

WOOLHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

c/o Juniper House, Aldermaston, RG7 4LJ
Email: woolhamptonclerk@gmail.com
Tel: 07877 122 127

Minutes 15th September 2025 7.45pm, Woolhampton Village Hall

This meeting will be conducted strictly in accordance with Standing Orders as adopted by Council in July 2017. All Councillors are reminded to acquaint themselves with these Standing Orders.

District Councillor: Chris Read

Councillors: Malcolm Large, Jack Lovell, Laurence Harwood, Cheryl Springer

Members of Public: 4

1. To receive apologies

Ben Holden-Crowther (Malcolm Large to chair meeting)

Sean Garden

Terence Webster

2. To receive declarations of interest

There were none however District Cllr Read noted that the Leader of the Council has appointed Chris Read to be the Council's representative on the Local Access Forum, replacing the existing representative, Councillor Tony Vickers.

3. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Council

The minutes were agreed and signed for records

4. Matters arising from previous meeting

Playground

Cllr Large reported on the RoSPA Play Safety inspection carried out in July. Works to the fox fencing have been completed and payment is pending.

Thames Water

Cllr Read reported on behalf of Cllr Garden that contact has been made with Olivia Bailey, and that Jon Winstanley has been tasked with writing to Thames Water regarding delays, as completion had previously been expected in April/May. It was noted that a resident on Station Road recently recorded 18 large vehicles passing between midnight and 7:20am, indicating a further increase in traffic. Cllr Read confirmed he has written to both Chris Western and Denise Kinsella but has received no response. It was also noted that Thames Water is not responding to other parties. Councillors agreed that a stronger intervention from the MP is required to ensure residents' concerns are addressed.

5. **Lorry parking in Woolhampton**

It was reported that the laybys have been clear for several weeks. Cods Hill will be discussed later in the meeting. It was also noted that additional buildings have been erected on the site behind the hot dog van.

ACTION – Cllr Read to look into this

6. **Footpath opposite**

Cllr Lovell reported that CIL funding had previously been used to tidy footpaths, with self-binding gravel laid at the Parish Council's arrangement. Shortly after completion, West Berkshire Council carried out works that disturbed this surface. When challenged, West Berkshire advised that notification had been given, described only as "footpaths improved on Woolhampton Hill," with just 10 days' notice and no further detail. Cllr Read acknowledged that the Council should have sought clarification, noting that a petition for new surfacing had been submitted around four years ago. Cllr Lovell confirmed he holds correspondence from Nick Coulson, including photos of the proposed works, which do not match what has been carried out. The current finish appears contrary to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) and has created an urbanised appearance. Cllr Lovell strongly recommended challenging West Berkshire Council to establish what steps will be taken to rectify the works and ensure they are appropriate for the AONB.

ACTION – Cllr Lovell to send Cllr Read copies of previous correspondence. Cllr Read to ask for additional information.

7. **Planning**

7.1 25/01890/FUL

Councillors expressed concern that the application does not align with Chapter 15 (enhancing the natural environment) and appears to be retrospective in nature, despite not being presented as such. It was noted that the owners had applied to pay business rates for on agricultural land, which is unusual. Councillors agreed that West Berkshire should be reminded of rules regarding retrospective planning following the 2015 Order. It was further noted that B8 classification relates to storage and distribution, not agriculture. Concerns were raised about potential flood risk, the creation of additional hard standing, and the removal of mature trees. The site lies on the edge of the National Landscape, close to Woolhampton Park (within 100 yards) which is a recognised landmark. Original planning permission was for ponies and a stable/field building, but the current site includes around 32 lorries and two mobile offices, with unclear vehicle access between the garage and field. This application followed an enforcement notice being issued.

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Reference was made to a similar case in Midgham ("The Nurseries"), where an application for 20 storage containers was refused by Eastern Area Planning following neighbour presentations. Cllr Read confirmed he is willing to request a call-in, noting councillors' concerns that the proposal is unsightly and not in keeping with the surrounding countryside. Councillors also discussed a precedent in the South Downs, where an order was made to clear and restore land, although it was unclear whether this could assist the case locally.

Following discussion, councillors voted unanimously to strongly object to the application and requested that Cllr Read call it in, a counsellor and a member of the public will be required to speak for 5 minutes.

It was noted that any objections must be submitted by 30 September 2025.

ACTION – Cllr Read to follow up accordingly

8. District Councillor's Report

District Cllr Read gave his report which will be uploaded to the parish council website.

9. Bank Reconciliation

Balance on 30 July 2025	£110,019.37	
	Payments	Receipts
Income		
Allotments - M Hall		£22.50
Payments		
Service Charges	£5.25	
Clerk Salary	£336.48	
G Sparkes (Paths)	£1,740.00	
West Berks (Gritting)	£1,383.07	
	£3,464.80	£22.50
Balance on 28 August 2025	£106,577.07	

10. Any Other Business

Canal path

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A member of the public raised concerns about canal boat residents parking in Angel Mead, querying whether planning agreements included provision for a car park. Cllr Lovell noted that the moorings in question have access to a car park. Under their license agreement, residents are permitted to use this facility, which has space for 4/5 five vehicles, although it is rarely fully utilised. Instead, vehicles are often parked partly on the pavement in Angel Mead, obstructing pedestrian access. It was also noted that the nearby bin is frequently overflowing, despite a refuse facility being available.

ACTION – Cllr Lovell to remind canal boat residents of the parking options available, and to advise the boat hire business owner that visitors should also make use of these facilities.

Village hall

A representative of the trustees of Woolhampton Village Hall, raised a concern that was highlighted in a recent survey, that in the event of a fire near the fuseboard at the front of the property, there is currently no viable exit for disabled visitors from the rear of the building. They requested that the Council explore the possibility of installing a ramp at the rear. It was noted that a stroke club regularly uses the facilities. Cllr Springer advised that any evacuation route should likely provide direct access to the path rather than onto the grass.

Allotments

Cllr Large reported that one allotment holder had been reminded to improve the maintenance of their plot, as all plots are expected to be kept to a good standard. This prompted discussion regarding the upkeep of paths at the allotments. Cllr Lovell confirmed that no further funds are available and questioned whether such matters should always come through the Parish Council, or whether a designated person could be appointed to deal with allotment queries.

Football at Douai

A member of the public has suggested to Cllr Large that the Douai Park could benefit from serving teas and coffees. Cllr Lovell noted that while this is not a new idea, it requires significant time and volunteer support and would only be more feasible on larger event days. He added that this falls beyond the trustees' remit and suggested that Thatcham Tornadoes might consider running it themselves. Cllr Lovell also proposed that a simpler way to raise funds would be to encourage regular users, clubs, dog walkers, and occasional visitors to contribute through donations, alongside greater promotion of the Friends of Douai Park scheme.

Train station flowers

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A member of public queried the status of the plants funded through GWR money and asked for an update.

ACTION – Clerk to follow up

Defibrillator at the Village Hall

Cllr Harwood reported that he had recently replaced the preparation kit, battery, and pads on the defibrillator at the Village Hall and queried whether the cost should be met by the Parish Hall or the Parish Council. It was noted that the Parish Council had previously reimbursed costs for the defibrillator at the Angel Pub. It was confirmed that batteries and pads require replacement every two years. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Parish Council would incorporate these costs into the precept budget and retain ownership responsibility.

Brabazons

A discussion was held regarding whether the hedges are being cut back sufficiently. Cllr Harwood suggested it may be preferable to leave them for wildlife. It was noted that Cllr Garden had prepared the original quote and brief for the work so it may be beneficial to look back to see what was agreed initially.

Village shop

It was stated that the leaseholders of the Village shop are finding it difficult to operate, as neighbouring residents have parked vehicles on the site and are unwilling to move them. Cllr Read confirmed he has spoken to the Council to ask them check the deeds. It was noted that the Council cannot be asked to install limited waiting time lines if the land is privately owned, hence why this needs to be established first. All councillors agreed that the site needs to be actively used in order to demonstrate its viability as a commercial opportunity, otherwise it is at risk of being made residential

11. To record meeting closed

20:57