

**WOODBOROUGH
PARISH
COUNCIL**

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on THURSDAY the 18th of May 2023
at 6.30 pm in the Woodborough Parish Room

Present: Councillors Steve Napier, John Brewin, Brian Marnane, Andy Towler, Johnny Paterson and Linda Winter

Clerk Ruth Kinderman

Chairman of Governors, Woodborough School – Tim Atkins

Residents Chris White, Karen White, Malcolm Cox, Adrian Lythgow, Tony Phillimore, Peter Maclaine, Dan Cowan and Debbie Wordley.

1. Welcome by the Chairman

Cllr Napier welcomed everybody to the meeting; he noted with pleasure that a good turnout is becoming more frequent.

2. Apologies

Unitary Councillor Paul Oatway.

Residents Stephen Warren and Caroline Allen.

3. Report from Woodborough Primary School

Tim Atkins expressed thanks for being invited to report to the meeting and thanked the parish council and the Social Club for their ongoing support for the school. The school is aware of tensions caused by parent parking and continues to address these through all possible avenues.

Following the post-fire building restoration works, there has been a shift around of classes within the school and the new play area at the front of the school, all of which rearrangement seems to be working well.

Woodborough School continues to perform above the national average overall; the school improvement plan identifies weaker areas and outlines proposals to address these. Currently, there are 170 children on roll, a bit lower than the ideal of 180; the forthcoming new academic year is expected to start with 175 children on roll for September.

The national increase in the number of children needing additional support is reflected at Woodborough, with a noticeable increase in the number of parents requiring support too. Governing bodies are obliged to address these matters, rather than delve into the causes, which are likely to be many and various.

Volunteers are always needed to hear children read, especially those who never read at home; full training is given, and anybody interested should contact the school administrative officer at admin@woodborough.sch.uk

Mrs Katie Scaplehorn joins the school in September as Headteacher, taking over from Mrs Sarah Brewis who is retiring in July, after twenty-one years at the school. There have been a few new additions to the local governing body and the school is seeking to recruit a part-time finance and administrative officer, having divided the secretarial role in the spring when Karen Bolwell moved on to a new job after seven years at Woodborough.

4. Report from Wiltshire Council

Clerk presented various items from Unitary Councillor Paul Oatway in his absence; with fourteen parish councils in his division, it is difficult for him to attend all the May meetings in person.

Cllr Oatway has become frustrated at Highways commitment to the condition of the road between Honey Street and Woodborough, at Bakers Corner and The Sands in particular. He has now escalated this to the Cabinet member and is in the process of requiring an on-site meeting. Cllr Oatway noted that he has more than twenty-five Highways matters, some of which have been outstanding for more than four years.

Cllr Oatway had been waiting for the Wiltshire Council report on climate change to be published before he could make any sensible observations. He had received the document on May 16th and is currently reviewing pages 53 to 98. Cllr Oatway asked the parish council to let him know if a copy is required. Cllr Oatway is willing to share the document with Chris White in the light of item 6.

Cllr Oatway was pleased to report that the Direct Route Transport (DRT) rural bus service for "Pewsey Vale" is now likely to go live on July 1st, postponed slightly due to driver recruitment delays.

Cllr Oatway will update the parish council at their next meeting regarding matters around Wiltshire Council's Budget matters for 23/24 and the impact for Woodborough regarding town and council costs for elections.

In discussion, attendees expressed concern about paying for elections without being informed what Wiltshire Council would be spending the money on instead. It was felt that devolving costs to parish councils in this way would set a precedent for more hidden taxes, with parishes expected to fund ever more services with no commensurate gain in services from, or reduction in council tax paid to, Wiltshire Council.

5. Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report

Cllr Napier presented his report which is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

6. Chris White – Climate Workshop update

Having attended the recent Wiltshire Climate Workshops on Zoom, along with resident Ines Garcia, Chris noted that there was no clear strategy coming from Wiltshire Council and that the workshops were aimed at larger town councils with bigger budgets. Chris noted that funding is needed to implement any proactive Net Zero projects. Chris believed that the village should take the initiative and develop its own strategy, alongside ensuring one-off projects were implemented with due regard to environmental factors. Chris noted that, generally, people tend to support activities which save money or add beauty to their lives. Examples mentioned were the voluntary Village Vergers, the Village Veg group and the regular swap and borrow activity on the village Whats App group. A feasible suggestion for the future is a Repair Club, maybe at the Parish Room, where residents can bring items for repair rather than disposing of them. Chris referred to the Great Green Bedwyn Group, which has a website <https://www.greatgreenbedwyn.org.uk/> and which is addressing various items such as home energy, flooding and water pollution, low carbon travel and community energy generation.

Chris felt positive in that he now has relevant named contacts at Wiltshire Council and the voluntary Wiltshire Climate Change Alliance appears to be a valuable source of advice, support and information.

In discussion, it was agreed that some way of measuring the results needs to be found, such as recording the number of bus journeys taken during a given period of time. Chris is willing to facilitate the development of an environmental strategy for the village and it was agreed that the parish council would consider making Environmental Matters an Area of Responsibility.

7. Residents' Parochial Matters

Malcolm Cox reported that broadband speeds are still poor, although the meeting noted that this varies across the parish. There had been no apparent outcome from the broadband summit held by Danny Kruger, MP, although it was noted that fibre is being gradually introduced in places, such as north of the canal in Wilcot, but not south. Clerk to check the roll-out program for any mention of Woodborough. It was noted that the broadband cabinet on the Free Trade triangle had been removed soon after installation, due to underlying ditches; Clerk to double-check the correspondence held on this matter. It was noted that Broadband matters used to be regularly discussed at Area Board meetings, often with Openreach representatives in attendance, and that this could be reintroduced as a way of addressing local variations in provision.

Clerk read out correspondence received from Steve Warren relating to cars parking along the C261 and to the state of the C38/Broad Street between the crossroads and The Sands, asking that resources be directed towards addressing the road rather than resolving problems connected with the school.

Tim Atkins noted that the most recent use of parish resources by the school was for the bus pull-in, some years ago. Cllr Brewin said that decisions about how parish resources are used are taken by the parish council, not by the school.

The meeting agreed that parking along the C261 has increased, making a single-width highway between the crossroads and the stream. This is causing frustration for all road users, including the school buses and parents trying to get to the Social Club car park. The meeting noted that the Social Club car park is rarely full, with as many as eight unused spaces most of the time. Several attendees asked whether the stony area in Mr Nutland's field just north of the railway bridge could be used for parking. The parish council would not consider this due to cost, insurance, Health and Safety and the complex legalities, together with the absence of a safe walking route from the bridge to the school. Residents felt that parents could make a private arrangement with Mr Nutland, if they wished, and if he was agreeable to the proposal; such an arrangement for parents travelling from south of Woodborough would reduce the number of cars passing and re-passing the school.

It was noted that some parents remove the cones placed at the crossroads outside Jasmine Cottage; it was agreed that Clerk should ask permission from Highways for weighted cones.

Malcolm Cox was pleased to hear that Cllr Oatway was aware of the state of the roads and pointed out that the previous approach of a rolling program for road maintenance had been far more cost effective than the current reactive repairs. Despite the short-term savings of 'fixing when faulty', the roads are generally more hazardous, thus adding to journey times. As repairs are not inspected, they are rarely completed to a high standard and are consequently a waste of public money. Cllr Napier noted that the parish council has very little authority when it comes to the highway.

Malcolm Cox suggested that the nascent Woodborough Scouts Group could be made aware of any village emergency plan and associated exercises. Cllr Napier noted that the emergency plan is yet to be completed but agreed that the Scouts would be a useful asset to the village.

Report from the Parish Council Chairman to the Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 18th May 2023

The year has been **Royal** in every way, starting with the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June, followed by the State Funeral in September and then just last week the Coronation; our village celebrations were well attended, with many visitors from surrounding villages too, the Red Devils proving a great attraction. Huge thanks to all involved in organising it and running it on the day – military-precision-level planning! Publicity was helped by the villager-run **Community Chat** app, which now has membership spread well beyond Woodborough.

Due to the focus on the Royal Events, I decided to stand down our entry for the **Best Kept Village** competition this year. We had a good turnout in March, with several families taking part in the village litter pick. However, the high winds meant another pick would have been necessary before the judging and I could not see this happening. Providing nothing else ‘major’ turns up, we shall put our military planning skills to good use for next year’s Best Kept Village competition and pull out all the stops to win it.

School - It has been great to see the school building works complete, and we look forward to meeting the new headteacher Mrs Katie Scaplehorn, who takes over from Mrs Sarah Brewis in September. I want to record the parish council’s thanks to Mrs Brewis for looking after our school so well during her two decades with us and to note her constant efforts via the school newsletters to encourage parents to park in the Social Club. I must also thank the **Social Club** for their continued support of the village with allowing the use of their car park. Unfortunately, many parents do choose to park along the C261; some residents and other parents on their way to the Club car park do find the resultant ‘single width lane’ between the stream and the crossroads very frustrating.

Verges - Another effect of the parking is the continued deterioration of our verges, and we were disappointed to fail to qualify, by a very narrow margin, for the next round of funding; this means we cannot extend the footway beyond Leabinloch this year. We hope to submit a fresh bid application this year, for the next round of funding.

CSW - One success story though, about this stretch of the C261 – this is where our Community Speed Watch team members have given many hours during the past year to help enforce the 20mph limit through the village. Many thanks to Caroline Allen for all the effort and time she puts in to arranging the rota and processing the data, and to all the volunteers. We continue to push for a second CSW site along The Sands; it would be good to achieve this during the coming year.

Planning - I referred last year to changes to the National Planning Policy Framework; these have been controversial at the highest level of government, and it seems that

most proposals were overturned after a backbench rebellion. However, we have now been made aware of government proposals to extend Permitted Development Rights, and we will continue to monitor the situation carefully. This parish council is a member of WALC, and I am pleased to report that NALC is campaigning hard for local councils to retain control over development within their towns and parishes.

During the last year, the parish council considered twenty planning applications, of which fourteen were notices of tree-works in the Conservation Area (including one under a Tree Preservation Order) and one was for Listed Building Consent, in tandem with a full planning application, of which there were five.

Defibrillators - I like to take the annual opportunity to remind everybody about the defibrillators, which are accessible round the clock, and are easy to use. We took delivery of two new machines this year under our new contract with SWAST, with one at the original location outside the Social Club and the second in its new home outside the Parish Room. The parish council will be deliberating later this evening whether to provide a third machine at the eastern end of the parish, at the old location near the Garden Centre. There was a fantastic turnout for the annual training session; hopefully most residents would feel confident in using a defibrillator should the need arise.

Parish Room - The Parish Council maintains an amicable working relationship with the Parochial Church Council; representatives of both groups sit on the Parish Room Management Committee to maintain it as a useful asset to the village. We are looking forward to welcoming a Scout Troop as a regular user of the Parish Room from September; as a bonus, we understand that scouting activities may include maintaining the garden outside!

We are grateful to our Unitary Councillor, Councillor **Paul Oatway** QPM, for all the advice and support that he gives us; much of his work is very often 'behind the scenes' at County Hall and unseen by our residents.

Parish Council representatives continue to regularly attend meetings of the **Area Board** and the **Pewsey Community Area Partnership** (PCAP) as both organisations do much to formulate policy at a very local level. I would like to thank Cllr Brewin who takes on much of this responsibility, as well as putting a lot of work into keeping the parish **financial position** very healthy.

I also wish to thank our **Parish Steward**, who does all the odd jobs around the village that we cannot do. As a result, the combined efforts of residents, my fellow councillors and others who volunteer in so many ways, continue to make Woodborough a calm and tidy, yet thriving and popular village.

Steve Napier, Parish Council Chairman 2022/2023