

# WALTHAM ST LAWRENCE PARISH COUNCIL

The Old School, The Street, Shurlock Row, Berkshire RG10 0PR



Clerk to the Council: *Mrs MJ Streater*  
Telephone: 07956 217783  
Email: parishclerk@wslpc.uk

## Waltham St. Lawrence Annual Parish Meeting

held on Tuesday 23rd April 2024 in the Neville Hall

Present: Mike Kay (Chairman), Mark Hipgrave, Rupe Patel, Stuart Craig, Sarah Goodchild, Isabelle Crawley-Boevey, Charles Willams, MJ Streater (Clerk)  
Also present: Cllr Hunt and 32 Members of the public.

### Minutes (Reports of what was presented)

1	<b>APOLOGIES:</b> There were none.
2,	<b>MINUTES:</b> To advise that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 were approved at a Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup> May 2023
3.	<b>Report from the Parish Council:</b> - The Chairman Mike Kay . I am delighted to be able to report to you on the activities of the Waltham St Lawrence Parish Council over the last year and to highlight the major events and ongoing challenges.  In May last year a new Council was formed. We unfortunately only had 6 out of the 7 places applied for but a co-option process attracted a further 4 applicants – it was just a pity that we could not, as a Parish, have been selecting 7 from 10 rather than the Parish Council needing to select 1 from 4 excellent candidates. Having had a couple of Councillors step down after only 6 months we once again found the available co-option places oversubscribed, which can only be a healthy position for the Parish with so many keen to be involved.  A number of planning issues continue to cause concern. Last summer saw an influx of oversized horse transporters through our narrow lanes causing serious risks to both horse riders and other residents. There are signs that RBWM are beginning to listen to the issues but, as ever, progress and any positive action is painfully slow.  The latest Bellman Hanger appeal saw the applicant gain permission for 12 homes on the site in spite of significant local concerns and opposition but the Inspector had limited options with such a weak representation from the RBWM Planning representative. The Parish Council have very grave concerns about the impact on road safety and neighbouring properties.  A further set back was the approval of a solar farm on the open fields south of Shurlock Row, where the RBWM planning panel vote was split along party lines.  The adoption of the Shurlock Row Nature Reserve has experienced numerous delays and legal discussions but, over the past year, with the excessive levels of rainfall, it has become apparent that the infrastructure put into the wetlands is not of sufficient specification to withstand the very wet conditions. Estimated costs of the site have increased significantly and we therefore are now seeking an alternative way forward to limit the costs for Parishioners.  Rising costs are impacting us all and the Parish Maintenance tenders this year indicated that our costs might double. However, Rupe Patel has managed to obtain a new contractor at only slightly increased costs to the Parish. It is early days so we will continue to monitor results.  I am very pleased to see that so many local residents have answered the call to muck in and help with local initiatives for the benefit of the Parish. Isobel and John Kiss have taken a lead on these working groups and I

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would personally like to thank all those who have contributed time and energy to these projects, whether it be digging out ditches, litter picking or any of the other tasks that benefit us all.

We now have a third defibrillator in the village, housed in the old telephone box by Milley Bridge, with the fourth planned to be installed shortly by the school in West End. I would like to thank Mark Hipgrave for leading this project.

The last year saw the Coronation celebrations, followed by the return of the Village Festival in June, providing a much needed fundraiser for local organisations. I thank everybody who puts time and effort into arranging these community events for the benefit of all in the Parish.

The Parish are in receipt of CIL development monies and there is an ongoing project to consider how these can be best applied for the benefit of the community. Projects started or planned include the smartening up of the Burial Ground and the pond in Shurlock Row – when the wet weather relents.

As noted earlier, the Parish Council have not been immune to the inflationary pressures that we are all feeling. Earlier this year we asked residents for feedback on the level of the precept and whether they would prefer the Parish Council to look to address any reduction in services provided by RBWM. Sarah Goodchild has put considerable energy into promoting communication within the Parish and the overwhelming feedback is that residents wanted to look to maintain standards and therefore the Parish Council agreed that, with this in mind, the total precept should increase by £2,500 to £31,500 to cover the potential additional tasks required.

The Parish holds healthy reserves to be able to deal with the unknown and therefore is financially in a strong position to withstand what will undoubtedly be difficult times ahead due to global factors.

In addition to thanking everybody who puts their time and energy into being a Parish Councillor, and our Clerk MJ, I would particularly like to thank and highlight the contribution of Clive Scott Hopkins who chose to step down from the Parish Council last May, having served this community for more than 40 years. We all owe a great debt to him for the extensive commitment that he has given to this community.

I would like to repeat what I have said numerous times on local issues. Whatever you decide, please look to support and give your time to the local organisations or events such as those that you have heard from at previous Annual Parish Meetings or later in this meeting. The new working party initiatives provide a new positive opportunity for us all to put something back. It is very easy to sit back and just assume that things happen around you. They don't. People in this Parish work tirelessly to maintain and build this special community life. Please don't just take or criticise, please help to keep Waltham St Lawrence special.

And my final thanks goes to those within the community who take the time and effort to either attend Parish Council meetings or to share their views and opinions through other means. Please remember that the Parish Council is here to represent the views of the Parish. It is not a straightforward task, many views conflict and, more often than not, the Parish Council have no powers over areas of concern, they can only try to influence, but without input and direction we cannot help to lead both the conservation and development of this very special community.

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4.	<p><b>Report from: The WSL Charities</b>, The Chairman Rob Lyman:</p> <p>The Charities are administered for the benefit of those resident in the Parish of Waltham St Lawrence, with the following objects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to relieve those in need</li><li>• to relieve those who are sick</li><li>• to promote education and training</li><li>• to promote any charitable purpose in the Parish</li></ul> <p>The Charities have had an active year.</p> <p>The traditional main group of beneficiaries has comprised those more senior in years who receive an annual payment in January. In January 2023 this amounted to £20,500.</p> <p>In addition, individual payments to this in need, following representation to the trustees, has resulted in payments of £4,266.62.</p> <p>The promotion of education has been one of the 'objects' of the Charities for over 300 years. Grants are today given to help with the costs of further education, whether that is for apprenticeships or university fees. These grants are of course intended for those who would struggle financially without the grants. Three years ago we introduced a system whereby, without requiring means-testing (which the trustees believe to be inappropriate in a village community context for any of the grants we make), applicants for education grants were required to provide with their applications a justification as to why they should receive a grant. In 2020 education grants to individuals amounted to £2,300; in 2021 the figure was less than £1,000; in 2022 £8,000 in total and in 2023 £8000.</p> <p>The People to Places bus service for qualifying residents continued to operate, with a total of £3,263 spent on this service.</p> <p>Personal alarms are currently available through the Charities to 15 individuals.</p> <p>The total given away in grants and services provided by the Charities in 2023 was £38,558.99 (£64,543 in 2022; £23,535 in 2021).</p> <p>The Charities' reserves represented by their COIF investments had a year-end value of £289,374, a little above what the trustees believe prudentially they ought to have according to their reserves policy.</p> <p>The Gansons' lease of the Bell has been very successful, following renewal in December 2022. We are very grateful to Scott for his exemplary behaviour as tenant.</p> <p>I would like to pay tribute to the handover I have received from the outgoing chairman, Richard Sykes. Over many years the Charities benefited from his diligence, commitment and hard work. I'd also like to thank all the trustees for their contributions to the running of the Charities during the year and in particular Nick Kohl for acting as Treasurer in addition to his other involvements with the Charities, Polly Pollecutt for organising the People to Places bus service and Jeremy McEvet for his work with Sue's Piddle and with the personal alarms. We have welcomed Joy Aldred and Francesca Seligman as trustees this year, and both have made an early impact already on our business.</p>
5.	<p><b>Report from The Neville Hall Management team:</b> - John Kiss:</p> <p>Finances</p> <p>The Trust looks after Neville Hall, and the Festival/Fete. Neville Hall made just over £12,000 last Financial Year, having absorbed the increase in fuel costs (doubled), and finished refurbishing the downstairs office.</p>

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	<p>This used to be used by the surgery, but they ceased this last spring, and ANB Groundcare expanded their operation into this space. Just over half the income comes from office rents.</p> <p>The Festival and Coronation together made just over £16,000 last year thanks to kind weather, and a very supportive Parish community. We donated £15,000 split between our School, Church, and Cricket club. We had made £6,000 the year before and had been slow to donate that, so got round to it this year (similar beneficiaries).</p> <p>Availability / Usage</p> <p>The Offices are fully let, the Hall is quite busy at the weekends, and most week nights. Mondays Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays are often free during the day. This means the Hall is quite often in use, and needs cleaning and maintaining regularly.</p> <p>Regulars</p> <p>Art club, Parish Council, Silver band, Wednesday Club, 3G, Tai Chi, Junior Choir, Yoga, Café, International Wine and Food Society, Judith Alvarez Christians, Pony Club, Body in Harmony, Ways into Work, Janine Brockway are all regulars using the hall.</p> <p>Offices</p> <p>ANB Groundcare (Alistair Brooker) use two of the larger offices, Accordis (Simon Shaw), and Graham Ackerman (Osteopath) use the other two offices.</p> <p>People</p> <p>We are extremely fortunate to have Kate and David Francis on our side. Kate comes regularly (and at all times of night and early morning) to ensure the hall is spick and span ready for the next hirers. David comes at a moment's notice to repair, unblock, sort out all those other things that occur with any building. A huge thanks to them. On the management team are David Crawley-Boevey (chair), Sheila Kiss, John Kiss, Mark Hipgrave (Trustee rep), and now Georgina Irving (Rick Marshal moved to France last year). Between us we manage the building upkeep, outside space maintenance, admin, record keeping, finances, bookings, web-site, long term planning, enquiries, showing people around.</p> <p>The parish councillors are the trustees who are ultimately responsible for the Hall.</p>
6.	<p><b>Report from The Lychgate:</b></p> <p>Well I've been asked to talk about The Lych Gate as the new editor, but to be honest it's almost 2 years since I took over, so I'm already feeling like a bit of an old hand.</p> <p>When I heard that the late Nick Kendal was looking for someone to take over the editor's role, I was definitely interested. Having a wife who has been deeply embedded in the finances of the community for some time, I'd been looking for a way I could contribute as well. Being semi-retired, my time was my own to manage, and having been in IT for my whole professional career I knew I would have no problem with the technical side of things. And I've always been a stickler for well-constructed prose which I also thought would be a good qualification. So I put my name forward and after a thorough grilling from the PCC, I was fortunate to be offered the role.</p> <p>I took the easy option with the magazine at first, pretty much following Nick's way of doing things, but since then I've tried to introduce a few changes, albeit still keeping things in the spirit of his well-established legacy.</p> <p>Anyhow, since then I started to introduce a few modifications to the magazine. A general "tidy up" and attempting to make the structure a bit more consistent was the first order of the day. And later came the "what's happening" section to supplement the regular village diary with a bit more in depth detail. I also</p>

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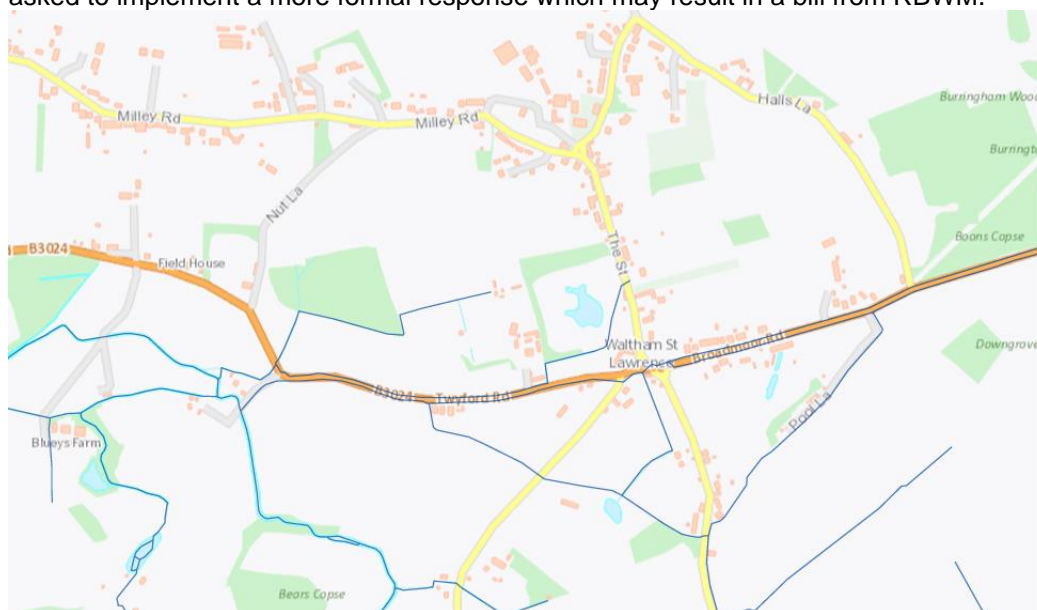
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started to put some teaser comments on the front cover, which I always felt it was lacking, to encourage people to actually open the thing when it hit the doormat. This has now evolved into photo splash boxes which I hope are giving it a bit more visual appeal.

It is important to remember that The Lych Gate is open to anyone to submit articles of any description if they feel it is of value or interest to our community, and I really do encourage that, but of course there are regular contributors who form the backbone of the content. In particular I should mention Fiona Penn for providing all the church related material, including Junior Choir, and currently she is doing a sterling job of providing the spiritual content while we have no vicar. But also I would like to mention Prue Williams for keeping me up to speed on The Wednesday Club, Mrs Ellerton and the PTA for all school related material, Isabelle Crawley-Boevey for the café marketing and many other bits and pieces as well, Sarah Goodchild for all Parish Council minutes and communiques, Peter Harland-Jones for looking after the advertising, Simon Shaw for the service calendar and musical input and of course Stuart Scott for all his wonderful photographs. And all the others I've inexcusably not mentioned who contribute regularly

### 7. Report on Ditches, Drains and Flooding. Cllr Craig

Cllr Craig highlighted individual land owners have a responsibility to maintain the ditches on their properties: In addition he highlighted the main waterways that exist in the Parish. Given the extreme weather we have endure during this past winter the Parish Council will be working closely with the Residents to try to ensure ditches and waterways are kept clear. If landowners do not maintain their responsibilities, then RBWM will be asked to implement a more formal response which may result in a bill from RBWM.



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8.	<p><b>Report on Working Parties:</b> John Kiss and Cllr Crawley Boevey:</p> <p>The success of the recent litter pick was discussed, it is intended to repeat this as and when the first verge cut happens. Other projects are planned including a refresh of entrance gates to the Parish, and hand rails, also Shurlock Row Pond (when it is not so full!).</p> <p>Success of the working Parties depends on input and commitment from resident! All interested parties should contact the speakers. The Parish Council can make safety equipment available including Hi Viz jackets etc. If individuals are interested in organising their own litter pick, please contact Cllr Crawley-Boevey to discuss the requirement for a risk assessment.</p> <p>Ideas would be welcome for projects that would benefit the community which would be funded by CIL monies (Community Infrastructure Levy).</p> <p>In 2025 there will be an award at the Village Show for 'Best kept allotment'.</p>
9	<p><b>Report from Waltham St Lawrence Preservation Society</b></p> <p>The Waltham St Lawrence and Shurlock Row Preservation Society has been in existence as a charitable society for over 50 years, with Clive Scott Hopkins as its Chairman until he stood down last year. Keith Dawes, who was the Society Secretary, also stood down last year. Clive has accepted the role of Honorary President of the Society with myself taking over as Chairman and Janey Grace as Secretary. Colin Dean has</p>

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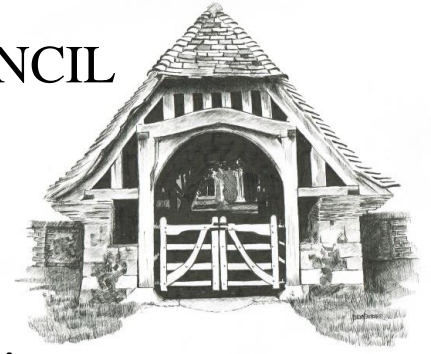
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	<p>kindly agreed to continue as our Treasurer which is a great help. I should also pay tribute to Margaret Railton who has been a strong supporter of the Society over the years, who sadly passed away last year.</p> <p>The Preservation Society was set up to protect and preserve the Parish of Waltham St Lawrence; to promote high standards of planning and architecture in the Parish; and to preserve, conserve, develop and improve features of general public amenity, or historic, or public interest in the Parish. The constitution includes a longer list of objectives but these are the key ones.</p> <p>The Society membership currently stands at about 110 households and members make annual donations totalling between £1,000 and £1,500 per year. The Society typically uses these funds to pay for legal and technical support to fight planning applications or breaches in planning which are considered to be in contravention with the objective to “protect and preserve”. In the past year our activities have focussed on two major developments, the planning application for the solar farm off the Straight Mile and the planning appeal against refusal of the housing development at Bellmans Hanger.</p> <p>I would like to finish by saying that the Preservation Society has played an important role in preserving the character of our Parish over the last 50 years and protecting it from developments which might spoil the beautiful villages we live in. There are probably greater risks now than ever because of the pressures to build new homes, the house building targets in our Borough and emerging policies to relax building rules in Green Belt areas. We can see the impact major housing development has had in Wokingham for example and we need to keep a close watch on developments such as the previous proposal to build nearly 2,500 new homes between Ruscombe and Waltham St Lawrence which would have a major impact on our Parish. For these reasons I would urge local residents to continue to support the Preservation Society through membership and by also considering volunteering to join the Preservation Society Committee. We have lost valuable experience from The Society over the last year and additional committee members would be welcome. If you're interested please contact either myself or Janey Grace.</p> <p><b>Contact details are as follows:</b> <b>Charles Williams: charleswilliams0707@gmail.com, tel 07739 429648</b> <b>Janey Grace: janeygrace99@gmail.com, 07789 207204</b></p>
10.	<p><b>Report from Waltham St Lawrence Primary School:</b> - Mrs Li-Juan Ellerton (Presented by Mrs Trudy Wiseman (a full copy of the report is available on the website wsl.link)</p> <p>Topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Improvement Priorities / Projects</li><li>• RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education) via The Big Think (TBT) SMSC Programme</li><li>• Continuous Professional Development and Empowerment</li><li>• Learning Environment and Resources</li><li>• Waltham St Lawrence Primary School PTA</li><li>• Links with other schools and International Exchange</li><li>• The Parish Magazine and Website</li><li>• After School Extra-Curricular Clubs and Wraparound Services</li><li>• The Summer Village Festival</li></ul>
11.	<p><b>Report on Speed Watch:</b> Cllr Patel</p>

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<p>Cllr Patel highlighted that the Speedwatch initiative is supported by Thames Vally Police, and indeed the statistics are all forwarded to TVP. Persistent offenders will be likely to have a visit from TVP! The initiative is dependent on voluntary participation by Residents. There is a short online training program. Any interested parties should contact Cllr Patel.</p>
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<p>It is hard to prove success rates of the scheme, however lower speeds are proven to reduce fatalities, hence the initiative being adopted nationwide.</p>
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