

RAMSBURY & AXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council: Alice Charlwood, c/o Council Office, Memorial Hall, High Street, Ramsbury
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Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 19th May 2025 in Ramsbury Memorial Hall at 7.45pm.

Present

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| S Glass (SG) Chairman, | H Lloyd (HL), |
| D Barnett (DB) Vice Chair | D Gill (DG) |
| D. Greenway (DGr) | R Greasley (RG) |
| B Murray (BM) | A Charlwood (Clerk) |
| E Hodgson (EH), | |

3 members of the public were present

1. Reading of the Notice Convening the Meeting

The clerk read the notice convening the meeting.

2. Welcome by the Chairman

SG welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. Apologies for absence – were received from M Tester, M. Waugh, C. Morgan and A Foale. D. Edwards was not present.

4. Adoption of minutes of the assembly held on 20th May 2024

The minutes of the previous Annual Assembly were approved. **Prop. RG; Sec. HL. All agreed.**

5. Matters Arising - None

6. Chairman's report

Sheila Glass

This year we were delighted to welcome a new Councillor, Doug Greenway in January. He hit the ground running, organising the Boundary Walk and the recently inaugurated monthly walks, so welcome Doug.

There was a Parish Council election in May. One of our longest standing Councillors, George Hawes, decided not to stand for election this time so we start the year two councillors down. I'd like to thank George for his many years of service and we hope to see him at the June meeting to thank him properly - by which time I will have searched the archives to see exactly how many years!

Since there were only 11 candidates for 13 places there was no election here - all nominees were elected unopposed. There has only been one election since 1986. However, the good news is that we saved some money, since we now have to pay for an election. We will however have something to pay even for an unopposed election, so we await the invoice.

The Unitary Election for County Councillor saw James Sheppard re-elected in Aldbourne and Ramsbury but the County Council is now "No overall control". A special meeting tomorrow (May 20th) will decide who will be leader.

The year saw various events: we had a stall at the village Freshers' Day in May followed by an event for volunteers from the village in the evening which was well attended, and we did cream teas in the Square for D Day 80.

We've spent some money - £40,000 - on pavements in the High Street and Whittonditch Road, new play equipment at Axford, a community noticeboard at the Post Office, bike racks in the Memorial Hall car park, a contribution to the reprinting and framing of the Millenium Tapestry print (now in the hall) as well as the usual Christmas trees and lights. A catastrophic equipment failure at Whittonditch led to a new swing set being purchased and we are currently looking at quotes for more equipment there. Details of other work carried out is in the reports of the various committee chairmen below.

A sofa fly-tipped on the Whittonditch play area caused some expense after our, at first, kindly attitude to its use by young people there was abused. We also had three vehicles abandoned on the car park which took a little while to resolve, mainly due to the intransigent application of GDPR by the DVLA.

A traffic survey in Whittonditch Road and the High Street in April showed the majority of traffic travelling at under 20mph in the High Street and around 25mph in Whittonditch Road so it was decided to take no further action at present on speed limits. Other traffic matters included a request for traffic-calming near the school, speed limit reductions in Whittonditch hamlet and Axford, and a one-way system in Union Street - all of which are ongoing.

Thankfully the winter was not as wet as the previous one, although we did have one incident of flooding in Mill Lane which saw Alison Foale and her husband, together with Justyn Waterworth and Robert Copp, clearing a gully at the end of Hilldrop Lane which greatly helped matters. Many thanks to them. This led to the discussion of a possible flood attenuation pond further up Hilldrop Lane. We were contacted in January by Thames Water, who are carrying out works locally, and part of their mandated remit is to offer community projects. We thought that a pond would be up their street since it involves water and flooding but, in spite of Helen Lloyd's best efforts, they seem to have disappeared. Meanwhile Ramsbury Estates have carried out a major drainage project in Hilldrop Lane, and also on Manor Hill which, it is hoped, will divert water onto fields away from roads and houses. The PC has lots of aquasacs which can be used if flooding is expected. I attended a workshop in Marlborough in person, and online Flood Group meetings with the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Council, but I'm afraid that the message seems to be that no-one is absolutely sure what can be done. The extreme weather events which we are experiencing are producing flooding where none has previously been experienced, so we must continue to be vigilant.

Parish Council reports are posted in Whittonways and the Diary, and copies of PC meeting minutes are available in the Post Office. Anyone who wishes to receive a digital copy of the minutes should contact the clerk. Our website www.ramsbury.org.uk carries details of PC matters and village events as well as other information.

I'd like to thank all our Councillors for the time and effort they give to the village - we can co-opt two more councillors if anyone would like to join us.

SHEILA GLASS

7. Committee Reports
(i) Finance Committee

Erica Hodgson

2024/2025 Financial Year

| | ACTUALS | BUDGET ASSIGNED | % of BUDGET |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | APR 2024-MARCH2025 | 2024-2025 | |
| INCOME | | | |
| Annual precept | £76,380.00 | £76,380.00 | 100% |
| Grants, prizes, donations to PC | £5,568.03 | £0.00 | |
| Community Space Rental | £3,600.00 | £3,600.00 | 100% |
| Sales | £212.50 | £150.00 | 142% |
| Bank Interest | £2,352.86 | £2,000.00 | 118% |
| TOTAL INCOME | £88,113.39 | £82,130.00 | 115% |
| EXPENDITURE | | | |
| Capital Projects | £49,361.29 | £37,400.00 | 132% |
| Committee Expenditure | £2,587.74 | £3,205.00 | 81% |
| Events Expense | £1,634.15 | £1,810.00 | 90% |
| General Administration | £12,796.25 | £13,035.00 | 98% |
| Grants to village organisations | £6,100.00 | £6,720.00 | 91% |
| Insurance, legal & professional fees | £2,235.92 | £7,300.00 | 31% |
| Public conveniences | £2,861.84 | £3,850.00 | 74% |
| Upkeep of village facilities | £6,858.00 | £6,810.00 | 101% |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | £84,435.19 | £80,130.00 | 87.20% |

This financial year we were granted a precept of £76,380.00. We also received additional funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) associated with the renovation of the Methodist Chapel, Oxford Street (£5568.03). In addition to this we received income from the rental of the Community Space, sales of Walk Maps, Aquasacs and substantial bank interest.

Our expense this year was significant (£84,435.19), with the majority of this being spent on pavement repairs on Whittonditch Road and the High Street, as well as renewal of the virtual pavement on Back Lane and Isles Road (£41,800.80). We used the income from the CIL to partially fund pavement repairs in line with the requirements for its' expenditure. We also spent £6,545 on new swings for Whittonditch Road and Axford play areas. We continue to support funding for the Ramsbury Flyer as a key village amenity, as well as funding signage work, grass cutting, hedge cutting, maintenance of the public conveniences to name a few of our expenses.

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.

Looking forwards, we have agreed a budget for the next financial year and been granted our Precept from Wiltshire Council. We have increased our Precept to £81,086.50 (cost for Band D Property = £85.45/ Year, £7.12/Month, + 5.6% vs YA) to enable us to purchase new Speed Indicator Signs and upgrade our play areas 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.

Thank you to the Finance Committee and our Responsible Financial Officer for all their input and support this year.

ERICA HODGSON

(ii) Planning Committee report

Diann Barnett

Over the last year we have dealt with 47 planning applications of varying degrees. Most of our comments have been taken note of, which is always encouraging.

We have also had 4 appeals:

1. for the refusal to site a mobile home at Lamplands;
2. for the Red Lion appealing against Wilts Councils enforcement notice;
3. another for the Red Lion appealing against Wilts Council planning refusal, and
4. the most recent, appealing against Wilts Councils refusal of the 'planning in principle' for houses to the north of Newtown Road. This could prove to be a controversial one as, previous to the government's new planning regime, the area would have been protected by being outside the settlement boundary and situated within the North Wessex Downs Natural Landscape. This is no longer the case and the fact that Wilts Council do not have an up-to-date housing quota puts this refusal at risk, as well as potentially the pockets we have kept safe as natural limits to our boundaries. This could cause us problems in the near future.

DIANN BARNETT

(iii) Rights of Way Committee report

Doug Greenway

The Sub-Committee, which meets quarterly, discusses matters related to Parish rights of way, including footpath accessibility, care, maintenance, and accurate representation on the County Council's definitive map. In January 2025, a change in chair continued the positive work seen throughout the year.

Monthly parish circular walks happen on the first Sunday of the month. These were initiated in 2024 and continue to be well-attended. Following a short winter break, a programme of walks continues into 2025/26.

Early in the year, the Sub-Committee successfully organised the Parish Boundary walk on 4th May, with nearly a hundred participants. This event involved input and support from various stakeholders across the village.

Ongoing engagement with Wiltshire Council continues, particularly with the 'Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum', which provides extensive information to help improve local rights of way.

The focus for 2025/26 remains involving the local community through parish walks and ensuring the accessibility of local footpaths. Improving information and awareness of local rights of way is also key. Additionally, interfacing with local landowners, improving footpath quality, and ensuring the accuracy of the definitive map will continue to be important topics.

DOUG GREENWAY

(iv) Play Areas & Seating Committee report

Denise Edwards

No report.

(v) Allotments report

Denise Edwards

No report

(vi) Emergency Committee Report

Alison Foale

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

Flood Wardens

The Parish Council has been unable 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.

Community Hubs

Both the Ramsbury and Axford halls are registered as Community Hubs in the event of an emergency.

Emergency Wardens

An Emergency Warden meeting was held in September 2024. The aim was to remind wardens what their role entailed, give a short demonstration on how to use Aquasacs, and provide an opportunity for any questions.

There are a number of gaps in the emergency warden list which are in the process of being filled.

A WhatsApp group has been created for the emergency wardens to aid communication when needed.

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.

Weather events

Unlike in early 2024 there have been no significant weather events over the last 12 months. The Parish Council has a stock of Aquasacs which residents can purchase.

Ongoing actions

- Fill vacant emergency warden posts
- Meet with Trustees of Ramsbury Manor to discuss the grade II listed bridge and weir.
- 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

ALISON FOALE (Read by Chairman)

(vii) Environment Committee report

Bernard Murray

The Environment Committee created a new policy document in 2024. The policy outlines how Ramsbury and Axford Parish Council aims to support a drive to an improved local environment and a more sustainable climate. [See the full policy and articles in the Ramsbury and Axford Parish Council Website.](#)

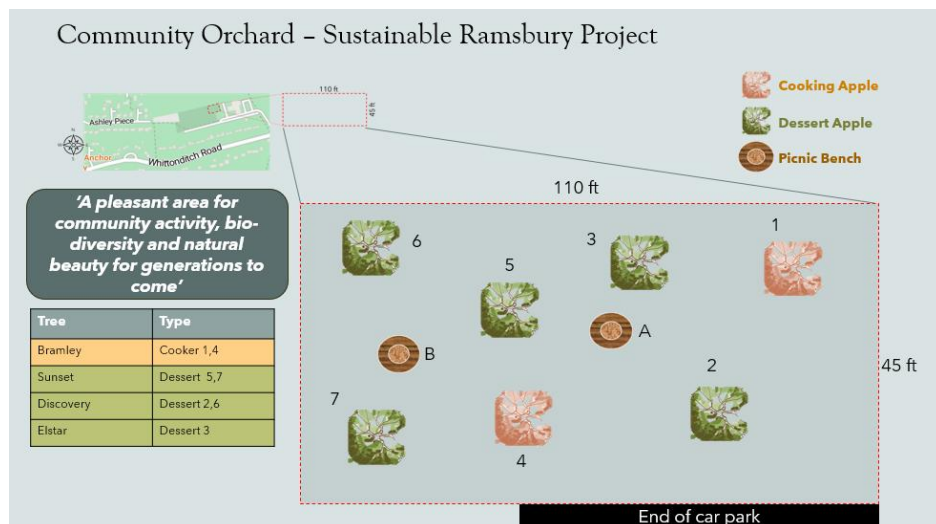
Community Orchard Project

The current playing field to the east of Ashley Piece was identified to be the ideal location and within that the North-East corner is the most appropriate site. It is a plot of 5,000 sq ft.

The community orchard had three overall benefits for our community:

- Create a new space for residents to enjoy and relax in with friends and family.
- Provide a further opportunity for the community involvement with developing and caring for the environment.
- Increase the diversity of trees and other wildlife in an under-used part of the playing fields.

The orchard has a three year roll-out period, the first three trees were planted in 2024; by 2026 a total of seven trees will have been planted including dessert and cooking varieties.



8. Axford Ward Report

Diann Barnett

Axford changes very little, we have new residents who have integrated well into the community, contributing to events and with thoughts for the future.

We had a successful fete last year with help from a lot of the village and this year will be the Open Gardens on the 8th June.

There is still an ongoing battle regarding the Red Lion with planning and enforcement.

We have a new swing set on the village hall playground, much enjoyed by the children.

Enquiries were made as to whether people thought we should have a defibrillator in the village, and it was a resounding yes, so fundraising was started. After a Games Café and Easter bingo Nick, Steve and Simon from Smiths of Axford very kindly offered to fund the balance. We now have our defib and our grateful thanks go to Smiths of Axford for their funding and to Ken Read for installing it to the front of the village hall. It has been registered with the emergency services.

Speeding is, as always, a cause for concern throughout the community and appears worse as there are few pavements from either end of the village to the bus stop for the children at school time. Councillor Murray has arranged for a road speed survey to be done, and we are reviewing the data returned.

Axford would like to thank the parish Council for their continued support.

DIANN BARNETT

9. County Councillor's Report

Cllr James Sheppard

Wiltshire Council's Annual Report for Town and Parish Councils can be found at [Resources for Town and Parish Councils - Democratic Services - Wiltshire Council](#) – here are some highlights.

Secure Finances – Investing in Key Services: Despite the ongoing budget pressures arising from increasing demand for services and inflationary costs, the Council has been able to effectively manage these challenges to ensure a firm financial footing. Key to this sustainable approach to delivering for Wilt-

shire, is to invest in services, especially those which tackle issues in a proactive way. The Council receives nearly 83% of its funding from local taxes, Business Rates and Council Tax, so we take delivering on our promises to local people very seriously.

Children's Services – Outstanding Ofsted: We want to give Wiltshire's children the best start in life as it is fundamental in improving their long-term life chances and gives them the best opportunity to live full and healthy lives. We have worked relentlessly to improve our services and now deliver consistently Outstanding services that ensure the needs of families and children are met at the right time by the right people. This is reflected in the Ofsted inspection report from November 2023 that rated us Outstanding across the board.

Additional Funding for Highways & Flood Prevention: Heat, flooding and severe winter weather has caused significant damage to some of Wiltshire's roads in 2023. Whilst the overall condition of Wiltshire's classified road network is better than the national average this continues to be a priority. We are investing an additional £10m in Highways maintenance, which together with increased Department for Transport (DfT) funding, will enable an extensive programme of road surfacing and treatment in 2024/25. We are also investing an additional £1m to support preventative drainage programmes and have confirmed additional £1.5m funding from 25/26 onwards to help with gully cleaning and potholes.

£179m for Adult Services, which includes over £9m of efficiency savings: Adult Social Care accounts for the highest percentage spend of Wiltshire Council's budget and continues to see significant demographic and cost pressures. The Transforming Adult Social Care programme ensures that the Council is proactive in ensuring services meet need. Continued investment is being made in preventative, enablement and reablement services that support people to stay in their own homes and take full part in their communities. The Shared Lives Scheme, which offers a fostering style model of care and support continues to grow, and the use of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) is a key priority. Moving from children to adult services is one of the most critical times for anyone's life, this is even more important for young adults who have Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

Thank you once again for your continued support. I look forward to representing you in the coming term.

JAMES SHEPPARD

Wiltshire Councillor for Aldbourne and Ramsbury (Read by Chairman)

10. Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public but one of the residents present said how much she appreciated what the PC does on behalf of the villages and thanked all the councillors for their hard work.

The Annual Assembly closed at 8.15pm