

Wonersh Parish Council

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Minutes of the meeting of Wonersh Parish Council held on Thursday 10 October 2024 at 7.30pm, at the Wonersh Sports Pavilion.

Present: Cllrs Max Gibbs, Chris Howard, Stephen Lavender, Anthony Shutes (Chair) and George Sobek.

In attendance: Lisa Davison and three members of the public. County Councillor Kevin Deanus from 9pm.

24/25 145 To consider and approve apologies for absence.

The Council considered and approved apologies for Cllrs Mike Band, Ben Knight, Rob Merriman and Kevin Sloan.

The Council noted that Borough and County Councillors were not in attendance as there was a meeting in Dunsfold regarding a reported planning breach requiring their urgent attention. The County Councillor was hoping to attend from 9pm.

24/25 146 Wonersh Parish Code of Conduct – Declarations of disclosable interests.

There were no declarations of disclosable interest with regards to agenda items, though Cllr Sobek noted that he was also a member of Wonersh Cricket Club, as raised under 24/25 148

24/25 147 Open meeting for members of the public to raise matters with the Council.

Three members of the public were in attendance, one with an interest in 24/25 114 from the September Council Meeting, one with an interest in 24/25 155 and one with an interest in 24/25 159, 160 and 162. The Chair outlined the processes for public speaking and the Council listened to each attendee in turn.

The member of the public concerned about 24/25 114 expressed disappointment in democratic process and the legislation guiding Council decision making including the Standing Orders. They felt excluded and the Council's decision to apply the Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy to them has had a profound impact upon their health and wellbeing. Cllr Shutes noted that many of the decisions the resident had corresponded on related to matters with further layer of complexity, as this common land is owned by Waverley Borough Council. The decision to apply the policy was made by the Council at the request of the Clerk. The Clerk explained that their reasons for this request related to the volume and timing of communications, including the frequency and intensity of the content. They were finding that in responding to this they did not have the capacity to fulfil the requirements of the role for the Council to function. This was impacting upon their health and wellbeing both at work and in everyday life. Councillors stressed the importance of having an experienced and responsive Clerk to enable the Council to function at its most effective and for Councillors to represent all the residents within their wards and the Parish as whole. The voluntary, unpaid nature of the role of Councillor was recognised. It was highlighted that the Council acted on the Clerk's request as they wanted to protect them personally and professionally and that directing frustrations to the Chair or any individual Councillors for this decision was unhelpful for all involved.

The Chair enquired as to whether the Council, given this additional information would like to retract their earlier decision to apply the policy. The Council voted unanimously to keep this in place. They thanked the resident for taking the time to attend the meeting and requested that

they engage in this manner in the future as face-to-face discussion can be useful. They encouraged the resident to seek help for how they were feeling.

The next member of the public to speak thanked the Parish Council for all they did for the local area and updated the Council regarding Shamley Green Environment Group concerns. They noted in particular the Parish Council consultation meeting regarding the management and maintenance of Lords Hill, where managing the brambles in the area were considered a priority by all in attendance. It was recognised this was scheduled already. Correspondence regarding the management of the duck pond green were also noted and expectations of the landowner and also the important role of the Council's Pond Maintenance Contractor noted in discussions. More generally noted the planned litter picking event and the bulb planting too, including the potential for further bulbs to be funded by the Rotary Club at the entrance to Nursery Hill. They are looking forward to seeing the Ponds Maintenance. They also noted that some progress had been made in resolving flooding of the local public rights of way.

Regarding the Arbuthnot Hall they noted the Planning Permissions received and the intention was to apply for funding from Your Fund Surrey at the earliest opportunity. Match funding was also being sought from lottery funding sources and the role of Strategic CIL was also recognised during this meeting. The Public Works Loan Board contribution of £100,000 was appreciated and it was anticipated that this could be drawn down early in the next financial year.

The final member of the public present at this point enquired of the Council as to whether they had any questions as to the Risk Assessment relating to the use of an offroad vehicle.

County Cllr Kevin Deanus attended from 9pm and noted that they had explored further the cost of improving the surface between the Wonersh and New Road towards Chilworth (Rice's Corner) and this was in the region of £400,000, which would be challenging to allocate around other priorities. He noted his support for the Arbuthnot Hall's application to Your Fund Surrey and recommended a submission in November at the latest.

24/25 148 To receive progress reports about matters previously considered and approved by the Council.

Cllr Sobek noted that he had shared a response to the Heritage Features consultation and the Clerk was requested to forward these and correspondence from the History Society with the Waverley Borough Council.

Action: Clerk to follow up with Waverley Borough Council Officers on this matter.

Cllr Sobek noted his report on a number of matters for consideration between Wonersh Cricket Club and Wonersh Parish Council and it was agreed that this would be considered further by the Risk and Audit Committee in relation to the budget and then progressed by the Working Party.

Action: Clerk to include this on Risk and Audit Committee agenda.

Cllr Shutes noted that they intended to speak on behalf of the Council at the Waverley Borough Council Planning Committee on 16 October 2024. He noted the draft response circulated and welcomed feedback from Councillors on this.

24/25 149 To consider and approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 September and 3 October 2024.

The Council consider and approved the minutes of the Council Meetings these were duly signed.

24/25 150 To receive the approved the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 12 September 2024.

These were received.

24/25 151 Finance – to consider and approve the following:

- (a) The list of payment and receipt vouchers in September 2024
- (b) The end-September 2024 financial statement
- (c) The reconciliation of accounts, completed by non-signatories
- (d) Parish Online £90 – annual mapping IT service
- (e) Hallmaster renewal £154.17
- (f) Wonersh Cricket Club £1,500 – annual contribution
- (g) Travis Perkins £160 – aggregate for steps in Gerald's Wood.

These were approved with the exception of the Hallmaster renewal, which given the volume of bookings was considered unnecessary.

24/25 152 Finance – to note receipt of:

- (a) The hire fees for use of community room of £550
- (b) £2,265 – Wonersh foundation for Pepperpot sign
- (c) £348 – Parochial Church Council for Pepperpot sign

These were noted with particular thanks to the Wonersh Foundation for funding a range of projects which improve the local area.

Action: Clerk and Cllr Lavender to write a formal letter of thanks from the Council.

24/25 153 To note the conclusion of audit for [the AGAR for the 2023/24 financial year](#) from the External Auditors. 24/25 151 (h) to consider and approve payment of £1,050 to PKF Littlejohn for external audit fees.

The Council welcomed this news and thanked officers for their hard work in responding to the auditor's comments. It was noted that the invoice was over the amount budgeted and it was assumed this related to the increased turnover in 2023/24 with the purchase of Barnett Hill Fields.

Action: Clerk to confirm the reason for the increased audit costs.

24/25 154 To receive the Interim Internal Audit Report and approve next steps.

The Council welcomed this report and noted there were no recommendations for the Council to act on. Usually, the Council would delegate further discussion of action to the Risk and Audit Committee but this was not required on this occasion.

24/25 155 To receive an update regarding the Barnett Fields Group including the request to use an off-road vehicle owned and insured for such purposes by a volunteer and the viability for a pond and approve next steps.

The Council received the report regarding the viability of a pond on Barnett Hill Fields and noted that this would not be straightforward to introduce and manage as there does not appear to be a source of easily accessible water in the field to maintain a viable pond in the summer months. It was also highlighted that there are other areas in Wonersh better suited for such an approach to increasing biodiversity. The Council extended thanks to the volunteer with specialist knowledge in this area for informing the Council's decision not to progress these plans in this locale and also the other volunteers who assisted.

Action: Clerk and Cllr Shutes to write a formal letter of thanks from the Council.

The Council received the Risk Assessment for the use of a volunteer's ATV for Council-related activities, primarily on Barnett Hill Fields. Cllr Shutes updated the Council as to discussions with the relevant insurance providers and it was noted that this would primarily be covered by the owner and operator unless there was any negligence on the part of the Council. The Council were advised to follow HSE guidance on such matters. The Council reviewed and approved the existing Risk Assessment and delegated to the Clerk and The Risk and Audit Committee the review of the [HSE advice on the use of ATVs for agriculture and forestry](#), which had already been circulated to the Councillors and the volunteer and consider whether any further advice to the volunteer was required.

24/25 156 To receive an update on progress in fundraising for the playground rejuvenations, including planned events associated with these, and approve next steps. 24/25 151 (i) to consider and approve payment of £100 to Guildford Signs for a commemorative plaque for Wonersh Playground.

The Council approved the payment of the commemorative plaque on this occasion and noted the planned event on 10 November 2024 to recognise the kind donations received from a resident of Wonersh, in memory of his wife, who has since died.

The Council noted that a further festive family funday was scheduled for 1 December 2024 at the Arbuthnot Hall to raise funds for the Lords Hill Playground. This was of a similar nature to the previous one and the Council resolved to accept the Risk Assessment.

Council officers confirmed that the current status for completing the next phase of the works to each playground was based on amounts in the Playgrounds Charity and Wonersh Parish Council funds was:

Wonersh

Rhinoplay quote: £16,115.14 (removal costs taken out - maintenance cost for Council)

Available: £13,067.85

Current shortfall: £3,047.29

Lords Hill

Rhinoplay quote: £25,358.00

Available: £19,654.26

Current shortfall: £5,703.74

Cllr Lavender noted that there were also funds within the Just Giving account for the Wonersh Playground.

The Clerk raised that the Council had suggested that further Neighbourhood CIL funds might be dedicated to the new equipment and this is considered under 24/25 158, noting that £6,761 is available at present.

24/25 157 To consider provisions for playing recreational football on Wonersh Common and approve next steps.

The Council welcomed Cllr Lavender's suggestion that temporary goals be placed on the common, considerate of other sporting commitments throughout the year. The funding amount was approved in principle and it was suggested that this amount should be requested from the Wonersh Foundation in the first instance. Whilst not in use these are to be removed to the periphery of the common and secured as required.

Action: Clerk and Cllr Lavender to apply to the Wonersh Foundation for funding for the temporary goal posts.

24/25 158 To consider and approve allocations of Neighbourhood CIL and approve next steps.

Extending from the discussion in 24/25 156 the Council considered and agreed to allocate £5,000 of the currently available Neighbourhood CIL to the playgrounds and delegated to the Clerk the Playground portfolio lead the allocation of these between the playgrounds, should a 50:50 split not be the best or preferred use of funds.

There was further discussion regarding the demand for neighbourhood CIL in Blackheath though it was noted that much of the required expenditure there would be considered revenue rather than capital at present. At this stage, the remaining £1,760 was allocated as a contribution towards the new fencing in Barnet Hill Fields.

Cllr Howard raised the potential for any forthcoming neighbourhood CIL to be allocated to the Arbuthnot Hall redevelopment and this was noted for future discussion. The importance of this at present was that within the application to Your Fund Surrey identification of other funds is required and applications to sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund had been found to be challenging. The Clerk noted that the online exacom system suggested that circa £10,000 Neighbourhood CIL would be received soon. Strategic CIL was identified as a potential source of funds, as whilst the deadline was approaching, there had clearly been efforts dedicated to preparing applications, so a quick turnaround was possible.

Action: Clerk to advise recipients.

Clerk to follow up with WBC Planning Officers as to expected timeline for receipt of collected Neighbourhood CIL.

Council to consider the allocation of Neighbourhood CIL upon receipt.

24/25 159 To receive an update on the consultation event regarding Lords Hill and approve next steps.

Councillors welcomed the Report from Cllr Howard who led this meeting with input from the Shamley Green Environment Group. Key learning points were summarised in the following SWOT analysis:

Strengths	Weaknesses/Issues
Rare wetland meadow	Fire threat?

Very beautiful wildflower meadow Rare plants Supporting local businesses Within the Surrey Hills AONB (National Landscape) The football pitch area and playground The attractiveness of the wildflowers Valuable habitat for wildlife Nearby cricket pitch on main SG common	Difficulties mowing a wet meadow Difficulty finding good contractors Scrub growth inhibiting access Parking on common Lords Hill is very wet so difficult to use as a recreation area Because it is often very wet, it is difficult to mow. Machine gets stuck.
Opportunities	Threats
Take more advice on Bramble Management Fire review with the fire service	Brambles taking over Concern over spread of undergrowth Lack of accessibility to all areas of the common for people Fire Car parking on common ruining area (also illegal) Concern over sight lines, where verge growth obscures sight lines Goat willows on Commons need to be taken out. Moles in the playground ruining the area. Incursion by Travellers

In summary, it was felt there was not enough support to do a full review of the current management plan. Interested residents could join Shamley Green Environment Group and work with the parish council on management plans for our green spaces. Residents were also able to attend parish council meetings and make specific requests for changes to the mowing regime or other management issues like tree management or new plantings.

Fire issues should be addressed as part of a wider review of Emergency Planning for the Parish.

The Council accepted the recommendations, which were

- That the current mowing regime be maintained at Lords Hill Common.
- That the Parish Council look at wild fire issues as part of a 2025 review of Emergency Planning.
- That the Parish Council undertake a review of illegal parking across the common land with on our control in the parish, in partnership with Waverley Borough Council.

It was also noted that the Council had plans to cut back the brambles already, and this had been scheduled in. The Council agreed the following actions:

Action: Council to agree any small changes to the mowing schedule in early 2025.

Clerk to follow up with the Fire Service to confirm whether any changes were required to the existing fire breaks.

Clerk and Cllr Howard to explore the cost of approaches to protecting the commons from incursions and other additional risk and to bring recommendations to Council.

24/25 160 To receive recommendations and updates from the Commons Working Party – with input from the Wonersh Environmental Advisory Group and Shamley Green Environment Group – and approve next steps. 24/25 151 (j) to consider and approve payment of £585 to Cath Services to cut back the hedge near Blackheath Lane.

Councillor members to SGEG and WEAG outlined the key activities planned for the season including litter picks, bulb planting and hedge planting. It was noted that there were approved risk assessments for such activities already and the necessary landowner approvals in place.

The autumn works, including the cutting back and removal of brambles and the clearing of ditches around the commons were identified as benefitting from further investment by the Council. The Council resolved to offer a further day per month to their routine maintenance contractor, with a view to completing these in good time and also for the completion of further summer works, such as staining benches. It was considered that works such as these are of a nature which will increase for Council and it was anticipated that this would be a permanent increase for such a role subject to annual budget reviews, and this should be included in the budget and precept for 2025/26, to be discussed by Risk and Audit on 17 October 2024.

Action: Clerk to enquire as to the current contractor availability for the increased workload.

Council to budget for the remainder of the year and to consider for the 2025/26 budget.

24/25 161 To receive an update on the request from a resident for an easement across Wonersh Common to park within the curtilage of their property and approve next steps. 24/25 151 (p) to consider and approve payment of £1,200 to Surrey Hills Solicitors for legal advice in relation to the introduction of an easement.

The council confirmed that they wanted grasscrete to reduce the visual impact of the easement and it will still be permeable. It was noted that should the resident need to remove a tree there would be the expectation that they would fund the replacement of a tree in a suitable location. Other matters the resident would need to follow up with the relevant organisations, which seems to be Surrey County Council for the road sign and BT Openreach for the telegraph poles.

The Clerk noted the order in which the resident planned to progress matters and that as such approval for payment of solicitor's fees was not required as yet. However, the Council resolved this payment subject to receipt of funds from the applicant so as this can be progressed effectively.

Action: Clerk to advise applicant.

Clerk to progress works with the solicitor upon request.

24/25 162 To receive the update on the Arbuthnot Hall and consider the specifics of any actions in relation to the PWLB drawdown and approve next steps.

The Council noted further discussion of this under 24/25 147 and 158 was noted. The key point to take at this time is that it is anticipated that the PWLB drawdown for the Arbuthnot Hall contribution was likely to be early in the 2025/26 financial year and on that basis a further extension is not likely to be required.

Action: Clerk to review progress and include the drawdown/ extension of the PWLB loan on the April 2025 Council Meeting Agenda.

24/25 163 To receive the application for the renewal of a Street Trading Consent for 'Il Forno Volante' to continue trading from the Arbuthnot Hall car park, Shamley Green and approve next steps.

The Council noted this and were supportive, so there were no further comments to the licensing authority.

24/25 164 To receive an update on the closed burial ground wall and safety related matters and approve next steps.

The Council noted the advice from the Internal Auditor that the Church as the wall owner could lead on this project to the preferred extent, however, if the Council is making a significant contribution, then the Council's policies should be adhered to.

They noted the updates received from Wonersh Parochial Church Council. They requested view of the proposed specifications before confirming the next steps but approved in principle the proposed contractors and an approach involving contacting specialist contractors rather than advertising more widely given the nature of the works.

Further consideration as to how this is progressed was delegated to the Risk and Audit Committee mindful of time.

Action: Clerk to request copies of the design specification.

Clerk to include on the Risk and Audit Committee agenda for further consideration.

24/25 165 To receive the proposals for reduced rates and consider eligibility criteria for the 2025/26 allotment rents and approve next steps.

Noted there are other sources of support to meet such needs, signpost if raised.

24/25 166 To receive an update on the letter of complaint regarding the Assistant Director for Planning Development and Waverley and Guildford Borough Council and approve next steps.

Councillors queried whether the letter of complaint should consider both Willowhayne and the Villagers pub, or whether these should be separate communications. It was agreed that these should be considered together as illustrative of fundamental failings in the decision-making process by Waverley Borough Council as the Planning Authority.

Action: Cllrs Gibbs, Lavender and Shutes to review and clarify email.

Clerk to send to the relevant officers at Waverley Borough Council.

24/25 167 To confirm attendance at the [Surrey ALC AGM and Annual Conference on 19 November at Silvermere Golf Club](#).

Cllr Sobek and the Clerk confirmed attendance on behalf of Wonersh Parish Council.

Action: Clerk to book places.

24/25 168 To confirm attendance at the [Know Your Wonersh event on 12 October at the Wonersh Memorial Hall](#).

Cllrs Howard, Shutes and Sobek confirmed attendance.

24/25 169 To receive any further risk assessments for voluntary works and note expected forthcoming ones for Council consideration.

Council noted that all expected Risk Assessment for planned events had been received and approved, some with minor actions for Council to follow up on. One element to consider is organisational awareness of the requirements for events on the local common land, particularly those which went beyond general community use, organised outside e.g. the Cricket Clubs.

Action: Clerk to ensure all organisations neighbouring and using the commons are aware of the requirements for public liability, risk assessments, training and licensing for use and the sale of alcohol etc.

24/25 170 To receive the summary of suggested actions responding to the weekly playground inspection reports and approve next steps.

Works to the playgrounds were ongoing in response to weekly checks. The Clerk noted an outstanding action for them to follow up on material costs for replacement parts highlighted in the annual inspection, ready for when they are needed.

Action: Clerk to follow up on annual inspection material quotes.

24/25 171 To confirm that the Council Meeting will be on the third Thursday of the month, commencing at 7.30pm.

This was confirmed.

Action: Clerk to update details on the website and noticeboards.

24/25 172 Members' business and correspondence for noting or including on a future agenda.

It was noted that the option of a bigger bin at the shops was under consideration. Installation costs would need to be covered by Womersley Parish Council.

Action: Clerk to follow up with WBC Officer.

The volume and general content of email correspondence from the resident present in the open session with an interest 24/25 114 was noted.

24/25 173 Dates of future meetings:

Full Council Meeting:	21 November 2024
Planning Committee:	24 October 2024
Risk and Audit Committee:	17 October 2024

These were confirmed