

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting

Held on Tuesday 13th February 2024

Chairman: Councillor Mr J Pugh
Councillors: Councillor Mr G Chater, Councillor Ms E Farrell, Councillor Mrs M Lawrence, Councillor Mr P Robinson, Councillor Dr J Walmsley, Councillor A Barlow Councillor S Davidson
Apologies: Councillors Lawrence, Farrell, Barlow & Davidson
Clerk: Mrs J Flanders
Attendance: Buckinghamshire Councillors Diana Blamires and Peter Cooper
Parishioners: 8

1. Apologies for absences

Councillors Lawrence, Farrell, Barlow and Davidson sent in their apologies. There were no other apologies received.

2. Reports from Buckinghamshire Council Councillor and the Police

None received from the Police.

Councillor Blamires confirmed that Bucks Council when setting the budget for the coming year was intending to raise car parking charges, maybe sell off the Tower Block, reduce open hours at Waste Sites and rationalise office space where possible in order to save overall costs. It was confirmed that statutory duties would not be reduced but cuts in other areas may be necessary.

Councillor Cooper confirmed he would be raising concerns regarding the proposed roadworks in two separate sites on the A418 towards Aylesbury potentially causing long delays. He hopes to get one set re-scheduled. He confirmed that householders may be offered the opportunity to put a channel across a pavement for EV charging at a cost £750 and that the Council has been offered £1.9M to spend on EV charging. He asked if the Parish Council could put a list together of the properties where this could be appropriate ie those without driveways.

The Cycleways project is still progressing and hopefully a decision will be made this year.

He confirmed that Castle Street was on the list for re-surfacing and he was questioned as to why no date had been set and Councillor Cooper confirmed that Whitchurch and Soulbury Road had taken priority which pushed Castle Street back.

3. Disclosure of interest on items in agenda

No Councillors present needed to disclose for any item on the agenda.

4. Sign off Parish Council Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved as an accurate account of the meeting held on 10 January 2024 and were signed by the Chairman.

5. Planning Applications:

5.1: 24/00399/VRC Burston Ridge Farm Aylesbury Road Wingrave. Variation of condition 2 (plans) 9 (parking) relating to application 23/01931/APP (Conversion of 2No Agricultural Barns to 7No residential dwellings (Use Class C3); associated amenity space, parking and landscaping.

Councillor Pugh outlined the application and after a short discussion it was decided to approve it unanimously.

It was RESOLVED to approve the Application unanimously

6. Thames Water Sewage Works – Update by Phil Lees

Phil Lees gave a thorough report to update the Parish Council as to his continued efforts with Thames Water and the Environment Agency concerning the sewage discharges and the proposed upgrading of the sewage works. The Parish Council thanked him for his continued input and work. See full Report at Annexe A.

7. Increase of Heavy Vehicles through village – what action can be taken.

Councillor Pugh outlined the concerns from various villagers about the number of HGV trucks going through the village and discussion took place as to where they have come from and where they are going. The main concern was they were using Wingrave as a shortcut rather than adhering to the Freight Zone restricting vehicles which are not visiting within the zone. It was suggested that they could be going from or to Kingsbrook and Betlow Farm or Long Marston Airfield. The Clerk has contacts at both and confirmed would ask if they were going to Betlow Farm or Airfield.

8. D-Day Beacon Proposal Update

In Councillor Barlow's absence Councillor Chater updated the Parish Council confirming that a Kirby Fund application would be made and Pratts Charity had been asked for permission which was awaited. They had raised the issue of how to manage fire risk. It was confirmed the insurance quote was awaited and that the Community Board's result was awaited.

9. Bus Shelter Board – Update

Councillor Robinson confirmed that a member of the public had made the Information Board free of charge and the only cost involved was for the post and brackets and it should be installed within a few weeks. It was thought to ask Mr Keighley from the Heritage Association to formally unveil it. The Parish Council thanked Councillor Robinson for his help with this project.

10. Neighbourhood Plan – Update on Working Group

No Report received other than Councillor Davidson is continuing with collating information for the updating of the Plan.

11. Footpaths - Update – Confirm next step.

Councillor Walmsley confirmed that there had been an amazing response and that the forms (130 in total) had been personally handed in to Bucks Council who confirmed it could take 2-3 years for a result unless there was a planning application received affecting any of the routes and then it would be given priority. Councillor Walmsley thanked all her helpers and the Parish Council thanked Councillor Walmsley for her hard work in progressing this matter. See Annexe B for numbers supporting each path. Councillor Walmsley reported the four bridges on various footpaths around the village and how dangerous they are and perhaps these could be repaired with helped from volunteers as previously when stiles were replaced. It was confirmed that consent for any works would be required.

12. WILD Report

Councillor Walmsley gave her Report and update on WILD matters – see Annexe C attached.

13. Pavilion & Bowls Clubhouse Tender Documents – Update

Councillor Chater confirmed that there had been an extension for the return of Tenders following a request and all received Tenders would be considered and hopefully a full report would be possible at the next Parish Council meeting.

14. Clerks Report: Update on Parish matters.

The Clerk updated the meeting on various matters which had been on-going – see Annexe D.

15. Clubs & Societies Day – PC to take part?

Following a discussion it was decided that the Parish Council would not have a presence at this occasion but would at the Summer Fete later in the year. It was felt the Clubs & Societies Day was more to promote the various clubs offered in the village. Councillor Walmsley confirmed she thought WILD would attend.

16. Finance -

16.1 Clerk Update on balances as follows:

Community

Reserve Account

Meeting closed 8.50pm

Annexe A
Thames Water Sewage Report – Phil Lees

Response from CEO Office, Thames Water

On 17 January 2024 I received a response from Thames Water to my report on the problems of Wingrave Sewage Treatment Work (STW) sent to its then CEOs on 30 October 2023.

It was a spirited response but ultimately inadequate, providing contradictory reasons for the problems when compared to previous correspondence and failing to address the prime causes which were clearly detailed in my report. I will be collating the contradictory evidence and replying to the new CEO of Thames Water, the fourth since my first complaint to Thames Water in March 2023.

Despite this some new important information has been divulged.

Hydraulic Capacity

Hydraulic capacity is the term used by Thames Water for the ability of an STW to cope with the input flow of sewage and rainwater runoff. When the input flow exceeds the hydraulic capacity of the STW the excess flows into the storm overflow tanks and, when those are full, directly into the associated watercourse.

I have maintained throughout my correspondence with Thames Water that lack of hydraulic capacity is the prime reason for the excessive level of discharges from Wingrave STW and the STW's failure to meet the requirements of its Environmental Permit. In their response to me they now admit that –

“The site struggles with a lack of inlet balancing, lack of hydraulic capacity, and a lack of fall through the works (i.e gravitation). These are issues which we are working to resolve, and the upgrade to improve hydraulic capacity is presently being designed.”

They go on to state that –

“We can confirm that the site is operating at full capacity, and as mentioned ... upgrades are being designed.”

I would agree with this admission, the first I have received on this issue. Unfortunately the term full capacity should not be seen as the STW coping with current requirements albeit with no spare capacity. When the STW operates at full capacity the excess flow still arrives at the STW bypassing the treatment process and, in the case of Wingrave STW, mostly discharges into Rowsham Brook due to the fiasco of the automated storm overflow pumps. This has resulted in untreated sewage being discharged into Rowsham Brook for a staggering 3,145 hours during the 14 months from November 2022 to January 2024 making Wingrave STW the worst performing of all Thames Water's STW's.

It is not clear whether the 'design work' for the upgrade to improve hydraulic capacity is in addition to the currently proposed upgrade of the STW which does not significantly increase hydraulic capacity. I will seek clarification on this from Thames Water's CEO.

I will also seek confirmation from the Environment Agency at both Officer and CEO level that Thames Water's proposed upgrade to hydraulic capacity matches current and future anticipated input flows.

Significantly for the Parish Council and Buckinghamshire County Council the admission that the STW is operating at maximum capacity implies that no further building should be approved in

Wingrave until additional capacity has been successfully installed. This should be reflected in the update of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Environment Agency

On 9 January 2024 I wrote to the Environment Agency at their request following my enquiry as to whether Thames Water had informed them of the problem reinstating Filtration Unit 2 and the saga of the failed automated storm return pumps both of which they seemed unaware. They advised me that they had been investigating the problems at Wingrave STW since I alerted them to on 3 May 2023. With no apparent progress on the issues on their part I was able to appraise them of the results of my investigations and offer to update their investigating Officer.

I also raised the issue of the proposed renewal of the Environmental Permit without taking into account the increased population of Wingrave identified in the 2021 census and subsequently further increased by the occupation of the 130 new houses. I shared my view that to renew the Environmental Permit without reflecting the current population level and consequent necessary dry weather flow level and overflow setting could be reviewed as negligent.

The issue of the Environmental Permit is so important, with a high risk of leaving the Environmental Agency's unable to require improved performance of the STW, I have written to Philip Duffy the Chief Executive of the Agency to point out the risk of sleepwalking into renewal of the existing Environmental Permit. Both the Officers and the Chief Executive have committed to respond to me by 6 February.

Annex B Footpath Numbers

Path A - 34

Path B - 23

Path C - 27

Path D - 33

(see Parish Council's website for map showing the routes).

That is 130 of the 200 forms distributed.

Annex C WILD Report

Bird Surveys

John Dowling reported that bird recording this Winter is down, probably affected by the wet start to the Winter, though the presence of Waxwings in the wider area locally, including the McDonald's car park in Leighton Buzzard, has been a bonus. John will put out a reminder to encourage those interested to note and record sightings.

Water quality

Phil Lees reported that Wingrave STW discharged untreated sewage for 2,284 hours during 2023, the worst year by a large margin. A response to the report sent to Thames Water Chief Executives in October is still awaited and, after delays, is now promised for late January. A letter has been sent to the Environment Agency regarding the problems at Wingrave STW and to their Chief Executive requesting that the proposed new Environment Permit must reflect the current population level of Wingrave. A response is awaited. Phil Lees is to pursue whether a partial reengineering of the rainwater drainage system is feasible to relieve the pressure on the STW. He will also speak to Tony White regarding the drainage from the moat and village pond.

Quadrat Surveys

It was agreed that timing of future quadrat surveys would encompass a range of days rather than a specific date to give flexibility to volunteers. It was agreed the first surveys would be scheduled for week beginning 8 April. Val Godfrey is willing to host a tea on Saturday 13 April. Val Godfrey will advise the Group of the schedule for subsequent surveys.

Winter Bird Feeding

The proposal that the Wild Group seek funding for Winter Supplementary bird feed for use by one of the local farms was discussed. It was agreed that Jan Walmsley would speak to the Parish Council before proceeding. It was felt that funding should cover two years so that the success of the initiative could be assessed.

Winter WILD Talk

'Making your village and garden more Wildlife Friendly' will be at the Sports and Social Club on Monday 18th March 7.30 – 9.00pm

Verges:

The recent Environmental Survey completed by residents of Wingrave indicated strong support (81%) for improving more verges for nature. It was agreed that the mound at the corner of Coblers Wick, the verge in front of the Unitarian Church and the verge in Church Street backing onto the play park should be considered. Jan Walmsley to discuss with PC before talking with the new contractor.

Hedge at The Park:

Hedge-laying training has been agreed for a small number of villagers and has been proposed for 9/10 16/17 March, run by Paul Blissett Jan Walmsley

Annex D Clerks Report

1. Pond Railings: Police have supplied information on the vehicle and individual so putting together the claim information. Just need a quote for the repair works. An insurance claim will be made.
2. Hedge from The Park to the Bus Shelter to be cut back as causing problems with the ditch and ingressing into the road. Cost is £600 plus VAT and given the go ahead as this needs to be done before end of March 2024 and is a matter of safety. Awaiting on Highways as to whether they will clear the ditch. When it rained heavily on Thursday the road was awash and the ditches under the accesses into the field were blocked and the main problem. Councillor Cooper confirmed the blocked drains under the accessways would be cleared by Highways.
3. Sensory Garden. This needs further discussion – a second design has been presented to Councillors but there are still questions to be considered. Councillor Robinson thought it would be best to ask the village on the preferred location.
4. Pub Update: Have received a response from Star Pubs from the rep who covers this area who just confirms they are actively marketing the pub and would be happy to meet when she is next visiting – the Clerk has confirmed that would be great. There is currently a Notice on the door requesting Ross removes his items by the end of February. The Clerk proposes to contact the person from Star Pub noted on the Notice to ensure items are removed from the Council's property.

5. Repair to surface at corner of Gym Equipment at Rec Ground requested – thought to be due to grass cutting around corner. This has been carried out and looks OK.
6. Footpath bridges – email to the correct person requesting some feedback and when these will be repaired. It is Bucks Council's responsibility to repair. The Rights of Way person has confirmed they will go on the list once they've had a look but cannot give any indication as to when this will be and if they deem it dangerous they will close the footpath. This is not what the village want – Councillor Walmsley has found a group who often work with Bucks C to voluntarily repair footpaths – so next step is to ask Bucks C if the Parish Council can organise the work on their behalf if the work is not imminent.
7. Electric costs have risen and the Clerk will seek a quote through a third party who deals with Councils to see if there is a cheaper contract available. It is for information only as will not be binding at this stage.

Annex E
Finance – Payments Made

02.01.24 Wingrave Park Rent	275.00
02.01.24 Bin Waste Collection	51.20
02.01.24 Buckland Devolved Services	796.08
08.01.24 Architects Pavilion/Bowls Club	960.00
31.01.24 Clerks Pay	830.33
31.0124 Clerk NI	9.98
01.02.24 Bin Waste Collection	23.00
01.02.24 Buckland Devolved Services	796.08
06.02.24 Hedge Cut Winslow Road	720.00