



Laverstock & Ford Parish Council

Incorporating Milford, Bishopdown Farm, Old Sarum & Longhedge

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held at River Bourne Community Farm at 6.00pm
on Monday 15th May 2023

MINUTES

Chair of the Annual Parish Meeting: Cllr Nick Baker, Chair of Laverstock and Ford Parish Council

The following Parish Councillors were also present: Cllr Derek Hayes, Cllr Laura Jones, Cllr Kevin Lynn, Cllr Tom Maskell, Cllr Ian McDonald, Cllr Laura Rigiani, Cllr James Smith, Cllr Patrick Schneider, Cllr Cindy Vanstone, Cllr Lesley Waller.

The following Wiltshire Councillors were present: WCllr Ian McLennan, WCllr Andrew Oliver

43 members of the public were present, including representatives from the Police, Land Trust and Parish Council staff.

There was an opportunity for all to view stands from local organisations including Milford Preservation Group and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

The meeting commenced at 6.20pm.

1. Election of Chair and welcome.

Cllr Baker offered to chair the meeting, which was agreed by all present. The Chair welcomed all present and explained the format of the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Parish Councillor Lainey Barker and John Glen MP.

3. Presentation from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Josh Rogers, Community Empowerment Officer from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, spoke about their work on Castle Hill Country Park in partnership with the Land Trust. Works are ongoing to improve the wildlife habitats including clearing of invasive garden shrubs and digging of hibernacula for reptiles. Reptile and Skylark surveys are ongoing in the park. Skylark numbers nationally are declining due to agricultural processes, but numbers are currently steady at Castle Hill. Ways to protect the Skylark nesting sites include keeping to mapped pathways and keeping dogs on leads during nesting season. Josh expressed thanks to the many volunteers who help maintain the park, in particular James Boardman, and encouraged anyone who wished to get involved to visit the WWT or Land Trust websites. The volunteers are currently focusing on tree care, including the Community Orchard, mulching and feeding the trees.

Resident questions included:-

How is the park promoted to the wider parish? Work is ongoing to improve the website and include regular entries in the parish newsletter with news from the park. On 17th September a community fun day will be held on the park.

What will the park look like in the future? Community Growing Areas and Livestock grazing will be introduced and some improvement to the woodlands, but it is hoped that the large grassed areas will be maintained and improved as a mixture of scrub and chalk meadow grassland.

Will areas be fenced off to protect skylarks? This is being considered and investigated but no decision has yet been made, as we are aware this is controversial. Of the persons attending, all but three supported the fencing of some areas to protect the skylarks.

4. Approval of Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 16th May 2022

Resolved: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2022.

5. Chairs Report

The Chair thanked the many organisations and individuals who collaborate with the Parish Council during the year to deliver the services provided. The Chair presented the new Parish Strategic Plan, built around six core principles, and highlighted key projects and initiatives in each area. Residents were asked to provide feedback on the plan.

Community Resilience – ensuring the parish is a place where everyone feels part of a safe and supportive local community – by engaging through social media, website and community events. Working with the Police to address anti-social behaviour and vandalism. Providing facilities for young people such as skateparks and supporting youth clubs.

Planning and Development – encouraging development in the parish that results in a thriving semi-rural community with excellent facilities and heritage assets – through adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan which becomes part of the planning framework for the Parish, for which the Chair extended particular thanks to Vic Bussereau, James Boardman, Kevin Martin, James Robertson, Ron and Sarah Champion and Marti Hilliard. The Chair reported on the need to balance the need for new houses with the location, quality of design and infrastructure on new developments.

Sustainable Transport – striving to promote and support safe, sustainable travel across the parish – through the use of Speed indicator Devices and a new Community Speed Watch team. Working in collaboration with Wiltshire Council on projects such as the development of the cycle network and traffic regulation orders to enforce traffic restrictions where needed. A new team of volunteer footpath wardens to clear and maintain footpaths and rights of way in the parish.

Climate Change and Environment – delivering initiatives to protect and improve our environment in partnership with other agencies – the Parish Environmental Action Group formed of residents and councillors looking at projects and initiatives for the Parish. 130 trees planted across the parish as part of Queens Green Canopy initiatives. Review of Flood Plan underway. Grants provided to support Devenish Bradshaw Chalk Stream Challenge and the River Bourne Community Farm, educating young people about environmental challenges.

Public Amenity – providing access to high quality spaces for play, recreation, community activity and the enjoyment of nature – major improvements at 3 Play Areas in Bishopdown Farm, with a total of 33 play areas across the parish to manage. Active tree management across the parish, including areas taken over from Wiltshire Council, with professional surveys and a new Tree Policy. Working with housing associations at Longhedge on the creation of a Community Garden and Outdoor Gym. Contributions towards cemetery provision in Salisbury. Support for community centres in the parish through grants and assistance to managing committees to ensure these facilities remain available to residents in the face of increasing overheads.

Accountability – to carry out all of our work in a professional way which provides residents with value for money and opportunities to be heard and participate in decision making – employment of a team of staff to manage responsibilities and finances of the council.

The Chair emphasised the need for more councillors, in particular Bishopdown Farm ward, and encouraged anyone interested to get in touch.

The Responsible Financial Officer RFO circulated the Financial Report 2022-23. Revenue expenditure increased by 11.53%, but overall expenditure fell by 8% due to a reduced level of capital expenditure. This is expected to reverse in the coming financial year with the renewal of play areas in Bishopdown Farm.

The precept was increased by 18.35%, but remained the lowest among similar large parishes in Wiltshire.

The balance of funds held at the end of the financial year was £1,446,573, of which £1,346,921 are earmarked reserves held for the long-term maintenance of public open space and play areas. These funds are provided by developers and cannot be used for any other purpose.

6. Welcome to Philip Wilkinson, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Catherine Roper, Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police.

The Chair welcomed the PCC and Chief Constable who had arrived during the meeting. The Chair invited residents to stay for the upcoming Annual Parish Council Meeting to follow on at 7.45pm, where they would have the chance to hear the reports of the PCC and Chief Constable, and ask questions.

7. Questions from Residents

There were no further questions from residents and the meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Signed:

Date: