

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
OF CULWORTH PARISH
Held on Thursday 3rd April 2025 at 7pm in the Village Hall**

Present:	Andrew Wilby (AW)	Chairman
	Stuart Rolt (SR)	Councillor
	David Mumford (DM)	Councillor
	Catherine Ruffley (CR)	Councillor
	Jose Rowling (JR)	Councillor
	Martin Rowling (MR)	Councillor
	Andrew Field (AF)	Councillor
	Alison Eastwood (AE)	WNC Councillor
	Gary Denby (GD)	Parish Clerk

Public: Darryl Timmins (DT)
Rob Stuart
Mary Grice
Amy Harrison
Jennie Howse (JH)
Clive Waller
Kay and Norman Green
Karen and Simon Theobald
Sarah and Mark Izzett
Ginny and Phil Stanniford

(Total 23)



Welcome from the Parish Council Chairman Andrew Wilby

1. **Apologies:** None.
2. **Minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting summary from 11th April 2024**
These were received by those present as a record at the meeting.
culworthparishcouncil.gov.uk/community/culworth-parish-council-18681/annual-reports/

3. **Reports received from village organisations**

3.1 **Culworth Parish Council – AW**

Over the past year Phase 1 of the Culworth Hill Field Trust (CHFT) project has reached a satisfactory conclusion. The best part of £250,000 was raised through grants and the Activate group's fundraising, to improve the cricket field and facilities, the addition of a children's Play Area and an Adult Gym, then most recently the addition of an improved road access. This has now passed to the Parish Council, who have responsibility for its Health & Safety and Maintenance provisions. Phase 2 of the project is commencing, with the provision of some Parish Council funding.

The Parish Council is aware of a number of village activities planned for 2025:-

- **Sunday 22nd June Fun Day:** a BBQ on the village green with traditional activities such as 'Welly Wanging'. An appeal has gone out for the loan of the equipment (or should a commercial 1m x 30cm one be bought for around £150 + VAT – Phil Stanniford offered to store it?).
- A Christmas shopping trail around the village, including multiple artists stalls (maybe 30) at five locations, involving the church and the village halls: 10am to 4pm.

3.2 **Culworth Charity - MR**

This past year 20 resident households within the Parish have cash benefits from Culworth Charity. An income of £2,890 plus £5 Wayleave was noted. The amount remaining in the account has yet to be confirmed.

Trustees remain as the current Churchwardens:

Martin Rowling
Jennifer Howse

No report was received on Jenny's request to clarify the legacies (perhaps from as early as the 1700's), as might affect the dispersal of funds.

3.3 **Culworth Village Hall Trust - DT**

Culworth Village Hall continues to be used for regular fixtures such as Coffee and Chat, the monthly Village Café, Hot Shots, Film Nights and for one off bookings. We have secured some new regular bookings which is encouraging.

At our AGM in November Julie Tinn stepped down as Chair but remains on the Committee. Charlie Timmins was elected as Chair and John Emmett was elected as Vice Chair. Mark Izzett (Treasurer), Linda Reynolds (Secretary) and Darryl Timmins (bookings clerk) agreed to continue in their roles and were re-elected unanimously. All other Trustees agreed to continue on the Committee apart from Catherine Ruffley who decided to stand down due to work commitments. Jim Gibbs was co-opted onto the Committee. Gill Sussman was also co-opted onto the Committee at our VH meeting in February.

The Hiring Rates are on the Village Hall page of the Village website as well as details of the officers, the Hall and upcoming events.

The film nights continue to be popular. Over the last year we have shown several films. The Red Lion prepared the suppers for many of them. We are now managing the suppers with help from some villagers.

Over the past year we have done much to repair and renew the Village Hall including decorating inside. However, the roof is still leaking, which requires further attention. The Trustees are getting assessments and quotes in regard to this issue and that of insulating the Hall.

The Village Hall Trustees are working with the Culworth Hill Field Trust to find a solution to the future of the Village Hall and Cricket Pavilion. We hope to find a solution and with the backing of the Village, hope we will achieve a great result.

The Hall remains a valuable space in the village community.

Charlie Timmins

Chair – Culworth Village Hall Trustees

3.4 **St Mary's Church – JH** See APPENDIX A.

3.5 **Culworth CofE Primary School** – no report received this year. It was noted that there have been many changes to the school's governors over the past year. The role of School Governor has changed significantly, having less influence. There needs to be a new nominated link persons between the school and the Parish Council and church, to assist in current communications difficulties.

3.6 **Culworth Cricket Club** – Jim Powell was unaware of the meeting (email invitation sent on 27 March).

3.7 **Culworth Snappers Camera Club – Rebecca Boasman:** see APPENDIX B.

3.8 **Report from our WNC Unitary Councillor Alison Eastwood**
See APPENDIX C.

3.9 **Update on local HS/2 development issues – SR**

SR met with Hadie Williams of HS/2 last week, discussing the Greatworth Green Tunnel. This seems likely to close the Banbury Road for two or more years, and is running late. Local work should conclude in 2027. There is a public drop-in session planned for 5th May at The Forge cafe.

3.10 **CHFT Report** – John Duggan was unable to attend. A draft briefing note is being circulated, awaiting approval by the parties concerned. AW noted that talks with HS/2 indicated that additional funding will be made available to the village. Other funding streams are being sought, once the project is defined.

4. **Any Other Business**

4.1 The illegibility of some of the village entrance signs was noted. This may have West Northants Council involvement, since within the verge (WNC Highways)?

Meeting closed at 8.05 pm

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Chairman

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Date

APPENDIX A: St Mary's church report 2024/5 by Jennifer Howse

This is very much a repeat of the previous reports over the past few years. The Culworth Church report changes little over the years. This timeless building has withstood the savages of progress that surround us. In many ways that's the way I think the village wants it to be; a reliable institution that is always there when they need it, for prayer, baptisms, weddings and funerals and also as a symbol of our village.

Culworth Church continues to maintain its position as the centre of the village. There are regular services and we continue to have a service every Sunday. The church is well maintained and always looks splendid. As usual Martin Rowling takes care of all the day to day maintenance but the churchyard is maintained by a group of willing mowers in the summer and a working party which clears the conservation area in August, which has resulted in the past few years in an absolutely magnificent display of snowdrops and primroses in the Spring. There have been no major expenses so far this year.

The flower arrangements in the church continue to be expertly organised by Diana Langdale and she manages to bring in many others to help with the magnificent Christmas, Easter and Harvest displays.

Christine and John Emmett continue to maintain the ever increasing number of books in the library at the back of the church. We have a rota of cleaners for the year. Thanks to everyone who helps.

We started 2024 as a parish with Rev. Karen Jongman as our house of duty rector. She retired in July 2024 and since then we have been very fortunate to have a group of wonderful retired clergy who come and take communion services, weddings, funerals and christenings. We are still unsure what is going to happen to our benefice. There is talk of combining our benefice (Chipping Warden, Moreton Pinkney, Edgcote and ourselves) with the Chenderit benefice creating a very large benefice with the appointment of an extra priest to share the duties. He/she may then take up residence in the Rectory in Culworth. However this is still undecided.

2 children were baptised, there has been 1 wedding, 3 funerals and 3 internment of ashes since between January 2024 and January 2025.

Several regular events have continued to take place organised by members of the church community, including the Lent Quiz and Lent lunch. I understand that the village café on the first Saturday of the month no longer gives any of its donations to the church. We have continued to raise money for various good causes, including Water Aid, The Red Cross, The Children's Society and the British Legion.

During the past month, Martin with the help of friends, has erected some rope guides which he made in the forge. These will help Tom control the ropes of the bells when they are rung. Previously the Culworth bells are known to have been more difficult to control than bells in other towers.

Much needs to be done to the fabric of the church. It is in desperate need of redecoration but until we know what the future holds such projects must be delayed. At the moment there are preliminary talks about converting the church into a community hub space and after an initial visit from members of the DAC, their report shows approval of such a proposal.

The church is a place where villagers turn to in times of need, for weddings and funerals. As I said last year, the building is a Grade 2 listed building in a most beautiful setting overlooking the cricket field.

The church belongs to the village and as such is much loved but with the congregation dwindling year by year we desperately need the support of people from the village, not necessarily regular church attenders, but people who feel that can give just a little time to help maintain it for future generations. Without this the future looks bleak!

APPENDIX B: Culworth Snappers Camera Club – Rebecca Boasman

Culworth Snappers is now in its 11th year. The membership has remained much the same over the last year and we have an active membership of 20 with varying skill levels from beginners to keen amateurs, using various levels of equipment from mobile phones to mirror-less cameras.

We meet once a month in Culworth Forge Coffee, usually the 4th Thursday of the month at 19.30. Each month there is a topic which has been selected by members, these are then discussed on the club nights. As well as discussing images, members will discuss any new ideas or queries they might have. At our club nights we also include regular technical sessions where members share knowledge and experience on a range of topics such as composition and slow shutter speed.

We aim to have a variety of outdoor photo-shoots which are popular with the Members, and have some interesting locations planned for the future which include Chesterton Mill, Whichford Pottery, and hopefully Cotswold Lavender.

Members enjoyed the annual Christmas dinner at The Falcon near Banbury with 20 people attending.

You can also follow us on Facebook under "Culworth Snappers" where you can find images taken by members.

Topics this year include: Shapes, Abstract Architecture, Long Exposure, Street and a host of others.

Future Club Nights this year:- 24th April; 22nd May; 26th June; 24th July; 28th August; 25th September; 23rd October; 27th November. Later this year we are looking to host a guest speaker to give a talk on Macro Photography.

This is a very friendly local club, why not come and join us. Membership is only £25/annum, to cover things like the hiring of the club night venue and guest speakers etc.

Rebecca Boasman – 31st March 2025

APPENDIX C: WNC report from our WNC Councillor Alison Eastwood

2025 Annual report and budget

Good evening

And so, we have reached the end of first 4 years of the Unitary Council Which has continued to protect essential services and tackle significant challenges whilst setting a balanced budget for the year ahead. At the meeting on 20th February Councillors agreed the authorities' final budget and housing revenues whilst setting council tax for 2025/2026.

WNC along with Council's across the country continue to face severe financial pressures caused by increasing costs for both Children's services and adult social care. Despite this ,the council has managed to set a balanced revenue budget for 2025/2026 of 956.6 million (431.8 million excluding the dedicated school grant). WNC started its budgetary process this year with an anticipated short fall of £53m for 25/26 and embarked on an early review of its finances reducing the spend to 39m by July, followed by a major drive over the autumn to close the gap.

The budget includes a council tax rise of 4.99% whilst balancing the books into its 5th year. It is in line with the government's threshold and an average increase on a band D property £1.71 per week or £88.00 per year. This generates extra funding of around 19m per year with 2% of the increase going towards funding adult social care. Cllr Malcom Longley, who sadly does not stand for re-election at the WNC this May, stated that setting the budget has once again been complex and challenging.

The election falls on Thursday 1st of May with final results confirmed on 2nd May. Our **Silverstone Ward will be renamed Rural South Northants**. Charles Manners and I stand again with Councillor David Smith replacing Dermot Banbridge. David currently holds the role of Community cabinet under the current Council.

Purdah commences on March 18th and we will be canvassing busily across 29 villages. Of course we are here to answer questions at all times. Our fliers have a telephone number and an e-mail printed especially for your use.

South Midlands are not currently included in the Governments Devolution programme; Milton Keynes and Luton refused to join the party as part of the priority programme. It will happen in the future and we will continue to work with the government.

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

Recycling centres are to be opened 7 days a week as new contracts are signed. In the past year the cycling Tour of Britain boosted our economy by £3.6m, coming from attendee spending. This year Women's Rugby world cup comes to Northamptonshire. The trophy has already made various stops over the past 2 months, organised by WNC and All Saints in anticipation of the incredible event.

Final construction has begun on the Sandy Lane relief road along the A4500, and the Towcester by pass/relief road finally moves to its last stages of construction.

We will celebrate the great Fire of Northampton 1675 with events starting with OAK

APPLE DAY outside all Saints church at the end of April. There will be exhibitions on the Great Fire across the county, with a Son e Lumiere outside all Saints, and Carnival to celebrate the event. Concerts and art exhibitions will be held over a period of 3 months throughout the summer. Watch WNC space for information.

I lead a scrutiny enquiry into the consultation of Voi Scooters, which amongst poor and good press had been a tremendous asset in Blackmills industrial estate. The project is monitored on a 3 monthly basis, and the consultation period extends for another 18 months.

Schools: In May 2021 Fiona Baker assumed the position of local minister in charge of education. She and her team have done a terrific job raising the standards according to Ofsted dictates from POOR to outstanding in one case. Send needs continue to be a challenge, however the purpose-built school for Send pupils opens at Tiffield this Autumn.

HS2 Continues to be a bug bear. We have successfully negotiated a new road design in Boddington, however it still involves extensive closure along the Banbury Road and Spella Road. Our two new MPs Sarah Bool and Stuart Andrew have both taken enormous interest in trying to mitigate on your behalf. Extra traffic travelling the B4525 from Middleton Cheney has resulted in appalling road damage and numerous car accidents. We are working with the Northamptonshire police to reduce the travel of speed.

DHL: As you may be aware, the appeal against the refusal of planning consent for the DHL site in Towcester concluded on Friday 28th February. The inspectors' findings will be announced on or before 23rd April. Once again Sarah Bool has actively opposed the DHL development; see Sarah Bool DHL appeal submission; The development of 5 sites with storage units along the A43 is a hot potato. The confirmation of work on all 5 sites will probably await the Inspectors report.

Maggies Cancer support centre: Finally after 8.5 years, we have managed to raise the funds to begin development and build the unit adjacent to the oncology department at Northampton General on the Billing Road. A brilliant scheme implemented 33 years ago at the Edinburgh infirmary by Maggie. There are now 26 support units attached to principal hospitals across the country. We become 27th unit, with future units planned for Cambridge and Coventry. Free at the point of access, they are staffed with available help to support families tackling cancer whether it be domestic, financially, or to discover further information on the dreaded affliction

Finally, with the pending elections on May 1st we say farewell to Cllr Dermot Bambridge; He will not be joining Charles Manners and myself on the election panel. He has served the county for 23 years as a councillor, chairman and cabinet member. A very faithful servant. We thank him for his extraordinary sense of duty and commitment.

Four years have passed since the UNITARY council was formed and I was elected to represent you locally. I love all that I do within our villages, but I thank you for your support and patience; Should you have any questions my email and telephone number are below.

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