

Wherwell Parish Council

**The Annual Parish Assembly took place on Tuesday 12th May 2026,
at the Colonel Jenkins Memorial Hall, Wherwell at 7.30pm.**

- 1. Welcome:** The Parish Assembly was chaired by Cllr Hutton.
Cllrs Sue Blazdell, Peter Bryant, Cheryl Barnes, Ali Young, the Parish Clerk Philip Warner and a dozen or more members of the public and local community groups attended.
- 2. Open Session:** The Assembly began with an open session in which members of the local parish thanked Cllr for the work they do for the community.
- 3. Approval of minutes:** The minutes of last year's meeting on 13th May 2025 were agreed and signed as accurate.
Matters Arising: The Parish Council needs to follow up on the idea of creating a parish emergency fund to help support any parishioners following an emergency.
- 4. To receive the observations of the County & District Councillors:** HCC and District Cllr David Drew presented his report, thanking the enthusiastic team of Local Parish Cllrs, and noting that Parish, District and County Cllrs achieve more when they all work together. Pressures on HCC finances mean that they have to focus on their statutory services. The Government reorganisation of local authorities will present challenges in the next couple of years as HCC and Local District Councils make way for new Unitary Authorities.
- 5. To receive reports from Village Clubs & organisations:**
 - a. Wherwell Church (St Peter and Holy Cross)** Nigel Waters, as Treasurer of the PCC presented his report, which began by noting how the fall in regular church attendees over the last 2 decades had put considerable strain on the church's income. There are however 2 regular services each month, as well as the well-attended Harvest and Carol Services. The year has seen significant maintenance including the felling of 4 large Ash trees in the church yard and work to the roof. Upcoming work includes restoring the chiming mechanism for the clock and repairs needed for the organ. The PC were thanked for their grant towards maintaining the churchyard, and a discussion followed on whether families with relative buried in the grounds might help financially with maintenance.
It was also noted that there will be a flower festival and plant sale at the church to raise funds for the clock on Sunday 31st May coinciding with the Wherwell Open Gardens.

- b. Home Guard Club (HGC)** Sandie Bastable, chair of the HGC presented a report about the club focusing on its social and charitable activities. Founded in 1946 to support soldiers returning home from the war, its mission remains to support the community through a place to socialise and be welcomed. Membership is only £20/yr and there are ~70 members. With a function room, pool table and snooker table, they hold regular quiz nights and other events to raise funds for local charities. Their 80th birthday celebrations this year included dishes from 1940's ration books and the first pint at 1946 prices!
- c. Wherwell and Chilbolton History Group (WHG)** report was made by their chair Andrew Flanagan. The Group was founded in 2008 following the discovery of a skeleton on the chalk bank opposite the HGC, which after initial police investigation turned out to be a 3rd Century body. Other remains discovered are believed to date from the Stephen and Matilda battle in 1141. WHG maintains a significant archive of the history of Wherwell and Chilbolton, organises a program of 9 talks each year and an annual walk, and is involved in a project to record an archive of all the headstones in the Wherwell churchyard. Again, membership is only £20, and they have ~65 members, though talks are open to all.
- d. Wherwell Village Hall (WVH)** John Conte, the chair of the village hall prepared a report, but being unable to attend, the clerk presented. WVH is managed and maintained by a dedicated team of volunteers, and is available at very modest rates for ad hoc and regular bookings. They offer a monthly coffee morning to support local residents, and organise an annual (sold out) fund raiser quiz. These fundraising events plus grants received are enabling a significant program of venue improvements to be undertaken.

6. Cllr Hutton made a report on Parish Council and other activities: His report focused on **Parish Council Business**

Cllr Hutton thanked Cllrs and Clerk for their work to support Wherwell Parish. Especially remembered were the late Lizzie Broadbent, who passed away early this year after many years' service on the PC, and the contribution of Diane Newell who has recently resigned for personal reasons.

The PC has reviewed many local planning applications, supported some, and raised concerns about others, although TVBC have the ultimate authority on these matters. In the year the PC has finally managed to get TVBC to approve plans for the restoration of the Villages War Memorial **Thanks to Cllr Bryant**. This work should now progress in 26/27. The PC has been working to try and address speeding in the village, and to prevent HGVs using the villages narrow streets and awkward junctions. They have managed to get HCC to install "not suitable for HGV" signs and have purchased 2 Speed Indicator Devices to alert drivers of their speed in the village. These will be installed once HCC have done necessary work to move or place posts around the village to mount them on. **Thanks to Cllr Blazdell**.

WPC engaged a consultancy firm to help prepare a neighbourhood plan last year. Regrettably the grants that were available to help support a parish in preparing the legal plan have been withdrawal, so for the moment the neighbourhood plan is on hold.

Wherwell Playing Fields

The playing fields continues to be looked after by the users, Shooters youth football, Wherwell Royals Men's Football team and cricket users. Thruxton Cricket Club disbanded at the end of the season and left Wherwell, and the plan over the next couple of years is to build a new Wherwell Cricket team.

WPF has recently been approached by Hampshire Cricket Club with a view to using the playing fields for one of its Pathway programmes to develop cricket talent in young people. This is an exciting opportunity, in the first year they will be developing the existing square to a higher standard and will repair or replace any equipment as required, plus they will be playing some games. If the relationship develops well, we will then look for a more formal agreement moving forward.

The Pavilion is now used during the week for both yoga and dog obedience and agility training. This brings in a small but steady income, but more importantly it provides an opportunity for groups of more mature people to get together and socialise doing something that they love.

In addition, we have recently been approached Ninny's House Nursery with a view to moving to Wherwell Playing Fields. Plans are being drawn up to accommodate the Nursery alongside existing users. This will bring in steady income to allow the playing fields committee to improve the sports facilities and make repairs to the pavilion.

Wherwell Primary School

The school is doing incredibly well under the leadership of our head teacher, Mandy Ovenden and her team. Our phonics and key stage 2 results were some of the best in the country let alone Hampshire.

We are a very sought after school as a result we are taking 22 pupils in reception which is bucking the trend as many primary schools are finding reduced numbers. In total we have 137 pupils which is the highest for many years and may even consider opening a 6th classroom in the future.

7. Date of the next Meeting: Tuesday 11th May, 2027

There being no further business, the Parish Assembly closed at 7:15 pm, and members of the public and representatives of local groups remained for some time to continue informal discussions about how they could work together to support each other and the local community.

Signed:.....

Date:.....