

DRAFT Minutes of Woolaston Annual Parish Meeting
Held on Thursday 18 April 2024 at 8.00pm
in Woolaston Memorial Hall

Present: Councillors: Terina Riches (Chairman), Peter Brown, Hannah Greenslade, Mary Greenslade, and Jeanette McElroy

In attendance: Gillian Orchard Preece (Clerk); 11 members of the public

1. Welcome.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman who welcomed those present and thanked everyone for attending. She explained that the Annual Parish Meeting is required by law and hosted by the Parish Council. It is an opportunity for members of the parish to get together to discuss issues of interest and for community groups to report on their activities over the previous year.

2. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors M Fairless, M Rose, CCllr C McFarling, DCllr J Lane DCllr A Birch, PCSO A Ravenhill, D Harris (Woolaston Pools Land), M Corrigan (Memory Group)

3. Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

4. Financial Report (Appendix A)

The Clerk provided an unaudited summary of accounts for the past financial year. It was explained that finances are generated mainly by parishioners' council tax contribution. The overall position showed an underspend of £3,483, however, it is expected to spend £2,375 for the removal of trees carried over from last financial year. The current balance of accounts was provided – the report will provide the basis of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return due to the external auditors by 30 June 2024.

5. Report of the Chairman to the Parish Council (Appendix B)

The Chairman reported on the work of the Parish Council over the past 12 months – another full and active year which has gone quickly. The key points included

- The Council, in conjunction with Woolaston Memorial Hall committee organized a picnic on the playing field for the coronation of King Charles III. As it was a good atmosphere it was agreed that this would become an annual event – this year to commemorate D-Day 80.
- Attendance of Parishioners at meetings are low – the council are keen to increase attendance
- Planning applications are discussed throughout the year led by Cllr H Greenslade. As statutory consultees, feedback from parishioners is passed to the decision makers (FODDC), as well as reiterating Council concerns
- The crime rate remains low in Woolaston. Two new roles on the PC, Pete Brown is the council representative on Neighborhood Watch Scheme and Mary Greenslade, represents the council on a Gloucestershire Police Advocacy scheme.
- A lot of money is spent on parish maintenance, including maintenance of the churchyard and cemetery, tree maintenance. The Chairman thanked Steve Hamblyn for his excellent work keeping the Parish free from litter and for providing feedback on other issues in the Parish, and for going over and above the work expected of him. She also thanked the other groups that actively litter pick in the Parish.
- The clerk was thanked for her continued support to the Council and was congratulated on the completion of the Council qualification.
- The council welcomed two new councillors, Peter Brown, returning to the council after a few years away and Jeanette McElroy who attended the APM last year, and then successfully applied to become a parish councillor.
- The chairman thanked the County and District councillors who regularly attend meetings, give advice and are available to take away issues and information relating to areas of concern.

- The chairman thanked all the councillor colleagues who work voluntarily and for their support to help make the Chairman's job 'fun and enjoyable' and continue to work as hard as possible to keep Woolaston a vibrant and thriving village.

6. Report of the Parish Charities Trustees

a. The Mary Smart and Margaret Clayton Charity Woolaston (Appendix C)

The report was read by Peter Brown on behalf of the Parish Council. The previous trustees have stepped down and handed the charity over to the Parish Council. The council will continue the village tradition of the charities which were established in the 17th century with the purpose of providing bread to the poor and in many respects fulfilled the role now played by foodbanks. In the months ahead the current Trustees will produce a short history of the Trust for the benefit of residents new to Woolaston. The balance of accounts is £303.95. Amount made from £1 levy from Roseville, plus interest. The balance is held in two accounts however, it is proposed to combine the two into one account with Lloyds Bank.

b. Woolaston Poores Land & Woolaston Woodland Recreation Trust (Appendix D)

The report was read by the Parish Council Chairman.

- Many of the trees in Woolaston Parish woods, covered by the larger tree shelters last year have survived. However, the bracken is still a problem. There has been deer activity in the wood but so far the trees are not affected.
- There are two allotments halves vacant on the Poores Land. The wet weather has caused some problems with vehicles becoming stuck inside the gate. We are hoping to provide some hard standing, but the access path often has a torrent flowing over it which will need to be dealt with first.
- Financial balances: Woodland Trust – £2,142 and Poores Land - £2,035

7. Report from Parish Organisations / Community Groups.

(Full reports (where provided) are published on the Parish Council website (<https://woolastonparishcouncil.gov.uk>)).

a. Woolaston Memorial Hall (WMH) & Playing Fields Committee. The Memorial Hall Chairman provided a full and detailed report. The key points include.

- WMH bookings continue to be healthy as the Hall is very popular. There was a total of 561 bookings for the 2022/2023 Financial Year. Google Reviews Rating = 4.5 stars achieved
- Hire charges increase - one-off booking from £10 to £12 per hour and (from 1.4.24), Regular Classes/Group hire from £7 to £8.50 per hour.
- Heating: The boiler has been repaired and serviced, and it ~~hasn't~~ has not let us down so far this winter. A Grant from the Rural England Prosperity Fund has just been applied for to request funding for an air source heat pump. An air source heat pump will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of WMH and reduce heating costs.
- Football Club House Build: Jointly funded by WMH and the Football Club. Phase 1 is completed and provides a social space with a bar for the Football Club as well as potential additional hire space for WMH. Phase 2 is to build better changing room facilities, but funds need to be raised first.
- Outdoor Play Equipment: The parent community were unable to raise the funds to have a state-of-the-art skatepark built, therefore, the ringfenced funds of £16K jointly provided by WMH, Parish Council and Parents fundraising was redirected into purchasing new outdoor play equipment. After consultation with parents, a basketball post, a tall traditional slide and a multi activity centre for younger children at a cost of just over £15k was purchased. A grant of £2k was secured from the FODDC Communities Grant. The basketball post was installed during the summer on the skatepark area, the play area fencing has been extended to accommodate the new play equipment and when the weather improves the Traditional Slide and Activity Centre will be installed.
- Woolaston News Magazine: This had been a fund raiser, for WMH for over 30 years. Sadly, the Woolaston News has had to ~~come to an end~~ ended primarily because the local postmen, who delivered them voluntarily, have been instructed not to do so. The area covered is too wide and rural to rely on volunteers and paying for delivery would wipe out any profit. Additionally, contributions to the magazine were becoming a challenge; the time spent by the magazine's volunteers was becoming onerous and finally printing costs had significantly increased, therefore it became necessary to draw a line under the

magazine. There were no volunteers following a request to help manage a proposed Woolaston Community Website, therefore this idea was shelved. The committee are investigating other fundraising ideas.

- Carnival: Last summer's Carnival was well supported and, as always, the weather was fantastic. The successful Motor Parade and Show replaced the traditional floats as none of the groups or families wanted to resurrect this tradition after Covid. The net profit from the event was approximately £2k. The next Carnival is Saturday 6 July 2024. The plan is to hold Woolaston's Motor Carnival Show on the first Saturday of July ahead of all other carnivals.

b. St Andrews Church. The report was produced and read by the Churchwarden (Alan Robinson). The Parochial Church Council (PCC) and Rev David Gardiner thanked the parish council for its commitment and cooperation in maintaining the churchyard and cemetery. It gives comfort and satisfaction to see a clean and well kept/well-kept graveyard. Sunday services are held on first Sunday of every month, (congregation of 20 – 25, the electoral roll is 62). Other services across the benefice are held at Lydney, Holy Trinity Primrose Hill, ACMC Aylburton and Alvington on a rota basis. A warm welcome awaits all in the benefice and all aspects of church life are undertaken (Baptisms, confirmations, weddings) as well as all special services (Mothering Sunday, easter, Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday and Christmas Carol Services, Christingle and Midnight Mass). With the help of a benefactor from the USA, the church will be able to erect a toilet block and kitchen facility to improve the facilities and therefore the use of the building. He welcomes everyone to the parish church – whether it be for religious reasons or not.

c. Art Group

- Meets weekly on Tuesdays 2 – 4pm. Cost £14 for a 12 week course (hall fees and refreshments). The summer course started on 9 April and ends 2 Jul 24. At the end of the 12 weeks there is usually a treat at Hanley Farm or Taurus Craft.
- Initially started following the closure of a day class run by Wyedean School due to Covid
- 18 members currently who work with crayons, pastels, watercolours, water based paint, traditional oil and acrylic. Work is varied, large paintings to greeting cards; white paper or coloured.
- Members are from in and around the village, including Alvington, Tutshill, Chepstow, Brockweir and Bream
- Last year a sample of the artwork was displayed at the carnival, and it is planned to repeat it this year.
- Anyone interested in joining is welcome.

d. Craft Group. The group meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month (except December – Christmas party, and bank holidays). There are 13 members who take their own craft to work on. It varies between mosaics, weaving, sewing or embroidery. The cost is £15 for 6 weeks, or £3.50 a session. It is a social event, the opportunity for a chat with tea and coffee provided. Beginners are welcome as there is usually someone available to assist.

e. Memory Group. A representative was unable to attend. The group are responsible for the window boxes around the hall which always look great during the summer.

f. Woolaston Guides. The guides have been running continually since 1990, with 2 leaders and 2 young leaders, until Covid when a few meetings were held on zoom. The numbers have varied from 36 – 13 partly due to no longer having a Brownie Pack. Activities include annual camping trips (Aston Ingham) and indoor sleepovers (Airhop trampoline park in Bristol); and in the summer, trekking, scavenger hunts and cookouts. In November, the guides take part in Parliament Week and Remembrance Day services.

g. Woolaston Amateur Gardening Society (WAGS). The group meet at WMH on the 1st Thursday of the month. They have various speakers, including allotment growers. They continue their affiliation with Bristol Botanic Garden. Although worried about its survival during covid, they have continued as a group and enjoy more socialising with both winter and summer socials. They receive plenty of support from the Netherend Public House

h. Woolaston Young Farmers Club (WYFC). A representative was unable to attend, however it was noted that they have already made an impact in the parish. The chairman noted that they have agreed to flail the community orchard which will give their members experience of using the equipment.

i. Women's Institute. The WI meet monthly on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. The subscription is £48 pa (£4 per session). The group kept meeting during Covid-19, making use of zoom, and in fact flourished. They have varied speakers and enjoy plenty of trips out.

j. Trefoil Group. A group of active and retired guide leaders. They have speakers, boat trips visits and help out with other charities (e.g. Seaman's missions). They meet during the winter (September to April) and outdoors in the summer months. The group cover the South Forest of Dean (Coleford to Beachley).

A resident mentioned other groups who were not represented, including the Woolaston Walkers, who meet at the Rising Sun every Wednesday. Their initial aim was to walk the local footpaths and report any issues to the parish council. The walking group will be invited to attend next year – the Chairman reiterated that all community groups are welcome to attend.

9. Public Forum

Residents were invited to ask questions or make comments

a. The evening showed that there is a lot going on in the parish, it is a vibrant and supportive community. Residents were asked to spread the word to other groups in the parish and pass information about the meeting. The problems surrounding communication were discussed, it is not always easy to inform everyone.

b. Speeding. A resident expressed concern at the vehicles speeding on the corner of Severn View Road. The Chairman explained that speeding was an issue continually raised by the parish council and the County Councillor C McFarling. He was responsible for instigating the "school ahead" road markings and the flashing lights on the A48. The council has asked for a reduction to 20mph, and a speed survey was conducted last year, but no vehicles were found to be speeding during that time. The issue will be taken to a full council meeting.

c. "Woolaston" displayed in daffodils. A resident asked whether it would be possible to reinstate the display of daffodils which spelled out 'Woolaston' at the entrance of the village. The resident stated that if permission was granted, they would fund it. The Chairman agreed to take the item to the full council meeting.

d. Vibrant Village competition. A resident asked whether there is still a "Vibrant Village" competition (or something similar).

10. There being no other questions or issues raised, the Parish Council Chairman thanked those in attendance, and closed the meeting at 2105.

Signed: Dated: