

# Wonersh Parish Council

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## **Minutes of the meeting of the Risk and Audit Committee of the Wonersh Parish Council held on Thursday 17 October 2024 at 9.30am, at the Wonersh Sports Pavilion.**

**Present:** Chris Howard, Stephen Lavender, Rob Merriman, Anthony Shutes and Kevin Sloan (Chair).

**In attendance:** Lisa Davison, Jeannette Stevenson.

### **R24/25 020 To receive and approve apologies for absence.**

The Council received and approved apologies for Cllrs Mike Band, Ben Knight and George Sobek and welcomed the deputisation by Cllr Stephen Lavender.

### **R24/25 021 Wonersh Parish Code of Conduct – Declarations of disclosable interests and, if requested, consideration and approval of dispensations under the Code.**

There were no declarations of disclosable interests shared.

### **R24/25 022 Open meeting for members of the public to raise matters about the Council's risk management and audit issues.**

There were no members of the public present.

### **R24/25 023 To receive progress reports about matters previously considered and approved by the Committee or the Council.**

Cllr Sloan congratulated officers on their hard work and commitment, which resulted in a clear internal and external audit.

The Clerk noted that requests to bring forward the end of year cut and collect to September had been limited by availability and technical difficulties and whilst the ground was now wetter, the weather also meant that vegetation was still growing. They were in the process of following up with all contractors to ensure works would be completed at the earliest opportunity. Cllr Lavender also raised the matter of mowing the Wonersh Cricket Club outfield, particularly the area where recreational football is to be played.

### **Action: Clerk to follow up with grass cutting contractors and update accordingly.**

There was further discussion of how neighbourhood CIL was allocated, with particular focus on the Arbuthnot Hall. The Clerk confirmed there was powers to support the redevelopment of the Arbuthnot Hall and there was some discussion of the equity of investment between the two larger villages, where the Parish Council held the most assets. Discussion included that many Parish Councils held direct responsibility for village halls, whereas historically Wonersh had resolved not to and that whilst there was no direct return on the hall from investment it was a facility available to Parish residents. It was also recognised that the Council decided to request much less for the hall than the purchase of the fields, mindful of ownership, and whilst donations and grant-funding had been received for works to the Barnett Hill Fields the Parish Council continued to invest in the maintenance of this. It was noted that the land was owned by the Council whereas the Hall was not, and this influenced some of the wider decision making, particularly when there were other halls across the Parish not receiving the same benefit.

In summary, the Council was keen to drawdown and support the Hall to sum of £100,000 subject to planning permission and line of sight of the required capital and other funds, and

support for this was unanimous. There was more uncertainty as to committing future neighbourhood CIL income, noting that circa £10,000 was expected this month from the Planning Authority. However, there was full appreciation of the task in generating sufficient match funding to progress the project and an appetite to 'plug the gap' to a sum of the incoming CIL, should other support not be available. Concerns were however raised on escalating costs, though it was recognised that this was being managed by the architect / project manager, with extensive experience in managing this. It was noted that this amount was of most value, should Your Fund Surrey funding be available and the availability and extent of this would be clear early in 2025. The Arbuthnot Hall Committee external to the Parish Council were already in the process of applying for Strategic CIL, due this month, which would also assist, as would local donations and other grants and charitable giving.

The Clerk noted that this was outside the Risk and Audit Committee Agenda. And though it is of some relevance to item R24/25 023 the Council did not typically assume a CIL income, until it was received. It was suggested that this be included on the November Council Meeting agenda, with the above discussion informing recommendations.

**Action: Clerk to include Neighbourhood CIL on the November Council Meeting agenda, mindful of the expected incoming CIL,**

Cllr Shutes enquired of the Clerk as to whether the residents utilising a corner of Barnet Hill Fields as a kitchen garden for individual household benefit had responded to the licence document and the request to cut back vegetation to assist in assessing the area covered by this licence.

**Action: Clerk to follow up and to include on the November Council Meeting Agenda for further consideration,**

The Clerk noted an update item 24/25 147 at the Council Meeting and requested that the Council go into a closed session at the end of the meeting to discuss this further, which the Council resolved to do.

**R24/25 024 To consider the 2025/26 precept and budget and make recommendations to Council, considerate of other relevant items on this agenda.**

The Assistant to the Clerk took the Councillors through the proposed budget circulated by email in advance of the meeting. In exploring this by budget category it was accepted that it would be challenging to hold the budget as static, though the regular underspend was noted. Areas where increases were likely including National Insurance Contributions and Staff costs, given the emphasis on increasing the income of Officers under SCP [what?] in the discussion between and recommendations from the unions and employers.

Other areas requiring further consideration include budgeting for the replacement or repair of the drainage pipe serving much of Womersley and pavilion-related costs. Whilst it is anticipated that the latter will not increase for the Council now, a fuller discussion is required by the Working Party, which is to include Cricket Club members, as required. The building of a small reserve for the pavilion was highlighted as something which had been proposed in the budget to provide resilience, if needed. The outcome of this would be considered further at the January Council Meeting where the budget will be finalised. The Clerk raised concerns regarding matters raised under R24/25 025 and was reassured that the reserves in place would assist with this in the short to medium term and this can be built upon in future precepts as required.

**Action: Clerk to include on November Council Meeting agenda for the initial approval of the budget and the precept.**

**Wonersh Pavilion and outfield working party to meet and progress actions including identifying any budget.**

**Clerk to submit request to Waverley Borough Council for the precept including draft details.**

**Clerk to include the finalisation of the budget and precept on the January Council Meeting and update Waverley Borough Council if required.**

**Risk and Audit Committee to consider whether a meeting is required in advance of the 16 January Council Meeting.**

**R24/25 025 To consider tree matters in relation to recent Tree Surveys and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

The Clerk highlighted a number of tree failures in Shamley Green, impacting areas with pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The first a chestnut near the forge and second a chestnut the common side of the ditch – the branch which fell reached the carriageway. These had been considered under 24/25 140 at the Council Meeting on 3 October and it was noted as an update to this that Waverley Borough Council were progressing these works.

The Clerk noted that neither of these had been raised in Wonersh Parish Council's recent tree survey but had previously been highlighted by Waverley Borough Council and recent tree planting on the green had been considerate of the succession. The Council was already aware of this and other liabilities in relation to trees would grow in relation to decisions to lease and purchase land and budgets were being allocated considerate of this. The Council confirmed that they were keen to finalise these leases at the earliest opportunity.

The Clerk noted the recommendation from Waverley Borough Council that the trees in this area be surveyed annually. This was accepted by the Council and it was agreed that current funds and future precepts could be used for these purposes. They resolved that the current tree surveyor would be tasked with this.

**Action: Clerk to note the Council response to the regular tree surveys and the desire to finalise leases soon to Waverley Borough Council as landowners.**

**Clerk to follow up with the current tree surveyor to update them on recent developments, requesting quotes for a survey to be completed on an annual basis.**

The Clerk also noted that the resident whose ash tree was in danger of damaging the SGN black should it fall, was willing to make a 50% contribution to completion of the tree works. The householder selling the house was still not willing to concede full responsibility but there were no further requests of the Council to explore this further, the Council's recent judgment on responsibilities stands. The Council confirmed that they were also willing to pay 50% to protect the SGN asset on their common land.

**Action: Clerk to advise the tree surgeon to complete these works.**

**R24/25 026 To receive an update on the Closed Burial Ground Wall and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

Cllr Shutes updated the Council as to the progress made with developing a specification for the buttresses to support the unstable closed burial ground wall. The Committee agreed that the Council would outline the works required on the walls away from the unstable

segment. This is to be developed by Clerk and Cllr Shutes with consideration for recent Hockley and Dawson reports.

The Committee considered how these works might be progressed and the roles and responsibilities within this. The Clerk noted that, given the shared responsibilities, it was permissible for the church to explore the costs associated with these works but if the Parish Council was to contribute their policies must be adhered to. This had been confirmed with the Internal Auditor.

The Clerk confirmed that the Committee's recommendation to Council and Womersley Parochial Church Council was not advertised widely but to contact specialist providers, operating in the local area. Under delegated powers, they approved the list of contractors shared by the Church Warden and to not use Contracts Finder. They noted that it might be necessary to use the tender process should quotes be likely to exceed £60,000 and that a representative of the WPCC would be involved in viewing the tenders also.

There was some discussion on who should contract the works and the Council were open to the Church doing this but noted that the Council would not pay VAT for works included in the asset register, whereas the church might. It was agreed that the Working Party could include members of the WPCC and they could lead this process, bringing aspects to Council as required.

**Action: Clerk and Councillor Shutes to develop the specifications for the works outside the unstable portion of wall.**

**Clerk to confirm the extent to which Parish Council processes are required to be considered when progressing this matter, including better understanding VAT implications.**

**Working Party to work together to progress this, making recommendations for Council decisions as required.**

**R24/25 027 To receive an update on the Shamley Green Community Room and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

Cllr Merriman update the Committee as to the recent meeting with the WBC officer to discuss the potential to lift restrictions on hire, so as to reduce the Council subsidy of this responsibility. The current request was for the hire of the kitchen to support food preparation for a mobile food van.

Advance warning had been given to Waverley Borough Council that it was unlikely the Parish Council would like to continue with this arrangement beyond the 5-year breakpoint. It was noted that WBC would progress discussion with the Housing department with a view to replacement with housing to be considered. The Parish Council intend to consult on its return closer to the time when a decision is required.

The Council reaffirmed that they would not be adding to the allocated reserve for this facility and would use what was currently available to subsidise running costs. Works required in advance of returning the asset would be discussed further with Waverley Borough Council as to their planned next steps.

**Action: Clerk to confirm whether the proposed use of the community room is permitted by Waverley Borough Council.**

**Allocated reserve to be used to subsidise running costs and not built up further. Consideration to be given to any end of tenancy costs.**

**R24/25 028 To receive an update on the management and maintenance of the Wonersh Sports Pavilion and outfield and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

The Council welcomed the updates received by Cllr Sobek and delegated to the Clerk and the Working Party exploring fully the queries raised by this including any requests to the Cricket Club to assist with this. It was confirmed by Council that this Working Party could include members of the Cricket Club in order to progress this for consideration of costs for 2025/26 budget at the January Meeting and longer-term considerations also.

In discussing this it was recognised that there were two elements to this, the extent to which the Council was to support the pavilion, which was leased to the Cricket Club on a long-term maintaining lease and the success of the Cricket Club more generally. Regarding the former the Council noted that they were setting up a small reserve and an action in relation to this was to complete conditions survey of the pavilion. Regarding the Cricket Club more generally the Parish Council were keen to see them experience the same successes as the other local clubs in the area and appreciated the efforts being made by members of the Cricket Club in making this happen.

Regarding cutting of the outfield in the winter months it was recognised that the ground was too wet already to cut much of the outfield but an area for football to be played would be beneficial.

**Action: Working Party and Clerk to progress with updates raised by Cllr Sobek, including meeting with Cricket Club members as required.**

**Clerk to obtain quotes for a conditions survey of the pavilion for consideration at the November Council Meeting.**

**Council to consider any changes to 2025/26 precept / budget in relation to this at the January Council Meeting.**

**R24/25 029 To receive and consider the Risk Management Policy and Task List (or Risk Management Register) and approve next steps.**

The Clerk noted that the Risk Management Register had been updated and circulated by email, with the following actions, not covered under existing items highlighted. These were approved as actions which the Committee approved subject to Council approval of any costs.

**Action: Clerk to remind Routine Maintenance Contractor for the installation of posts / logs alongside Shamley Green Village Stores.**

**Clerk to arrange repair to or replacement of Shamley Green Noticeboard near the Shamley Green Village Stores.**

**Clerk to follow up with Thames Water regarding water supply on Barnett Hill Fields.**

**Clerk to advise contractor as to whether there are any services near the areas to be prepared for planting – it was confirmed that there is not.**

**Clerk to advise householder that the culvert to Spring Cottage is blocked and requires attention.**

**Clerk to review condition of posts on all commons and arrange works over the winter months, with particular consideration for the ‘no parking’ posts on Lords Hill.**

**Clerk to agree with the Routine Maintenance Contractor as to whether the fencing needs extending further along the wall now the grass has been mown.**

**Clerk and Assistant Clerk to create a quarterly summary of works completed to playgrounds for consideration under the relevant agenda item at the Council Meeting.**

**Clerk to price the material costs of the items raised in the Annual Inspection.**

**Clerk to add the wooden signs to the asset register and clerk / routine maintenance contractor to check for stability.**

**Council to consider how long we keep records / disposal, Clerk to include on next R&A meeting agenda, with consideration for general advice.**

**Clerk to book whole council training on dealing with challenging / difficult situations / people (reserved held from 2023/24)**

**Clerk to consider CILCA when completing other actions such as policy review.**

**Clerk to reassess capacity to progress with CILCA in 2024 (then complete learning outcomes and enrol on CILCA submission when ready to submit.)**

**Council to schedule and complete business / action / project planning workshop**

**Clerk to set up training register for all.**

**Assistant to the Clerk encouraged to consider wider training.**

It was noted that tasks registered in this manner, with notes on completed and outstanding actions against risks was useful and such an approach should be absorbed with the updates to the Risk Management Policy and Calenderised tasks which were to be developed by the Clerk and Cllr Sobek.

**Action: Clerk and Cllr Sobek to develop Risk Management Policy for consideration at the January Council Meeting.**

**Clerk to include on the January Council Meeting Agenda.**

**R24/25 030 To consider [our Finance and Investment Policy](#) and approve next steps including recommendations to Council.**

The Clerk noted that for a Council of Wonersh's size, it was typical to hold a higher level of general reserves, typically 6 months or more and in previous audits this had been mentioned. The Assistant to the Clerk noted that the budget forecast did look to build towards this. The Internal Auditor had confirmed that 3-12 months was expected and the Parish Council was already at this point. On that basis, the Council approved much of the Policy as is and requested that the returns on investment be explored inline with the existing policy to better understand the benefits available now. It was suggested that mindful of administrative costs the existing banks be prioritised in the first instance. Should other options outside the existing policy, such as investing with [CCLA](#), be advantageous then the Council can decide whether this should be adapted at the point or deferred to a later date.

**Action: Assistant to the Clerk to explore options for savings accounts with existing banks in the first instance.**

**Clerk to explore the investment strategies of other Councils who place money in longer term investments.**

**Clerk to include the policy on the November Council Meeting agenda for approval, including consideration of any proposed changes.**

**R24/25 031 To consider [Our General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) Policy](#) and [GDPR explanation](#) and approve next steps including recommendations to Council.**

Cllr Sloan reported verbally the required changes to section 7 to bring this policy in-line with UK legislation and confirmed the hyperlink to include for readers to cross reference with this. Council approved these changes and requested that, like other policies, this be available as a pdf rather than a webpage.

**Action: Clerk and Cllr Sloan to agree the updated version to be proposed to Council with a view to it being added to the website as a pdf.**

**Clerk to include on the November Council Meeting agenda.**

**R24/25 032 To consider updating the [Standing Orders](#) to permit the publication of draft minutes and outline changes to the tender process and, approve next steps including recommendations to Council.**

The Clerk noted that the Standing Order already permitted the publication of draft minutes, so on the occasions these were available then the Council would like to see these published on the website. The Clerk noted that they endeavoured to complete the draft minutes within 14 days of the meeting but this was workload dependent.

The Clerk requested that the tender process be moved to electronic methods rather than submitted envelopes and also noted that this was for works exceeding £60,000. The approach suggested in the Financial Regulations is that a specific email address be used for such purposes and submitted tenders be opened by the Clerk and at least one other Councillor once the deadline has passed. The Committee recommended that Council resolved to approve this change and for it to be reflected in all relevant documents.

**Action: Clerk to have the option to publish draft minutes with a clear watermark.**

**Clerk to update the Standing Orders to reflect an electronic submission process to a designated email address.**

**Clerk to arrange for an additional email address, linked to the Clerk account if practicable or as an additional account when the tender process is being used.**

**R24/25 033 To note the other progress made with schedule for policy review and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

Good progress has been made in reviewing existing policies and for these to be considered and approved by Council when needed. The next priority is the Risk Management Policy and the following Policies will be developed and presented to the Risk and Audit Committee / Council during 2025.

**P24/25 034 To consider and approve the date of the next Risk and Audit Committee meeting.**

This was scheduled provisionally for 16 January subject to substantive matters requiring attention prior to the Council meeting, which is also on 16 January as this is the third Thursday. The Clerk noted her concern in preparing for, clerking and writing minutes for three meetings in the same day, as there is a Planning Committee Meeting that day also.

**R24/25 035 To consider and approve that the official record of this meeting be presented at the meeting of the Council on 21 November 2024 for approval.**

This was approved.