Brimpton Annual Parish Assembly
Minutes

Tuesday 12th May 2026

7.30pm at Brimpton Village Hall

1. **To approve minutes of Annual Parish Assembly 2025**
   The minutes were approved and the Chairman of the Parish Council signed them as a true record.

2. **Parish Council**
   Cllr Nick Matthews, the Chairman of the Parish Council, thanked a resident for a new sound system to help parishioners hear proceedings.
   Cllr Nick Matthews thanked Cllr John Hicks for nine years of service as Chairman.

   He also thanked his colleagues on the Parish Council for their voluntary service as councillors over the year and also thanked the Clerk for her work.

   Cllr John Hicks then gave a report which is available in Appendix A.

3. **West Berkshire Council** Cllr Dominic Boeck – Aldermaston Ward
   Cllr Dominic presented his reported as outlined in Appendix B

4. **Brimpton C of E Primary School** Heidi Davies – Headteacher
   See Appendix C for full report

5. **St Peter's Church** Patricia Brims - Churchwarden

   Patricia Brims gave a report and the full text can be read in Appendix D

6. **Village Hall** John Dolphin, Chairman
   See Appendix for full report.

7. **Brimpton Women's Institute** Shelley Bassil, President

   Shelley Bassil thanked the Parish Council for the opportunity to speak about Brimpton Women's Institute and shared an overview of the group's recent activities and achievements.
   The WI continues to grow and now has 27 members. The group meets at the Village Hall on the third Tuesday of each month, with no meeting in August.
   Members enjoyed a varied programme over the past year, including celebrations for the WI's 50th anniversary, a resolution event, creative and social outings, guest speakers, cultural visits, and open evenings where friends and partners were welcome. A particular highlight was Brimpton WI winning the competition to design the new Berkshire banner and then creating the finished piece, which will be displayed at WI House for many years to come.
   Upcoming open events will be publicised in John Hick's community update. Shelley also thanked the hardworking and dedicated committee for all they do and invited anyone interested in joining to speak to her.

8. **Brimpton Common Fuel Allotment** Graham Hawker, Chairman
   Graham Hawker reported that the Brimpton Common Fuel Allotment is managed by a committee of three members, with one formal meeting held during the year. Routine responsibilities have included tree safety checks, while a major task was the cutting of the meadows for the trust by John Dolphin.

Moth trapping has continued successfully, with around 3,000 records collected so far. This year the group also plans to begin recording wildflowers and birds. The meadow will again be cut and raked, and volunteers would be very welcome to help with this work. Overall, the nature reserve continues to develop well.

9. The Wasing Estate Andrew Perkins, CEO

Andrew Perkins thanked the Parish Council for the invitation to attend and gave an overview of the scale and range of activity across The Wasing Estate. The estate covers 1,750 acres of farmland and 885 acres of woodland, with two rivers running through it and a network of public and permitted footpaths. It also includes seven fishing lakes, a marina with around 160 boats moored, farming operations, residential and commercial property, and a growing wellbeing offer. The estate employs around 60 full-time staff and a further 200 casual workers for weddings and events, many of them from the local community.
Business areas include weddings, corporate events, fishing, concerts, festivals, farming, the marina, and wellbeing activities such as wild swimming, sauna sessions, workshops and retreats. Andrew explained that between 65,000 and 70,000 people are expected to visit the estate each year. Key events include weddings, the pumpkin event, Mount concerts, the Medicine Festival, the Well Read Festival, the Solstice Festival and Christmas carols. He also noted the estate's ongoing commitment to local skills development, including work experience opportunities for students from Castle School.

James then provided an update on the farming side of the estate, including the early calving group of 56 pedigree Sussex cattle and a range of arable and environmental initiatives. These include trialling mixed cropping to improve soil health, reduce cultivation and support insects and bacteria, as well as growing spring barley, spelt, pumpkins, oats and wildlife margins. The estate is also providing 36 hectares of winter bird food and is working to reduce artificial inputs wherever possible.

Looking ahead, Wasing is progressing plans for further development. These include refurbishing Wasing Place for use as part of the wedding venue, with additional bedrooms and weekend hire potential, and exploring future uses for Manor Farm, including a possible farm shop, café, restaurant or wider community space. An open day is planned in the autumn to invite residents to discuss ideas for the future use of the farm buildings.

Appendix A- Parish Council Report

As this is supposed to be a report on the business of the Parish Council, I could follow my usual formula of telling you how many planning applications we've handled, or how many times we've responded to consultative papers, or how many briefings Nick and I attended on local government re-organisation, the NE Thatcham Housing Development, the environment strategy, including changes to waste collection, viable villages and much more. But that's all recorded in the Parish Council Minutes which are available on line, and as this is my final report to the Parish Assembly, I'd like to recall a few moments from my time as Chairman, and then to highlight what I see as two issues with which the Parish Council will have to grapple in the coming years.

There are three things which remain very much in my mind from the past nine years. The first erupted as I became Chairman in 2017: it was the West Berkshire Draft Minerals & Waste Plan. You may remember it proposed sites for gravel extraction and its replacement by household waste, at Manor Farm and Boot Farm. Both would have been subject to work for 10 years and the village and Brimpton Common would have been subject to an endless stream of lorries carrying gravel out and bringing waste in. Even when we produced evidence of likely damage to the environment both natural and built, West Berkshire Council was unhelpful, inflexible and as we proved by commissioning an expert report, wrong in their calculation of how much they needed to take out the ground over for the 10 year period. Eventually the proposals were withdrawn and when they re-appeared a year later both sites had disappeared from the list and the amount of gravel required had been reduced. Victory, yes, but it left a poor impression as to how West Berkshire dealt with the parishes.

The second historic issue is the Covid outbreak. The Parish Council set up a volunteer register which was remarkable successful in finding people to deliver medication or essential items to those deemed to be at risk. We had twice as many volunteers as we actually needed but the scheme seemed to work quite well. However, some people appeared to get the wrong end of the stick. I was telephoned by a lady who asked if she could “book an afternoon slot” for the delivery of her medication. I explained that this wasn't how we were working. If she told me what items and where they needed to be collected, then I'd find a volunteer going in that direction and she could liaise with them. This wasn't what she had in mind because she needed to know when they would be delivered so it didn't interrupt the daily walk with her dog. And if you think that is being picky, I could mention the lady who said she needed some tomatoes that afternoon but they had to be organic. Sadly, I have not made up these examples, or others.

My last memory isn't really a memory because we're still living through the problem of the unauthorised mobile home on a plot in Brimpton Common. The Parish Council has been closely involved throughout and Charles gave a masterful presentation of our case at the Planning Appeal, but I want to commend the Residents' Group who took the lead in opposing the planning application and who produced most of the funds needed for lawyers and assorted experts. Collectively, the residents and the Parish Council won at every level but sadly, this fight is not over and won't be for some time since the owner is playing games and there is now a new application for three plots instead of one. WBC claims that this means they cannot proceed with enforcement action on the first site until the new application is resolved. The question that remains in my mind is this: why bother to have a planning system if you don't enforce the decisions you've made, and more so when they've been backed up by a Planning Inspector?

Looking to the future, a shortfall in funding has sent many local councils, including West Berkshire, to go cap in hand to the Government to bail them out. The rising cost of Adult Social Care, the increasing number of children diagnosed with Special Education Needs (which together take up nearly 90% of WBC's budget) and other services which are not properly funded, have created a financial crisis the like of which we have not seen before. The Government's solution is re-organise local government into larger units and locally that means the proposed Ridgeway Council created by a merger with South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse. Re-organisations of this nature are very expensive and there is no certainty it will lower the cost of providing Council services. Creating new councils was not the solution when it was last tried in 1998, and it isn't now.

One of the ways in which West Berkshire Council has tried to reduce the cost of providing services is to pass delivery to town and parish councils. From hedge cutting to drain clearance, from pop-up libraries to the maintenance of public toilets, the offer is irresistible. Except that it isn't. It's possible in the case of Thatcham, or Hungerford or any council that employs someone to run the facilities it already has. It isn't possible when you are a small parish whose only employee works 20 hours over a month. The answer we heard from the Leader of West Berkshire recently was that we should band together with neighbouring parishes to create a larger unit. Choose your partner.

If the first of my future concerns was finance, the second is development. The Labour Government is set upon changing the planning system by making it easier for developers to build more houses. Perhaps we should be pleased that Labour doesn't have a very good record in delivering on their Manifesto promises because in Brimpton, the Parish Council has followed a policy of supporting suitable in-filling but opposing larger developments. We have been supported in this by West Berkshire's view that Brimpton is in the lowest category for development. However, the current Government is intent on eliminating some of the protection communities such as this one receive from the current planning system and we need to be aware developers are circling and some development may be inevitable.

If you think I'm exaggerating, a few years ago there was a proposal to build houses on the field that runs from the War Memorial down the right hand side of Brimpton Road. Nothing came of it but the proposal to build there hasn't gone away. Similarly, the builder who owns Washoe Lodge next to the school has been trying to buy adjacent land in order to expand that development. The owner of the land that runs from there behind the gardens of the houses in Hatch Lane (mine included) was last approached a few weeks ago and refused the offer. Just two examples, but there will be others and some may be successful.

On a happier note, for the past nine years I have been keen that the Parish Council initiate community events to provide an opportunity for residents to meet informally. We were prepared to spend money to do this but that hasn't been necessary because every event has made a profit, which we have donated to charity. The Platinum Jubilee, the Coronation, D-Day and VE Day and other events have all seen large groups of residents come together to foster Brimpton's community identity.

Overall, I have enjoyed my time as Chairman, despite some abusive phone calls, including one where the individual yelled down the phone that if I didn't do what he wanted, he would call a public meeting and have me dismissed. Despite that sort of thing, which is thankfully rare, it has been a pleasure to get to know many of you and to work on your behalf. Moving ahead, there may be a time when we once again need to defend our community interests and I have no doubt that Nick will lead the Parish Council to do that.

Thank you.

Appendix B – District Councillor's Annual Report

ALDERMASTON WARD 2025–2026

This report sets out what I did over the past year on behalf of residents across Aldermaston Ward, both locally and at West Berkshire Council.

It has been a challenging year financially, with rising demand on services. My focus has been straightforward: to deal with the issues residents raise, make sure our area is properly represented, and challenge decisions where they do not deliver the right outcomes.
The Year in Summary
In practice, my work fell into three areas.

First, dealing with day-to-day issues raised by residents—roads, drainage and planning.

Second, using my role at the Council to challenge decisions, particularly around children's services and the budget.

Third, working closely with parish councils to make sure local concerns are heard and acted on.
Local Issues
Most of the issues I dealt with locally followed a familiar pattern.

Roads and drainage remain a major source of frustration. I spent a significant amount of time following up repeat problems and pushing for a more consistent and responsive approach.

Planning is the other area that regularly comes up. My job is to ensure that local views are properly reflected and that decisions take account of infrastructure and impact—not simply policy in isolation.

Alongside this, I supported residents on a range of individual issues. Some were resolved quickly; others required persistence and escalation.

Work at the Council

At the Council, my main focus has been children and young people.

A lot of my work has been about asking a simple question: will this actually improve outcomes, or are we just managing pressures?

I have challenged elements of the budget and service plans on that basis, while supporting proposals that I believe will make a real difference.

Education and Attainment

There has been recent external challenge on education performance in West Berkshire, particularly around the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

As Chairman of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, I have a direct responsibility to ensure that the Council's response is robust and focused on outcomes.

The response is still being developed. My role will be to make sure it leads to practical change—clear actions, consistent support and challenge for schools, and measurable progress over time.

Local Government Review and Devolution

The Government is leading a programme of local government reorganisation and devolution which could significantly reshape how areas like ours are governed.

There is still uncertainty about what the final structure will look like. However, there have already been suggestions—including from Labour-led Reading Borough Council—that parts of eastern West Berkshire could be drawn into a different arrangement.

From the perspective of Aldermaston Ward, I am clear that our communities are best served by remaining within West Berkshire.

There is also a developing cross-party view within West Berkshire—shared by both the Liberal Democrat administration and the Conservative group—that the most coherent option is to work with Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire to form what is being referred to as Ridgeway Council.

Through my role on the Council's advisory panel, I will continue to press for arrangements that protect local representation and accountability.

Working with Parish Councils

I have continued to attend parish meetings where possible, respond to queries, and work collaboratively on local issues.

Priorities for 2026–27

My priorities are to improve responsiveness on roads and drainage, address increasing traffic through our villages, tackle rural isolation, and improve outcomes for children and families.

Contact

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Closing

I will continue to focus on getting things done locally and making sure decisions taken at the Council work for communities like ours.

Appendix C – Report from Brimpton C of E Primary School. Heidi Davies – Headteacher
Parish Council meeting - 12th May 2026

Brimpton CE Primary School currently have 48 children on roll. We are a happy school where every child and every family matters.

We have 3 amazing teachers for 3 classes. In Sepetmber we introduced a nursery provision. This is bespoke to us as a school so it is just for 5 children. Watching the magic happen as these 3 year olds grow and develop – absorb what those around them are doing is amazing. It means that in September those nursery child will be very rounded and 'Brimptonfied'. Our classes are currently taught as Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, Year 3 and 4 and then Year 5 and 6. Often we work across the school or in Key Stages as it helps the children develop social and communication skills.

We have other fantastic staff in the school that keep Brimpton the special place it is. We offer breakfast club and after school club to support working families and a range of extra curricular activities that are run free of charge and voluntarily by the staff.

We are part of the sports and music network and have the opportunity to take part in many Sporting and Music activities. Recently we have taken part in a cricket and golf festival, and we are preparing to sing in the junior music festival in June.

We have 6 volunteers each week that come in and hear readers across the school. They are all invaluable - they provide our pupils with the opportunity to share texts, to develop their fluency and develop their confidence as readers. One of the most important life skills - that some children do not get chance to practise as regularly as others.

We have a thriving Facebook page that is our way of communicating with the world that we know what a special place our school is. . We have a team of supportive parents that support fundraising for our school. We have a summer festival on July 4th – so the children will be writing to you in the village to invite you and to make your aware.

We enjoy being part of the Brimpton community - especially visiting our beautiful St Peters church either during our services or using our nature gate for a walk to the church and the chance to take in and appreciate the wonderful setting that Brimpton has. The children are currently working on a display of David Attenborough as we celebrated his birthday last week by receiving special celebratory seeds. We even sent him a video of us singing Happy Birthday to him!

On our doors as you come into Brimpton there is a sticker that says 'Amazing things happen here' and that is because everyday they do! Feel free to pop in and see us ..... and see for yourself! We have ice cream Friday every Friday of eth summer term. Each class take it in turns to sell ice creams for £1.00 so feel free to wander down and buy one if you fancy a sweet treat to end the week – you'd be very welcome!

Appendix D – Report from the Parochial Church Council

- Context for the Spire Project
- PCC is responsible for the everyday running of all aspects of the church.
- Everyday running costs approx. £22,000 per year. With donations, fees and fund raising, we cover that.
- On top of this, we are responsible for maintaining the building and churchyard. The Victorian building is a community asset and it is ageing. Spire is just one part.
- Maintenance is unpredictable and often expensive. We currently have several big expenses: apart from the spire, we have recently had to repair the roof and cut down some dangerous trees. The flints on the walls are unstable and some are dropping off. A section of the fragile 18th Century perimeter wall has fallen. Thanks to the generosity of the village and the Parish Council for the much needed support with repairs to the building and maintenance of the churchyard.
- This year, we held the usual regular events and several funerals. Notably, the launch of the Spire Project.

- A working group for the spire has been formed under the chairmanship of Philip Turner. It will continue to inform the parish of progress. The group is currently investigating avenues for funding, and researching ways to minimise the cost.
- In summary, we are an active church is a small but very special community. Thank you to everyone.

Appendix E – Village Hall report

Why is the village hall so important.

“THE PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE OF A VILLAGE HALL FOR THE USE OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH OF BRIMPTON WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS OR OTHER OPINIONS, INCLUDING USE FOR MEETINGS, LECTURES AND CLASSES, AND FOR OTHER FORMS OF RECREATION AND LEISURE TIME OCCUPATION, WITH THE OBJECT OF IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE FOR THE SAID INHABITANTS.” Taken directly from Charity commission.

The hall is the only public space left available to hire within the parish.

Not withstanding the 2 churches and school as they have obvious limitations to their use.

Matters that have been started/completed since last assembly.

The hall is in a good condition physically and with the help of Brimpton PC we are going to complete the last of major tasks a Kitchen refit. This we hope to start June this year. This will practically complete all of the major works from the condition survey we commissioned in 2024 where we were told we would need to spend £250k over the next 10 years to bring/keep the hall up to a good standard. Well I'm very pleased to say that we have completed all the major works for under £45k (~£8k grants included). This has been completed by a lot of hard work by trustees looking for grants where we can and chasing down keen pricing and doing a lot of the work ourselves.

Complete external and internal decoration. This included removing the redundant/leaning chimney, a complete removal of the failed rendering and re-rendering of the old part of the hall, replacing the last single glazed wooden window, a lot of work on the roof mainly replacing the flashings and replacing all the external rain water fittings. Replacing all the flood lights and all the emergency lights. This is top of the many day to day tasks that need to be completed on a well-used hall.

Many Mandatory reports/Surveys are completed, Fire RA, Safety RA, Asbestos Management plan, Legionella RA, Electrical inspections and Water Installation check.

Changing electrical supplier and Solar upgrade. (looks very promising to save over 50%/pa on costs. The last full 12 months with old supplier was ~£8.4k)

The new Solar & Battery install of ~10kw Solar Panel with ~15kw battery. So far this has meant we have exported £638.07 back to grid and a further saving of £613.64 of Solar used by the hall.

We have also connected the heating in the WC's to the mains as they used to be connected to the old Solar panels that did not produce sufficient power to keep them warm so it now warm in the small rooms over the winter.

It has been a very busy year although a little down on the previous 12 months utilisation.

Bookings are made up of :-

A group uses the hall for people with sever learning difficulties.

A polercise group uses the hall for exercise/ fitness classes.

Upholstery Classes.

A small group use hall for Tai Chi. Craft Club. WI meetings. Calming Space.Caged Birds.

Sterling engine AGM.PC Meetings.Kennet Opera.Lace-makers.

And many birthday parties and other private celebrations

We also enabled several events such as VJ-Day, Church, School, The Murder Mystery in aid of St Michael's Hospice and Bingo has become a very popular event.

The next Bingo event is on 13th June and back by very popular demand Bacon Butty is on 25th July.

70 days with nothing on at all over this reporting period giving a “utilisation” of just over 80% that is stunning when you consider what has been achieved over the reporting period.

None of this would have been possible without all the work of the existing trustees. All give their time for free and make meetings entertaining.

Carol, Mandy, Shelley, Jonathan, Rob, Pete, Alex.

We are always looking for new ideas for events to put on and new trustees.

If I have missed anything or anyone I do apologise.

John Dolphin

Chairman Brimpton Village Hall Trustees.