



Minutes of a meeting of Great Shefford Parish Council held on Monday 3rd March 2025 at 7.30pm at Great Shefford Village Hall

Present: Councillor Louisa Freeman (Chairman)
Councillors Miranda Armstrong, Tony Coard and Carol Turner

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Locum Parish Clerk)
Councillor Clive Hooker (West Berkshire District Council)
3 x members of public

2025-03/01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jessica Copcutt, Piers Storey and Eunice Tweedie.

2025-03/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

2025-03/03 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED to take as read and confirm as accurate the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2025.

2025-03/04 OPEN FORUM

- i. The following questions were raised by members of the public:

District Councillor Hooker joined the meeting during this agenda item

A resident raised concern that the minutes of the previous meeting appeared to indicate that the Emergency Management Team (EMT) was no longer active (Minute reference 2025-01/13iii), which was not correct. Councillors acknowledged that the EMT was still active and confirmed that the Minute referred to the Parish Council looking at disposing of redundant equipment that had not been used for a long period of time and had become defective. The resident also queried the contact details of the EMT having been removed from the village website¹. **It was agreed that the resident would provide up-to-date contact information for the EMT for upload to the website.**

A resident requested an update on the Asset of Community Value application regarding The Great Shefford pub and Councillor Freeman advised that a new application had been submitted, which included many letters of support from the community, along with a business case. It was confirmed that a buyer had been found for the property and the purchase was progressing, with a potential opening around the end of 2025.

¹ POST MEETING NOTE: it was confirmed that contact details of members of the EMT had been removed from the website at the request of a member of the EMT, due to GDPR concerns

2025-03/04 OPEN FORUM continued

A resident raised concern at the potential impact of the flood alleviation scheme on his property, with particular regard to the volume of water being let through and the impact of the culvert not being properly maintained due to access issues and there was currently no trash screen on the culvert, allowing debris to build up. The resident confirmed that he had contacted the Environment Agency, who had refused a request to install a trash screen and the resident enquired whether the Parish Council / Community might wish to fund. District Councillor Hooker advised the resident to contact West Berkshire Council Officer, Paul Bacchus, and request an observation on whether a trash screen would be advantageous.

It was agreed to invite the Environment Agency to attend the Parish Council meeting on 7th April 2025.

A resident queried an extract from the minutes of the last meeting regarding membership of the Speed Awareness Scheme (Minute reference 2025-01/07) and advised that she was leader of the scheme, and Councillors Copcutt and Tweedie were co-ordinators.

ii. Report from District Councillor

Councillor Hooker apologised for his late arrival, due to attending a Public Protection Partnership meeting at West Berkshire Council.

Councillor Hooker reported that:

- his Members' Bid application for a replacement Vehicle Activated Sign for the village had been awarded £2,232;
- West Berkshire Council's 2025/26 budget had been set, with Council Tax increases at the maximum permitted by central government;
- West Berkshire Council had applied to central government for a £16m loan;
- black bin collections would be moving to collection every 3 weeks, green bin collections remaining fortnightly;
- a commercial property purchased to generate income had been sold and other such properties were likely to also be sold;
- street lights would be dimmed (not switched off) between 12am and 6am across the district;
- there was no change to the green bin charge;
- assessments underway on the potential for commercial companies taking over West Berkshire Council care homes;
- £18m would be invested in a solar farm at Grazeley, with a payback period of 10 years;
- mobile library services were ceasing and there were incentives for pop-up libraries instead;
- a Devolution Advisory Group had been established to look at potential unitary authority proposals. Currently in discussions with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Councils. Implementation anticipated in 5 to 10 years;
- resurfacing and remarking of a section of the B4000/A338 junction at Shefford Woodlands, had been a great improvement.

Councillors thanked Councillor Hooker for his update.

2 members of public left the meeting

2025-03/05 SERVICE DELIVERY OFFERS FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Following consideration at the last meeting (2025-01/06), it was noted that no information had been received regarding dog or litter bins in the parish that were maintained by West Berkshire Council, it was therefore presumed that there were no bins.

Further information on the possibility of hosting a regular 'pop-up library' would be reported to the next meeting of the Parish Council for consideration.

025-03/06 NUISANCE AND OBSTRRRRUCTION – OVERHANGING VEGETATION

Councillors considered a proposal from West Berkshire Council (WBC) for the Parish Council to provide assistance in relation to vegetation overhanging the highway from private properties.

West Berkshire District Council would consent to a Parish / Town Council to administer the sending of letters, in the form approved by WBC, relating to overhanging vegetation, with the exception that any formal or final notices must be served by West Berkshire Council, this function being reserved to the principal authority pursuant to highways legislation. This proposal follows success trials with Holybrook Parish Council since April 2022.

RESOLVED to confirm the Parish Council's agreement to take on this role.

2025-03/07 TRAFFIC CALMING AND SPEED AWARENESS

- i. It was noted that the Parish Council's application via District Councillor Clive Hooker for Members' Bid funding for a replacement Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) had received an award of £2,232 (a little less than the £3,266 applied for). The total project cost was £4,666, thereby requiring the Parish Council to contribute £2,434. It was agreed to enquire with the relevant West Berkshire Council Officer whether the grant could be used to replace the sign at the northern entrance to the village, rather than the one detailed in the application, as it was felt that this sign was in a more prominent, effective location and was also faulty. If this was not permitted, it was agreed to proceed with replacing the sign detailed in the application, on the A338 Wantage Road.

RESOLVED to accept the grant, with thanks to Councillor Hooker, and agree to contribute £2,434 towards the purchase and installation of the VAS, funded from Community Infrastructure Levy funds held, and to enquire whether the grant could be used to replace an alternative VAS in the village.

- ii. There were no updates on the Speed Awareness Scheme.

- iii. **It was agreed to include funding to enhance village signage and traffic calming measures in the 2026/27 draft budget.**

2025-03/08 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Updates on new planning applications and decisions since the last meeting were noted.

2025-03/09 FINANCE

- i. It was noted that a duplicate payment to Tactical Facilities Management would be offset against the next invoice.
- ii. It was noted that multiple communication had been sent to SSE regarding the incorrect contract charges and no response had been received to date. The Clerk would now pursue via a formal complaint process.

2025-03/10 RECRUITMENT OF A PARISH CLERK

Councillors considered a draft job description for the permanent Parish Clerk vacancy.

RESOLVED to approve the job description, as presented, and to delegate authority to the Chair and Vice Chair to recruit and appoint a permanent Parish Clerk.

2025-03/11 PROPOSED NEW WEBSITE

Councillors considered a proposal to commission a new Parish Council / Village website, to support and enhance local information sharing and communication.

RESOLVED to commission e-mango to develop a new website as set out in the proposal and at a cost of £300 one-off charge and £384 annually.

2025-03/12 VILLAGE MATTERS**i. Village Events**

Councillor Turner reported that 14 volunteers had attended the last community litter pick on 2nd February, and the next would be held on Sunday 6th April 2025 at 10am, followed by 1st June 2025, 3rd August 2025 and 5th October 2025. Consideration was being given to an incentive scheme.

ii. Village Communications – website, Facebook and coordinated communications

With a new website agreed under the previous agenda item, it was hoped that this would be the first step towards enhanced village communications.

iii. Update on the Asset of Community Value (ACV) application for The Great Shefford

As reported in the open forum (Minute Reference (2025-03/04)).

iv. Future Councillor ‘Meet & Greet’

The next opportunity was the Annual Parish Meeting on 12th May 2025.

2025-03/13 FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME AND SAGLUV (Sewage Action Group for the Lambourn Upper Valley)

Councillor Freeman reported that the projected completion date was now the end of May 2025.

2025-03/14 COUNCILLORS' BUSINESS

i. Councillor Coard reported that grit bins needed refilling and would provide details on locations.

ii. Councillor Coard advised that he had been challenged by a member of public whilst undertaking a recent play area inspection.

RESOLVED to issue all Councillors with an ID badge for use whilst on Council business.

Councillor Hooker left the meeting

2025-03/15 MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Nothing at this time.

2025-03/16 PLAY AREA & RECREATION GROUND REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Councillors noted the annual play area inspection report.

2025-03/17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 7th April 2025 at 7.30pm.

Subsequent meeting dates 2025: 12th May, 2nd June, 7th July, 8th September, 6th October and 3rd November.

2025-03/18 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, in view of the commercially sensitive nature of the business to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they were instructed to withdraw.

2025-03/19 PLAY AREA & RECREATION GROUND REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Councillors considered costs for repairs to play area equipment, identified in the annual play area inspection report.

RESOLVED to instruct Infinity Playgrounds to carry out repairs identified as moderate risk in the annual inspection report, plus all cleansing, at a cost of £3,755.20 and to review low risk repairs for completion in 2025/26.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.11pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____