

Blewbury Parish Council

Clerk to the Council

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MINUTES of the meeting of the Parish Council held on **Wednesday 16th April 2025** at 7.00 pm in the Melland Room at the Blewbury Clubhouse.

In attendance:

Cllr. Dermot Mathias, Chairman
Cllr. Anne Millman
Cllr. Lee Robinson
Cllr. Shelia Austin
Cllr. Julia Saunders
Cllr. Mark Shayler
Cllr. Andy Evason
Cllr. Andrew Calder
Iain Wood, Lengthman
Members of the public 2 (Wendy Carless and 1 other)

1. Apologies for Absence - Lydia Inglis and District Cllr. Hayleigh Gascoigne sent apologies.

The Chairman stated that the meeting was not advertised three days prior due to website issues with a new Clerk in situ. The meeting was advertised on Monday. Councillors were summoned in the statutory timeframe. Council approved carrying on with the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

Andy Evason and Anne raised a declaration of interest relating to all matters regarding Sustainable Blewbury as members of this group.

3. Public Participation

Nothing raised

4. Planning Matters

4.1 New Planning Applications

The following planning applications were reviewed, it was agreed that no further comments were needed.

- [P25/V0314/DIS](#) Rumseys Barn London Road Blewbury Didcot. Amended plan and additional information received 7 April 2025.

- [P24/V2404/HH](#) Millbrook Cottage Berry Lane Blewbury Didcot. Construction Method Statement received 4th April 2025.

4.2 Planning Decisions from Vale of the White Horse (VOWH)

For information only.

[P18/V1826/RM](#) GWP Healthcare Site Sir Frank Williams Way Harwell. Reserved Matters application following Outline approval P02/V1594/O for Mixed-use urban extension of 3300 new dwellings together with associated open space, leisure, community, local shops and services and drainage and utility infrastructure.

Consent sought for: Erection of Healthcare Centre, car parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure. **VOWH Grants permission. BPC supported.**

[P25/V0264/S73](#) Oak Hall House Nottingham Fee Blewbury Didcot OX11 9PG. Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on application ref. P24/V1678/HH - to add 0.5m to depth of approved extension

(Replacement of existing glass room with single storey rear extension.) **VOWH Grants permission**
BPC had no objections.

5. No report submitted from the County Councillor

6. District Councillor Report was received on 10/04 and circulated to Council. Please contact the Clerk if you would like to see a copy.

7. Business Rates demands – Old Scout Hut /Clubhouse

Dermot had spoken to a helpful representative from Capita who explained 4 new invoices for the Scout Hut that had recently been issued related to payments in arrears. It seems that some of these invoices had in fact been paid and there was approximately £1,000 outstanding. These invoices related to the period 2021 to 2025. During that period the scout hut was in disrepair and only useable for storage purposes. Dermot thought that the Parish Council should appeal its valuation. In the meantime, Blewshed, who have restored the building to a useable state, are hoping to be established as a charity within the next 3 months. Charitable status should enable Blewshed to claim a minimum discount of 80%.

With regard to the Clubhouse, the Parish Council are paying £180 p/m for 10 months. Dermot thought that due to the vagaries of the rating system, the Parish Council should be able to reduce this amount if we can establish that the scout hut has a rateable value of less than £3,000. District Cllr. Hayleigh Gascoigne is setting up a conference call with an expert from VOWH. In the meantime, Dermot agreed with Capita that no further payments will be made until 1 June at the earliest.

8. To receive the Lengthman's report from Iain Wood

- 8.1 **Bench in Playclose** is broken, a resident had said they would like to pay for its replacement as a memorial bench. Discussed putting up the bench now with a plaque to be added later. Iain will discuss with resident.
- 8.2 **Picnic Table in TFF** – This was in disrepair and now is just a heap of wood remains. The table needs replacing. Iain will look at alternatives.
- 8.3 **Quaker Wood** – Sustainable Blueberry confirmed that they will pay for the Iain's time to mow and strim the wood. Parish Council approved for their equipment to be used.
- 8.4 **Clubhouse Bench** - is broken and in the back of the shed. Blue Shed is going to kindly mend it.
- 8.5 **Replacing Water Filter in Plant Room** – Blue Shed is also going to look at the water filter.
- 8.6 **New Padlock for TFF gate** – The Clerk had ordered new padlocks which had arrived and now in situ.
- 8.7 Minor repairs were carried out from the recent RoSPA Report: Iain had repaired the gap in the gate.

Swing Chain: Iain reported to the Clerk on 14/04 that the main chain on the big swing had broken. The bolt is worn out after only 18 months. Iain suggested replacing the bolt every six months and doing self-checks. RoSPA checks are ineffective due to the height of the swing. This was the main chain that had broken and fortunately hangs on the safety chain. It was agreed to add this check to the maintenance internal checks. Mark Shayler and Iain will investigate the repair. The Swing has been taped off not to use until the repair can be done.

Smart Meter Installation: A previous installer said there was insufficient access to install a meter. It was thought that a pipe on the floor in the way of it could be the reason why as it was awkward to get to. It was also said that switching to Octopus Energy could increase earnings from generated electricity. Lee will speak with the energy provider and Evason will investigate the meter installation further and report back.

{Julia Saunders arrived}

9. Road Safety

- 9.1 **SID** – Traffic signs have been moved to new positions as part of the six-monthly rotation. Two signs are on London Road. One is opposite the Blueberry on pole. The other is near the "donkey field" on Winterbrook Farm. Matthew Barber, Thames Valley Police, was contacted about the use of speed data. The response was that it would be looked into it. The Parish Council emphasised that the data is important for advocacy purposes and verification.
- 9.2 **Blind spot mirror** for junction of Westbrook St, Heather Way/ Church End. Been approved, Andy Evason to follow up. No further update at this time to its action.
- 9.3. **Road Safety Report 20mph** –The council ratified the 20-mph decision previously agreed by the last Parish Council. It was agreed to support the reduction of the speed limit to 20-

mph on all roads going through the village. Notwithstanding the concern that slower speeds will result in bunching making it more difficult to cross.

Top speeds have been recorded at 100 mph in the London Road, there is more traffic now than ever. Highways had reported that chicanes are not a good due to increased noise, fuel consumption and pollution. The application has been submitted to highways and the next step is for highways to decide if a consultation with the village will be carried forward.

It was reported that bollards will be installed in the autumn for informal crossing points. Wig wags (flashing signs) for children crossing will be installed at the same time. Oxfordshire County Council are paying for both.

- 9.4 **Vision Zero** (Vision Zero is a multi-national road traffic safety project that aims to achieve a roadway safety) a representative had been asked to attend a Parish Council meeting. BPC have submitted an application to Vision Zero to review speed limits on our village roads.

10. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12th March 2025 were approved.

11. Finance

11.1 The **April payments** and **bank reconciliation as of 31st March 2025** were approved as shown in Appendix 1.

- The finance committee will have a meeting to discuss the **2024-2025 budget** in full and report back.
- Lee raised that the **Electricity bill** was £233 for the last quarter, which is very low. The Budget is normally £3-4k per year, £700-800 per quarter. The bill covers only three weeks of solar panel use. The Clubhouse is fully sufficient on solar and not using anything from the grid. Savings from solar panels should be about £2,000 per year. It was suggested to use the solar panel income to finance further solar panels for the Clubhouse.
- The new Clerk and Lee need to have a good look at **Scribe** as it may not be used as well as it could be.
- To outsource the **Payroll** to SME Accounting Services Ltd was approved.
- To note that the Clerk was added to the **Lloyds Bank Account** mandate

11.2 Funding Requests

A meeting had been set up with BPC and Blewbury Tennis Club members on May 8th regarding the resurfacing of courts funding request. The Tennis Club had requested to access CIL funds.

For information only: Thames Valley Community Fund had not been successful

12. Skatepark Tenders (Skateboard Working Group)

The working party had a meeting and received three similar tenders. An expert supplier had responded to a Facebook enquiry suggesting that concrete would be a better option. The

working group is now exploring that option with consultants, but the initial advice was against concrete due to cost. It was confirmed that Parish Council had a gift from an anonymous donor of £50,000. Another meeting will be arranged to discuss further.

13. Work on Zip Wire progress

The Zip wire progress is stalled due to lack of time and resources.

14. Footpath Gravelling

Footpath gravelling is mostly done, with a few exceptions.

15. Formulate a Working Party for the Recreation Ground

Members of The Amazons (football team) and cricketers are formulating a maintenance working party. They together with Parish Council are applying for a grant to manage the recreation ground. **Iain, was congratulated** for completing the Recreation Management Association qualification.

16. Flooding and Drainage

16.1 Church End - It was reported that sadly most of the £30,000 national government flood relief grant that was devolved to local authorities had been wasted in Blewbury. The authority chose an alternative that didn't work, despite warnings. Anne will contact the line manager of the person responsible and the person who awarded the grant to review the situation. The authority tried to use a giant suction excavator to dig, but it was blocked by too many tree roots.

16.2 London Road - A meeting was held with Anne, Dermot and Andy E. with a senior engineer from Oxfordshire County Council who will clear gullies along Bohams Road to alleviate run-off. It was hoped to secure money for this and obtain the landowner's permission to divert the water.

16.3 Other- New properties off Westbrook Street haven't had adequate drainage, adding to problems. It was felt the contractor would be responsible. Extra drains were installed without permission, diverting water and exacerbating flooding on Westbrook Street.

There was flooding around **Orchard Way**. The local authority put homes on a drainage ditch, causing flooding. A surveyor was going to look at it, but no report had been received.

Ladycroft Park had only one home connected to the new drainage system. It's understood to be Thames Water's responsibility, not the councils. The private landowners 'Wildcrest' is ultimately responsible. A letter from Parish Council may be needed to push for action.

Council members **thanked Anne** for all her efforts on Flooding matters in the village.

17. The matter of parking on the **Verges on South Street** has been resolved for now.

18. Armillary Sphere in the Play Close

The Armillary has been taken away and a new base is going to be installed. It was taken down because it was deemed loose and people were playing on it. The proposal is to auger a concrete pile with steel rods to ensure its secure. Richard Page on the Parochial Church Council (PCC) is having a meeting in May with Mark to discuss the proposal. The re-installation works may cost up to £1k. There is £500 remaining of the grant funds.

19. Closure of permissible footpath -Effective 26/02/25 at the Land in Downside Farm

The landowner's Email to Parish Council was dated 28th of February. It's not known how many incidents there have been with dogs attacking Ewes. It was agreed that a landowner can close a footpath for animals for up to 28 days a year, but not over holidays. They can do six weeks for excluding dogs under certain conditions. The landowner cannot unilaterally close the footpath. The gate on Cow Lane was padlocked. The land has been common land for a long time. Lydia will finalise the draft letter already circulated to Parish Council which members supported. Documentation of incidents may be requested in the future. The letter will state that the regulations should be obeyed and the path should be open. It is not the Parish Council's responsibility to inform everyone about the footpath closure.

20. Croquet Club Irrigation Tanks

The Croquet Club wants to install water storage tanks for their irrigation system. The tanks would be about 2.5 meters wide and 4 feet high, screened by a hedge. The Parish Council is the landlord, so the Croquet Club is seeking their approval. The council agrees in principle, pending a sketch of the proposal. (received after the meeting, this has now therefore been approved)

21. Parish Council Gov.uk Emails

The new regulations require the Parish Councils to use gov.uk email addresses instead of personal ones. The Clerk mentioned Parish Online is a company that offers parish council websites and Gov.uk Emails. This will be revisited in the future.

22. Annual Parish Meeting 22nd May 2025

The parish meeting is scheduled for May 22nd. The same format from last year, with short presentations, which was well-received. The Amazons have expressed interest in presenting at the meeting. There is a need to reach out to a broader audience beyond the usual attendees for 2026.

23. Clerk's Correspondence

The agenda was not posted on the website in a timely manner due to technical issues. There is a need to establish who is responsible for posting the agenda on the notice board by the post office. Anne and Andy Evason who live closest to the notice board will coordinate posting the Agenda.

The Clerk also raised that Minutes need to be statutory on the website three weeks after a meeting.

24. Chairman's Report

The current Chair is going to speak to Councillors over the next few weeks to find out whether there's anybody prepared to take over as Chairman. The chair wants to get people's views on the subject.

25. Parish Councillors' Reports

- The Clubhouse working group needs to meet.
- There is damage to the bank in the closed churchyard, possibly due to construction traffic.
- 2 Chailey car park bins have been raised as an issue.

- **Chailey Gardens playground:** The playground is located on the northeast corner of Chailey Gardens. It has its own play area and small park area. The Parish Council was offered the land many years ago but declined. The playground is currently managed by Trinity Estates management company. Residents contribute to the upkeep of the playground through a charge. The bins are not emptied regularly, and some equipment is rotten. Residents may need to form an Association to fight the management company to address the concerns. The Parish Council will write to the management company in first instance. If the play equipment looked to be unsafe this needed to be reported also to them and OCC if no action is taken. Pictures will be taken and sent to the Clerk to build a record of events.
- **EV Chargers for the Village Hall.** There will probably be no EV chargers due to compliance costs in excess of £700 a year. The village hall will need to take out insurance to cover them. The grant money will have to be returned. It was felt that Sustainable Blewbury should have a conversation about it in conjunction with the parish council. The insurance cost was £200 for the software and another £200 to have them serviced a year.

26. Future Agenda Items

- Finalise Asset Register – May Meeting
- Schedule Neighbourhood Plan Review – July /September Meeting
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27. Date of Next Meeting – Parish Council Meeting: Wednesday 21st May 2025 / Thursday 22nd May – Annual Parish Meeting

Actions		
Item 25	Write to Trinity Estates management company	Clerk
Item 25	Clarify damage to the grass bank in closed churchyard	Julia
Item 8.1	Memorial Bench, discuss with the resident	Iain
Item 8.2	Picnic Table in TFF alternative	Iain
Item 13	Repair to Zip Wire	Iain /Mark
Item 8	Swing Chain, Investigate its repair	Iain /Mark
Item 22	Contact groups for Annual Parish Meeting	Clerk
Item 18	PCC mtg, discuss reinstallation of the Armillary Sphere	Mark
Item 11	Set up Payroll	Clerk
Item 11	Finance Committee meeting to discuss Budget	Finance Committee
Item 9.2	Blind spot mirror	Andy Evason
Item 8	Clubhouse, energy provider /meter installation	Lee / Andy Evason.

APPENDIX 1

Finance April 2025			Apr-25
	PAYMENTS TO APPROVE IN MEETING		
01.04.2025	Annual Liceince Fee Band B for Clubhouse 90299821	Vale of the White Horse	180.00
03.04.2025	Full Membership for Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plans Alliance	ONPA	50.00
09.04.2025	Hi-Tip Dumper	Didcot Plant Ltd	175.14
<i>Waiting on invoice</i>	Relocation of Speed Signs_MTS	MTS_Awaiting Invoice Ref. Lee	648.00
14.04.2025	Repair to lock on the PC Noticeboard outside Post Office	R.N. Rigley Electrical Contractor	17.00
23.03.2025	Works to Childrens Play Area	H L Pulleyn	200.00
26.03.2025	Service to John Deere Tractor	Bill Denton	675.00
15.04.2025	HMRC Employee/ers TAX /NI Contributions	HMRC	1,391.47
	PAID: Salaries, on 02.04.2025		
01.04.2025	March Cleaning Clubhouse	Jayne Newman	252.00
02.04.2025	Outgoing Clerk_Final Salary	Miss EC Cooper	1,466.75
02.04.2025	Village Hall and Clubhouse Administrator for March	Helen Evi Holroyd	1,017.25
02.04.2025	Lengthman Service	Mr I T Wood	1,006.84
	<i>Expenses_included in payment above, here for information</i>		132.90
02.04.2025	Nest Pension_for outgoing Clerk	Nest Pension	177.24
	PAID: Direct Debits/Standing Orders		
28.03.2025	Wheelie Bin Waste Collection, DD paid 27.04.2025	Biffa	206.58
01.04.2025	Clubhouse Loan, repayment 29.04.2025 DD	PWLB Loan	4,102.50
24.03.2025	25/12 to 24/03/25 electric, Estimate reading 318537, payment taken 01.4 DD	Scottish Power	233.00
24.02.2025	BT M170 IE DD - taken from account 10.03.2025	BT	36.86
	PAID: since previous meeting		
27.03.2025	Amazon, Toilet Roll for Clubhouse	Amazon	39.98
27.03.2025	Amazon, Hand paper towel	Amazon	17.90
	Total Expenditure		12,026.41
	RECEIPTS		
02.04.2025	Lloyds Deposit Account Interest from 28/02 -31/03	Lloyds	171.13
01.04.2025	Precept 1st half of payment 2025-26	Vale of White Horse	59,000.00
04.04.2025	Voluntary contribution towards Footpath Gravelling	Richard Savages	400.00
	Total Income		59,571.13

