



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Minutes

**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Thursday 29 January 2025 at 18:30 at
Mortimer Methodist Church Hall, West End Road, Mortimer, RG7 3TB**

Present

Members

Cllrs J Allan, D Backhouse, G Bridgman (Chairman), S Child, H Geary, D Kilshaw, M Lock, D Morsley, R Saunders (from 18:33), K Strong, J Todd, and N Williams.

Officers of the Council

Miss D Davis.

Public/Press

There was one member of the public (who arrived part way through the meeting for the Planning and Highways meeting due to follow this) and no members of the press in attendance.

Commencement

The meeting commenced at 18:30.

Part I

25/110 To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Carter, Dennett and Hill.

25/111 To receive any declarations of interest

To receive from Members at this point, or at any point during the meeting, in respect of any items included on the agenda, disclosure of any interests, and/or gifts and hospitality, in line with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.

For transparency, it was noted for information that Cllrs Bridgman, Geary, Kilshaw and Strong are well acquainted with the directors of RC Saunders, and Cllr Saunders had a disclosable pecuniary interest in the company.

Cllr Saunders joined the meeting at 18:33.

Cllr Saunders made a declaration with regard to RC Saunders, a family concern. As the relevant matters to be raised were for information only and no decisions would

be taken, the Chairman advised that he could remain for the presentation of item 25/115 (see further below).

25/112 Chairman's remarks

Cllr Bridgman:

- Apologised for the need to call an extraordinary meeting and thanked the Clerk for taking the initiative in raising concerns regarding the decision and associated procedure.
- Stated that he personally believed that Council had been able to re-discuss the matter following a recommendation (rather than a resolution) from F&GP, but reiterated his support for the Clerk's decision to raise concerns about procedure.
- Cllr Morsley commented that it had been a long time since the Council had held an extraordinary meeting and noted that such meetings are usually called to address procedural matters.

25/113 Items to be taken into private session

To determine which items, if any, of the Agenda should be taken with the public excluded.

Cllr Bridgman proposed agenda item 25/115 (Items for Information only - Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway Tenders) be taken into private session due to the commercially sensitive nature of the information to be noted.

Cllr Morsley seconded.

Resolved unanimously.

25/114 Pizza Press

To review the decision of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 27 November 2025 and in particular:

- 1 To consider whether the decision to award Pizza Press a contract for the use of the West End Road Carpark was valid and in accordance with the lease held by the Council by West Berkshire Council.**

Cllrs Bridgman and Geary reported that they had reviewed the lease held with West Berkshire Council and could identify no wording that prevented the Council from issuing a contract of the type envisaged to Pizza Press, provided that any arrangement remained consistent with the terms of the lease.

Cllr Morsley queried whether the Council held comparable agreements with other users of the Fairground space.

Cllr Kilshaw reported having taken informal advice from a land agent barrister following the previous meeting, who had advised that a lease should not be granted, but that a contractual arrangement would be appropriate.

Members discussed whether Pizza Press' operation remained compatible with the car park's primary purpose and whether any planning or licensing issues could arise in relation to street trading permissions.

The Chairman noted the need to ensure that any proposed contract aligned with the Council's lease obligations with West Berkshire Council and confirmed that further discussion with West Berkshire Council would be required.

- 2 If the answer to the first question is ‘yes’ to consider the terms of that contract including but not limited to the question as to demand any consideration, and if so the amount of such.**

The Chairman opened the matter for debate and Members confirmed that they had reviewed the meeting papers.

Members noted positive feedback from the community and the importance of not discouraging a successful local business. Concerns were raised that excessive charges could make the venture unviable. Members also discussed fairness to future applicants, administrative overhead, and the principle of maintaining a consistent process while allowing flexibility in contractual terms depending on circumstances.

Several Members expressed discomfort at revisiting a decision of this nature, noting concerns about the precedent it may set and the potential reputational impact on the Council. It was acknowledged that consistency, fairness, and confidence in Council decision-making were important considerations alongside the contractual and legal issues being discussed.

The inclusion of a break clause and an earlier review period was suggested to provide safeguards for the Council.

Cllr Kilshaw proposed that, subject to no objection from West Berkshire Council, a peppercorn consideration of £1 per year be agreed for a 12-month period, with a 3-month notice period for cause and a 3-month notice period without cause exercisable only after the initial 12 months. The motion was seconded by Cllr Morsley.

Resolved by majority vote

Vote: 10 in favour, 2 abstentions, none against.

The Chairman confirmed that a draft contract would be prepared and discussed with Cllr Geary and West Berkshire Council.

- 3 To consider any other matter arising from the issues set out above.**

None.

25/115 Items for information only

Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway Tenders

To note that three tenders were received in accordance with the Parish Council’s procurement procedures. The Steering Group reviewed all submissions and made a recommendation to the Clerk regarding the preferred bidder. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Community Committee and the Chairman of the Council, agreed with the recommendation to proceed with RC Saunders.

Minuted at Part II.

Part II

25/116 Exclusion of Press and Public (if needed)

To pass a resolution under s.1(2), Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Cllr Bridgman proposed.

Cllr Kilshaw seconded.

Resolved unanimously.

25/115 Items for information only

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The Members noted that five tenders were issued in accordance with the Parish Council's procurement procedures, in response to which three submissions were received. The Steering Group had reviewed all the submissions in detail and made its recommendation to the Clerk regarding a preferred bidder.

Cllr Kilshaw set out an analysis of the tender responses (Cllr Saunders left the room during this explanation and, in any event, took no part in this item).

Cllr Morsley thanked Cllr Kilshaw for his work to date and commented that the tenders had been thoroughly reviewed and that the preferred tender met the Council's requirements and was financially viable.

It was noted that, following receipt of the Steering Group's recommendation, the Clerk had decided, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and Financial Regulations (and following consultation with the Chairman of the Community Committee and the Chairman of the Council), to proceed with RC Saunders as the successful bidder for the Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway – Phases A and B.

Close

The meeting closed at 19:12

Date of next meeting: March 12 2026

Miss Danielle Davis

30/01/2026