

WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the twenty fourth Annual Parish Meeting 15 April 2025

Present: Cllrs Andy Gribble (Chairman), Phil Corke (Vice Chairman), Tim Dix, Sarah Hall & Rob Horton.

In attendance: J Pearce (Clerk).

Herts County Councillor T Kingsbury, Borough Councillors T Mitchinson & R Trigg.
Reverend Will Ellis, Members of the public.

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Parish Cllr Grant Pinney & Borough Cllr Julie Cragg.
- 2. Chairman's introduction:** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked the Borough and County Councillors for their help and support over the past year and for the contributions made by Parish Councillors. He also thanked the Clerk for the efficient running of the Parish Council.
Thanks also went to the caretakers Abdul and Pete and the cleaner Peter for ensuring the village hall is run smoothly for hirers. The Chairman wished to acknowledge former caretaker, Julie, who has retired to Scotland after 17 years' service. She was the face of the village hall and the Council awarded her the Community Award for 2024 in recognition of her years of dedication. Following Julie's departure, we have a new caretaker, Pete, who joined in February and has settled in well.
There was also thanks to all the volunteers: those that deliver the newsletter, Jenny for tending the planters and Chris for inspecting the playground and doing odd jobs. The Annual Report was on the tables and is also available on the website. The Chairman explained that most of our income comes from the village hall and this year there has been a lot of unbudgeted expenses. One of the items was a new boiler for the showers and the Chairman expressed his grateful thanks to County Cllr Kingsbury who contributed £1,061 to the cost from his Locality Budget.
The Council received the final £5,000 grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which was used to pay for a resin surface under the climbing frame in the Garden Road playground. The Parish Council is 25 years old this year and it is fitting to recognise Judith Watson who was the primary instigator in getting Woolmer Green Parish Council established.
- 3. To approve minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2024:** The minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.
- 4. To receive the Annual Report:** No questions were raised. The report can be viewed on the Council website.
- 5. To receive a report on the Church from Reverend Will Ellis:**
Reverend Ellis introduced himself and said he had recently moved to Woolmer Green. Following Reverend Gilfeather's move to Codicote, he will share church duties on an interim basis with Reverend Jackson who are both part time. Since arriving he has received a warm welcome and everything is going very well. The church now has two church wardens. The church treasurer said they are holding their own with regard to finances, but they are waiting for the results of the 5 year church inspection which could raise issues. The church is open every day for the foodbank.
- 6. Events – Cllrs Corke:**
Cllr Corke informed the meeting he was responsible for events. He said Cllrs attend the annual Remembrance Service which is well attended by the public along with the Brownies.

Carols round the Tree on Christmas Eve takes place at the village hall for convenience and safety rather than its previous location in New Road. It is a popular event that raises money for charity.

Wheels on Woolmer Green car show, another charity fund raiser, is traditionally held on May Day Bank Holiday and was started by Cllr Pinney. It has grown over the years and last year almost £300 was raised despite a rainy day.

Village Day is the biggest event and is attended by more than 1000 people from Woolmer Green and the surrounding area, coming and going throughout the afternoon.

Cllr Corke also sits on the WoollyFest committee, which is independent from the Parish Council, and puts on a non-profit music event in July. Last year £7,000 was raised for three charities. This year proceeds will be donated to the Lister Hospital Research Centre.

Cllr Corke thanked everyone that supported the events.

7. County Councillor Tony Kingsbury:

Cllr Kingsbury said he has been our County Councillor for four years representing Woolmer Green, Digswell, Welwyn, the Ayots and parts of Welwyn Garden City. As a County Councillor he has two budgets: the Locality Budget of £5,000 for community groups and a Highways Locality Budget of £90,000. Funds from his Locality Budget has helped towards the tennis court and, more recently, a new boiler for the village hall. Last year funds from his Highways Budget were used to resurface a path in Longmead.

Last year a resident said the B197 has been discussed for 40 years and nothing has changed. I explained a consultation had been undertaken, but funding wasn't in place. There has recently been an announcement to stakeholders to say they are going to do the initial work in the summer to progress with signalling Mardleybury junction, introducing a 30mph speed limit and widen the path by the school. So, after all those years something is going to happen. There has also been a consultation on introducing a 20mph limit in residential roads. Mardelybury Road is due to be resurfaced this year.

8. Questions from the Public:

Chairman: Are we definitely sure we are going to get the signalised crossing?

Cllr Kingsbury: Yes. It is in the budget and Integrated Works Plan and a statement has been put out to stakeholders, so that is a firm commitment.

Resident: Is there any progress on the puffin crossing by the shops?

Cllr Mitchinson: There was a recently a productive meeting between Herts Highways, Welwyn Hatfield Enforcement and the site owners to discuss this and it was agreed to hold a further meeting in early May. There is no timetable for the work to begin, however, the plan is to ensure the site owner carries out the work without the council having to use legal measures.

Clerk: Did you manage to find out if there is any expiry date on the S127 agreement?

Cllr Mitchinson: Yes, there is no expiry on this agreement. Hopefully the next meeting will go ahead in May.

Chairman: In the Safer Routes to School Scheme there were further measures planned, is this dependant on funding?

Cllr Kingsbury: Yes, the long-term plan is to improve the B197 between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City but the focus is on the two schools as a priority.

Chairman: In the past when discussing the B197 with Highways we were told if a 30mph limit was introduced the speed camera would have to be removed

Cllr Kingsbury: I did query that and was told they could adjust it to 30mph.

Resident: Regarding the housing behind Lessiters, there has been preparatory work taking place on the site. Is it correct that vehicles should not access the site via New Road? The gap to the site has been widened and there has been a lot of mud on the road.

Cllr Mitchinson: I took photos and raised this with enforcement. They said the gap had not been widened but it has been. They also said they will inform the developer that the site should not be accessed from New Road. If this continues, please report it to me.

Chairman: Our understanding is that Gladmans are carrying out preparatory work and will pass the site on to a developer. We will contact Gladmans and find out what is going on.

Cllr Mitchinson: You are aware of the plans for devolution. I wondered if the Parish Council has discussed this with other parish councils on how to move forward.

Clerk: I have had a meeting with the other Welwyn Hatfield Clerks and a letter has been produced to send to the Borough asking for parishes to be involved in the process.

Cllr Mitchinson: I think it is important that parishes are engaged in the process to ensure things are not pushed through that may not be beneficial to parishes.

Cllr Kingsbury: We had a motion put through at the last meeting on the issue to ensure parish councils are consulted.

There were no further questions, and the Chairman thanked everyone for coming.

JRP 23.4.25