
Parish Council Meeting

9th March 2026, 7pm

Padworth Village Hall

Councillors: Rob Jones (Chair), John Miller, Andy Williams, Andrew Griffin, Emily Robinson, Tom Tucker and Johnathan Johnson, Dominic Boeck (District Councillor)

Members of the public: 3

1. To receive apologies

There were none

2. To receive declarations of interest and dispensations

There were none

3. To approve minutes of the last meeting of the council

Minutes were signed and dated for records

4. To receive the District Councillors report

The report will be posted to the parish council website.

The meeting noted that Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) has been granted, which effectively operates as a loan to support the council's budget. It was reported that £16 million has been allocated, with £30 million anticipated this year. While this provides short-term relief and helps to balance the budget, it was acknowledged that underlying financial pressures, particularly in areas such as social care, will need to be addressed in the longer term. It was noted that West Berkshire is not alone in this situation, with approximately 35 other counties facing similar challenges. The government has been considering a fair funding model; however, it was observed that West Berkshire is not considered sufficiently deprived to benefit significantly under current criteria. Although the immediate funding gap is being managed, a four-year financial plan will be required to ensure longer-term sustainability.

The meeting was informed that the consultation on the local government review is currently open and will close on 26th March. Members were encouraged to engage with the process if interested. It was noted that West Berkshire may be considered too small to achieve the desired economies of scale and efficiencies, which is a factor being examined as part of the review.

5. To receive the Clerks report

PADWORTH PARISH COUNCIL - CLERKS FINANCIAL REPORT

Bank Reconcilliation for Meeting 09/03/26

	<u>Payments</u>	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Balance as at 1st January 2026			
Treasurers Account			£ 813.40
Project Account			£ 48,770.87
			£ 49,584.27

Bank Interest received (Jan)	£	24.85
Bank Interest received (Feb)	£	22.06

Payments

Service Charge (Jan)	£	4.25
Ellie Brewer (Jan)	£	406.19
Service Charge (Feb)	£	4.25
Ellie Brewer (Feb)	£	406.19
	£	820.88
	£	46.91
	£	48,810.30

Treasurers Account	£992.52
Project Account	£ 47,817.78
	£ 48,810.30

6. Village Hall matters

Refurbishment

The Councillors noted the recent refurbishment works, including the stripping and polishing of the floor and the completion of the front toilets. These improvements were considered to have made a significant difference, with the hall now feeling much fresher and cleaner. Overall, the work was regarded as good value for what has been achieved.

Damage to field

Attention was drawn to the recent damage to the field. It was reported that the police do not intend to pursue prosecution due to an ongoing dispute regarding the boundary. The meeting agreed that the matter should be addressed properly through appropriate legal channels rather than through individual action. It was noted that both the football club and the parish hall would be willing to collaborate on replacing the boundary with a proper wooden fence. There was also

a suggestion that those involved would be willing to enter into discussion or arbitration once tensions have subsided.

General

The chair discussed the trustees desire to increase daytime hires of the hall. It was noted that the venue offers useful facilities, including large screens, and could accommodate a variety of users. Members were encouraged to promote the hall to anyone in need of a suitable venue to maximise its use.

7. To review Planning Matters

25/01915/FULMAJ

The meeting discussed the planning application relating to the site, with particular concern raised about the significant level of HGV traffic. Residents have expressed worries regarding safety, especially for children, given the nature and volume of vehicles using what is a small country lane. District Cllr Boeck has called in the application, meaning it will now be determined by the planning committee.

It was noted that the proposed extension is substantial in scale. A scheduled meeting to discuss the application had been cancelled, leaving several questions still outstanding. An independent consultant has advised that no increase in vehicle movements is anticipated; however, this was met with some scepticism by those present. Aldermaston Parish Council has also raised concerns regarding the application.

Further issues were highlighted regarding the suitability of the road, including the lack of width restrictions, despite reports of two 18-wheeler lorries attempting to pass each other on the narrow lane. It was agreed that the road is not appropriate for this level of traffic, and it is hoped that the planning committee will take these concerns into account and impose appropriate conditions if the application is approved.

26/00155/CERTE

The meeting discussed the current situation regarding the nature reserve, noting that Harleyford appears to be seeking to withdraw from its responsibilities. It was agreed that the situation remains uncertain and will need to be monitored as it develops. Despite this, the local bird club has expressed enthusiasm about the site, with a number of rare species having been spotted there.

It was reported that although some withdrawal has taken place, certain structures such as site offices remain. Reference was made to earlier agreements which included provisions for facilities such as a car park and lake, as well as funds that had been set aside for the site. The matter has now been passed to legal representatives for further handling.

8. To receive updates from Councillors

Speed Limit Review on A4 Bath Road

The meeting discussed the ongoing speed limit review on the A4. It was noted that Reading Buses have been using the chevron area, which they should not be doing, and that there has recently been an accident at this location. Members are still awaiting confirmation of a date for the relevant meeting to address these concerns.

ACTION – Cllr Griffin to follow up and chase for an update regarding the meeting date.

Parish Newsletter

The meeting discussed the development of a new electronic newsletter, which is being managed on a voluntary basis. It was acknowledged that some residents do not have access to the internet; however, the newsletter will be only be accessible online, including being shared via Facebook. A mailing list has now been created so that future editions can be distributed directly via email.

Content for upcoming editions was also considered. The tea rooms have provided advance notice that the Devizes to Westminster canoe race will be passing through, and this will be featured, including ideas for families and local activities. Contributions are being organised, with a horticulture feature and a historical aspect. There was discussion about printing a limited number of physical copies to be made available at selected pick-up points. While there is currently no capacity for paid advertising, the newsletter aims to highlight community stories and positive local initiatives. Contributors are still being actively encouraged to get involved. It was agreed that content should be submitted by the 25th of each month, with publication targeted for the 1st. The newsletter was recognised as particularly important for the parish, given the lack of a central village hub and the dispersed nature of the community. It was also noted that moving to a digital format represents a significant cost saving of approximately £2,000 compared to previous years, with current costs expected to be only a few hundred pounds.

The Padworth show

The challenges associated with organising the Padworth Show were noted, particularly given that it is currently managed by only two individuals, with one balancing this alongside other events. Issues with the field, including parking constraints and previous instances of double booking by the field owner, have further complicated arrangements. The football fixtures this year may also create additional difficulties, particularly in coordinating with other contributors.

As a result, it was suggested that the event may not take place this year, with consideration instead being given to organising it in 2027. There was interest in potentially reimagining the event with a more family-oriented focus, incorporating elements such as live music and food. Comparisons were drawn with other local events, including the Woolhampton school fireworks event, which attracts around 1,000 attendees and generates approximately £800 profit on the bar for the parish hall. This arrangement was seen as mutually beneficial, as the organisers can use the hall free of charge. Reference was also made to the Aldermaston show, which successfully incorporates additional attractions such as a produce show and other established features.

Mill Lane

The councillors discussed that the field on the right-hand side at the end, towards the trout farm has recently been sold, and that shire horses have since appeared on the land. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of waste provision in the area, which has led to an increase in littering, as well as reports of some antisocial behaviour. It was also noted that digging and the creation of holes have taken place, contributing to growing anxiety among residents. Additionally, an outbuilding and paddocks have been installed on the site.

District Cllr Boeck reported that he has been approached on this matter and has spoken with planning, noting that there had been previous works involving the road being dug up last year, reportedly for water access. Residents' concerns were acknowledged and will require further review.

ACTION – Cllr Griffin to have a look and share findings

Website

A member of the public raised several issues with the current website and offered their assistance in improving it. A proposal was put forward to redesign and modernise the site, including migrating existing content to a new platform. It was noted that the current Google Site is somewhat limited and could be updated to provide a more modern and user-friendly experience. The proposed solution would incur an ongoing maintenance cost of approximately £30 per month and could also integrate effectively with the newsletter.

ACTION – Clerk to share details, including costs and a mock-up of the proposed website with the group for review.

Reading Road Site

Ongoing issues relating to the Reading Road Site near AWE were discussed. It was reported that a High Court injunction has been granted and stop notices have been issued. It was noted that residents have also submitted further planning applications. While permission has been granted for 20 caravans, occupancy is currently limited to one, and there is an intention from those involved to increase this number.

It was further noted that AWE has purchased Aldermaston Manor, leading to speculation that access arrangements to the site may change. The meeting discussed a wider pattern whereby land is purchased by a company, sometimes based offshore, and then subdivided and sold on to members of the travelling community. It was acknowledged that this tends to occur in areas where there is insufficient provision of authorised sites and where planning enforcement may be perceived as weak.

Reference was made to a similar situation at Brimpton Common, where a new entrance was created in breach of planning regulations. A retrospective planning application and subsequent appeal were both rejected, with instructions given to reinstate the land. However, it was noted that further applications have since been submitted for adjacent land, suggesting that similar approaches may continue to be pursued. Overall, concerns were expressed regarding the effectiveness of enforcement, although it was acknowledged that breaches can ultimately lead to prosecution.

Padworth Lane Speeding

District Cllr Boeck updated that he is currently awaiting a response on what measures may be possible to address the issue. It was noted that this matter has been raised previously but did not receive a particularly positive or proactive response at that time. The road is frequently used for nursery-related traffic and is also considered a rat run during several points in the day, which contributes to the problem.

Rural Crime

The meeting was informed of several recent incidents of rural crime in the area. Approximately a fortnight ago, there was a break-in at the village hall sheds, where doors were forced but nothing was ultimately taken. Around the same time, garages and sheds in the vicinity were also targeted, with bolt cutters reportedly used to gain access to containers. Two motorbikes were stolen during these incidents, one of which was later recovered having been stripped for parts. Various changes have been fitted in response to the incidents, to improve security. It was noted with concern that crime rates in the area appear to be increasing compared to surrounding locations, and residents should be encouraged to remain vigilant and take steps to enhance their own security measures.

Parochial Charity

The meeting noted that the charity is currently experiencing difficulty generating interest. While there have been various requests in the past, it was felt that there is a general lack of awareness within the community about the charity and the support it can offer. It was agreed that the profile of the charity needs to be raised to encourage more people to come forward with requests. It was suggested that clearer

information be shared regarding the specific criteria and types of support available. This will be reviewed further at the next meeting.

Padworth church

The meeting noted that Pete Warner continues to look after the church and that the hedge issue has now been resolved. A request has been received from the church for a financial contribution towards the works. It was discussed that these costs could potentially be incorporated into the existing contractor's scope and responsibilities, subject to costs and agreement.

Tree works

Cllr Griffin raised concerns regarding a tree having fallen over alongside the Kennet near the bird reserve. It was noted that there is some uncertainty over land ownership in this location. The fallen tree represents a significant amount of work, and it was also reported that individuals have removed fence panels in the area in order to move around it. The situation requires appropriate action to address the tree and any associated damage.

ACTION – Cllr Griffin to look at quote for removal

9. Next meeting

5th May 2026

10. To record the time meeting closed

20.50