**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD AT WILMCOTE VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 20th MARCH 2024.**

**Present:** Cllr Ray, Chairman**,** Cllr Nurser-Stephens, Cllr Stewart, Cllr Mahon, Cllr.McMillan and two members of the public.

**Apologies:** Cllr Shilvock due to illness – approved. Cllr Boyes-unapproved, late apologies received. District Cllr Holmes.

**Chairman’s Report 2023/2024:**

**Reflections on 2023/2024**

We have a responsibility to demonstrate our contribution to society more broadly. At the Parish Council we are committed to being a responsible local council in everything we do. We are committed to contribute to the aims of a clean energy and net zero future and to this end we have invested in low energy street lighting. We also aim to support the shop, pub, and reduction in traffic speed particularly near our school. We also value the benefit the play area brings for our younger children in the parish, the current facilities are ageing, and consideration is being given to a replacement design for this play area.

Through the past year we have delivered good operational performance and so I want to thank those who have worked tirelessly across our council, as they played their part in keeping our council operating. I am also pleased to welcome some new councillors to our council. Together we can use our extensive expertise to help support the communities in the Parish we serve. Our structure aims to empower each councillor for great performance, each councillor has their own area of responsibility.

Our focus remains on protecting our parish ensuring that the various planning policies (National Planning Policy Framework, SDC Core Strategy, and WPC Neighbourhood Plan) are met to create an environment we all enjoy.

We continue to monitor our internal control systems (standing orders) to ensure they reflect best practice as part of our continuing drive for improvement. We strive to take account of the views of residents in the parish in the council meetings and decisions made. Where necessary we will hold open public meetings to seek resident’s views on specific issues to ensure your voice is communicated to the District and County levels. Promoting a culture of openness and debate is one of my key aims and ensuring that we establish good governance to underpin a healthy culture. We always encourage residents to attend the WPC meetings to ask questions or raise concerns directly with councillors. We remain committed to the highest standards of public governance and best practice in all we do.

We deliver value for residents of the Parish operating within the planning frameworks of the government National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the District Council Policies and our local Neighbourhood Plan Policies. We maintain a disciplined approach to investment in the Parish assets that are complementary to our core activity. These include street lighting, children’s play area, highway signage as well as grants to support activity groups in the Parish balanced with the desire to invest in services for residents of the Parish to deliver the Neighbourhood Plan which was supported by residents and remains our goal. Our commitment is to be a responsible business Parish Council and is central to the way in which we operate. We welcome direct engagement with residents to help informed decisions. For example, the public participation is a regular part of our agenda in which we seek regular feedback from residents to help to shape future actions. Continual improvement is our aim.

Safety is incredibly important to us, the people that work for us and the residents of the Parish, in particular the children, parents, and teaching staff at our primary school. It is imperative that we continue to monitor good safety behaviours and act where needed.

It’s important that we are open and transparent for all our residents, and that’s why we encourage residents to attend our meetings, our accounts are subject to independent audit to ensure we deliver strong economic value. Our Standing Orders that govern how we operate have been reviewed and extended where appropriate.

We recognise the hurdles in the move to create a 20mph speed limit throughout the parish and the ban on parking of cars on the pavement which is a particular problem around our railway station. We will continue to support these changes.

Finally, we recognise the cost-of-living pressures for some residents and aim to keep our parish council precept to near zero increase and manage all investments within the budget this provides.

Effective Communication

Effective communication within the community is important. Our aim is to reach all residents in the Parish and to achieve this we use various methods of communication, a Parish website ([www.wilmcotepc.co.uk](http://www.wilmcotepc.co.uk)), the Village Vine, the notice board opposite the village shop and social media. In special circumstances a leaflet is circulated to each house in the Parish. The parish council has established a social media presence on twitter which will continue to be updated. The handle is @wilmcotepc for those not following.

Effective Governance

Each councillor has an area of responsibility, and I would like to thank them all for their hard work, dedication, and commitment throughout the year in dealing with the increasing volume of work that the Parish Council has to manage. We have a strong team with the varied range of skills and experience we need for the challenges ahead.

Legal

When Wilmcote Parish Council requires legal advice, it is available from Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC). Using WALC helps to ensure that when legal advice is required the advice is provided as cost effectively as possible.

Reviews from Lead Councillors

Planning – Cllr Shilvock, Cllr Boyes, Cllr Mahon

Planning Applications:

During the year Wilmcote Parish Council has submitted recommendations to Stratford District Council regarding 27 planning applications relating to Wilmcote and Pathlow. Response to planning applications is becoming more complex as these need to be examined against National Planning Guidelines, SDC Planning Policy and the Wilmcote Neighbourhood Plan. One major consideration is the restrictions on planning placed by Wilmcote’s position within the Greenbelt, which gives the parish some protection, particularly against large and medium scale development. Several planning applications have been refused owing to over-development.

WPC is engaging with the consultation process for developing the next SDC Local Plan as appropriate at each stage. As a village with a train station, Wilmcote and Pathlow is considered as suitable for future development and WPC will endeavour to ensure that any development is of an appropriate scale and form and conforms to the WPC Neighbourhood Plan

Where we need some professional planning input in complex cases, we engage the help of a planning consultant.

Willow Wood Play Area – Cllr McMillan, Cllr Ray.

In recent years considerable investment has made in new pieces of equipment which has proved very popular with children. The playground has been kept in good order with regular maintenance including grass and hedge cutting, strimming and litter picking.

Professional inspectors visit the playground once a month and produce a report; a more detailed inspection is carried out annually. As a result of their findings minor repairs have been carried out where needed. The latest inspection report hadn’t raised anything over and above what was in the annual one.

The life expectancy of some of the original equipment is reaching the end and we are in discussion with a playground equipment supplier regarding their recommendation for a new layout for the children’s play area.

Road safety and Parking (Community Speed Watch Scheme) – Cllr Boyes, Cllr Nurser-Stephens

Wilmcote CSW continues to operate to promote road safety and reduce incidence of speeding in the village.

Grant Applications – Cllr Shilvock

The system for awarding grants to local organisations continues to work well. The aim is to ensure parity of opportunity for interested groups, transparency in the grant award process and appropriate use of Parish Council funds. Organisations were invited to submit applications and the dates and process was advertised locally. In the latest round, one application was received, from Good Companions for audio visual and computer equipment in order to enhance presentations. A sum of £600 was awarded.

Parish Emergency Plan/Defibrillators – Cllr Stewart

The Parish Council emergency plan and Emergency box were updated and approved by the Parish Council in the previous year. These will be reviewed annually.

The two defibrillator units at the Training Shed and outside the village shop remain in good condition with no vandalism to either unit. The gel pads have been changed and are up to date and ready for use. Neither unit has yet been called upon in an emergency.

Both defibrillators were recalled for updating and are now safely back in their cabinets in full working order.  A Defibrillator Awareness Session was arranged in April with Henley 1st Responders.

**Issues of particular local importance:**

Ms Brooke-Taylor, WRCC asked if we could circulate some flyers in the Parish advertising Meals-on-Wheels. Warwickshire County Council ceased supplying these and WRCC are now providing them.

**Other Matters raised by an Elector of the Parish:**

No matters were raised and Cllr. Ray declared the meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.