

Minutes of Frilsham Annual Parish Meeting held in the Clubroom on Wednesday 7th May 2025 at 7.30pm.

In attendance at the meeting were approximately 30 parishioners together with members of the Parish Council and the Clerk.

Cllr. Allum, Chairman of Frilsham Parish Council welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting, particularly Ben Mitchell from River Barn.

1. Apologies.

Apologies of absence were received from Cllr. Ian Coxhead and James Hole (Yattendon Estate).

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2024.

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 15th May 2024 having been circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting, and signed by the Chairman.

3. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council: Marcus Allum.

Tonight I am very pleased to welcome Ben Mitchell who will give a presentation on River Barn. For those of you who do not know, it is situated on the Pang just downstream of Frilsham. We'll hear from Ben later.

As usual the council met every other month. There have been very few planning applications and those that we have received have mainly been modifications to already submitted cases. One application is for the reduction in size of one of the two houses that are to be constructed in the old quarry.

One subject that the Parish council will be involved in is a fence on the far side of the recreation field that the football club want to erect, full details of the fence are unknown but it's likely to be around 1m high and approximately 2m from the touch line. The parish council would welcome your thoughts on this proposal.

Frilsham being a small village is lucky to work closely with Yattendon. The two villages make a good pair with many activities being combined. These include coffee mornings, Christmas lunches, tennis and cricket matches to name just a few. The biggest by far is the Yattendon and Frilsham Village Fete, without this annual fete many of the activities that are enjoyed across both villages would struggle to financially survive. But to run the Fete it takes many people's input, it's likely that it takes something like 100 volunteers to put on the show and this year the committee are really struggling to find sufficient helpers.

One very big concern for some of us who live close to the common is the very high risk of fire during the long dry spells. This was highlighted when a fire was started in the woods just off Chapel lane. If it hadn't been quickly discovered by a dog walker who took instant action via WhatsApp in seeking help the consequence could have been very great. The fires in Dartmoor and parts of Scotland that have occurred recently show the dangers posed. Parishioners were asked to consider not having bonfires and open BBQs, where there is a great risk of sparks traveling some distance and setting fire to tinder dry material. Sources of readily available water will be identified over the next week or so which could be used if needed.

My grateful thanks as usual go to Helen our clerk, Carolyne our District Councillor and all my fellow parish councillors who help to make things in Frilsham run so smoothly.

4. Report from Yattendon Estate (submitted by James Hole).

Mr. Hole had submitted his apologies that he couldn't be at the meeting but submitted a written report - see Appendix 1.

5. Report from Frilsham Futures and the Clubroom Committee (Bob Lyon).

The Development Team for the Clubroom has been extended and meets regularly to work on the proposals. An independent structural engineer assessment of the Clubroom has been commissioned. This reported that the existing building could be extended and refurbished but identified that the existing foundations would almost certainly not be adequate to support the additional load. As a result, expensive and extensive

underpinning would be necessary which would also extend the project duration significantly. As a result, it has been concluded that a complete rebuild is the best option.

Meetings with Yattendon and Frilsham Sports and Social Trust (who own the building and the site) have continued. The Trust are broadly in favour of the project and accept that a rebuild is the better option and have agreed that work should proceed up to the building work start-point.

A new bank account, linked to the Trust, specifically and wholly for the Development has been opened and our EasyFundraising has been switched to this account.

The Trust have asked for a summary project plan covering activities up to the start-point of the building work which needs to include:

- refining the building design (the initial one being the proposal presented at the most recent consultations)
- working with a development company – preferably one experienced in village halls – to gauge overall costs and proceed to a planning application
- establishing wide community and user support
- fund raising, including through Greenham Trust who will match funds raised

The Trust has requested estimates of post-build running costs as well as all other necessary activities. This information will all be posted on the Frilsham website enabling people to see progress.

To minimise the risk to the trustees, the Trust is considering whether it should be restructured as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Questions were asked about the expected duration of the project, the estimated costs and the funds which are currently available.

6. Report from WBC District Cllr. Culver.

WBC is facing severe financial challenges and has approached central Government about exceptional funding (a loan) of £16 million. Council tax has increased by 4.99%. The biggest challenge is the increasing cost of special education needs (SEN). Adult social care and children's services account for 70% of the budget.

WBC has decided to move to a three-weekly black bin collection, however there is no information on proposed start dates.

Under the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation, there is a proposal for WBC to join with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils. There is a lot of logistical work to be carried out for this proposal. Whilst the next elections are planned for 2027, it is possible they will be postponed until the new council is formed. It is possible that wards may become a lot bigger.

There is a push for more powers to be given to town and parish councils.

7. The History of River Barn, its mill, the restoration and future (Ben Mitchell).

Ben Mitchell, the owner and restorer of River Barn, gave an interesting talk about how the site on the River Pang has developed since it was built, probably in the late 1700s. The current mill wheel was cast in 1865 at Hedges Foundry in Bucklebury Village.

Tom Froud bought River Barn in 1937 and in 1938 replaced the thatched roof with asbestos tiles.

Ben's restoration work has not only included the buildings but also the habitat of the river.

Cllr. Allum thanked Ben for a very interesting talk.

8. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Appendix 1 – Yattendon Estate.

Since the last annual meeting, the Estate has grown in size following the acquisition of Wyld Court (Hampstead Norreys) in the early summer last year and the field adjacent to Barn Close office in the Autumn. Through these acquisitions, a further 560 acres has been added along with 11 residential properties and 5 new commercial tenants including the incredibly popular RDA. The Estate has now been incorporated into the wider Estate.

The last 12 months also saw us add to the Estate's existing solar portfolio with a further 90 kW of solar added across 4 sites at Haw Farm, the Estate Office, The Village stores and our first residential property as a trial. The existing three sites at Childs Court Farm, the Brewery and Vicars Game continue to operate well with 50%, 77% and 92% respectively of the solar produced used on the site with the remainder being exported to the grid.

In terms of farming, it has been a wet, wet, wet year and now we find ourselves in a dry, dry, dry year! One extreme to the other! Last year's harvest was completed in good time but the wet and cold weather of last spring and summer, meant yields were down – the record book remained in the cupboard last year, other than for rainfall(!) and it is looking likely that this year will be the same. We were well placed having got all our spring crops in the ground in good time, into moisture but this dry weather is now really impacting yields. We know the rain will come, the question is just when and when it does, will the tap get turned off again. Please do your best rain dances for the forthcoming week. We have entered into a new SFI agreement for the next 3 years on the Estate and we are waiting for further details from the Government on what the replacement will be with for HLS schemes as our current one expires at the end of this calendar year. We are also working with the Ark with a scheme for the water meadows - further details to come.

Property wise, we have just installed our first ASHP as a trial to see how the portfolio could fare should these get rolled out further as an alternative to Fossil Fuel heating. Retrospective fitting of ASHP is not straight forward and is incredibly invasive so can only really work when a property becomes vacant. We are seeing strong demand for when properties do come up in the area and will continue our programme of investing in properties over the coming year. Commercial tenants are largely unchanged with one new addition to the Frilsham Home Farm site as we see Smile Smart move away this Autumn to be replaced by Ceres Rural, a farming and property consultancy. Both pubs continue to be busy but as ever, the huge increase in costs for the establishments means that things remain tough – please do continue to support them as best you can and I hope you have all enjoyed having the Pot Kiln open after its refurbishment.

Woodland wise, we are 2 years into our approved Woodland Management Plan and looking into Deer and Squirrel Control as the new trees planted, over 30,000 in 3 years, are being severely attacked from all sides. We will also need to do something about the Spruce trees south of the motorway and the IPS beetle, further details will be made available in due course but will involve selective felling of our mature spruce trees to help control the spread of the beetle.

Looking forward, 2025 marks the 100th anniversary of the Iliffe family being in Yattendon and there will be a small event in the summer to mark the milestone. Further details to come in due course.

Appendix 2 – Frilsham Allotment Trust.

It's been a quiet year for Frilsham allotments and our community orchard. A year of poor weather reduced activity on the plots. But Marcus still managed to complete his aim of growing enough wheat to produce at least one loaf of bread - something that's not likely to be repeated soon! A couple of long standing allotmenters have decided to move on so there are a few plots available. If anyone fancies having a go at growing their own produce please get in touch with Alison Luke or anyone from the council who will be happy to point you in the right direction. The paddock has been empty for most of the year but I'm pleased to say that we now have a four legged tenant who has settled in well and we're looking forward to a long stay. Over the year many of the fence posts have had to be replaced and the trust is looking to remove some of the barbed wire and replace with smooth. The deer fencing has finally been completed. Many thanks to Marcus for his help in getting that task done.

There is much more to be done on the School Lane area, including clearance and height reduction of the footpath hedge and erection of a small shed. We also need fencing between the Pot Kiln Lane allotment plots and the community orchard.

Community orchard update

There is a lot more blossom on the fruit trees in the orchard this year and we look forward to a more productive harvest.

The majority of the initial trees have survived. Bryan Kettlewell has kindly donated some more apple trees in memory of Christine and is helping to keep them watered. Thank you Bryan. Marcus and Bryan have re-sited the large water containers to the top end where they are out of sight but easily refillable courtesy of Arthur Little.

Marcus has kept up the mowing of the site carefully avoiding the many foxglove plants that should give us a magnificent display later in the year.

The three flowering Japanese cherry trees in the quiet area are looked stunning when one sat on the bench that was donated by David Flynn. Personal circumstances have reduced the time I can devote to FAT and it needs a breath of fresh air to move things along. As such I have stood down as chairman so this will be my last report. I will still be around to help and I would like to express my thanks to Rob and Wendy on the committee for their support. Alison Luke has stepped forward with some ideas, see the Broadsheet, and the Trust thanks to her for her efforts.

Appendix 3 – Beechfield Lane Residents Association.

- Current membership is stable at 25 households including 5 Sovereign Housing homes
- Funds are projected to stand at £15k by the end of the year
- It was agreed that no major work was currently required, however the contractor who did the work, will be contacted to get an idea of what a cost might be to do a top surface level only treatment. This simply provides a guide, given the current situation of rising costs and ensures we stay on track to have accumulated an appropriate sum to deal with a resurface when required
- Members contribution remains at £120 per household per annum
- Thames water did carry out a repair recently which fixed a leak. Any remaining water flow is likely to be groundwater
- Speed on the lane remains a concerning issue. Options were discussed. Following this Rob Morley as a Parish Councillor has agreed to raise the issue at the next Parish Council meeting to engage them in the issue and possibly the Council could consider funding the cost of a long term and permanent solution
- The damage to the grass verge where the skip has been for so long, is the responsibility of the Council to repair, if this doesn't happen in due course then we will address the issue with them.

Appendix 4 – Parochial charities incorporating the Haywards Educational Donation.

The main purpose of the Frilsham & Yattendon Parochial Charity is to help those (mainly but not exclusively our elderly residents) in most need in our two villages, with a small cash grant at Christmas time. We can also sometimes help in cases of particular need at other times of the year too.

The charity has a small annual income of around £2,000 and for the last few years we have made a cash grant of £75 which allows us to support around 25 residents in the communities of Frilsham, Yattendon and Burnt Hill.

We do not have the competence to undertake a means test - nor would we wish to do so - so we rely on our trustees and what others tell us about who might benefit. We hope that we get it mostly right! On one or two occasions we have had a "thank you" from recipients to tell us they have given their grant to a charity. That is not what the grant is intended for - it is for the recipient - so if you don't need it, please tell us, so we can give it to someone who may benefit more over Christmas time for food or extra heating etc.

We hope that everyone to whom we gave a grant last Christmas found it helpful. We need to review the list of those to whom we give to next Christmas, so we would like to hear from you that you would like to continue to receive a grant. And, if anyone in our charitable area of Frilsham, Yattendon, or Burnt Hill

knows of someone who might benefit and perhaps we don't give a grant to at the moment, perhaps they would also let one of the Trustees know (The Trustees are Shirley Lyon, Phil Gent, Wendy Mole, Georgie Woods, Rob Morley and Teri Muggeridge (in the shop)).

Appendix 5 – Yattendon and Frilsham Sports and Social Trust.

Last year the Trust acquired the Yattendon & Frilsham War Memorial Trust invested funds. The intention is not to draw on these investments at all, but the Trust will benefit from any dividends each year.

Following a record income at the Fete last year, the usual fixed grants were made to the two village halls, the churches, cricket club, and oldies' Christmas lunch, along with discretionary grants to

- Friends of Yattendon School for the replacement of the nature pool
- Yattendon & Frilsham Social Club for a Lindr drink dispenser
- Frilsham & Yattendon Football Club for a line marker machine
- Yattendon & Frilsham Parochial Church Council for the replacement of the boiler in St Frideswide church in Frilsham.

The Trust also added an additional £10,000 to its Maintenance Reserve fund.

The other significant expenditure was the insurance of all the Trust's assets (buildings and contents) and comprehensive public liability insurance.

The Trust depends almost entirely on the success of the annual Yattendon & Frilsham Fete, which this year takes place in less than three weeks' time on bank holiday Monday 26th May. We can still benefit from more volunteers, please. If you can spare an hour (or more) on the day, please contact anyone on the Fete organising committee – Marcus, Tessa and Bob are here this evening and generally available.

And of course, most importantly, do come along to the Fete, bring your friends and family, and have a really enjoyable afternoon.