

ST. NICHOLAS HURST PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD IN ST NICHOLAS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, HURST
ON TUESDAY 6TH MAY 2025 AT 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Curry (in the Chair),
Boyd, Eastaugh, Ewart, Kendall, Openshaw,
Percival (in part), Robinson, Smith and Thomas.

OFFICERS: Mrs. M. Bradshaw (Clerk).

PUBLIC: Seventeen Members of the Public.

9545 Public Forum

The Chair welcomed the public. The Clerk confirmed that one question had been submitted by Dr. Jeremy Lade:

Q: “Parish Councillors will be aware that the Application for 9 dwellings on Land northwest of Hogmoor Lane was firmly refused by WBC planning officers and that the site has been ruled out as a suitable allocation for development in the emerging Local Plan. The developer, Shorewood Homes, have now submitted an Appeal with two requests to the Planning Inspectorate for a 6-day Public Inquiry because of the number of complex issues to be decided. The outcome of the Appeal will affect future planning applications in Hurst and we hope that there will be no doubt that the Parish Council will wish to submit a robust objection to this unwelcome proposal.

Are you able to confirm this please?”

A: The Chair stated that the Parish Council had not yet been formally informed of the appeal and would therefore not comment until such time. The Clerk confirmed this to be the case. Borough Councillor Conway added that, in usual circumstances of this size, a decision would be reached through a normal hearing. However, in this case, the appellant has requested a full public inquiry and the Planning Inspectorate’s decision is awaited.

9546 Election of Chair

Councillor Ian Smith temporarily took the Chair and invited nominations for a new Chair. Councillor Kendall nominated Councillor Curry. No other nominations were received. Seconded, Councillor Smith. Agreed unanimously.

Councillor Curry accepted and took the Chair.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Curry is elected Chair for the current Municipal Year.

9547 To receive a declaration of office from the Chair

Councillor Curry signed her declaration of office of Chair and this was witnessed and signed by the Clerk.

9548 Election of Vice-Chair

Councillor Robinson proposed Councillor Boyd as Vice Chair. No other nominations were received. This was seconded by Councillor Ewart. Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Boyd is elected as Vice-Chair for the current Municipal Year.

9549 To receive a declaration of office from the Vice Chair

Councillor Boyd signed his declaration of office of Vice Chair and this was witnessed and signed by the Clerk.

9550 Declarations of Interest

There were none to declare.

9551 Review of Committees and appointments to Outside Bodies:

RESOLVED: that Members be appointed to the following bodies for the current Municipal Year:

Allotments – Councillors Curry.

Playing fields and open spaces – Councillor Ewart.

9552 Appointments of Representatives on Outside Bodies

RESOLVED: that Members be appointed to represent the Council as indicated:

Village Halls – Councillor Robinson.

Northern Parishes Group – Councillor Boyd.

Community Hub project - Councillor Robinson.

New Hurst Village Society (NHVS) – Councillor Robinson.

IT/Social Media Support – Councillor Kendall.

9553 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Borough Councillor Andrea.

9554 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

9555 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 8th April 2025 were approved.

9556 **Matters arising**

The following matters were noted:

- the allotments are now full;
- Councillor Thomas awaits a response from the Area Manager of The Warren Inn public house regarding siting of the Parish Council noticeboard for Ashridge Ward;
- the Clerk still to follow up on whether the Council is achieving maximum interest in the current bank accounts;
- Simon Bartrum, Countryside Services, has confirmed that the invasive species in the village pond is known as Crassula Helmsi and is best pulled out. Two sets of fisherman's waders to be procured;
- the member of the public who approached the Parish Council requesting use of the Community Orchard for an outdoor playgroup has withdrawn as a result of lack of facilities i.e. toilets and storage; and
- the Parish Council has now fully transitioned to the new "gov.uk" domain name which satisfies the requirement of the new assertion on the 2025-26 Annual Governance Statement which will require all local authorities to have a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain.

9557 **Vacancies on the Parish Council**

The Chair welcomed Zoe Percival to the public forum. She had expressed an interest in filling the remaining vacancy for the Village Ward.

RESOLVED: Members agreed unanimously to co-opt Zoe Percival. Councillor Zoe Percival duly co-opted to represent the Village Ward.

Councillor Percival joined the table.

9558 **Borough Councillor Update**

The Chair welcomed Borough Councillor Conway to the meeting.

Local Plan Update (LPU)

Borough Councillor Conway updated Members regarding the latest position with the LPU which has now been read by two Planning Inspectors who've submitted their queries. Queries are largely of a predictable nature and pertain to the rate of delivery and identified sites. He reiterated that the principle site remains at Hall Farm with the South Wokingham SDU being an extension to that. Hurst remains a limited development location. Both Ashridge and the Ruscombe Green Belt were both rejected and do not feature in the current plan.

First indications are encouraging, with news from the Planning Inspectorate that preliminary sessions, dealing with initial queries, may be held as early as late June/early July 2025.

Councillor Robinson noted that a number of developers are trying to discredit the LPU. Borough Councillor Conway responded that this is normal and to be expected. The process is based upon thorough work and complies with both local and national policy.

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) financial position

Borough Councillor Conway went on to update Members on the financial position of the Borough. He was pleased to report a break even position at the end of year which was positive. However, the Borough remains a Council which is not considered to be highly deprived and, therefore, suffers in respect of its Revenue Support Grant allocation. Councillor Boyd noted that presumably with more housing, the revenue base will increase. Borough Councillor Conway acknowledged that, whilst true, so will associated expenditure. People are attracted the Wokingham for its adult social care provision which currently 2/3rds of budget is allocated to.

A new strategic partnership with the University of Reading has been formed, the aim of which is to pull resources and data. This model has been proven successful.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Borough Councillor Conway reported that Central Government's original desire for Unitary Councils of approximately the same size has now been backed away from. There appears to be no appetite to deal with existing Unitary Councils and make them comply. Borough Councillor Conway currently favours a "Berkshire"

council but other Councils seem less keen with alternative solutions being muted as “Berkshire and Oxfordshire” and also “Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Swindon”.

Councillor Boyd queried whether mayoral authorities would have planning responsibilities. Borough Councillor Conway replied that, under such circumstances, there could be a return to the previous Berkshire Structure Plan.

9559 Planning Applications

Members discussed the applications attached to these Minutes. It was agreed that Members had no adverse comments with regards to applications 250784, 250758, 250815, 250820 and 250825.

RESOLVED: the Clerk to communicate the Parish Council’s planning comments to WBC.

9560 Finance

The following accounts were presented for approval this month:

May-25										
						Main Fund	CIL*	Neighbourhood Planning	Lodge Rd Appeal	Total
Previous Balance					£	49687.53	210169.42	-5027.62	1442.29	256271.62
The following accounts are presented for approval this month:										
Ref	Expenditure - Payee									
2.1	5G (phone)					41.30				
2.2	WBC (temporary events notice)					21.00				
2.3	Bibby (dog waste removal)					251.32				
2.4	BDK Solutions (domain and internet services)					66.00				
2.5	Parish notice board company (50% deposit)					1125.00				
2.6	Castle Water (allotments)					4.58				
2.7	WEL Medical (replacement defib pads)					75.18				
2.8	M Bradshaw (reimbursement for fire extinguisher)					99.98				
2.9	ROSPA Play Safety (park inspections)					316.80				
2.10	itQED (annual hosting)					86.40				
2.11	St Nicholas CE Primary (room hire)					50.00				
2.12	itQED (one year new domain)					42.00				
2.13	BALC (annual membership)					528.66				
2.14	M Bradshaw (reimbursement for ink cartridges)					150.08				
2.15	M Bradshaw			Salary	1827.59					
				(Income Tax)	-153.20					
				(National Insurance)	-62.37					
				(Pension)	-73.10					
				Office	40.00	1578.92				
2.16	NEST (Employee pension £73.10 + Employer pension £54.83)					127.93				
2.17	HMRC (Employee's Income Tax £153.20 + Employee's NI £62.37 +Employer's NI £211.59)					427.16				
	Total Expenditure					4992.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	4992.31
	Income									
	CIL (Lilac Cottage, Sawpit Rd)						7916.24			
	VAT refund for 2024/25					7439.48				
	Precept (40%)					23832.00				
	Allotment rent (in part)					280.00				
	Dunt Lane rent					80.00				
	Total Income					31631.48	7916.24			39547.72
	Revised balance c/f					76326.70	218085.66	-5027.62	1442.29	290827.03

Audit timetable for 2024/25

The Clerk confirmed that Claire Connell would complete the internal audit on the 8th May 2025. The Clerk to circulate her report once received.

Insurance arrangements

The Clerk confirmed that the Council is currently in the middle of a three year fixed agreement with Zurich at an annual premium of £1452.47.

RESOLVED: all payments were approved;
audit timetable approved; and
insurance arrangements noted.

9561 **Rosa Playpark Inspections**

The Clerk had circulated the reports the previous day and reported that she was yet to go through them thoroughly. A quick read had indicated wear on the large structure in the enclosure in School Road Playpark. The Clerk noted that this equipment was approaching twenty years old and when the budget is set for next year, Members will need to consider a phase of playpark equipment replacement across all three playparks.

9562 **Community Hub Update**

The Clerk confirmed that no outcome of the planning application had yet been received. The Planning Officer required a tree survey which has been commissioned.

9563 **Parish Council Mission Statement**

Councillor Boyd reported that he was yet to formalise the document but felt it would focus primarily on planning (powers and scope), future CIL spend and early ideas relating to the next LPU.

RESOLVED: outstanding for Councillor Boyd to produce. To be circulated to Members when complete.

9564 **Correspondence**

Davis Street/Davis Way parking

Councillor Openshaw reported that cones remain in Davis Way. The Clerk reported that this is migrating the problem over the motorway bridge to the Sherwood Grange estate. Residents remain unsupportive of any permanent parking restrictions and the situation continues to be monitored.

9565 **Information Reports**

There were none to report.

The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.

Signed.....

Date.....