car park behind Kennet Mews and Aster, which a resident kindly sorted out. Aster has been contacted to sort the mis-allocation of parking places, but to date we have not heard anything from them.

Events

It was the Open Gardens last year, which turned out to be our most successful to date. The gardens were beautiful, tea and cake scrummy, and lovely weather to boot. Let's hope we have the same success with the village fete this year.

Village Landmarks and Community Assets

- The WWII Memorial commemorating the 473th US Airborne Troop Carrier Group, remembering an incident in the latter stages of WWII in the valley, had long stood in the Red Lion car park, but became inaccessible to the public and neglected. It has now been cleaned, repainted and beautifully sited on the grass bank near Stone Lane. Sincere thanks go to Ivor Dunbar for allowing it to be placed on his land, Neil Stevens and colleagues for their efforts in making this happen, and the Parish Council for refurbishing the seat next to it.

- The Red Lion

There is still no news on the future of the Red Lion, although the enforcement notice has finally been served, it has only taken 2 years.

Environment

We were lucky that during the period of high rainfall and flooding earlier this year, the majority of the village escaped damage. It was touch and go for 2 or 3 houses near the river, and one had its basement flooded.

9. County Councillor's Report

Cllr James Sheppard

By the time you read this, Wiltshire Council will have agreed its budget for 2024/25 at the Full Council meeting on Tuesday 20 February. I am pleased that the Council plans to continue with its prudent and preventative approach, putting it in a strong position to deliver on its Business Plan priorities to ensure high quality services for Wiltshire's residents, businesses, and communities.

Continued sensible financial management means that the Council is forecasting a modest underspend of £634k for the 2023/24 financial year. From this strong position, the council has planned its budget for the next three years, so that it isn't reliant on reserves to balance budgets to deliver day-to-day services. In 2024/25, an additional £36m will support the council's service budgets, with nearly £25m of that going on adult and children's services. Overall, the council's proposed budget for 2024/25 stands at around £486m - more than half is spent on adult and children's social care services. The recent children's services Ofsted inspection recognised the positive impact that the focus on prevention is having and was rated Outstanding.

The most significant spending in 2024/25 will be:

- Adult services - £179.4m
- Families and children - £70.8m
- Environment - £49.5m
- Highways and transport - £43m
- Education and skills - £35.1m

This prudent and preventative plan means that further investment can be made to improve services and infrastructure. Despite the challenging financial climate nationally, Wiltshire Council will still be investing in key services and programmes. The council has allocated an extra £10m over the next two years to spend on filling potholes, road resurfacing and verge repairs. This funding is in addition to the £25.9m the council receives from the Government for Highways Maintenance. Also included in the budget is an additional £1 million investment into extra gully cleaning work and reactive pothole filling. This is on top of the £1 million that was invested into improving drainage in 2022 and will effectively treble drain-clearing work since 2021.

Another £1m has also been allocated in 2024/25 for the Wiltshire Towns Programme to help create and support vibrant town centres. The council is also focussing on strengthening its work around enforcement, building on the significant reduction in fly-tipping because of its work since 2021.

The capital programme for 2024/25 has been budgeted at around £285m and details the council's investment in the improvement and maintenance of the county's infrastructure. Some of the capital spend in 2024/25 will be:

- building and refurbishing council houses - £45m
- structural maintenance and bridges - £21m
- A350 Chippenham & Melksham bypass ongoing work - £18m
- Trowbridge and Salisbury Future High Streets - £11m
- highways investment plan - £7m
- property carbon reduction programme inc. solar canopies - £5m
- investment in leisure centres - £3m
- Trowbridge Leisure Centre - £800k (with more than £20m allocated in subsequent financial years)

The council receives nearly 84% of its funding from local taxes, business rates and council tax, and is dependent on increases in these to deliver services to Wiltshire's residents, communities, and businesses. Therefore, Wiltshire Council is proposing a 2.99% for its element of council tax, plus a 2% levy to be spent solely on adult social care. This will mean an increase of £1.65 per week for those with a Band D property at an annual charge of £1,805.73. This balanced budget ensures that Wiltshire Council can deliver much needed services and continue to invest for the future – in contrast to a number of other local authorities across the country.

10. Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

The Annual Assembly closed at 8.15pm