

# CHIPPENHAM WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL

## DRAFT MINUTES

### ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

held at 7.30pm  
The Pavilion, Allington Fields, Frogwell, Chippenham SN14 0YZ

**14<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

Present: Cllr. H Ham, Cllr S Eades, Cllr C Harford, Cllr M Muller and Cllr J Savage. Wiltshire Councillor H Greenman, 6 members of the public (Chris Barrow, Melanie Barnett, Valerie Ham, Amy Savage, Martin Wikstrom, Tasmin Wimhurst) and Mr V Vines Clerk of the Council.

**MIN 1. Apologies:** Elizabeth Kennedy.

**MIN 2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2024:**

Draft Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024 were circulated to those in attendance and had been available online.

**Cllr J Savage proposed, Cllr M Muller seconded and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to receive, approve and sign as a true record the Minutes from the above Meeting. The Parish Meeting Chairman, Cllr H Ham duly signed the Minutes.

**MIN 3. Matter arising from the Annual Parish Meeting 2024:**

There were none that were not included as later Agenda items.

**MIN 4. Chairman's Report:**

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr H Ham, welcomed all to the Annual Meeting and had the sad duty to start with reminding all of Ken Kennedy's passing about 2 weeks ago and that it went without saying that he was a stalwart member of the Parish possessed of a real community spirit. He and Elizabeth, his wife had lived in Allington Lane for over 25 years and had served together on the Parish Council for a time. In asking for a moment's silence in honour and memory of Ken he advised that his funeral would be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 10.30am in St Andrews Church.

He was pleased to announce that there would be an un-contested Parish Council Election on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 and congratulated the "Team" for opting to stand again. Stephen Eades, Chris Harford and Mike Muller were re-elected unopposed and we said farewell and gave thanks to Malcolm Brinkworth for his contribution over a number of years. His business commitments in London had become an increasing draw on his time but he had promised to help out as and when he could. There had been one Vacancy on the Council to fill and at the Council Meeting held earlier in the evening the Council had been able to co-opt James Savage, who was a willing volunteer.

The big news last year was the success with the Neighbourhood Plan. The Chippenham Without Neighbourhood Plan was 'Made' back in January 2024 and so far there had been an uneventful year of its existence and planning control. The Council awaited any new rules on Neighbourhood Plans from the current administration in Whitehall and how Wiltshire Council might interpret this. There were a number of things the Neighbourhood Plan aimed to do including implementing some interest groups and conducting a review of the viability of having

a Parish Hall and he would address this last topic at the end of his report. The interest groups on such subjects as Parish flora and fauna, architecture and history had yet to be formed and the Council would try to encourage them again during the coming year.

He hoped that the attendees had continued to notice the Parish Entry Gates on the lanes into the Parish. The Council had a few problems with one location where the sign went missing twice, but that problem seemed to have passed. The Council still had one left to position on the way out of Bumpers Farm Roundabout on the A420 but there was a need to wait until the A350 dualling work and the new shape of the roundabout had been completed hopefully within the next year.

In regards to highway matters he reported that the Parish Steward attends roughly once a month and works through the Council link, Chris Harford, on such things such as gully and run-off clearance, clearing deadfall and leaves from the lanes and filling minor potholes. Potholes remain a continuing problem not helped by the amount of flooding experienced over the last year. He encouraged everyone to report them to Wiltshire Council, preferably using the MyWilts App. It was a very useful, easy to use App and can be used for all manner of things including flooding and fly tipping.

The Parish has endured another bad winter of heavy rain but were a little better prepared through a revitalised relationship with the Highways Engineer for Chippenham and Corsham. The Council managed to invite her to attend a site meeting in early June last year and took her around all of the trouble spots. These are now firmly on her list of problem areas and many have been successfully dealt with. The major location to be fully addressed was Fowlswick Lane and while this had been surveyed and a works ticket raised this work must go hand in hand with clearing the ditches where the riparian owners had the responsibility for clearance and when necessary, digging out. Stephen Eades had the lead on this topic should you require any more detail.

The problem of accidents at well-known and recorded hotspots remained a priority with the Parish Council, that still had to work through a Wiltshire Group called the Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group (LHFIG) but the promised Local Safety Survey to address the problem locations kept being pushed to the right and linked to the dualling of the A350 and the possibility of an access to the Rugby Club Car Park from the A350. The Council had shown the Neighbourhood Community Policing Team the problem spots and discussed solutions but they like us have to wait for Wiltshire Highways.

The Council conducted an Annual Review of our Public Rights of Way, which is forwarded to the Wiltshire Council Rights of Way Officer. With the exception of one or two stiles, which need repair and the regular round of replacing signs and roundels the footpaths were in reasonable shape. The Council was studying the viability of “Kissing Gates” to provide better access for all capabilities but to be viable walking access must be available throughout the length of the footpath. Grants were available towards this.

In regards to “Planning” there had been the regular round of planning applications either in or affecting the Parish that the Council has considered as a Consultee. The dualling of the A350 had finally been given the go ahead with road closures scheduled for the beginning of June and the planning application for the proposed access off the A350 for the Rugby Club, had been resubmitted in February 2025 and the Council awaited movement on this.

Following a consultation and Wiltshire Council approval the Wiltshire Local Plan had been submitted to the Secretary of State late last Autumn. It was now undergoing Examination (including a hearing and receipt of inspector's report) with a target adoption of Q3 this year. Despite land in the Parish being reviewed, none of it was selected for planning purposes.

He mentioned that the Parish Council had been consulted twice now on the Lime Down Solar Farm proposals as one of the possible access routes to the Battery Management Storage Facility

and Grid Access Complex to be built at Melksham would go through Parish Land. The Council's responses had been to seek more information on their processes when examining the potential sites – this included alternative sites, alternative generating systems (wind or nuclear), ground quality measurements (how conducted), drainage, biodiversity net gain and the overall green savings to be made through the life of the project. The Council awaited the next step from the Developers.

The Council had considered their 2025-2026 budget proposals last November (2024) and decided to freeze the Precept at £12K – unchanged from the previous year. Possible expenditure on such things as defibrillators, kissing gates and security systems would be addressed on a case-by-case basis if any capital expenditure was required.

The Parish was now into our third year of a new system of Neighbourhood Community Policing and the Police Team had continued to work hard at meeting people and showing a presence in the local Parishes. The Parish was fortunate to have PC Jess Swanborough north of the A420 and PC Paul Croft south of the A420. They are both happy to meet up to discuss such things as accident hotspots and speeding issues and where there is sufficient interest the Council would request an early evening briefing from them here in the Cricket Pavilion.

The Council had decided to produce quarterly Newsletters as a trial for last year, four now completed, in an effort to keep Parishioners more informed and perhaps together. Feedback of any kind had been minimal and the Council would need more interest if they are to continue this and produce them again next year. His thanks were given to all who helped in what seemed to be informative publications. Thanks were also given to Viv Vines who produced the information sheet earlier this month and for passing on the permanent flow of information electronically from Wiltshire Council and a variety of organisations to those on the Council database.

Hopefully the work carried out to The Long Stone had been noticed. A team from the Council led by Chris Harford and Mike Muller had undertaken a cleaning and painting maintenance operation on The Long Stone at the junction of the A420 and the Yatton Keynell road, the B4089. A full removal, repair, paint and replacement is beyond the funds of the Parish, but provided the cleaning and specialist protective paint activity was conducted annually the Heritage Monument would survive for many years to come.

There had been a number of incidents of Fly Tipping within the Parish this last year, normally coinciding with Recycling Centre closures and changes to the usual waste collection schedules. The MyWilts App works well at reporting such incidents along with such things as potholes. A Litter Pick of Allington Lane and some of Fowlswick Lane had taken place at the end of March and we await additional help from the Wiltshire Council Waste Management team, Idverde Ltd, who in the past had advised Bumpers Farm companies on Team Building Litter Picks starting at the Farm Shop - to Sheldon Corner - Frogwell Lane, the A350 and back. Much thanks go to them and Idverde for this.

In conclusion there were two issues that he wished to raise.

Firstly, that there was two defibrillators in the Parish – one at the Farm Shop and the other near Sheldon Corner. This last location at this time was questionable as a more suitable location may be the Rugby Club. However, the management organisation the South West NHS Ambulance Trust withdrew their involvement suddenly at the end of March at the Lease end and had divested themselves of all responsibility, leaving the Parish with two Defibs now 7 years old, but with no support. The Parish Council now had a number of options that could be discussed later in the Meeting:

Secondly, the issue of a Parish/Community Hall. The Neighbourhood Plan throughout its inception and progress to completion had always proposed to consider the possibility of producing some kind of Parish Hall. To that end a full review of the project had been

undertaken by the Parish Council and a study paper produced; it was available on the Parish Council website and circulated tonight. The Paper very thoroughly covered all aspects to be considered including, the need, the potential site, the costs and the governance/management. The Parish Council's conclusion was that a Parish Hall given the total lack of need was not a sensible use of Parish funds and the associated time and effort required from the Council and the matter would not be considered further. This again would be discussed later in the Meeting.

**MIN 5. Parish Council's Budget 2025-2026:**

The Clerk circulated the Parish Council's Budget and Precept Requirement for the year 2025/2026.

Wiltshire Council had advised of their Band D Tax Base, this year being, (92.05). As usual the Band D property charge would result from the Council's Precept divided by the Tax Base. Last year the Tax Base had been (91.77) with the Precept being £12,000.00 resulting in a £130.76 Band D property charge.

The Council had increased their budget in 2021/2022 to £12,000.00 and had retained that figure for the following 4 years without using any of the existing capital funds held.

Following consideration, including discussion on the possibility of reducing the Precept, the Council had agreed that the Precept for Year 2025/2026 should remain at £12,000.00 and using the new Tax Base this would result in a £130.36 Band D property charge, slightly less than the previous year.

There were no questions raised from attendees.

**MIN 6. Report from Wiltshire Council Representative:**

Wiltshire Councillor Howard Greenman reported and commented that this had been a year of change and challenges not least because of the changes brought about by a change in Government at the General Election in July 2024 and the administration at Wiltshire Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025.

The immediate impact of the change in Government to Wiltshire Council is the exponential proposed increase in housing targets. Wiltshire Council had secured a 4 Year Housing Land Supply over which he had personally engaged with the last Central Government, and that was a target Wiltshire Council had met. Due to recalculation of that figure however, by the Government, a recalculation he believed to be incorrect that figure was now stated to be 2.08 years. It was looking increasingly likely that the sheer numbers of housing units to be delivered would be significantly increased. He was hopeful that the Local Plan, yet to be ratified will provide some protection against this. The issue he had with this was that Wiltshire Council had issued planning consents for over 19,000 properties, which the developers had failed to deliver, preferring to 'land bank' rather than build.

There was also increasing pressure to deliver Solar Farms, and the north of the County particularly falls prey to this. Whilst accepting the need for renewable energy, there had to be a balance too with the need for food security, and the current proposal for Lime Down, which will have an impact on 2000 acres in close proximity to the Kington Division with a further 2000 acres being affected just outside of Melksham. He had spoken against this at a recent meeting in Malmesbury Town Hall and will continue to lobby against it.

An additional pressure locally is that of the delivery of Gypsy and Traveller pitches. Wiltshire, and north Wiltshire particularly due to the M4, is a particular target for the G&T community and we have a responsibility to accommodate them. However, we have also been subject to a large number of un-authorized pitches, which had as yet crept in under the radar and which he believed should be added into the number the Government require Wiltshire Council to deliver

if they are policy compliant. As such he is actively resisting ‘new’ pitches that have been identified in unsuitable locations and will continue to do so.

The Community Area Parish Forum he Chaired, continued to go from strength to strength and the most recent Meeting was attended by the Wiltshire Chief Constable, who found the Meeting very invaluable. This gives the sixteen Parishes in the Chippenham Community Area an opportunity to meet in a venue, typically a Village Hall, kindly hosted by the Parishes in turn and discuss issues such as speeding which they may have in common and to share experiences and intelligence. The Neighbourhood Police Team was regular attendees too and equally finds the Forum very useful.

Wiltshire Council finances continued to be strong and are certainly better placed than most surrounding Authorities. For the 2025/26 financial year the revenue budget would be £527m against the £490m for the last financial year. Although the Government had increased social care funding by £4.8m, increases in National Insurance contributions have resulted in costs of £8m. However, unlike many authorities Wiltshire Council had contained the Council Tax increase to just 4.5%, (2.5% basic Council Tax plus 2.0% Adult Social Care Levy), against the 4.99% that was allowed by the Government. This would see an increase of £1.56 per week for those in a Band D property.

The most significant areas of spend outlined in the proposals were;

- Adult Services - £194m
- Families and Children - £75m
- Highways and Transport - £43.4m
- Highway potholes etc - £22m
- Environment (including waste) - £49.5m and
- Education and skills - £38m

In closing, Howard gave his thanks to all Parish Councils for the hard work they do on behalf of their Parishes, and for making his job so much easier than it might otherwise be. He was pleased that he had been re-elected to represent Kington Division again in the Local Government Elections on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 and hoped to be able to continue to work for all.

The Chairman of the Meeting thanked Councillor Greenman for his advice, continued involvement and assistance during the past year and looked forward to working with him over the next 4 years.

#### **MIN 7. Reports from Local Organisations:**

There were no Reports.

#### **MIN 8. Council Member Vacancy:**

Following the Parish Council Elections on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 there had been an un-contested Election in the Parish. Fortunately four eligible persons had stood, which was sufficient to form a quorum leaving one Vacancy to fill. Since then a community volunteer had come forward and at the Council Meeting held earlier in the evening the Council had co-opted James Savage meaning the Council was now at full strength.

#### **MIN 9. Public Questions and General Discussion of Parish Issue:**

**Keep Britain Tidy – Great British Spring Clean (Litter Picking).** As the Council Chairman had reported earlier, sadly, there had been a number of incidents of Fly Tipping within the Parish possibly relating to changes to the usual waste collection schedules and Recycling Centre closures. A Litter Pick of Allington Lane and some of Fowlswick Lane had taken place at the

end of March and help was awaited from Idverde Ltd, who in the past had assisted with Litter Picks starting at the Farm Shop - to Sheldon Corner and along Frogwell Lane to the A350.

**Community Safety/Neighbourhood Watch/Emergency Plan** The Council Chairman reported that the Council had produced a Plan that needs regular updating as circumstances change, particularly in regards to flooding. There was no formal Neighbourhood Watch Scheme but Community Police messaging when received is circulated to those on the Council database.

**Traffic Speeds & Highway Safety.** As the Council Chairman had reported earlier, the problem of accidents at well-known hotspots remained a priority and the Parish Council had to work through the Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group (LHFIG) who had scheduled a Local Safety Survey to consider the problem locations. At the present time this had been delayed until the dualling of the A350 and the possibility of an access to the Rugby Club car park from the A350 was resolved. In the interim the Council had involved the Neighbourhood Community Policing Team and discussed potential solutions but, sadly, we were in the hands of Wiltshire Highways.

**Chippenham Without Neighbourhood Plan.** As reported last year the adopted Neighbourhood Plan was now being used as part of the Wiltshire Local Planning considerations on all planning applications. The Council Chairman had reported earlier that there were a number of things the Neighbourhood Plan aimed to do including implementing some interest groups. Cllr Stephen Eades advised that the Neighbourhood Plan promoted the formation of community interest groups, including the consideration of community facilities, history matters and biodiversity themes. The Parish Newsletter had continued to update on this and sought volunteers for interest groups on such subjects as Parish flora and fauna, architecture and history and these had yet to be formed and the Council would continue to encourage them during the coming year but the involvement of interested community volunteers would be required.

**Parish Database–Communications/Newsletters.** The Council had tried to create more community interest in Parish matters and had introduced a quarterly Newsletter. The production of this quite small publication had been time consuming and it had been sent to all households via Royal Mail to ensure all received a copy. The lack of feedback had raised the question of whether it was worthwhile continuing even though there was a need to inform Parishioners on local matters and topics such as the Neighbourhood Plan interest groups mentioned earlier. The Council wondered if they might be using the wrong formula and that perhaps more interest would be shown if the publication was circulated by email using the Council database. This in itself raised the issue of the GDPR controlled database that the Council used to circulate Wiltshire Council and Police news and messaging including road closures etc. The database circulation numbers remained small despite attempts to increase interest and so many would be disenfranchised if this method of Newsletter communication was adopted. It was suggested that perhaps more could be encouraged to join the database and ways and means would be considered further. Cllr Eades agreed to produce an article that could be circulated to increase interest.

**Rights of Way-Footpath maintenance-Community Wardens.** The Council Chairman had reported earlier that the Council conducted a Rights of Way review every year and were encouraging more use of the network of paths through improvements where necessary. They would encourage all to become “Wardens” as they walk the paths and report blockages and problems, or they might like to carry small tools themselves to clear brambles etc.

**Defibrillator provision within the Parish.** The Council Chairman had reported earlier that the that there were two defibrillators in the Parish – one at the Farm Shop and the other near Sheldon Corner. Historically, the Council had provided these by a lease scheme with management through the South West NHS Ambulance Trust who had now ended the schemes and had withdrawn their involvement at the Lease end leaving the Parish with two Defibrillators with no support. The Parish Council now had a number of options. This could include the removal of the appliances so that no emergency provision remained in the Parish, or Parish

funding to secure their retention possibly using volunteer support to oversee their condition. If the latter then the Parish Council would need to consider options. The first question to answer was whether or not the service should be continued or discontinued. There was overwhelming support for the retention of the emergency provision.

**Flooding-Flood Plan-Community Flood Wardens.** The Community Safety Plan had been discussed earlier and this included flood emergencies. It was important that flooding should be prevented by proactive means rather than reacting to emergencies and this could be aided by the reporting of ditch and culvert blockages that would encourage local riparian land owners to maintain the local watercourse network. All Parishioners could act as “Wardens” in this respect.

**Community Hall provision.** The Council Chairman had reported earlier that the Neighbourhood Plan throughout its progress to completion had always raised the consideration of producing some kind of Parish Hall. As no interests groups had taken this forward a full review of the project had been undertaken by the Parish Council and a study paper produced. It had been available on the Parish Council website and was circulated to attendees. The Paper very thoroughly covered all aspects to be considered including, the need, the potential site, the costs and the governance/management. The Parish Council’s conclusion had been that a Parish Hall, given the total lack of need, was not a sensible use of Parish funds and the associated time and effort required from the Council and the matter would not be considered further. They had determined that the matter would be discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting to ascertain community views on that decision. Those in attendance agreed with the Council’s decision and supported the view that no Hall was necessary and that no further action should be taken.

**MIN 10. Closure of Meeting:**

The Chairman of the Meeting thanked all those who had attended the Annual Parish Meeting and closed the Meeting at 8.23pm.

Signed:

Councillor:

Date: