

# WELFORD PARISH COUNCIL

## Annual Parish Meeting

Held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018 - 7.30pm in Wickham Village Hall

**Present**

D. Hunt	Chairman	C. Halliwell	Councillor
G. Frampton	Vice Chair	Sarah Youldon	Clerk
P. Stanley	Councillor	J. Cole	Kintbury Ward Councillor
L. Chamberlain	Councillor	22 Parishioners	

**Apologies**

A. Stansfeld	Kintbury Ward Councillor	L. Woodhead	Councillor
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<b>Welcome &amp; Introduction</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p>The Chairman welcomed those attending the meeting and commenced by outlining the role of the Parish Council. Councillors represent the local community and provide services to meet local needs. It aims to improve the quality of life in the parish. In order to finance activities the council raise money through a precept that is added to the council tax. An important role is to have the opportunity to voice an opinion on all planning applications in the parish. There were 8 application in the last year compared with 9 in the previous year.</p> <p>The members of the council were introduced. Cllr Hunt said that he was honoured to have been elected as Chairman again. This was now his 40<sup>th</sup> year as Chairman and 46<sup>th</sup> years as a councillor. Geraldine Frampton was re-elected as Vice Chairman.</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the website, <a href="http://www.welford-parish.org">www.welford-parish.org</a> which gives parish council information such as agendas and minutes of meeting. The site gives a description of the parish together with historical information. There is up-to-date news and information on events in the parish. Using links the site aims to foster closer ties with the local school.</p>	
<p><b>Guest Speakers</b></p> <p><b>Welford &amp; Wickham C.E. Primary School Update:</b></p> <p>Mrs Dicken reported to the meeting on the recent addition of the front school railings, and thanked the PC for installing gates at either end of the footpath bordering the school field. Both were assisting in meeting the school safeguarding policies. Mrs Dickens reported that the school would be part of an OFSTED inspection this week as one of the sample schools in special education needs. The school was happy to report that the children were happy, content, purposeful and they were now part of a European project in linking the school with Italy, Lithuania, Turkey and Estonia. Mrs Dickens reported that this had given her the opportunity to visit other schools, gaining a useful insight. The school has also increased its admission figure from 98 to 105, helping to secure more funds. A key decision being taken at this time is whether the school should gain Academy Status and a consultation is taking place. The Governors have looked at a range of multi academy offers and short listed linking with the King Alfreds Academy Trust. Mrs Dickens stated that this is still being considered and if it does not benefit the children it will not go ahead. Concern was raised by Parishioners on why an Oxfordshire academy rather than West Berkshire, also how this affects term dates. Details were taken for Mrs Dickens to respond directly. Agreed that it was important that the School and PC work together and S Youldon to ensure links to one another's websites were in place.</p> <p><b>Reverend Miriam Keen, West Downlands Benefice Rector</b></p> <p>Reverend Mirian Keen was inaugurated in February this year and introduced herself to the attendees of the meeting sharing details on her background and family. She explained that Welford and Wickham Church were part of the West Downland Benefice and therefore this made for an interesting and varied role across the villages. The Reverend stated how she was keen to serve the community as a whole, not just through offering the regular services, weddings, christening and funerals but by being there to support those in the community. Offering support, encouragement and kindness. Miri explained how in years gone by the Vicarage would have been central in the village and villagers would have seen the vicar on a regularly basis helping to keep them up to speed on the goings on, but how this was more difficult now as a Rector for a Benefice with many villages and being located in Great Shefford. Miri relies on people to contact her in times of need, be it their need, a friend, family or neighbour. Miri urged everyone to assist with this so she can be a listening ear, support and pray for those in need. As part of her role Miri will also be on the School Governors and will be working closely with the School too.</p>	SY

## Chairman's Summary

By having healthy finances the council has been able to maintain the precept at the same level as last year: £8,000. Section 137 donations are: £600 for the Village Hall, £600 for the upkeep of St Gregory's church graveyard and £250 for the Air Ambulance Service. £500 was donated to the St Swithun's Church repair fund. Poppy wreathes were purchased for Remembrance Day services and for the Anniversary Service for US airman that died following a crash at Welford Air Base during the war.

The council installed two defibrillators in the last year – one outside the Village Hall and the other outside Weston Farm Barn. Cllr Stanley and the chairman have been trained in the use of the defibrillators. The council would like to organise a training session for others in the parish. A show of hands indicated considerable interest in this.

Gates have been installed at each end of the footpath bordering the school field. This was paid for by Section 106 money given to the council following the housing development in Weston. A new parish council notice board has been installed outside the village hall. Repair of the bench at Easton is underway using recycled plastic. The Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), owned by the council, is being well-maintained and subject to regular inspections. The 5 dog waste bins in the parish are regularly emptied and the 5 salt bins are regularly inspected and refilled where necessary.

As usual, traffic and parking issues continue to dominate. A request to have a 30 m.p.h. sign in Weston moved further from the Elton Lane junction was rejected by the District Council. A minor change to the sign has still to be implemented. The Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) on the hill going down into Wickham on the B4000 has not been working for over a year. Repair has been delayed because of lack of funding and staffing issues. The council has requested a VAS to be installed on the B4000 west of the Five Bells public house. There are encouraging signs that this will be approved but financial constraints may delay the installation.

The council received a request for the speed of traffic along The Row in Welford to be monitored. Traffic is seen to be going too fast on this narrow lane that does not have a pavement. The council has said that the use of the Speed Indicator Device (SID) could not be used on an unrestricted road. Warning signs have been posted.

Parking on two grassed areas in Mant Close is causing damage. Residents have been consulted. The possibility of tarmacking or cobbling the areas is being considered. Sight-lines are being compromised by inconsiderate parking in two places in Wickham – the bottom of the lane next to the school playground and the bottom of Church Hill where it meets the B4000. Letters are being considered.

The site where the Swedish houses in Easton were demolished continues to be untidy. New fencing has been erected and some attempt at tidying up has been made. Fly-tipping has been reported at Halfway and Easton Hill.

The Boundary Commission has recommended that the number of District Councillors be reduced from 52 to 43. Welford Parish is included in the Kintbury and Hungerford Ward that will have three councillors.

The District Council needs to reduce their expenditure. In addition to closing libraries they seek to devolve many of the services previously provided. This includes salt bin filling, sandbag provision and verge clearance. These services will now need to be funded by parish councils. Co-operation between Parish Councils may result in economic alternatives.

The Weston Gate development of 10 houses in Weston resulted in a controversial issue concerning sewage treatment. The developer's original proposal was to put untreated sewage into the sewage main going through the village. This was changed to a scheme where local sewage treatment took place with the effluent being put into the River Lambourn. A concerted campaign resulted in a reversal of that proposal. A QC was hired to give legal advice at a cost of £4,254.84. The District Council and the Environment Agency were asked to contribute to the cost of this legal advice but they declined. The District Council said that there was no need to have brought in legal advice since they would not have approved the proposal to put treated sewage into the River Lambourn. The Parish Council was also asked to make a contribution. At a Parish Council Meeting on 21 March this application was turned down on a majority vote. The Parish Council realised that this would be a disappointing decision but said that they had no responsibility for the legal costs since they were not involved in the un-necessary hiring of a QC. The Chairman said that he had received a number of irate letters from the campaign group to which he had replied.

<b>Parishioners Questions &amp; Comments – Open Session</b>	
<p><b>Weston Gate QC Bill:</b> There was a heated debate and an angry response from some residents on the Council's refusal to contribute to the QC bill. They stated that they felt they did not get the support they expect from the Parish Council and as such do not feel part of the Parish. There was anger that the PC did know what was going on with the Campaign as it was so publically broadcast, PC responded that it had not been invited to take part in the campaign and the meetings that were held. Parishioner asked if the PC could have donated money to the bill, S Youldon responded that there was a power S137 where the PC could have contributed if the vote had gone that way. Question was raised why didn't PC not give this more consideration especially when neighbouring Parish Councils agreed to consider the matter. PC responded that it had discussed the matter at length with the written information it had on the matter. Chairman agreed that on the back of the response from the Parishioners that the matter would be raised again at the July meeting. Cllr Halliwell stated that donating money to the fund now would just be problematic as parishioners donations had already cleared the bill and money had already been given back to parishioners. Suggestion made that a particular donator should have their donation returned to them, it was thought to be more appropriate that a donation should be made to a relevant charity if the Councillors voted this way at the July meeting.</p>	SY
<p><b>Parking – Mant Close:</b> Parishioner asked for an update on the parking situation at Mant Close following the letters sent to residents in April. S Youldon confirmed that 14 of the 30 houses had responded and 50% would like to see the grass removed and replaced with hardstanding be it tarmac or cobbles. Parishioners were informed that the PC had agreed to take this to WBC, question raised over the funding of such work. S Youldon agreed to report back after the July meeting once a conversation has been held with WBC.</p>	SY
<p><b>Mobile Library:</b> Suggestion that the mobile library timetable should be published on the notice boards in addition to the website. It was raised that the services needs to be used otherwise it will be lost. PC agreed, S Youldon to add to notice boards.</p>	SY
<p><b>Salt Bins:</b> Parishioner noted that the salt bin inside Mant Close was nearly empty and asked who responsibility they were. PC responded that they were now its own responsibility and that they had all been refilled in February this year. S Youldon noted that more salt would need to be ordered in October. Also noted that the lid had broken on this bin.</p>	SY
<p><b>B4000, Wickham Speed Limit:</b> Several parishioners raised concerns about the speed limit on the B4000 in Wickham, believing that it should be 30mph not 40mph. Cllr Hunt confirmed that his own research had shown that it takes an average of 6 seconds to cross the road but cars could be at the crossing place within 4 seconds. Agreed by the PC that this should be pursued, S Youldon to make a hearing request for the Speed Review Committee later this year. Cllr Cole offered assistance from the Ward Councillors, S Youldon to liaise. Suggestion also made that the flashing School signs are moved onto the main road to help raise awareness of school children crossing this busy road. S Youldon to investigate with WBC.</p>	SY

The meeting closed at 9.10pm and was followed by Wine & Nibbles

Concerns about Councillor conduct during the Weston QC debate were raised to the Clerk following the meeting.  
Discussion on Standing Orders and Code of Conduct to be added to July meeting agenda.

**The remaining General Parish Council 2018 meetings are scheduled for:**

18<sup>th</sup> July, 12<sup>th</sup> September and 14<sup>th</sup> November