

MINUTES

Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Woodham Walter Parish Council.

Held at 8.00pm at Woodham Walter Women's Club.

Monday 13th January 2025

Present:

Cllr. John Brown (Chairman)

Cllr. James Rushton

Cllr. James Bunn

Cllr. Emel Fowler

Cllr. John Tompkins

Cllr. Joanna Symons

Cllr. Peter Warren

Others: Jacky Bannerman (Parish Clerk)

District Cllr. Simon Morgan (in attendance 8.00-9.20pm)

Public: 1 (in attendance until 8.50pm)

3326. Welcome Cllr. Brown welcomed those present to the meeting. No one present declared that they wished to record the meeting.

3327. To report, approve and record apologies for absence

Apologies were received from County Councillor Jane Fleming

3328. Disclosure of Interests/Consideration of Dispensations

3328.1 To disclose the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs), Other Registerable Interests (ORIs), or Non-Registerable Interests (NRIs) relating to items of business on the agenda having regard the Code of Conduct for Members. (Members were reminded they are also required to disclose any such interests as soon as they become aware should the need arise throughout the meeting).

It was noted that Cllr. Peter Warren is the treasurer of the Women's Club and Cllr. Joanna Symons is the joint President of the Women's Club.

3328.2 To receive requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests (if any)

There were none received.

3328.3 To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate.

It was noted that an existing dispensation remains in place in order that councillors are able to discuss the precept requirement.

3328.4 To adopt changes to Dispensation Guidance Note. This item was deferred to the next meeting.

3329. Public Forum

There was one member of the public present. They informed councillors that they had submitted a letter of objection to Maldon District Council with regards to planning application 24/00961/PACUAR. They also updated councillors that the sewage issues experienced at his property are on-going which is extremely frustrating and unpleasant.

3330. To approve the minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 9th December 2024.

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

3331. Matters Arising - Progress report (not for resolution)

3331.1 The report compiled by the Clerk was noted. Matters for report are contained within the agenda.

3332. Planning – APPLICATIONS RECEIVED (for consideration or report)

3332.1 24/00961/PACUAR Highfields, Bassetts Lane

Application for prior approval for the change of use of an agricultural building to one dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) and for associated operational development.

RESOLVED to write with no objections but to comment in line with previous responses to similar applications in the same location which have all so far failed; that councillors defer the legal considerations to the Planning Officer to decide if the application meets with the Part Q regulations including whether the agricultural use report complies.

3332.2 24/00996/VAR & 24/01006/VAR Little London House, Little London Lane

Proposal - Variation of condition 2 on approved planning permission 23/01092/HOUSE & 23/01093/LBC (Single storey rear extension to dwellinghouse. Alterations to outbuilding comprising new internal staircase, two new conservation rooflights and new window)

RESOLVED to support the application subject to the Conservation Officer's comments.

3332.3 24/00997/HOUSE Little London House, Little London Lane

Retrospective application for erection of two detached outbuildings comprising gym and shed. Addition of fence in side garden.

RESOLVED to object to the application. See below.

3332.4 24/01001/HOUSE Little London House, Little London Lane

Retrospective application for two oak gazebo's, boiler housing cover, patio and garden wall.

Councillors discussed the two retrospective applications concurrently as they are in the same location and comments for each apply.

RESOLVED to object to both applications. The following comments were made:

- Overdevelopment of the site considering the Listed Building status of the dwellinghouse.
- If enforcement action is not taken generally in the district, people will take advantage
- Flat roof is out of character
- Material selection not considered appropriate
- The Village Design Statement guidance has not been followed
- The gym building is too large in the setting.
- The corrugated roof does not appear to complement the existing building.
- Impact is in fact evident from various viewpoints including from West Bowers Road and the Public Footpath which passes across the field to the rear as well as Little London Lane.
- The works carried out detract from the heritage asset and the Conservation Officer should be consulted. Councillors were surprised that there was no separate Listed building application.

3332.5 There were no further application received.

3333. Planning – DECISIONS (for consideration or report)

3333.1 24/00715/HOUSE 4 Lodge Farm Cottages, Old London Road APPROVE
Two storey side link extension to existing garage, conversion of garage including alterations to garage roof height and fenestration alterations.

3333.2 Decisions Awaited

- a) 24/00898/LDP 2 Hawkins Farm Cottages
WWPC: Objection sent 10/12/24
- b) 24/00870/HOUSE & 24/00871/LBC The Shrubbery, Curling Tye Lane
WWPC: Support subject to Conservation Officer sent 10/12/24

3333.3 Appeal Decisions Awaited

- a) 23/00154/LDE Annexe at Guys Farm, Manor Road
WWPC Response: No Comment
Remains outstanding – Final comments April 2024

3334. Other Planning Matters /Other MDC Matters (for consideration or report)

3334.1 Enforcement – To consider any updates received. None received.

3334.2 Woodham Walter Neighbourhood Plan Update from Cllr. John Tompkins

- a) MDC Confirmation of Neighbourhood Area. The letter notes the Parish of Woodham Walter is now designated as a neighbourhood area (under section 61G of the 1990 Planning Act) and can continue to produce a neighbourhood plan
- b) Grant Application – the final points are being amalgamed and this will then be sent off.
- c) Report following meeting of steering group. It was noted that the meeting had been well attended and some volunteers have agreed to assist. However, more volunteers will be needed. The report from the meeting will be circulated to all councillors.

RESOLVED that once the grant aid has been received the RCCE will be instructed to carry out a housing needs survey.

3334.3 Maldon Corporate Plan

Councillor's noted the document and commented on the challenges faced with regards to digital exclusion in the district and that the Parish Council should also be mindful of this issue for our community. Not just with regards to some parishioners who do not wish or do not have equipment or skills for digital access, but there are also some pockets remaining where superfast broadband is not available.

3335. To receive reports of the County and District Councillor's.

District Cllr. Simon Morgan reported that the council no longer has a 5YHLS (5 year housing land supply) and that this had affected some decisions being made including by the Planning Inspectorate. Although it was noted that the Top Road decision to dismiss the appeal had been made since the NPPF changes. However, the changes to the house building requirements may change the course of future MDC decisions.

Devolution decisions are being taken at County Level and this may result in a Greater Essex Authority with an elected mayor. MDC will disappear into a unitary authority (circa 2027), although much of the information is lacking, it is expected that more will be released in march. It will change the quantity of Councillors from 1500 to 500.

Discussion points included that the impact of fewer councillors will be that there will be less representation or local knowledge and this could make the Neighbourhood Plan even more relevant and important.

Budget – MDC will raise the budget by the maximum allowed for Local Authorities at 2.99% and they anticipate that the books will then balance.

3336. Financial Matters (for consideration or report)

3336.1 To receive the Summary of Accounts to date. This includes transactions since December meeting.

Date	Unity Trust Instant Access Account	Transaction Detail	Amount In	Amount Out	Balance
16-Dec-24	Balance				35,383.22
31-Dec-24	Interest Received		256.54		35,639.76
06-Jan-25	Transferred to Current Account (Football Goals)			2,229.99	33,409.77
14-Jan-25	Transferred to Current Account (January Debits)		2,200.00	-	35,609.77
					35,609.77
					35,609.77

Date	Unity Trust Current Account	Transaction Detail	Amount In	Amount Out	Balance
16/12/2024	Balance				2,739.17
16/12/2024	December Debits (#133,139,141,145,146)			791.20	1,947.97
16/12/2024	Transferred from Instant Access		1,553.91		3,501.88
17/12/2024	December Debits (#135, 143)			2,177.09	1,324.79
18/12/2024	December Debits (#134)			77.73	1,247.06
19/12/2024	December Debits (#136)			107.09	1,139.97
20/12/2024	December Debits (#142)			35.00	1,104.97
31/12/2023	December Debits (#140)			6.00	1,098.97
06/01/2025	Transferred from Instant Access		2,229.99		3,328.96
07/01/2025	December Debits (#144)			2,229.99	1,098.97
13/01/2025	Outstanding December Debits (#138)			23.44	1,075.53
14/01/2025	Transferred from Instant Access		2,200.00		3,275.53
16/01/2025	January Debits			2,202.63	1,072.90
					1,072.90
			5,983.90	7,650.17	1,072.90

RESOLVED to accept the summary of accounts.

3336.2 Summary of Payments for January.

Ref:	December	Payee	Method	Net	VAT	Gross
#147	A&J Lighting Solutions		DD	21.00	4.20	25.20
#148	Npower		DD	77.64	3.88	81.52
#149	Mrs J Bannerman (Salary/Allowance)		BACS	874.62	-	874.62
#150	Nest Pension (Employer £59.91 Employee £95.85)		DD	155.76	-	155.76
#151	Barclaycard		DD	5.79	1.16	6.95
#152	Topsource Worldwide Uk Ltd (Eslip) Payroll		DD	19.53	3.91	23.44
#153	Woodham Walter Village Hall (Walter's)		BACS	30.00	-	30.00
#154	Unity Trust Bank (Charges) (December)		DD	6.00	-	6.00
#155	Woodham Walter Women's Club (Broadband Donation)		BACS	60.00	-	60.00
#156	National Allotment Society		BACS	70.00	14.00	84.00
#157	HMRC (PAYE Quarterly Payment)		BACS	690.14	-	690.14
#158	Woodham Walter Women's Club (Hire of Hall)		BACS	165.00	-	165.00
Total				2,175.48	27.15	2,202.63

Date	Barclaycard Payments (December Statement)	Net	VAT	Gross
11/12/2024	Amazon (Paper)	5.79	1.16	6.95
		5.79	1.16	6.95

Date	Barclaycard Payments (January Estimate)	Net	VAT	Gross
20/12/2024	Dell (Keyboard & Mouse)	29.98	6.00	35.98
16/01/2025	Walter's Café (Refreshments) Estimate	10.00	-	10.00
		39.98	6.00	45.98

All invoices listed have been 'examined, verified and certified' by the RFO. Where estimated, the Clerk will await final invoices/payslips. The BACS payments will be drawn up by the Parish Clerk and require authorisation by councillor signatory by Payment Date of 17th January 2025 or as soon as possible. RESOLVED to accept the payment schedule.

3336.3 Review of Bank Statements, Credit Card Statements and Account sheets for December.

Cllr. James Bunn confirmed that he had reviewed the documents and found them to be reconciled correctly.

3336.4 2025/26 Budget & Precept

Having carefully examined the budget and considered all expenditure and any areas where costs can be mitigated as well as taking into account the current inflation rate, in order to maintain adequate reserves over the next 3 years, the proposal which councillors will need to decide on is to raise the precept by 9.5%. The increase of 9.5% is forecast to be required over the next 3 years but this will be reviewed year on year. The precept required will therefore be: £34,213.00 (an increase of £2968). This equates to a Band D figure of £121.32 (up £7.83 on last year).

It was noted that discussions and a range of figures had been used to determine the budget, precept and reserves which has incorporated conservative inflation figures. If less than a 9.5% increase had been allocated the recommended reserves for a council of our size would have disappeared over 3 years. Inflation levels mean that the reserves buy less. The Council Tax Base figure varies each year and this also has an impact on the Band D costs. The updated summary closing balances document was shared with councillor along with full budget documents, all of which will be available on the website in due course.

Other points to note from discussions:

- Playground reserves will now carry over all outstanding budget from Repairs/Renewals as well as Maintenance in order that the reserves are built up for any future costs. The relevant guarantee terms were reviewed.
- A bi-monthly booking for Women's Club for possible Neighbourhood Plan (NP) meetings had been incorporated.
- Noted that the NP costs may vary from budget proposed depending on grant received and timing of any costs. However, it is anticipated that grant funding will cover expenditure for the most part.
- Additional 2 hours per month staff costs to allow for NP/Payroll/other general. Plus additional costs for National Insurance increases and estimated 2% national pay award.
- Increase of 5% for donations to local organisations towards maintenance costs (Women's Club and Village Hall) plus additional £120 to Women's Club towards Broadband costs. Essex Wildlife Trust to remain at £1000. Allowance for £250 donation for Parish Magazine subject to receipt of further information.
- It was agreed that costs for Walter's Café should be maintained as the event continues to offer village residents a meeting place with beneficial opportunities for socialising as well as providing useful information and interaction with guests. The Maldon Town Policing Unit are planning to attend regularly.
- Noted that Women's Club and Village Hall hire charges are expected to increase in 2025 and this had been incorporated into the figures.

RESOLVED Cllr. John Brown proposed and Cllr. John Tompkins seconded the proposal be carried. All councillor's in agreement the precept demand will be: £34,213.00 (an increase of £2968). This equates to a Band D figure of £121.32 (up £7.83 on last year). The Clerk/RFO will complete the form and send it to MDC.

3336.5 Grants/Expenditure. There were no updates to report.

3336.6 Party Tent Hire- To consider increasing the Party Tent Hire charges to £75 for one and £125 for two. The prices charged have remained the same ever since we started hiring out the tents. Currently £50 for one tent and £75 for two. This does not reflect the amount of admin (bookings enquiries, invoices etc) and time taken for collections/return of tents (although Anne at The Cats helps enormously with this). Research undertaken for similar hirings @£400 – although these are commercial ventures with higher quality tents and include delivery, erection and collection etc .

RESOLVED to increase hire charges to £75 for one and £125 for two. To research replacement costs for future consideration of creating a reserve for replacement. To purchase gift for Anne Beckwith to thank her for the storage and help given.

3336.7 It was noted that the Noticeboard, Football Goals and Memorial Garden Signs have all been purchased and added to asset register.

RESOLVED Clerk will notify insurance company of the new football goals but not for other items.

3337. Other Council Matters (for consideration or report)

3337.1 Community Engagement Team (CET).

(a) December report was noted.

(b) Explanation regarding playground inspections was noted and had been addressed.

3337.2 Woodham Walter Common – Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT). There were no updates report.

3337.3 Chelmer Valley Landscape Group. It was noted that minutes & info had been shared. Next meeting Tuesday 14th January at 10.15 but no representatives were available. However, Councillors continue to be interested in receiving information.

3337.4 Climate Action. An expression of interest had been completed for the ECC Wider Climate Action Network.

3337.5 Allotments Report – actions are ongoing.

3337.6 Parish & Town Forum – It was noted that minutes and slides been shared.

3337.7 Payroll Update – the existing provider has agreed to continue until the end of Financial Year (March) at current rate. We will then change to PAYE Basic Tools from April.

3337.8 Set the date for the Annual Parish Meeting.

RESOLVED to set the date for Thursday 15th May 2025 at 7.30pm. Clerk to arrange.

3337.9 Website compatibility to WCAG.2.2AA – To understand if the website meets the new criteria?

RESOLVED that without additional funding for professional services, the website meets with criteria to the best of our ability.

3338. Highways, Transport & Infrastructure (for consideration or report)

3338.1 Various matters on-going as detailed in the Highways log.

3338.2 Various road surfacing and pothole repairs undertaken and more are scheduled.

3338.3 It was noted that gully clearing had recently been undertaken

3338.4 99 Bus Services – Consider Love Your Bus Grant

RESOLVED to consider if funding could be gained for advertising the timetable in relevant local publications. Clerk to liaise with Little Baddow PC.

3339. Local Issues (for consideration or report)

3339.1 Bell Meadow & Memorial Garden

(a) Football Goals – The new goals have been ordered and are due to be delivered on Friday 17th.

RESOLVED that a working party would attend on Saturday 25th January to construct the new goals, also to attend to removal of old goals and find anchor points. Clerk to request assembly instructions.

(b) Playground Report - Cllr. Brown has sourced some bolts to resolve the recurring issue with the gates. There was no further information to report.

(c) Bell Meadow - there was no information to report.

(d) Memorial Garden – The signage has been ordered. Await delivery date. It is hoped that the working party on Saturday 25th January will also be able to install the signs.

3339.2 Footpaths Report

(a) Cllr. Peter Warren reported that paths are generally in a good condition.

(b) It was noted that information had been received from Lee Carter with regards to the shooting notices which have appeared in the woods/wilderness area.

3339.3 School Report to receive report from Representative on Governing Body –Cllr Symons. The consultation period continues. The Ofsted report was released with areas for improvement being implemented.

3339.4 Essex Police/Crime Reports/Neighbourhood Watch Report.

- (a) Various general reports and newsletters shared
- (b) Meet the Police at Walter's Café on Thursday 16th January.

3339.5 Litter

- a) The Clerk will arrange annual litter pick
- b) Fly Tip – Curling Tye Lane to be reported.

3339.6 Walter's Third Thursday Community Café

- Thursday 21st December – Maldon Meet The Police session.
- Thursday 16th January – Maldon Meet The Police session. Possibly Maldon CVS with Slipper Upgrades and Neighbourhood Plan information.

3340. Correspondence – Various items of correspondence have been received and shared with Councillors and where appropriate the public via the website and village emails.

(a) Various Essex Police Newsletters	(b) CVS Newsletter
(c) EALC County Updates	(d) Maldon Members Bulletins
(e) Essex Rural Partnership Newsletter	(f) Village News & Events
(g) MDC Winter Services Community Guide	(h) Essex Warbler Newsletter

3341. Points of Information/Items for future agenda

None

3342. Date of Next Parish Council Meeting:

Next scheduled Ordinary Parish Council Meeting – Monday 10th February 2025 at 8pm in Woodham Walter Women's Club.

3343. The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.45pm.

Signed
Dated