

WOOLHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

Minutes - Annual Parish Assembly 20th May 2026 6.00pm, Woolhampton Village Hall

District Councillor: Chris Read

Councillors: Ben Holden-Crowther, Malcolm Large, Laurence Harwood, Cheryl Springer, Brian Chick, Jack Lovell, Sean Garden

Members of Public: 7

1. To receive apologies

All Councillors were present.

Apologies were received from members of the public, Cathy Vallis and Gill Sitch.

1. To receive the Village Hall annual report

Nikki provided an update on the Village Hall, confirming it continues to be a successful community asset with a strong base of repeat users and regular bookings and was recently used as a Training Centre following the recent fire at Tigers Day Nurseries. She also reported Trustee meetings are progressing well, with three new members recently joining the Board.

Operational improvements this year have included the introduction of a twice-weekly cleaning schedule. The ongoing leak issue with Thames Water has now been resolved, with support from Chris Read. The defibrillator has been replaced and is now fully operational. Ceiling panels have also been replaced since the last update, alongside a number of additional cosmetic improvements to the building. The fire safety findings confirmed the premises to be sufficient. A small number of additional issues identified in the report have been addressed by Emma and Kate.

Overall, delighted to say the Village Hall continues to host a wide range of events and remains at the heart of the community.

2. To receive the Parish Council annual report

The Council has experienced a period of transition over the past 12 months, having had three Chairmen during this time: Sean Garden, followed by Ben Holden-Crowther, and most recently Malcolm Large, who has only recently taken up the role. Despite this change in leadership, continuity of work and delivery across Council priorities has been maintained.

The Council has invested in local infrastructure, providing significant financial support and CIL funding to key community assets. This has included assistance to the Douai Park Recreation Association for repairs to tennis netting, support for Woolhampton Primary School and St Peter's Church, and the provision of smaller annual grants to a range of local community groups.

WOOLHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

The Council has also addressed planning enforcement matters proactively, working closely with District Councillor Chris Read to ensure that planning regulations are appropriately upheld across the parish.

Responsibility has been taken for important community health assets, with Councillor Harwood leading work to secure replacement batteries and pads for the village hall defibrillator, ensuring it remains fully operational and correctly registered.

A significant amount of work continues to take place behind the scenes, with thanks recorded to the dedicated local volunteers who support this activity. In particular, appreciation is extended to the Village Hall Committee, as well as Cathy and Terry Vallis, who have continued to maintain the GWR floral displays at Midgham Station.

The Council has also progressed improvements to the allotments, working in partnership with Veolia to secure a bulk delivery of soil improver. Brian Chick has also agreed to take on the role of allotments monitor as part of the ongoing management of the site. Going forward, the focus will be on ensuring that all plots are fully occupied and maintained to a high standard.

Several village maintenance and safety projects have been completed, including general safety and maintenance works across the parish, the clearing of overgrown vegetation around the Woolhampton Hill bench, arranging repairs to the car park fence, and supporting the continued safe use of the play park through facilitation of the annual ROSPA inspection.

Communications have been modernised through the launch of a new Parish Council website, with thanks to Councillor Ben Holden-Crowther for his work in delivering this project, which has already proved to be a valuable and well-used resource for residents.

3. District councillor annual report

District Cllr Read reflects on three years in office since his election in 2023. During this period, the role has involved a wide range of casework and engagement across issues including highways (particularly potholes and verge maintenance), planning, housing, and both adult and children's social care.

He sits on the Resources Scrutiny Committee, which reviews decision-making and performance across the Council. He has also chaired a cross-bench Task and Finish Group on project and programme management, which examined how services can be delivered more effectively in the context of ongoing financial pressures. The group submitted over 20 recommendations to the Corporate Board.

A key theme throughout the term has been the significant financial challenge facing local government, including reductions in central government support and the long-term

WOOLHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

expectation that Westminster grant funding will cease, placing increased pressure on service delivery models.

Alongside formal duties, he has continued to hold regular councillor surgeries, host public meetings on local issues such as Thames Water, and support parish councils with Neighbourhood Plans and wider community priorities. He also acts as Secretary of the Bucklebury Common Interest Group and sits on the Local Access Forum, supporting work on public rights of way and access.

Community engagement has included support for local funding bids and projects, including school play equipment and improvements to community facilities such as the BMX track. Ongoing work with parish councils continues around local priorities, funding opportunities, and service issues.

At district level, the Council has continued to invest in housing, education, and community services. This has included delivery of additional affordable housing, the development of family hubs, increased use of temporary accommodation to reduce reliance on B&B provision, and continued investment in schools, leisure facilities, and environmental programmes such as chalk stream protection and recycling improvements.

Highways remain a significant area of casework, with changes to maintenance funding enabling over 3,000 pothole repairs per year. Residents are encouraged to continue reporting issues through the Council's reporting system.

Housing pressures remain a key issue across the district, although progress has been made in increasing affordable housing provision and supporting vulnerable households.

Looking ahead, local government reorganisation remains under consideration, including proposals such as a potential "Ridgeway Council". Decisions are expected in 2026, with possible implementation from 2028 onwards, and further structural changes across the sector likely.

Overall, the period has been one of significant workload and change, with progress delivered through ongoing engagement with parish councils, residents, and partner organisations.

4. Public Session

Big Butterfly Count

Cllr Harwood provided information regarding the Big Butterfly Count, which will take place between 17th July and 9th August. Details of the event and information on how residents can take part will be circulated.

5. To set the date for the next annual meeting

WOOLHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

It was agreed the next Annual Parish Assembly will be held on Wednesday 19th May 2027.

6. **To record meeting closed**
19:10