

Unadopted Minutes for Wokefield Annual Parish Assembly Meeting
Wednesday 14th May 2025
held at Burghfield Community Sports Association, James Lane, 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></p>	
1	<p><u>Apologies, Absences and Quorum</u></p> <p>a) Apologies for absence were received, and accepted, from: <i>Cllr. Vicky Poole (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 15th May 2024</u> The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th May 2024 had been circulated by email and posted on the website. They had been adopted as accurate at the meeting held on 13 August 2024. They were therefore signed 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 fourth report as Chairman of Wokefield Parish Council.</p> <p>Since my last report we have changed from a Conservative run government to Labour. War in Europe persists into its fourth year and the Israel Hamas conflict continues in Gaza.</p> <p>Parish Councillor News - The members of the Parish Council have remained the same from last year's APA and AGM. 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 Councillors Vicky Poole and Nick Carter who have attended our meetings and provided support.</p> <p>Communication Website - The website http://wokefield-pc.org.uk/ is our central method of communication. A big thank you to Vice Chair, Councillor Jim Thompson for regularly</p>	

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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 are considering a plan for an alternative solution.

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. We have ordered new notice boards made from metal and powder coated green. These should be easier to maintain in their locations under trees compared with the existing oak boards which have rotted. These will have a combination of locked and public notice areas to encourage community use. We have engaged a contractor to erect them.

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

The 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 October. 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 sight lines and unmanageable speed. The issue of speeding in Goring Lane has been raised again. We have recently been handed a document signed by a good proportion of the parish requesting that West Berkshire Council does something about the speed in Goring Lane. 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.

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 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.

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Liaison Committees and Conferences -

- 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

Reports are normally included in parish quarterly meetings. Thanks to the council members Richard Thorne and Jim Thompson for generously giving up their time to attend the meetings and support these organisations.

Planning - We have had a low level of planning applications to consider this year. 2 appeals have taken place following a refusal by West Berkshire Council. Both appeal refusal decisions were upheld following the appeal hearings. Ref Pitchkettle Farm and Rapleys.

A 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 in 2023 against robust local opposition has yet to be started. Another major solar farm proposal was the subject of a screening application. Local meetings were held to discuss this but it appears to have gone no further at present. Should this develop into a planning application there is robust opposition. Following permission granted for a quasi new residential development in a redundant farmyard attracting a CIL (community infrastructure levy) payment to Wokefield PC received a total of £3200 over a two year period. This money is being used for the replacement notice boards.

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.

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 and the CIL. Our case level will be severely impacted by the purchase of the new notice boards. The 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 subscribe to SLCC, HALC and CPRE.

Parish Council Meetings - Wokefield Parish Council meets four times per year. We have been holding our meetings at the Burghfield Community Sports Association, James Ln, Burghfield, RG30 3RS. 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.

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	<p>Clerk to the Parish Council - We are still looking for a Parish Clerk. After 8 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.</p>	
5	<p><u>STRATFIELD MORTIMER RELIEF IN NEED CHARITY Charity Number 237073 REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024</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 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>Investments and income</p> <p>The Charity has benefited during the year from a marginal increase in income and an increase in capital values of £71,000 compared to 2023. The net assets of the Charity at the year end were just over £2.1 million</p> <p>Disbursements</p>	

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	<p>There was an increase in the level of activities during the year with more grants being made to local organisations. Grants paid in the year amounted to some £72,000 (2023: £43,000) and include £31,500 to enable our Schools in Mortimer to give extra help to pupils with special needs.</p> <p>As in 2023, grants were made to individuals and families in need, including the provision of a number of Christmas hampers. Our support for Age Concern (Mortimer) in the form of fuel benefits continues.</p> <p>Cllr Jim Thompson, Nominative Trustee for Wokefield Parish. May 2025</p>	
6	<p><u>Clarkes Educational Foundation Annual Report Year Ended December 2024</u></p> <p>Clarke's Education 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.</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 and buildings comprising Mortimer St Mary's School, the School Cottage, the School House and its garden. The latter being the charities principal source of income.</p> <p>The charity derives its income from renting the School House to tenants, modest investment interest and, in 2024, a substantial grant from Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity.</p> <p>Following a number of urgent repairs in 2020, the trustees commissioned a survey into the general condition of this 150+ year School House. This revealed a programme of works to be carried out over 5 years estimated at c£35,000. This year saw further work on this programme with the long overdue replacement of its kitchen & other minor works at a total cost of £12,898.</p> <p>2024 saw unprecedented demand for university grants. Clarkes supported 44(40 in 2023) university students with bursaries amounting to £34,708 (£30,050 in 2023) thanks in a large part to the efforts of Trustee Mollie Lock and Clerk to the Trustees Valerie Hudson. For which efforts, many thanks.</p> <p>The charity made a further £2,377 (£3,170 in 2023) worth of grants to a variety of education related projects including: school trips; books for school leavers, travel for education and an online course.</p>	

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	<p>The charity has funds invested in two Charities Official Investment Funds (COIF).</p> <p>To meet demand for university grants the Charity had to release some of its Investments Funds.</p> <p>At the year end the COIF Investment Fund was worth £64,870 (£68,246 in 2023). The COIF Deposit Fund stood at £756 (£719 in 2023)</p> <p>Richard Thorne, Chairman 14th May 2025</p>	
7	<p><u>NAG Report</u></p> <p>I attended 2 meetings in 2024. The agenda is typically driven by the police attendees and the principal focus is reports of crimes by Parish. Wokefield had 3 crimes reported, all theft from vehicles at Wokefield Park.</p> <p>Elsewhere the principal concerns of note for Wokefield were Antisocial Behaviour in neighbouring Parishes by youths in Burghfield and Mortimer with some 36 reports to October 2024, and shoplifting in both Burghfield and Mortimer.</p> <p>There was discussion about accident statistics. It is possible to view accidents statistics on-line at Crashmap though this is about a year behind. The police representatives reminded attendees that accidents can be reported online at Thames Valley Police</p> <p>J Thompson May 2025</p>	
8	<p><u>AWE Liaison Committee Report</u></p> <p>I was able to attend one of the two AWE Local Liaison Committee meetings in 2024. The over-arching object of the meetings is to reassure the public in general & AWEs; neighbours in particular that the potentially hazardous activities within the two sites are well managed and present no threat to the general public. In my opinion the meetings achieve this well.</p> <p>The meetings tend to follow the same structure with routine updates in a number of areas. Summarised below are key points in each area</p> <p>AWE Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· AWE have a new brand and a new strapline: AWE Nuclear Security Technologies. <p>Development Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Main topics of discussion: future planning, external planning, travel and transport update· New internal developments on track to meet 10% BNG· No new external developments granted within DEPZ in 2024	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Travel - collectively the two sites employ c 7000 people – whilst a proportion could use public transport , cycle or walk, in reality the vast majority . I estimate >5000 are dependant on the car. <p>Infrastructure Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Building work continues on the Hub· Design in progress for a Future Materials Campus <p>Estates and Liabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Information of safe demolition of redundant buildings <p>Community Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· 8 public engagement events in a triangle of Basingstoke /Newbury /Reading· Science presentations to some 60,000 school children in 112 schools· Staff took part in 850 volunteering events <p>Regulators' Update</p> <p>Possibly the driest content of the day but the most important in terms of reassuring the public of the safety of AWE's activities. Presentations are given by 3 regulatory bodies: Office Nuclear Regulation; Environment Agency and Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator, each of which provides data on inspection & enforcement activities. There were no significant local issues to report</p> <p>Emergency planning and Response</p> <p>Annually, AWE are required to conduct a major exercise to demonstrate AWE's site emergency response arrangements. The latest exercise was on 8 October 2024 was judged adequate'. The exercise focused on an emergency in one of AWE's radioactive material facilities and a simulated release of material from that facility. A wide range of responders participated including the Fire and Rescue Service, Ministry of Defence Police, Paramedics, Safety Shift, Health Physics, RPAs, Emergency Managers, Facility Staff, Security, West Berkshire District Council, Duty Site Manager and a full suite of Subject Matter Experts from across the business. As well as the CEO and Executive team members to observe.</p> <p>Jim Thompson May 2025</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the Councillors for attending the meetings and reporting back to the council.</p>	
9	<p><u>Date of next APA Meeting</u></p> <p>It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Monday 11th May 2026, beginning at 7pm at the Burghfield Community Sports Association.</p>	

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9	<u>Meeting Closed</u> The Meeting was declared closed at 1930 hrs.	
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