

Annual Village Meeting

14th May 2025

6.30pm, Rowde Village Hall

Minutes

20 people attended, plus 6 Parish Councillors

1. Review of Minutes of the last Annual Village Meeting held on 8th May 2024.

The minutes were reviewed for accuracy by the Parish Council at their meeting in June 2024. A copy is available from the Clerk or on the website.

2. Community reports

- Alice Simpson, Headteacher from Rowde Primary School.

Miss Simpson noted that the school is in a really good place. There are now 120 children on roll. This has increased from 89 at its lowest. The number of pupils joining the school is stable. In September 2025, there will be 23 pupils joining the school. There is now a straight reception, and year 1 class now. There are 5 classes in total.

The school has just undergone its Church school inspection (SIAMS). The report can be found on the school website. The school has been rated as 'flourishing'.

There will be a nursery on the school site provided by an external company (not led by the school). They are waiting for their Ofsted registration. They have created a beautiful room which is ready to go. The nursery will take children from 2 years old. The school's reception class will work closely with the new nursery.

Rowde School has received a grant from Wiltshire Council to provide wrap around care. This has enabled the school to reduce the cost for parents. The school is now open 10 hours a day.

The school has obtained three quotations from contractors to infill the pool. There have been some delays due to drainage queries. This is stage one of the project; to infill the pool and to grass over the area.

A question was asked about Forest School. Miss Simpson replied that a teacher is undergoing forest school training. The school thanked the fete committee in advance for their proposed donation from the Rowdefest event.

- Julie Baker: Rowde Village News

J Baker updated the meeting on the cash flow problems being experienced by the Rowde Village News. It was noted that printing costs have sky rocketed. It costs £585 per print run. The Parish Council was thanked for the contribution that it makes to the Rowde Village News.

A question was asked about where the shortfalls are. Payments for advertisements are not always made timely. There is enough to cover the issue for June. J Baker agreed to remain in touch with the Parish Council about funds, especially if there is a short-term problem.

- Barbara Zaccarelli: Fete Committee – Rowdefest

B Zaccarelli noted that this is the fourth consecutive year of the fete. This run of the fete events began in 2022, the year of the Jubilee. The event started out as a picnic in the playing field and a chance to gather. There was the Coronation to celebrate in the following year. Then the event was renamed to Rowdefest and became a festival with a fete.

Earlier this year, the team hosted a cream tea. It was a wonderful event. Lots of tea and lots of cake. Everything including the tea and cream was donated. The profit from the event was £460. All food and drink items were donated by Sainsburys.

Rowdefest this year will have a food van, pizza, tea in the church, a book stall, plants sale (people can bring plants on the day), bric-a-brac.

The proceeds from the profits of the event will be split between: Rowde Academy Forest School, and the Rowde village news.

B Zaccarelli thanked the Church and Village Hall for being so supportive, and so that the team do not have to hire portable toilets.

B Zaccarelli noted the good condition of the grass in the Tower View Play Area. The Parish Council has a new grounds maintenance contractor.

There are plans to rekindle the Open Gardens, which used to happen in the village. More gardens are needed. There will be a charge of £5.00 for an adult, children free, with tea provided in the church.

Every year the support from village for the fete is growing. The purpose was to get villagers involved.

The fete event will take place on Saturday 31st May 2025, 1pm – 7pm.

- Cllr Laura Mayes,

Wiltshire Councillor for Bromham, Rowde and Roundway was re-elected at the beginning of this month.

Cllr Mayes updated the meeting on the political status of Wiltshire Council. The Conservative party had a large majority at the previous elections. The biggest party in Wiltshire Council now is the Liberal Democrats. They do not have enough members to form a majority. A Cabinet will be formed soon.

Cllr Mayes gave an overview of work that she has been involved in over the past four years:

Furlong Close is still going. The previous admin block is being used to deliver low-cost counselling. They are getting a lot of referrals from GPS, and there is self-referring too. Those doing the counselling are Trainees. The first cohort of 100 trainees have completed their required training hours at the Mind Tree Café.

Sands Lane: this was a planning application for a large development off Sands Lane. Wiltshire Council refused the application. The appeal against the decision has been refused too.

Furlong Close: the owners are looking to build on the site.

The government has set high housing targets. Cllr Mayes states that if the village has a strong neighbourhood plan, then planners should respect that.

Silverwood School: the development work has been completed now. Cllr Mayes made the case to the Cabinet for the school to be saved and not closed. Cllr Mayes suggested that the Clerk contacts the Headteacher and arranges a tour of the school.

ACTION: Clerk

It was noted that the Parish Council had been concerned about increases in traffic to the school. Cllr Mayes noted the extra traffic is not noticeable.

A Parish Councillor raised concerned that minibuses are still using Cock Road. Cllr Mayes asked the Parish Council to put that concern in writing to her and she would investigate the concern with Passenger Transport.

ACTION: Clerk

The Gypsy and traveller plan has been paused. Some County Councillors raised concern about the process of the development of the plan.

The Clerk noted a current planning application for a Romany settlement on land off The Common and asked whether that would be included in the quota for gypsy and traveller sites.

Cllr Mayes also mentioned the forthcoming shop for the village.

Caen Hill: there will be traffic lights at the Marsh Lane junction. Traffic lights will be triggered by traffic coming along Marsh Lane. Wiltshire Council is making a £3million investment in this project.

It was noted that work is being carried out on Caen Hill to modify drainage under A361.

- Rowde Parish Council

A Year in the Life of Rowde Parish Council

May 2024 – April 2025

Councillors

- We said farewell to Barbara Zaccarelli and Chris Stevens.

We welcomed:

- Elaine Watt and Sarah Rigby

Concerns raised by residents during the year

- speed of traffic through the village
- Safe pedestrian route along A342
- Litter
- Car parking on junctions
- Dog waste in Children's playing areas.

Fete

Celebrated Rowdefest. Thanks to Barbara and her team. A £1000 was donated to the Mind Tree Café from the proceeds of the Fete. The Parish Council donated a further £1800 to purchase a barista machine for the new café.

Services

The Hub – in December 2024, Rowde Parish Council started the discussion with Bromham Parish Council to re-house their container acting as The Clubhouse, when their new community hub has been constructed. The Parish Council expressed their interest in having the container.

Community Payback have been contacted and will carry out community work for the village. They need access to a toilet and hand washing facilities though.

The Defibrillator was moved from the Cross Keys pub to the Village Hall.

RoSPA report of play areas in September 2024. The wooden swing set in Silverlands Plan Area has been replaced (May 2025).

Community

The PC hosted a Community Prepared evening in June 2024, where the parish asked for people who could help in an emergency. It was also an opportunity for to identify vulnerable members of the community who may need help in an emergency.

Contractors for the new Haymeadow Way build, have offered to carry out some voluntary work in the village. It was originally suggested that they could paint the goal posts in the large playing field and the benches on the Hill. This has proved difficult to organise. It has been suggested that they carry out work on the memorial plot at the allotments for now.

Village Clean up took place on 15 June 2024 and the village entered the Best Kept Village competition again.

New bespoke village noticeboards have been made by the Devizes Men's shed. One has been gifted to the Village Hall. There are two further noticeboards, and we are waiting for Aster permission to site them.

Village Christmas Tree was purchased and put up by the Parish Council.

A remembrance wreath was laid on behalf of the Village on Remembrance Sunday.

The Parish Council carried out a leaflet drop to seek new Parish Councillors and to promote the elections that took place this month.

Allotments: a large volume of waste material which had been discarded in the allotment car park was paid to be removed.

Work has taken place recently to continue this clearing and to help create drainage channels in the car park to ease flooding issues.

- The allotment tenancy agreement was updated. Allotment rents increased from March 2025.

Planning:

Neighbourhood plan continues: a site selection meeting for the village was held on 23rd April 2025. The consultation is still open. If you are interested in putting your site selections forward for inclusion in the plan, please do.

There is a new Town Clerk for Devizes, and he will ensure that the Plan is finished.

Haymeadow Way is being built, off Reed Place. Priority will be given to Rowde residents. You must be on the homes4wiltshire website to be able to bid for a property.

6 of these will be for social rent. 4 properties will be for shared ownership (2 x one bed house; 2 x 2 bed house)

The buildings arrived on site as large modular structures. Rowde is only one of three areas in the whole county to benefit from such a project.

The houses will have EV chargers and solar panels.

The Parish Council was asked to grant an easement across the grassed play area in Silverlands Play area

Cross Keys pub: an application has been submitted for the pub to be turned into a village shop. There is also an application to build two new homes: in the car park and where the old shop was. There are plans for 12 parking spaces on site.

Furlong Close: information on a potential development by Gaiger Brothers was delivered at the Parish Council meeting in January 2025. Some initial investigation on site has taken place.

Sands Lane planning application was rejected at appeal.

Permission in principle application has been made to Wiltshire Council for 9 dwellings off Close Lane. This application has not been decided.

A Gypsy and Traveller Proposed Site has been proposed for Rowde (opposite Conscience Lane entrance). This consultation is still with Wiltshire Cabinet.

There was a planning application at Rowde Primary School to fill in their swimming pool and install EV units.

Silverwood School – new school building work has been completed and is now open to students.

Wiltshire Council is in the process of seeking a speed limit reduction from 50 mph to 40 mph

The Parish Council responded to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation (government).

National Grid continue with their VIP project to put pylons underground across Roundway Down.

Highways:

Community Speedwatch team continues to grow in number in preparation for using the camera in the village.

The overgrown pavement along Devizes Road is still of concern and the matter is being dealt with by Cllr Mayes. Wiltshire Council plan to carry out trial clearance of the grass verge, when the equipment is available. The tarmac on the pavement may deteriorate

further if the vegetation is ripped out. There is just earth underneath the overgrowth. Wiltshire Council has no funds to repair the pavement.

There has been a request for resurfacing on Springfield Road.

Rowde Court Road was resurfaced, when residents did not expect it to.

Cllr Mayes has requested patch work on Devizes Road (by bus shelter)

Caen Hill, there will be a road improvement scheme installed on Caen Hill in 2026. For Rowde there is a plan for movement sensor traffic lights at the junction of Marsh Lane.

Flooding:

L Wills has worked with the drainage team at Wiltshire Council. CCTV surveys of some of the main drains in Rowde have been carried out. Repair work has taken place on Devizes Road.

L Wills met with Richard Williams, Drainage Engineer for Wiltshire Council. There have been problems with flooding from Silverlands to Manor Farm.

Further drainage survey is taking place in Spring 2025 on Marsh Lane to look at flooding issues in that area.

The drainage team were in Rowde on 6/12/24. Some channels have been dug into the brook to help with drainage on A342.

VACANCIES

There are 4 vacancies on the Parish Council (3 after the co-option of T Lines at the Parish Council meeting on 14/5/25). If you are interested in local matters, please come along to a meeting to see what we do, then ask to be co-opted at the next meeting.

3. Presentation of the Parish Council Accounts for 2024-25.

The draft accounts were presented to the meeting. The accounts have been submitted to the internal auditor. There were no comments made. The accounts will be presented for approval at the Annual Parish Council meeting after this meeting.

The precept for 2024-25 was £40,554, which was an increase of 3% on the previous year. Expenditure last year 2024-25 was £50,906. This was a decrease from the previous year, with a spend of £83,067 in 2023-24. The majority of this increase was money spend on refurbishing Silverlands Play Area.

Income for 2024-25 totalled £52,563. In the previous year, income was £44,850. In the previous year the Council received an additional £32,703 from Wiltshire Council to take over the management of the play area at Silverlands Road. This year we have received a larger than normal VAT return of £8,455 for money spent on the Silverlands Play Area.

The public can view the accounts at any time.

4. Looking forward 2025-26 Precept

The Parish Council voted to increase the precept in January 2025 by 20%. This will give the Parish Council a total amount of £48,970.88.

The Parish Council's priorities for this year:

- a. Renewed grounds maintenance contract at an increase from £169 per month to the current contract which is £516 per month (large grass areas)
- b. Increasing waste management
- c. Neighbourhood Plan costs – savings on site selection but the draft document will have to have a referendum and there will be a cost for printing and collating that.
- d. Playground repairs: playground equipment is aging and needs replacing. The swing set in Silverlands Play area has just been changed at a cost of £3k
- e. Footpath creation at Tanis
- f. Potential legal fees over landownership disputes.
- g. Potential to purchase a decommissioned classroom to use as a meeting space at the large playing field (cost £3.5k), plus transport and utilities.

The final accounts can be viewed from July – September officially but you are welcome to ask any questions or see any information at any time.

5. Question time

Other issues raised:

Highways: C Greenwood asked if work to cut back overgrowth on the Devizes Road pavement could be continued by Wiltshire Council. Work was carried out from Dunkirk Hill towards Lakeside.

Drainage: recent CCTV survey by Wiltshire Council has shown that some drains were broken along Devizes Road. The area outside of Buena Vista can be infilled now.

A question was asked about the re-opening of two-way traffic through the Market Place, due to the closure after the fire in the Kebab shop.

There was some discussion about a building for the large playing field. C Greenwood noted that the community could set up a charitable trust to take on the structure and

manage it. There was a query about whether Parish Council could apply for grant funding from the Area Board {L Wills & Cllr Mayes have confirmed that they can}.

A question was asked about why Wiltshire Council was gritting large areas of road which are not swept up. The chippings are laid on top of micro surfacing. C Greenwood noted that county highways matters should be raised at the Area Board meeting.

A question was asked about missing speed signs in the village and why it has taken so long for them to be replaced. Wiltshire Council was waiting until after the elections.

ACTION: LM

A question was asked whether the landowner for Sands Lane had requested to move the footpath. The Parish Council has not heard of any application.

Annual Village meeting ended at: 7.40pm