

Unadopted Minutes for Wokefield Annual Parish Assembly Meeting
Wednesday 15th May 2024
held at Wokefield Estate starting at 7pm

	<p><u>Meeting opened</u> The Meeting was declared open at 1921 hrs.</p>	
	<p><u>Present:</u> <i>Cllr. Chris Faulkner (CF)</i> <i>Cllr. Jim Thompson (JT)</i> <i>Cllr. Richard Thorne (RT)</i></p> <p><u>In attendance:</u> <i>Mrs Sandra Faulkner (Interim Clerk)</i> <i>Cllr Vicky Poole (District)</i></p>	
1	<p><u>Apologies, Absences and Quorum</u></p> <p>a) Apologies for absence were received, and accepted, from: <i>Cllr. Geoff Mayes (District), Cllr Nick Carter (District)</i></p> <p>Absences: <i>None</i></p> <p>b) Quorum: The Clerk declared the Meeting to be quorate.</p>	
2	<p><u>Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly Meeting held on 17th May 2023</u> The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th May 2023 had been circulated by email and posted on the website. They had been adopted as accurate at the meeting held on 14 November 2023. RT proposed and JT seconded that they be signed as a true and correct record.</p>	
3	<p><u>Report on the activities of the Parish Council during the past year</u> This is my third report as Chairman of Wokefield Parish Council.</p> <p>Since my last report we have managed to keep the same Prime Minister for a whole year. We have an increasing cost of living and persistently high interest rates. We are constantly reminded in the news of the tragedy of war in Europe persisting into its third year and the Israel Hamas conflict in Gaza.</p> <p>Parish Councillor News - The members of the Parish Council were reelected in an uncontested election following last year's APA and AGM. David Gurney sadly resigned from the Parish Council during the year as he moved out of the area to a fresh challenge. I would like to thank him for his robust support and work during his time on the council. We are looking for folk who would like to get involved in the local community and become a parish councillor. I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their service over the last 12 months.</p> <p>District Councillors - There was a large change in District Councillors last year. I would like to thank our district Councillors for their support over the last year and especially Councillor Geoff Mayes and Councillor Vicky Poole who have attended our meetings and provided support.</p>	

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Communication

Website - The website <http://wokefield-pc.org.uk/> is now our central method of communication. A big thank you to Vice Chair, Councillor Jim Thompson for regularly maintaining the information on the site. It is a great resource for both new and existing residents alike. Whilst the website serves our purposes well the company supplying the website now is providing cause for concern on several fronts. We need to consider a plan for an alternative solution more seriously.

Parish Notice Boards - One of the few assets which the Parish owns are the 3 notice boards located in Goring Road, Grazeley Green, Reading Road, Burghfield and New Road, Wokefield. Due to the lack of resources we have been unable to maintain these with up to date information. We need to make a plan regarding the future of these assets.

Roads, Speed Limits, Sight Lines, Verges, Hedges, Fly Tipping, Footway, Footpaths -

As envisaged it seems to be a given now that planned annual highway maintenance is being carried out less and less due to funding constraints. Since the last meeting we have had one verge cut in February. The “report a problem” service, on the whole, appears to be operating quite well. This relies on folk spotting an issue and reporting it directly on the West Berkshire Council website. We have again had some successes in getting street maintenance works carried out via this method. The maintenance always appears to be just enough and in reality too little.

Fly tipping is still occurring but does not appear to have increased too much and West Berks have dealt with issues promptly. We need to continue to highlight this facility to all residents of Wokefield. Where the West Berkshire service has failed to deliver satisfaction is in the sight line trimming. It appears this semi-automated service does not allow for a two way conversation regarding expectations.

Wokefield continues to be the site of unnecessary vehicle accidents with serious consequences which could be attributed to seriously overgrown highways obscuring site lines and unmanageable speed. The issue of speeding in Goring Lane has been raised again. Despite the many unsuccessful attempts this council have made to get the speed limit on Goring Lane lowered over the last 20 years we have made further representations to West Berkshire Council.

West Berkshire provided an feasibility estimate for a proposed footway along Goring Lane from the junction of New Road to the Old Bell Public House of about £750,000. We have not followed up on this any further. Some work on this project has been undertaken by local residents without charge.

Environment - West Berkshire declared a Climate Emergency 2nd July 2019 by full council. As a result we in Wokefield have done virtually nothing. I believe

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	<p>individually we are becoming more mindful. It would be great to share in a common aim regarding how we, as a community, could learn more about what we can do in Wokefield to aid a healthy environment and reduce the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Liaison Committees and Conferences -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Burghfield Common Neighbourhood Action Group which includes neighbourhood Police liaison ● Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity ● Clarke Educational Foundation ● Atomic Weapons Establishment Local Liaison Committee <p>Reports are normally included in parish quarterly meetings. Thanks to the council members David Gurney, Richard Thorne and Jim Thompson for generously giving up their time to attend the meetings and support these organisations.</p> <p>Planning - We have had another interesting year planning wise but with less planning applications to consider. A new industrial use application at Pitchkettle Farm was refused by West Berkshire Council. The applicant has appealed the decision. We await the outcome. This council opposed the application and provided evidence against the acceptance of the proposed use.. An application at Rapleys to extend the residential curtilage of the property into the adjacent agricultural field and further domestic buildings was refused and has gone to appeal. This council had no objections. Following the granting of aA major 75 acres solar electricity generation development at the council owned Bloomfield Hatch Farm, that was voted through by council decision at an Eastern Area planning committee meeting against robust local opposition, another major solar farm proposal is on the cards in Grazeley Green. It has been the subject of a screening application (I dont know what this actually is). There is currently no outcome. Should this develop in to a planning application there is robust opposition, Last year, we have had permission granted for a quasi new residential development in a redundant farmyard attracting a CIL (community infrastructure levy) payment to Wokefield PC of around £1600. A further £1600 has been paid this year. We have to find a use for this unexpected funding. We have tried to support local residents' views in planning matters. We have met both online and in person on a number of occasions to discuss applications and prepare a response for the West Berkshire planning team to publish and consider.</p> <p>We no longer receive regular advice on planning applications from the district councillors.</p> <p>Finance - We continue to maintain high levels of cash in the bank. This has mainly occurred due to contingencies not materialising such as a contested election, elimination of bank charges and a significant reduction in insurance costs. The</p>	
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	<p>precept for this year has maintained its low level at £1750. During the year we have again made a donation to support the local library service. We continue to support SLCC, HALC and CPRE.</p> <p>Water - We have been made aware of an issue at Bloomfield Hatch regarding their water supply. It currently is supplied from Wokefield Estate. They have written to the residents advising them that their water supply is at risk. A solution needs to be found. This issue is not uncommon in the area.</p> <p>Parish Council Meetings - Wokefield Parish Council meets four times per year. We have been fortunate enough to be able to hold our meetings at Wokefield Estate, Goodboys Lane, Mortimer, RG7 3AE. These very comfortable meeting rooms are provided without charge from DeVere. Residents of Wokefield are welcome to attend at 7.30pm to ask questions. Meeting dates are published on the website together with minutes and agendas. A District Councillor is normally also in attendance.</p> <p>Clerk to the Parish Council - We are still looking for a Parish Clerk. After 7 years of Sandra Faulkner being Interim Parish Clerk. I would like to thank Sandra for continuing to cover this post despite having a senior full time role elsewhere. We would welcome applications for this paid role from interested parties.</p> <p>Cllr Chris Faulkner, Chairman</p>	
4	<p><u>District Councillors Report</u></p> <p>District Councillor Nick Carter has regularly sent reports through which are then posted on the website so that they are available to all local residents. The latest of these has covered items such as flooding, sewage, recycling, planning, appeals, electric vehicle charging.</p> <p>In addition to this it was noted that a new round of Members Bids would be opened again later in the year (around September).</p>	
5	<p><u>STRATFIELD MORTIMER RELIEF IN NEED CHARITY Charity Number 237073 REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023</u></p> <p>Objects, Organisations and Activities</p> <p>Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity ("the Charity") is an amalgamation of several ancient charities dating back to the sixteenth century. The area it covers is the ancient ecclesiastical parish of Stratfield Mortimer, which now comprises the parishes of Stratfield Mortimer, Mortimer West End and Wokefield. Its principal asset is Burnt Common, in Mortimer West End, which has been used traditionally to provide winter fuel to the old and needy in the parish. The charity did this originally by providing wood from the land, and later by raising money from the provision of grazing rights to local farmers. In 1995 an agreement was entered into with ARC</p>	

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	<p>Southern (now Hanson Aggregates) to allow that company to extract gravel from the land. The licence entitled the Charity to a royalty based on the amount of gravel extracted.</p> <p>The gravel extraction was effectively completed in June 2006, following which the land is being restored, partly to agricultural land and partly to a nature reserve. During this time the Charity will be entitled to a rent of at least £2,000 per annum. As reported last year the land restoration was expected to be completed during 2023 but it now looks likely to be delayed into 2024. It now seems that the restoration works are being carried out in a way that is better suited to the requirements of Hampshire Wildlife Trust but will mean the land has little capacity for agricultural grazing. The Trustees are investigating what impact this may have on the anticipated grant of a 15 year Farm Business Tenancy and any financial consequences.</p> <p>There have been meetings during the year with disbursements given. The annual report is yet to be published and will be shared with the Parish Council once this occurs.</p> <p>Cllr Jim Thompson, Nominative Trustee for Wokefield Parish. May 2024</p>	
6	<p><u>Clarke's Educational Foundation Annual Report Year Ended December 2023</u></p> <p>Clarke's Educational Foundation provides educational grants to schools, youth organisations and individual residents of the parishes of Wokefield and Stratfield Mortimer in West Berkshire and Mortimer West End in Hampshire.</p> <p>The principal recipients of grants are university students who are supported throughout their first three years and the trustees revised these grants upwards significantly this year.</p> <p>Grants are also made available for educational purposes to local schools to cover items not available from the Local Education Authority; other organisations such as Scouts and Guides; mature students; apprentices and for vocational training.</p> <p>The charity owns part of the land on which Mortimer St Mary's school is built, the School Cottage, the School House and its garden.</p> <p>Following a number of urgent repairs in 2020, the trustees commissioned a survey into the general condition of this 150+ year old building. This revealed a programme of works to be carried out over 5 years estimated at a cost of c£35,000.</p> <p>In 2023 we replaced the central heating boiler and made further reparations to the schoolhouse and grounds at a cost of £8,812.</p>	

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	<p>The charity derives its income from renting the School House to tenants, modest investment interest and, in 2023, grants from Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity and Stratfield Mortimer fairground charity.</p> <p>In 2023 Clarkes supported 40 (20 in 2022) university students with bursaries amounting to £30,050 (£13,000 in 2022) thanks in a large part to the efforts of Trustee Mollie Lock.</p> <p>The Charity made £3,170 (£2,606 in 2022) grants to a variety of education related projects including: school trips and books for school leavers.</p> <p>The charity has funds invested in two Charities Official Investment Funds (COIF).</p> <p>At year end the COIF investment fund was worth £68,246 (£62,415 in 2022) which represents and increase in funds of £5,831 for the year.</p> <p>The COIF deposit fund balance stood at £719 (£689 in 2022) the slight increase in value attributable to retained interest.</p> <p>At year end total reserves (bank account plus investments) were £96,489 (£106,002 in 2022).</p> <p>Richard Thorne Chairman February 2024</p>	
7	<p><u>NAG Report</u></p> <p>Having taken over from David Gurney in August 2023, I have only attended one brief NAG meeting in February 2024.</p> <p>At that meeting, it was reported that there had been no crimes reported in Wokefield.</p> <p>In the neighbouring area there was concern that instances of shoplifting were rising in both Mortimer & Burghfield.</p> <p>There was no discussion of either fly tipping or speeding at this meeting, topics which have featured prominently at past meetings.</p> <p>J Thompson May 2024</p>	
7	<p><u>Date of next APA Meeting</u></p>	

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	It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 14th May 2025, beginning at 7pm.	
9	<u>Meeting Closed</u> The Meeting was declared closed at 1942 hrs.	

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