



Stratfield Mortimer Parish

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

held at St. Johns Hall, West End Road at 7.30 pm on 28th April 2025

- There were approximately 35 members of the public and councillors present.
- 13 councillors were present, and apologies were received from Cllr Dennett. Cllr Dennett did arrive later in the meeting.
- The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm.
- It was agreed that Danielle Davis, Parish Clerk would take the minutes.

1 Welcome by the Parish Council Chairman

Cllr. Danusia Morsley, Chairman of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, welcomed all attendees.

2 To receive the Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting which was held at St. Johns Hall on 29th April 2024 were received.

3 The 2024 'My Mortimer' Art Competition Awards:

Cllr Morsley introduced the art competition, noting that this year's theme was 'Mortimer Past and Future'. Although the number of entries was low, the quality of the submissions was very high. Cllr Morsley then presented the certificates and first prize award, along with commendation certificates and prizes, as follows:

- 1st prize Florence Jourdan- Brown
- Highly Commended Minnie Giles
- Highly Commended Penny Giles
- Highly Commended Alice Prime

All the other entrants received 'Judges Commendations' certificates.

4 The 2025 Stratfield Mortimer Community Awards:

a Presentation of award to Chris Morsley

Cllr. Graham Bridgman opened the item by noting that, due to a conflict of interest, Cllr Danusia Morsley had stepped aside from the Community Award panel. He expressed thanks to all those who submitted nominations for this year's award including Anne Haines who nominated Chris Morsley.

The panel reached a unanimous decision to dedicate the 2025 Community Award to **Chris Morsley**.

Cllr. Bridgman highlighted Chris Morsley's longstanding and wide-ranging contributions to the community. These included:

- Assistant Cub Master with Mortimer Scout Group for more than 20 years and still assisting Remembrance Day services in full Scout uniform.
- Volunteering for several years as a driver for the Burghfield and Mortimer Volunteer Bureau.
- Later volunteering as a driver for Handybus Newbury and Thatcham, continuing through the COVID-19 pandemic by delivering food parcels. Resuming his driving role with Handibus post-COVID but with Burghfield and Mortimer Handybus and additionally taking on scheduling responsibilities for drivers and escorts.
- Serving as Quartermaster for Mortimer Village Partnership (MVP) since its inception, including managing the loaning of equipment to affiliate groups. Repairing equipment others deemed beyond repair. Logistics Manager of pre-COVID Fun Days. MVP website editor.
- Organising the delivery of newsletters for both the MVP and the Parish Council.

The Community Award plate was presented by **Cllr Morsley to Chris Morsley**.

Chris expressed his sincere thanks and said he felt honoured to join the ranks of previous Community Award recipients.

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Presentations from local bodies/organisations/etc:

- **Thames Valley Policy-** PC Robert Hubbard-Clark, accompanied by PCSO James, gave a short presentation on behalf of Thames Valley Police (TVP). PC Hubbard-Clark has worked in the local area on and off since 2009 and is now covering a wider area due to changes in local policing structure.

He noted an increase in police presence, with more officers being assigned across the region. Both officers stayed after the meeting to speak with residents who had specific concerns.

PC Hubbard-Clark shared that crime data is available and can be provided on request. He reported a notable rise in anti-social behaviour (ASB), particularly at the Fairground, where incidents related to noise nuisance and criminal damage have increased from 36 reports last year to 53 this year.

He encouraged residents to report all incidents to TVP using:

- 999 in an emergency
- 101 for non-emergencies
- Online contact forms available via the TVP website.

He stressed that even if a response isn't always provided, all reports are logged and contribute to the broader picture of crime and policing needs.

Recent crimes in the area include:

- Theft of motorbikes
- Break-ins to vehicles
- Individuals trying door handles on parked cars

- Shoplifting (13 reported incidents in the last year)

There was a significant reduction in burglaries, with only 1 reported this year compared to 22 the previous year.

PC Hubbard-Clark highlighted that TVP offers home security surveys, which are widely available to residents.

TVP also circulates a quarterly email survey to around 500 residents across Burghfield and Mortimer, asking for input on policing priorities.

Both officers expressed a desire to be more visible and involved in the community, and they will pass their contact details to the Parish Council. They also offered to speak at other local events.

Looking ahead, they hope to increase community engagement and build stronger relationships with village residents.

- **Mortimer Fire Station-** Watch Manager Daniel, along with Ben and James from Mortimer Fire Station, attended the meeting to provide an update on local fire services. Mortimer Fire Station operates as an on-call fire station, with all team members also working full-time jobs elsewhere.

They explained that Monday evenings are their regular drill nights and welcomed residents to visit the station to observe the drills and find out more. The team is actively recruiting new on-call firefighters and encouraged anyone interested to speak with them or visit the station.

As the warmer weather approaches, the station is entering wildfire season. The team warned that suspected arson has already been reported in the area. They urged residents to be vigilant, particularly regarding discarded glass bottles, which can cause fires in wooded areas.

In the event of a fire, residents are reminded to call 999 immediately. The team also promoted the What3Words app, which allows emergency services to locate incidents with pinpoint accuracy when details are passed to the control centre.

The Fire Service offers free home fire safety visits, which include guidance on fire prevention and installation of smoke alarms at no cost, by appointment.

The crew remained available after the meeting to answer any further questions and expressed their interest in becoming more visible at local events. Residents were encouraged to approach and engage with them directly.

- **Hills Quarry-** Frank, representing Hills Quarry Products, gave a presentation introducing the company and providing an update on operations at the local site.

He explained that Hills is a family-run business, recently celebrating 125 years of operation, with activities including six quarries, cement mixing, and waste collection across the Swindon area.

The local plant operates as a gravel washing facility, processing approximately 120–130 tonnes per hour, amounting to around 800 tonnes of mixed material daily. The output includes stone, sharp stone, and ballast mix, with most material supplied to Days Bagging Plant, various building merchants, and the Newbury Concrete Plant. The site also caters to smaller individual customers, who can be served directly on-site.

Frank discussed the development of the site, highlighting that there are currently 1.4 km of conveyor belts in place. These significantly reduce the need for lorry movements, thereby limiting traffic and noise.

As each new phase of excavation opens, no archaeological evidence has been discovered to date. He also detailed the ecological procedures in place: a dedicated ecology team surveys the land before each phase, checking for protected species such as breeding birds, badgers, snakes, and slow worms. In Phase 4, the team had completed 80 of 100 planned days of trapping. After the trapping phase, a period of monitoring and clearance follows under strict ecological supervision. Habitats lost through quarrying are recreated elsewhere on the site.

The quarry is expected to complete operations in 2030, after which a comprehensive regeneration plan will be implemented. Restoration is being developed in partnership with the Englefield Estate. Frank noted that an initial tree planting effort led by Richard failed due to drainage issues, which will be addressed ahead of a new tree planting programme planned for this winter.

A bridge over the conveyor system has already been constructed, with a second bridge planned between Phase 4 and Phase 5 to support site access and safety.

During the Q&A, a member of the public raised concerns about potholes on Welshman's Road and asked whether Hills would contribute to their repair. Frank responded that road maintenance is the responsibility of the highways authority, and not directly within Hills' remit. It was noted that members of the public can report such issues to the county council and that residents may also raise concerns with the local MP.

- **AWE-** Bryan Lyttle gave a presentation on behalf of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), which has been operating for over 75 years. He acknowledged that, despite its long-standing presence, many residents still have limited understanding of what AWE does. However, AWE is now becoming more open, with increased public engagement through events such as the current exhibition at West Berkshire Museum in Newbury, and recent public consultations.

To address common misconceptions, Mr. Lyttle presented a series of "myth-busting" facts:

- 1 Q: Do you have dangerous materials on site?
A: Yes, but all materials are highly regulated and carefully controlled.
- 2 Q: Does AWE have a 'red button' to launch a bomb?
A: No. AWE manages only part of the warhead system. Final assembly and operational deployment occur well away from Berkshire.
- 3 Q: Do you test nuclear warheads?
A: No. AWE tests components and conducts advanced simulations, not full warhead detonations.
- 4 Q: Are radiation levels around AWE dangerous to residents?
A:
 - Annual dose limit for nuclear workers: 3 mSv
 - AWE Site A boundary: 0.003 mSv
 - AWE Burghfield: 0.001 mSv

For comparison:

- UK average: 2.7 mSv
- Devon & Cornwall: 6.9 mSv
- Flight to USA: 0.08 mSv
- Chest X-ray: 0.014 mSv
- Dental X-ray: 0.005 mSv
- Biological changes in blood: occur at 100 mSv

5 Q: Is there a nuclear reactor on site?

A: There are no operational nuclear reactors on site. Any former reactors have been fully decommissioned or defueled and are now awaiting full decommissioning.

6 Q: Is AWE only involved in building warheads?

A: No. AWE also leads in nuclear security technologies, supporting national efforts to reduce nuclear risks. They provide radiological analysis and technical support, including working with the UK Border Force to prevent illegal radiological material from entering the country.

Bryan Lyttle concluded by inviting residents to submit any further questions about AWE through the Parish Clerk, who will liaise with AWE directly.

- **The Mortimer Federation of St John's and St Mary's**

Chris Hassey, Chair of the Federation, provided an update on behalf of Mortimer St Mary's Junior School, referring to the recent SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspection held on 13 March 2025. He shared the positive findings of the report and highlighted key strengths of the school.

The school's Christian vision, "Life in all its fullness" from John 10:10, underpins its ethos and daily practice. The motto "Share Your Light" is actively lived out, encouraging aspiration, resilience, and respect. The inspector commended the school's inclusive, nurturing, and aspirational environment, where both pupils and staff flourish.

Key strengths noted in the report included:

- A deeply embedded Christian vision that guides decision-making and day-to-day life in the school.
- A rich and creative curriculum that nurtures academic, spiritual, cultural, and ethical development, including international partnerships and experiential learning.
- High-quality, inclusive collective worship and spiritual opportunities that are inclusive and meaningful for all.
- Outstanding Religious Education (RE) provision, now known as "Religion and Worldviews," which ensures comprehensive understanding of Christianity and other faiths.
- Excellent support for pupils with SEND, ensuring full participation and personal development.

The report also noted a strong commitment to staff wellbeing, pupil leadership, environmental responsibility, and charitable initiatives. While the school is already enabling some social action, the inspection encouraged further development of pupil-led initiatives.

Chris emphasised that the school community is proud of the outcomes of the inspection, which reflects the dedication of staff, governors, pupils, and families. The positive report provides a strong foundation for continued growth and celebration of the school's Christian values.

Additional Discussion:

A member of the public raised concerns about ongoing parking issues at the school during pick-up and drop-off times. In response, Craig addressed the issue with the following points:

- Parents are regularly reminded and encouraged to park respectfully and carefully when collecting or dropping off children.
 - There has been engagement with the **Englefield Estate** regarding potential land that could be used for a dedicated car park.
 - Discussions are ongoing with **Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council** and **West Berkshire Council (WBC)** in an effort to find practical solutions, including potential lobbying, though details of the lobbying focus were not specified.
 - A recent incident involving a parent being knocked by a car near the school was acknowledged. Craig confirmed that the school is aware of the situation.
- **Mortimer Village Partnership-** Chairman Doug Overett gave an update- MVP, established over 15 years ago with the aim of *"Enriching Village Life,"* continues to deliver community-focused activities and events. Key updates included:

- **Lunch Club**

MVP's Lunch Club provides hot meals and social interaction for up to 40 senior residents. In response to the cost of living crisis, the service has been upgraded to a two-course hot meal during winter months. Following feedback, this enhanced service will now continue through the summer.

- **Arts & Culture**

The recent visiting musical comedy *Victor & Albert* was well received. MVP plans to continue offering diverse, professional theatre events.

- **Scarecrow Trail 2025**

The upcoming trail theme is *"Mortimer Goes Potty"*, where scarecrows must be made using flower pots. A "Pot Swap" crate will be set up to facilitate recycling and sharing of pots. Volunteers or hosts for the crate are welcome.

- **New Event – Wine Tasting**

In September, MVP will host a *Call My Bluff* wine tasting evening, promising fun and entertainment.

- **MVP Fun Day**

After a 6–7 year break, the Fun Day will return, focused on low-cost family enjoyment rather than fundraising. Highlights will include a high-energy arena act (supported by the Parish Council), dinosaurs, a dog show, fancy-dress parade, food stalls, and a ticketed ABBA tribute finale by Mortimer Music Live.

Volunteers are sought to help with the event—any amount of time is appreciated.

Commented [D1]: FYI there is a permanent tension between MVP and Mortimer Amateur Dramatics who generally put on farces. So as not to imply their shows aren't high quality, MVP concentrates on the fact ours are very varied in nature and professional. Even so I saw a member of the audience on Monday who is Am Dram raise their eyebrows at Doug saying about MVP shows

Finally, the MVP meets on the second Tuesday evening of each month and welcomes new members. Contact details are available for those interested in joining.

- **Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group-** Two representatives of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Jo Wines- Chairman, and Doug Overett, provided an update on the current and future Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

The original Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in 2017 and is due to expire in 2026. This plan is available on the Parish Council website and remains a legally binding planning document. For context, a Neighbourhood Plan allows communities to guide and shape the future development of their area, including decisions on where homes, shops, and offices should be built, and how they should look.

NDP Review – Reserved Land

In 2022, the Parish Council appointed a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to develop a new, broader-reaching Neighbourhood Plan, aligned with national planning policy, the emerging West Berkshire Local Plan, and evolving local community priorities. This new plan will run through to 2041, superseding the current plan upon its expiry.

As required by the existing NDP, a review of the Reserved Land behind St John's School was completed after five years and formally approved by the Parish Council. Following significant consultation with local schools and stakeholders, it was agreed that:

- A new infant school was not required.
- There is strong support for the creation of new playing fields for St John's School.
- The land will be allocated for:
 - Playing fields and associated staff parking for St John's School.
 - A new dental surgery for Oaktree Dental Practice.
 - A development of approximately 25 residential units for residents aged 60+, enabling local residents to downsize from family homes into smaller, age-appropriate accommodation.
 - The provision for a potential GP surgery was removed due to economic viability issues and lack of interest from existing GP providers.

The landowner and developer, TA Fisher, is currently finalising details, with the intention of submitting a planning application within the next few months. Subject to approval (a pre-application has been approved in principle by West Berkshire Council), construction could begin early in 2026.

6 Election of a Trustee (Regulation 3 Trustee) to the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field Trust for a 3 year term

Candidate Sarah Smith ran unopposed and was elected as a trustee to the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field Trust.

7 The Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Cllr. Danusia Morsley gave a report as follows:

This report covers the period April 2024 to April 2025. This time last year we were without a custodian following the death of Frank Stansfield. It's a pleasure to report that public contributions contributed to a seat in the grazing area with a plaque commemorating Frank. Last summer Jay Sylla took on that job and is doing a great job of looking after the Fairground and the other bits of the village that the Council is responsible for.

On 6th June we joined the country in marking the 80th anniversary of D-Day with the lighting of a beacon. Very soon, on May 8th, we will have the 80th anniversary of VE Victory in Europe Day. This will also be marked by the lighting of a beacon plus singing by the Hurst Choir and an opportunity to join in patriotic singing. The H&G will be serving fish & chips.

At the end of 2024 we said good bye to Lynn Hannawin who as clerk and assistant clerk before that, had kept the Parish Council running smoothly for many years. We have been very fortunate to find Danielle Davis as her replacement. Danielle is a Mortimer girl and has hit the ground running and is keeping us all in order. She and Sallyann make a great team in the office. Do remember that the Parish Office is open to the public Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursday if you have an issue you think we might be able to help with.

Another way of getting in touch with us is via one of the monthly occasions where you can find a couple of councillors eager to hear what you want to tell or ask them. They are on a Saturday morning 10 – 11 at Mortimer Bistro and in the Horse & Groom on a Tuesday evening 7 – 8 . The dates each month are on posters round the village, the website and are being renamed – Pint with a Councillor and Coffee with a Councillor

During the year we have lost 3 councillors. 2 from resignations and 1 sadly the death of John Wells. John was a Mortimer man born and bred; a much-respected councillor and we miss his presence and contributions. We have welcomed two new councillors quite recently: Jayne Todd and Ryan Saunders. We look forward to working with them and gaining benefit from their skills and experience. As of this moment we still have one vacancy, so please do come and talk to us if you think you might be interested in serving your village and helping decide how we spend your money.

Looking at the public comments/questions this time last year:

- The boards have been updated*
- We have got the police, fire, school here as requested this year*
- There is no change from GWR re a carpark at the station*
- The council is actively engaged with WBC re parking along The Street new St Mary's School. WBC needs to undertake public consultation to add yellow lines.*

*The work of the Council has developed a lot over recent years. We had a discussion at the end of last summer about how we could better organise ourselves to reflect what we actually need to do. The results of that discussion are that from 15th May (when we have our annual Parish **Council** Meeting) we will be working with a different committee structure. The current Fairground & Cemetery Committee is bravely taking on the Commons and various other bits of land we look after and is renamed Estate Management Committee. The current Planning Committee will also be considering highways and footpath issues and is renamed Planning &*

Highways Committee. The Roads, Footpaths & Commons is no more. But we will have a new committee, the Community Committee. This will bring under one umbrella the newsletter, website, surgeries and new ways we will communicate with you. It will administer the Community Grants and Community Award and also explore how it can support the many not-for-profit groups in the village to make Mortimer even better. I am hoping that individuals from the community may be co-opted onto this committee to work together. I expect that the new committee will want to undertake some form of public consultation to find out what you think we should be doing.

During the year a vast amount of work has been undertaken in revising all our policies, mainly by Graham Bridgman. I would like to report that we have the most polished and consistent set of policies that I have ever seen in any context!

During the last year we were awarded the Foundation level of the Local Council Award Scheme. This shows we adhere to all the essential standards, with all the necessary documentation to operate lawfully and in accordance with established practices. The council aims to work towards further levels in the future.

Design work on the cemetery extension continued last year leading to tenders in the autumn. The tender was awarded to White Horse contractors who have recently started work. We expect the landscaping to be completed before the summer. This will include a memorial wall where plaques can be placed for those whose ashes have been scattered elsewhere. We still have spaces in the current cemetery so there will be plenty of time for the new one to settle and become a place of tranquillity before it is needed.

Work on the cycleway to Burghfield continued all year. Sadly slow responses from WBC Highways at several points have caused further delays but we are creeping closer to preparing tenders for the construction.

This year under our Community Grant scheme we have given small grants (up to £1500) to Mortimer Music Live for 2 heavy duty gazebos for use as changing rooms etc during events, to Mortimer Table Tennis Club to fund a new free weekly table tennis session for teenagers, Mortimer Pre-School for specialist music teaching, Mortimer Warm Welcome towards provision of refreshments for attendees and The Oaks Childcare Club towards funding childcare for disadvantaged children. A number of applications have been received outside the advertised period and have been asked to wait and reapply. The Community Committee will be looking at how best to administer these grants as fairly as possible within Mortimer. A new timetable will be announced and it is expected that there will be only one period for applications each year. Also I think that organisations cannot expect the same item to be funded by the Parish Council year on year. New funding needs will likely be given priority over repeat applications. But watch this space for information from the new committee.

A footpath to enable children and others to walk from the Community Centre to The Street not via the carpark was completed during the winter along with the utility square. This is used for the Christmas tree and beacons as required by the Council but we also encourage suggestions from the public as to ways it can be used throughout the year. It has a power supply.

With the support of District Councillor Nick Carter we have received match funding from WBC for the installation of a lockable water supply in the centre of the Fairground which can be made available to hirers of the Fairground. It will be in place in time for this year's Fun Day on July 5th. A water supply will also be installed

inside the Parish Council compound which can be used for cleaning the tennis courts etc.

The Parish Council is pleased to announce that it is supporting the Fun Day by providing the headline arena act, a daredevil acrobatic act, no not performed by councillors. The council is funding the spectacle of a parkour athlete, a trials bike rider and a BMX rider racing over large obstacles.

The Parish Council through Mike Dennett has continued to monitor the discharges from the Thames Water Pumping station. He has also led the work in monitoring speeding in the village through our SID and ASWC. The purchase of further devices to deter speeding is in the pipeline.

Along with Burghfield and Sulhamstead Parish Councils we have recently given notice to withdraw from an agreement with West Berkshire Council which required us to contribute more than £15k per annum to the running of Willink Leisure Centre. The Parish Council felt there are better ways to spend that money.

I'm pleased to be able to state that the Precept we set for the financial year 2025/2026 means that the element of your Council Tax which comes to the Parish Council remains at 2022 levels. A Band D house paid £89.21 in 2022 and it is 12p less this year at £89.09.

I would like to thank all the councillors for their work this year. Parish Council work is a team effort. I had a significant period of ill-health during this year and would particularly like to thank Graham Bridgman for doing everything in my absence; the council relies on everyone taking their duties seriously but he has been an exceptional vice-chairman and made my role many times easier.

In response to a public question about the potential impact on services, Cllr G Bridgman provided background: the original agreement, established in 1996, was a joint venture between Berkshire County Council, Newbury District Council, local parishes, and the Willink School governors. The parishes contributed to operating costs in return for a share of income if the centre was profitable. Over time, the agreement evolved into a flat annual fee, with the managing board becoming inactive (last meeting in 2017), and no recent performance data has been provided.

Burghfield and Sulhamstead Parish Councils support the withdrawal. WBC has requested a meeting via the parish Clerk for Burghfield.

Cllr N Carter, also a District Councillor, noted that as West Berkshire Council's (WBC) budget for the year had already been set, the impact of the Parish Council's withdrawal on services was currently unknown.

Cllr G Bridgman clarified that Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) had paid the contract withdrawal fee, which equated to the 2025/26 annual contribution.

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Open Forum and Questions.

There were no questions.

The meeting closed at 21:13.

Miss Danielle Davis

29/04/2025