



## **Minutes of the Wilcot, Huish and Oare Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 14th May 2024 at 7.00 pm in Oare Village Hall**

**Present:** Parish Councillors Dawn Wilson (Chair), Richard Fleet, Nicky Fleet, Prue Smith, Jamie Ede, Kathryn Richardson, and Neil Ridgway  
Unitary Councillor Paul Oatway  
Clerk Ruth Kinderman  
Residents Jon Thompson, Philip Coles, Victoria Le Sueur

### **1. To receive apologies for absence**

Parish Councillors Dee Nix and Richard Lewis.

### **2. Introduction and Welcome**

Dawn Wilson welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked all councillors to introduce themselves. Dawn reminded those present that this is not a parish council meeting but the annual parish meeting for electors to receive annual reports from the parish council and other bodies, and for electors to raise any matters relating to the parish.

### **3. To sign minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

Dawn Wilson noted that these minutes have been available on the website and signed them as an accurate record of that meeting.

### **4. Annual Report to parishioners by the Chairman of the Parish Council**

Dawn Wilson read the report prepared by Dee Nix, which is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

Dawn noted that the Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group (LHFIG) is an advisory body with an annual budget of £34,000, covering twenty-eight parishes. Large projects are mostly financed by the Substantive Highways Scheme Fund, for which parishes submit bids, with contributions from parish councils, LHFIG and any other available sources. Dawn noted that the proposed footway through Oare is a huge project, requiring sustained effort by many parties for anything between five and ten years to come to fruition.

With reference to the poor state of the highways in general, Dawn reported that the Leader of Wiltshire Council, Richard Clewer, has twice visited the Pewsey Vale recently, at the invitation and request of Pewsey Community Area Partnership (PCAP) and Councillor Oatway; he has been given a list of the 180 worst recurring issues to be resolved within the next year.

With regards to the White Hart in Oare, Dawn reported that the parish council has tried unsuccessfully to prevent the deteriorating situation and that nothing further can be done other than to wait and see what the owner's intentions may be. In response to questions, Dawn confirmed that there has been no change in ownership.

Dawn thanked councillors from Wilcot for supervising another successful litter pick, and thanked Nicky Fleet for maintaining the parish finances as efficiently as ever.

Dawn reminded those present that there is a fund for families struggling financially; provided they have a referee, they can apply for shopping vouchers from PCAP.



The Friday evening Youth Café at the Vale Campus in Pewsey has been hugely successful, with a sports coach now hired until the end of the summer. More volunteers to work with the assembled 11-18-year-olds are always welcome.

#### **5. Report from Wiltshire Unitary Councillor Paul Oatway**

Cllr Paul Oatway, Unitary Councillor for Pewsey Vale West, reported that Wiltshire Council is in a stable financial position, in contrast to several other large councils nationwide. The books have been balanced, with some money being transferred back into reserves. Cllr Oatway was pleased to report that all thirty libraries remain open, including the mobile library services that operate. Library staff are now trained in well-being and health, widening the scope of the library service to provide safe spaces for vulnerable people, and other low-cost events to support young families and others, in line with the new 'Family Health Model'; almost 700 'warm packs' were distributed during the last winter.

Wiltshire Council's twenty leisure centres have been greatly improved and as a consequence seen membership rise by 31% to more than 20,000 residents during the last year. An additional £6million funding will be invested in leisure services during 2024/2025.

The largest portion of the Wiltshire Council budget continues to go towards adult social services and care, which will be £179million during 2024/2025, an increase of £9million on last year; this expenditure is being closely scrutinised by Wiltshire Council in order to detect and prevent mis-use of public money. In addition, £71million will be spent on children's social care and £39million on education. £3million will be invested in regenerating towns, and £100,000 on monitoring and improving air quality, mostly in the more industrialised west of the county. £50million will be spent on the environment including waste collection services. Wiltshire Council continues to resist the central government's plans to collect food waste, asking for further evidence of the benefits and noting that the current contractor Hills does not have the facilities to process food waste, which will therefore be dumped along with general waste, even if collected separately. In addition, the current fleet of vehicles is not equipped to collect food waste and would have to be replaced, negating any benefits gained. Wiltshire Council will review its policy on food waste collection when the fleet needs to be replaced.

Following up from item 4, Cllr Oatway noted that Wiltshire Council is responsible for a huge county, similar in size to Cornwall, with 2800 miles of highway as its greatest asset, which would cost £5billion to replace. In addition to maintaining the roads, the Highways department looks after 3.9 square miles of footway, more than 1,000 road bridges and more than 50,000 streetlights. During 2023/2024, 32km (20miles) of road were resurfaced and 63 miles surface dressed, alongside fulfilment of 180 schemes delivered through the Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group (LHFIG).

Acknowledging comments from the floor about the appalling state of the roads in the parish, Cllr Oatway agreed that the C52 at Hare Street and Little Abbots crossroads should be closed until restored to safe standards; Cllr Oatway had recently driven the Leader of Wiltshire Council, Richard Clewer, around his division to demonstrate the scale of the problem. A meeting with the Local Highway Engineer is due to take place; Cllr Oatway is disappointed that several issues have been marked on the recently published long-term



plan as deferred, or subject to further review. However, he was pleased to report that the A342 has been resurfaced in several places, including at Conock which has finally been subject to proper drainage works and resurfacing. He has also obtained funds for the A345 surfacing and, working through LHFIG and the Substantive Highways Scheme Fund, Wiltshire Council money will be spent on the next phases of footway projects at North Newton and Woodborough, both in his division.

#### **6. Demonstration of defibrillator - opening and checking**

Dawn demonstrated checking procedures to all councillors. All five defibrillators are now registered on The Circuit. Dawn will continue to check them and submit reports via WebNos while the councillors establish their own routines for checking and submitting reports to the Clerk. It is hoped that by next year, the new routines will be established enabling Dawn to step down, having conscientiously taken care of the defibrillators for many years.

The new defibrillator at Hillview Park had been used recently and was now in error mode; it appears to be the battery light flashing. Kathryn Richardson will check that the battery has been inserted correctly before a new one is purchased.

#### **7. A345 – review progress of safety and bus stop projects**

Dawn reported that the safety review was due to take place either last week or this.

With regards to costs, the proposed bus stop at Sunnyhill Lane is estimated at around £22,000, of which £5,000 would be provided by LHFIG. Footway through Oare would cost at least £300 per metre, considerably more where it is necessary to overcome obstacles such as utilities and ditches. Footways would have to be done in phases over many years, as has happened in North Newton, Rushall and Woodborough.

Dawn reported that so many projects are requested through LHFIG, that parish contributions to costs will now rise from 20% to 40%, capped at £5,000. Substantive bids, as mentioned earlier are up to a maximum of £60,000.

Both projects will require a considerable increase in the parish precept in order to proceed.

#### **8. Forum for parishioners to raise any other matters of interest**

Comment from the floor expressed disappointment at Wiltshire Council's budget allocation of £50million to the environment, in contrast to only £43million for the highways.

The recent road traffic accident at the Cross Hayes junction was discussed; it was noted that of the seven recent collisions at this site, six have been caused by vehicles failing to stop as they approach the junction southwards from Prospect. As well as the omission of this junction from SatNav systems, it was noted that there is only one small 'Give Way' sign on the north side, in contrast to the ample large signage as one approaches the junction from Hare Street.

Cllr Oatway agreed to support a request to LHFIG for additional signage on the Bristow's side of the junction.

With reference to the environment, Cllr Oatway said that the results of soil samples at Wilcot are still awaited.

On behalf of the Oare Village Hall Committee, Phil Coles said that an additional SID site is still desirable, although the purchase of a third SID by the cooperative had been appreciated in that the Committee no longer felt it necessary to but one independently of the group. The Committee is willing to fund a pole at a new site south of the church, which



they understand needs to be requested through LHFIG. The Committee recognises that the verge may be needed for a future footway but notes that this is likely to be some years off, whereas the pole could be installed very soon.

It was noted that data can be downloaded from one of the current SIDS; in response to a question, it was agreed to find out how many drivers have been sent on speed awareness courses as a result of speeding through Oare.

Comment from the floor was noted, that Wiltshire Council has employed four additional members of staff to process claims for vehicular damage caused by potholes; the costs of this situation were considered with dismay.

Dawn thanked everyone for attending.

Annual report to the parish meeting from the parish council.

**Planning** – we have considered 34 applications this year, of which 14 were notices of treeworks and 4 were for Listed Building Consent; 2 of these were in tandem with full planning applications of which there were 16.

**A345** - the PC has followed up on the footway project through the village with meetings with the Highways Engineer who is broadly supportive & made various helpful suggestions. A highways survey will be undertaken to monitor usage. We have a separate project running in parallel to put a bus shelter on the South bound carriageway of the A345 at Sunnyhill Lane. At present there is not even a path or hardstanding to the bus stop on this side of the road. Both highway projects are long term, and we will have to find funding from a variety of sources if they are to be viable. Wiltshire Council have taken the bus shelter project forward & we may be able to use Area Board funding to seed the project. However, there is considerable competition for very finite monies.

**SIDs** - We are still members of the Speed Indicator Device co-operative which is in the process of purchasing a third indicator device, this will give greater coverage in Oare. Our local Traffic Officer continues to monitor speeding through Oare & a large number of individuals have faced prosecution or driver training courses as a result of their behaviour.

**Speedwatch** in Oare has been in abeyance for some time due to ill health but 3 new volunteers have come forward for training & it is hoped that with our enlarged team we will be back "educating" drivers soon.

**Footpaths & byways** - unfortunately there has been a spate of blockages on a number of footpaths including an illegal closure. If you spot an obstruction of a foot path - vegetation, new gates etc. - you can report these to the Clerk or Wiltshire footpaths officer.

**Sheep worrying** - there have been a number of appalling attacks on sheep by dogs in the last year. Please make sure your dogs are under close control at all times & on a lead in fields with livestock. Your dog may well be shot if caught in the act of worrying livestock.

**Steward** - The PC clerk has put considerable effort into trying to get our Parish Steward scheme working as it should this year. Sadly, some areas are still not being maintained correctly & this is finally being acknowledged so hopefully things will improve shortly.

**Potholes** - The flooding at dog house (top of Oare on A345) is much reduced, a freedom of information request regarding works there seems to have triggered much more frequent drain clearance. We are promised that an engineering solution will-be undertaken this spring.

The sink hole in Oare is still being temporarily patched, the Council are well aware that it needs repairing properly but we have no dates for this. More generally regarding potholes, Cllr Wilson & PCAP persuaded Unitary Cllr leader of Wiltshire Council to visit the area. He admitted that the roads were in a disgraceful state & promised remedial action, who knows when!

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors & Cllr Oatway for the work they have undertaken on our behalf to try & improve our Parish. Finally, thanks to Ruth our Parish Clerk, whose dogged determination coupled with diplomatic skills get things done despite many obstructions thrown in her way.