

Willoughby Parish

Minutes of the Willoughby Annual Community Meeting held on 23 April 2026 at 7.00pm in the Village Hall

Present

Cllr Beech – Chair of Willoughby Parish Council
Parish councillors Ash, Honess, Lewis and Sheppard
Jo Jarman - minute taker
Members of the public – 12

Cllr Beech welcomed everyone to the meeting and reiterated that it is a legal requirement to hold a meeting annually between 1 March and 1 June. This meeting for the parish has been facilitated by the Parish Council this year. Residents can organise the meeting in the future, if they so wish.

Apologies

Richard Jackson

Minutes of the last meeting

Malcolm Lewis proposed that the minutes of the Annual Community Meeting held on 29 April 2025 be approved, seconded by Stuart Sheppard. **Approved.**

Community Action Report 2026

Maggie Beech presented the report. The full report is available on the Parish Council website.

The highlights of the year include:

- The concert arranged by FLAG to raise funds to dredge the brook was a great success and raised sufficient funds to dredge the brook with some money left over for further work. Maggie thanked all the volunteers for making the concert happen and residents for supporting the event. FLAG had carried out all the work they could; the dredging was the last piece of work needed to minimise the flooding in the village. Given the wet winter we have had it has paid dividends as there has been no flooding. It was noted that the banks need some work for which the remainder of the money could be used.
- Moor Lane and Sawbridge Road – there has been some progress. White edging lines have been painted and SLOW signs at Willoughby Lodge. The plantings along the edges of the road have been put in. We are waiting for the potholes and tarmac to be repaired. It is a temporary fix until such time as we move up on the waiting list. Residents noted the road is much safer.
- Willoughby Monthly – this is now being produced by a team of new volunteers, who put articles together, print and distribute the newsletter. Thanks were passed to Hannah Gowney-Hedges who had produced the newsletter until recently.
- New Parish Council website – the old website was run by Maggie and her husband but did not meet accessibility standards so a new one had to be commissioned. Maggie and the Clerk now maintain the website.
- Maintenance for which the Parish Council is responsible is listed in the report.
- The footpath on the A45 is an issue; this has been reported to WCC Highways.

- Big Ground – the gateway which the footpath goes through suffers from flooding. The Public Rights of Way Officer (PROW) at WCC has agreed to supply a ton of hardcore but this will need to be laid by volunteers. The owner of the land has asked that the work be supervised by WCC. It is hoped to get the work done in the summer when the ground is dry.
- Shrubbery footpath – three gateposts have been replaced. The kissing gate has been widened by 2” to 3”. There is nothing more that can be done. Signs have been put up asking people to keep their dogs on leads.
- Hedges – residents have kept their hedges cut back.
- Bus shelters and benches are inspected and maintained as necessary.
- Footpath and road issues are reported regularly to WCC Highways.
- Longdown Lane/A45 junction - a lot of work was carried out to obtain data which was submitted to the Road Safety Officer with a request for improvements to the road. The response is included in the appendix to the minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 11 March 2025. A resident raised that the hedge needs cutting back as it is obstructing the view for cars pulling out. Stuart Sheppard will take photos for the Clerk to send to WCC Highways to ask if they can arrange for the hedge to be cut back. WCC Highways will not fund road improvements at the junction. A resident raised that it might take a death to make WCC Highways do something; it was noted that there have been deaths in the past.
- RBC Local Plan – following the work carried out to object against the proposal to include Lodge Farm in the next stage of the Local Plan, it was not included in the Regulation 19 Submission Plan - a great success. RBC intend to send the Plan to the Government by the end of April.
- Neighbourhood Development Plan – this was approved in 2019. It has been updated every two years; the decision was taken to not update at the last review date as national policy may well change again, and RBC’s Local Plan has been undergoing review and consultations. It was noted that all funding has been withdrawn for Neighbourhood Development Plans in the future.
- Local Governance – a new duty on Local Government is being proposed to establish effective neighbourhood governance structures; the proposals recommend a reduced reliance on Town and Parish Councils which is disappointing as they know local needs better than anyone and the proposal would potentially reduce local empowerment.

Issues residents would like to raise

Maggie invited positive news:

- There was a speed van on the way into Dunchurch before the dual carriageway earlier today.

The following were raised:

- Local Government Reorganisation – the decision is due in the summer. The Parish Council did not submit a view as they felt it was very personal; the consultation was publicised by the Parish Council on the website for residents to respond to themselves.
- A resident gave an update on the plans for a neighbourhood health hub in Rugby Central.
- Footpath from Pye Court to the Church – there is an electric fence which is difficult to navigate for walkers and their dogs. This will be raised when the PROW Officer visits the village in June.

Maggie thanked residents for coming.

The meeting closed at 7.51pm.