

RAMSBURY & AXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council: Alice Charlwood, c/o Council Office, Memorial Hall, High Street, Ramsbury
Telephone: 01672 520045 parishcouncil@ramsbury.org

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on
Monday 15th May 2023 in Ramsbury Memorial Hall at 7.45pm.

Present

S Glass (SG) Chairman,	M Tester (MT),
D Barnett (DB) Vice Chair	E Hodgson (EH),
D Edwards (DE),	H Lloyd (HL),
G Hawes (GH),	D Gill (DG)
L Jauncey (LJ),	R Greasley (RG)
M Waugh (MW),	A Charlwood (Clerk)

1 member of the public was present

1. Reading of the Notice Convening the Meeting

AC read the notice convening the meeting.

2. Welcome by the Chairman

SG welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. Apologies for absence - A Foale; R Young; B Murray; C Morgan

4. Adoption of minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2022

The minutes of this meeting were approved. **Prop. EH; Sec. DB. All agreed**

5. Matters Arising - None

6. Chairman's report

Sheila Glass

This year has been a relatively quiet one after the disruption of lockdown and a pandemic.

Simon Smith, one of our Axford Councillors, went off to pastures new and we welcomed Bernard Murray in his place. I'd like to thank Simon for the many years of service he gave to the Council - his wet T shirt on one of the Boundary walks goes down in history.

In April 2022 we held a Fresher's Day in the Memorial Hall to enable village organisations to advertise and recruit. Volunteering plays a large part in the village and the day was very successful.

We came third in a hard fought Best Kept Village competition and our thanks are due to Karen and Mark Rees who masterminded the application.

We may have had a Coronation this year but last year there was a Platinum Jubilee - we gave medals to the schoolchildren and cream teas to the residents to commemorate the occasion. Thanks go to the Fire Service who put up bunting for this and the recent coronation.

Global events impinged on the villages when we had three Ukrainian families come to live here - they have all moved on now, but we hope we gave them some respite while they were here.

In July our Clerk Carol Standage left us and we welcomed Alice Charlwood in her place. Alice took on the roles of clerk and minute-taker, so this also meant that our minute-taker Mary Holdsworth was redundant. I'd like to thank Carol and Mary for the service they gave us, particularly over the unusual time of lockdown and zoom meetings.

In a nod to the Climate Change debate, we have instituted a Green Committee whose remit is to investigate ways in which we can seek to comply with regulations.

We finally got permission from Wiltshire Council to erect white gates at Whittonditch in the hope of slowing traffic and we have also instigated "20 for a reason" signs in Back Lane, in an effort to remind drivers that there is a speed limit of 20mph.

We are currently working on plans to convert the public loos into a usable space. Planning permission has been granted and we are considering quotes. Hopefully this project will come to fruition in the next few months.

The Boundary Walk in April was a great success, and the weather was kind. 65 people started the walk and 35 completed it. Thanks especially to Doug and Rachel Greenway who led it, and to all those who provided lifts and refreshments.

We are still working on the website, and this continues to improve as a source of news and information. We are also trying to establish a village database so that information and news can be spread quickly. I would urge anyone who hasn't filled in a form to do so - email is so much more effective than letterbox drops.

The usual chestnuts of speeding, dog poo and potholes have come up in correspondence. As I pointed out in an article in Whitton Ways, the first two are well in the control of residents, the last I'm afraid is not only a local problem.

Finally, thanks to all the Councillors who give freely of their time to keep things in the villages running smoothly.

7. Committee Reports

(i) Finance Committee

Erica Hodgson

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2022/2023:

	ACTUALS	BUDGET ASSIGNED
	APR 2022-MARCH 2023	2022-2023
INCOME		
Annual precept and top-up grant	£69,936.00	£69,936.00
Grants, prizes, donations to PC	£0.00	£0.00
Allotments income	£600.00	£600.00
Sales	£231.00	£150.00
Bank interest	£299.53	£0.00
Insurance Claim	£5,782.00	£0.00
TOTAL INCOME	£76,848.53	£70,686.00
EXPENDITURE		
Capital Projects	£2,301.13	£30,200.00
Committee Expenditure	£1,178.42	£2,875.00
Events Expenses	£1,922.55	£3,950.00
General Administration	£10,879.65	£10,500.00
Grants to village organisations	£5,385.00	£5,555.00
Insurance, legal & professional fees	£2,583.78	£3,526.00
Public conveniences	£3,432.20	£6,430.00
Allotments and Defib	£721.00	£0.00
Upkeep of village facilities	£4,843.29	£6,900.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£33,247.02	£69,936.00
Assigned to Ring Fenced Funds (for future FY expenditure)	£28,000.00	

This financial year we applied for and were granted a precept of £69,936.00. In addition to this we received income from an insurance claim (to be spent in FY 23/24) and for the first time for many years, we received ~£300 in bank interest. The precept we requested was significantly higher than previous years (~£15,000 increase vs FY 21/22); this was intentional to allow us to continue to fund long-term projects in the parish and to manage increasing ongoing costs. For Band D properties, this increase in the precept for the parish resulted in an attributed increase in Council Tax of £1.24 /month.

Our expenditure this year was modest (£33,247.02), compared with last year, when we made some significant investments. This year we have covered smaller parish projects and running costs. We have also ring-fenced funds from this budget (£28,000) for investment in capital projects in the village. One of these projects,

scheduled for next year is the renovation of the Public Conveniences, allowing us to maintain a Public Convenience whilst also creating a flexible workspace/shop for rental within the village. This will provide the Parish Council with income in future years - important as we consider the financial outlook for public funding. We will also continue to support funding for the Ramsbury Flyer as a key village amenity, as well as funding signage work and pavement repairs, as necessary, to cover shortfalls in funding from Wiltshire Council.

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 applied for our precept from Wiltshire Council. Given the economic pressures for all parishioners, and a healthy absolute precept amount, we have not significantly increased our precept this year (0.2% increase). 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.

(ii) Planning Committee report

Diann Barnett

We have dealt with 44 planning applications over the last year in our conservation area, 15 of which were for treeworks. Some have been somewhat controversial. In some, the Wilts CC planners have gone against the local and public opinion, and some other cases are still outstanding despite being past the notified publicised decision dates.

Two applications that we objected to were refused by Wilts CC. These then went to appeal but were refused by the Planning Inspectorate. Our conservation area status, combined with our AONB position and defined settlement boundary primarily hold us in good stead.

Two incidents have been referred to the 'enforcement' officer and are still outstanding. No further progress report has been made available to us despite frequent requests.

(iii) Rights of Way Committee report

Lynn Jauncey

Pathways

Our pathways continue to be well used by villagers, people visiting and others further afield, who come to enjoy our beautiful, varied countryside.

Throughout the year we have received various messages from local residents and walkers about the pathways' condition and signage. As always, we have managed to resolve issues as they arise.

An application to up-grade a footpath to a restricted by-way was submitted but latterly withdrawn by the applicant.

The only application for re-routing a path this year was submitted by Park Farm. The Parish Council made an objection to RAMS 5 and we are still waiting to hear from Wiltshire County Council with regards to a decision.

Alternative pathway applications

Park Farm is the only application we've received, who are re-routing several paths around the farm. The Parish Council has submitted an objection to RAMS5 diversion.

Boundary Walk

The Boundary Walk, completed in reverse, was a great success this year with a turnout of well over 80 people. The weather was good and warm overall with only a damp lunch stop. Our many thanks go to the people, clubs and societies who helped on the day with putting signage out, providing much needed refreshments, leading the walk and much more. The day was a huge success due to all their efforts. Also thank you to the landowners who allow access to some of their private land and enable this tradition to continue.

(iv) Play Areas & Seating Committee report

Denise Edwards

We suffered some storm damage to the nest swing in the play area at Ashley Piece. The insurance claim has now been settled and we are currently seeking a replacement for the equipment.

We also have an area of erosion around the toddler slide but our plans to install the rubber matting were hampered by a very hot summer and a wet winter, but we hope to sort this before the summer holidays.

We have had discussions with various equipment suppliers for the redevelopment of the Axford play area.

The new level-access roundabout at Knowledge Crescent requires some work due to sinkage after installation; the play board installation here still seems very popular.

I attended the WALC Play Areas Inspection training day in the last week and have a lot of information to process before any tasks are completed.

We have had an influx of requests for memorial benches this year and have allocated seating in some sites. We are currently working on a plan to have cobbles inscribed around the tree to ensure that memorial requests can be met in future.

(v) Allotments report

Denise Edwards

We have had another bumper year, with a number of new plot-holders being welcomed to the site.

We are looking forward to progressing with funding applications for the installation of all-weather matting up the central reservation to assist mobility scooter users.

Many users have installed extra water-harvesting devices to cover the times when hosepipe bans are in place.

The site has produced many exquisite entries into Ramsbury Horticultural Society shows.

The ever-changing landscape is a thing to be admired.

We did suffer a break-in last December where machinery was stolen; however, no damage to the site occurred.

(vi) Emergency Committee Report

Alison Foale

The emergency committee have updated the emergency warden list, including the addition of new wardens where areas have become available. A meeting was held on the 18 October 2022 to explain the role of the emergency wardens in more detail. Following the meeting wardens delivered the latest newsletter to residents with a request that they provide contact details for inclusion into the residents database. This initiative is to try and maximise the number of residents who can be contacted electronically in an emergency rather than by the current method of hand-delivering paper versions.

The number of completed database forms is currently 158. The parish council are continuing to encourage residents to provide their contact details, specifically an email address or mobile phone number.

(vii) Green Committee report

Maggie Waugh

The Green Committee have met three times over the past year.

The focus this year has been evaluating the need for the parish council to supply charge points for electric vehicles. We have discussed possible sites and suitability and have attended several webinar meetings on this subject. The conclusion has been that currently the need is not great enough to justify the cost. We as a committee will revisit this issue, if and when the need becomes greater and when the technological advances provide a more suitable charging alternative within a rural village setting.

We have also explored the value of purchasing or having access to an infra-red camera for use within the parish.

Moving forward, our aim is to establish a Green Issues page on the Ramsbury and Axford parish website for parishioners to access. This would include information on small-scale Green initiatives such as composting tips, recycling etc... and could also provide information on larger scale Wiltshire initiatives.

8. Axford Ward Report

Diann Barnett

I cannot say, as I usually do, that not much has happened over the last year.

The plague having now abated has led to community events. Ramsbury Band and Axford Art Group are back practising in the village hall, aptly true for both groups, although the band did withdraw to Axford Church for 2 or 3 weeks while the village hall was successfully used as a collection hub for Caragh Booth's appeal for supplies for Ukraine. It was heart-warming to see the sheer volume of essentials and Christmas treats people kindly donated, including several generators. Some of us had the job of washing teddies and soft toys before they were popped into Christmas boxes to lift a child's spirits.

We held a street party in the aptly-named Jubilee field last summer which included some Ukrainian contributions which were very nice. It was great to see the village finally getting together and meeting new people. We were also very lucky for the occasion to be given a new Village Hall notice board by Ramsbury Estate,

which has Axford Village Hall emblazoned across the top, so no excuse for not finding it anymore. Thank you, Ramsbury Estates, especially Mary for sorting it all.

We had a fete and duck race to raise funds for the village hall and Axford Church.

The village hall had burst pipes in the new year, due to a fault with the boiler frost control, which has now been repaired together with redecoration and new lighting in the toilet block.

The PC's Play Areas Chairman has kindly kept an eye on the equipment in the playground which is enjoyed by many children.

The WW2 American memorial has been removed from the defunct Red Lion car park for cleaning, repainting and reinstatement by kind permission of Ivor Dunbar near the seat by Stone Lane. Our thanks go to Neil Stevens for all his hard work in arranging this.

The new LED lighting through the village has made an amazing difference to our chances of dark skies. We just have to get rid of the clouds that seem to appear when there are things to look out for in our night skies.

By the time the AGM takes place we will have had (I hope) a successful Coronation afternoon tea in and around the Village Hall where I hope we will have met and welcomed new neighbours to our village.

Thanks go to everyone who have helped us through all the projects.

Surgery Representative's report

George Hawes

There were no face-to-face meetings with patient representatives in the period covered due to covid. Telephone calls to the surgery kept us updated.

There have again been huge efforts to keep the regular services going and at the same time carrying out the vaccination programme.

The surgery premises underwent a major upgrade.

Our thanks once again to the whole team.

Recreation Centre Representative's report

George Hawes

There were very few meetings due to the covid situation. All the clubs have now been operating normal matches and club nights.

Thanks must go to the team of groundsmen who have kept the facility in such good order during covid and after.

9. County Councillor's Report

Cllr James Sheppard

No report.

10. Public Question Time

One member of the public was present, who expressed the view that it was appalling that the residents of a parish of this size showed so little interest in this annual meeting. She came to thank the Councillors for all the time and effort they put into looking after the villages.

The Annual Assembly closed at 8.15pm