Review of the Parish Council Year, 2025/2026

INTRODUCTION

In preparing this review for us of the Parish Council's year I found myself thinking how meeting by meeting, month by month, it is hard to be sure whether we are making a difference?

However, having now done so, it has struck me how many things we have been involved with.

It is our hope that you will consider that we have made a positive contribution to the life of our community.

But that is for you to judge…

Richard Mann, Vice-Chair.

LOCAL ELECTIONS

Local elections were held in May 2025.

No election was necessary as we had two fewer candidates than councillor positions on the parish council. Eight councillors continued on the council and Caroline Roofe joined the Parish Council.

The two remaining vacancies were filled by co-option in June.

With Jim Bralsford and Mike Holgate joining us.

Nigel White was elected as our Wiltshire Councillor.

COMMEMORATIONS

On the 8th of May we remembered the 80th anniversary of VE day.

We also remembered VJ Day at the war memorial on the 15th of August.

And held our usual Remembrance service with St. Nicholas Church, the Methodist church and local residents in November.

The peace lamp was lit on each occasion.

VILLAGE SHOP

We are aware that there is interest in taking on the lease on the village shop, with an alcohol licence approved. However, it's not clear when, or if, it will re-open. Our Unitary Councillor has spoken to the potential new leaseholder.

CLIMATE AND NATURE GROUP

The Wild Waters Festival, which we lead on, will take place again this year.

It is a celebration of community and nature among our riverside towns and villages in the valley and beyond. At the same time drawing attention to the plight of the river due to climate change, nature loss and other human impacts such as pollution.

More than 20 events are expected across the festival area and they will take place between 30th May and 30th June. Here in Winsley we are hosting an important Eco-poet Dr Helen Moore and the film club are screening the Oscar winning animated film: Flow. Details on the festival website. There are two opportunities for residents to join Watermark workshops in June. Sign up is via the Wild Waters Festival website: wildwatersfestival.com

One benefit of last year's Festival is that we learnt from Wessex Water of their Watermark scheme. We have successfully applied for this year's scheme to become a Watermark Community which will provide us with practical support from Wessex Water to save water, manage rainwater, reduce runoff and improve the local environment. An increasingly important work as we face a warming climate bringing both greater risks of winter flooding and summer drought.

We are also looking to establish a farm cluster across the Winsley, Bradford on Avon and Trowbridge area. Clusters have become a popular way for farms to network; often opening up opportunities for sharing resources and knowledge, fostering innovation and helping co-ordinate best practice for example regenerative approaches to soil, water and nature. Our first meeting to make a start on this takes place next week.

HIGHWAYS

Posts and tactile pavement were added to the formal pedestrian crossing on Dane Rise where the path from the playpark meets the road, to make the crossing more obvious to drivers. New 20mph roundels were painted on Dane Rise to reinforce the speed limit.

We are expecting a traffic light-controlled crossing to be installed at the top of Dane Rise to allow pedestrians safe passage across the bypass to and from Hartley Farm and the surrounding countryside.

We continue to push for a 10mph reduction in speed limit on the Winsley bypass from 50mph to 40mph.

MAINTENANCE

A heavy roller was hired and used to create a level surface again on the Northfield village green making conventional mowing feasible again.

Swing chains & seats were renewed in the playpark.

DOG WASTE BINS

We were recently given short notice by the company emptying the village dog poo bins that they would no longer be providing us with this service.

We are very grateful to our neighbours Bradford on Avon Town Council for agreeing to include our bins in their waste collection round which they operate with their own staff. This is on a one year trial basis but has started well.

PLANNING

Between April 2025 and March 2026 the Council considered 41 planning applications, compared to 29 last year.

The Parish Council does not have authority to grant or reject a planning application. Instead, its role is to consider the potential impact of a development on the village and its environment and submit a considered opinion to the Wiltshire Planning Authority.

Significant planning applications considered during the year included:

- Alterations to Nicholson House at Dorothy House Hospice for therapy rooms.
- Change of use of a field on Bradford Road for commercial dog walking.
- Change of use of a garage and land on Cottles Lane to become a workshop.
- Bradford on Avon Rugby Club for construction of a new indoor training facility.

We had some objections to the above applications, with reasons set out on Wiltshire Council's planning portal.

The Wiltshire planning authority has subsequently approved the Dorothy House application but has refused both the dog walking field and the workshop. The Rugby Club's outline planning application was approved and we await further developments.

AVONPARK

Work has started on the redevelopment of Avonpark Retirement Village. This is due to last two and a half years.

A footpath across the 'dog walking' field has been re-routed to allow the contractor to setup a compound for them to operate from.

Currently there is a temporary mound of materials on site to be sorted into categories, for re-use on site, recycling, waste, etc. The area will be re-seeded and planted to bring it back to the open area that was previously there.

The Parish Council will continue to monitor the works and periodically will liaise with the management at Avonpark.

FINANCE

When considering the precept (the local tax to support the Parish Council) the Parish Council agreed to keep the 'precept' or local tax which funds the council unchanged with a charge for a Band D property being £30.45 for 2026/27, with the total precept being £28,597.73.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Parish Council has just received £21,871, the first of three Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments from the redevelopment of Avonpark Retirement Village. The total amount to be paid is £72,903.63, with further payments in November 2026 and May 2027. The Parish Council will start to consider possible uses of this money and will consult with residents. The money has to be spent, or allocated for spending, within five years of receipt.

NO MAN'S LAND, CONKWELL

This area of common land had been illegally occupied by an individual for several years.

A member of the local policing team and the Highways Enforcement Officer at Wiltshire Council drew the Parish Council's attention to legislation that would compel the occupier to leave the site and notice was served in August.

Once the occupier had left the site, members of the Parish Council and Wiltshire Council's contractor, Streetscene, cleared the site.

JOHN PRESLAND NATURE RESERVE AND ASHLEY PONDS

Thanks to volunteers from the Nature Reserve, Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and Winsley Wallers, who have all given their time during the year on enhancing our outdoor environment.

A brand new path and stone seat have been created in the reserve.

Dangerous trees with ash dieback near public paths were also removed.

The largest Ashley pond was cleared.

COTSWOLD VOLUNTARY WARDENS

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens installed steps on the slope at the bottom of the Turleigh to Avoncliff path (WINS10) in May 2025 making passage there much easier as it was an area prone to being very muddy and slippery.

WINSLEY WALLERS

Restoration has started on the dry stone wall at the east end of the Northfield village green. Wildflowers such as ivy leaved toadflax are being planted in the wall as it is being built in collaboration with the Nature Chain group. Repair of a collapsed wall on the Murhill road near the nature reserve has been completed.

THIRD ANNUAL ORGANISATION'S MEETING

We convened a third annual organisation's meeting in October.

In attendance were 20 village groups including the Gardening club, Nature Chain, Bowls Club, Cricket Club, Neighbourhood Police, Hartley Farm and many others.

Really useful conversations continue to take place at these meetings helping to strengthen and deepen our community.

GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Parish Council was pleased to make two grant awards.

One of £620 to Winsley Primary School for stage lighting and the other of £1,000 to the Village Hall for redecoration.

Also, a donation of £250 to the Dorothy House Lifelines Appeal.

THANK YOU!