WILLINGALE PARISH COUNCIL

Email clerk@willingaleparishcouncil.org.uk

Minutes of Annual Parish Assembly
Held Thursday 16th May 2025 – Willingale Village Hall

In attendance: Cllrs N Pavyer, D Stokes, J Bianchi, D Watson, R Tilbrook, L Fresco & 16 members of the public.

1) Apologies were received from Cllr S Bosworth and the Clerk to the Council, Clare Milligan.

2) The meeting was opened at 7.30pm by Cllr Nick Pavyer, Chair of the Council, who welcomed everyone. He said that the Council had met 6 times in the year, considered 14 planning applications and followed up on a significant number of fly tips. He said that recently the Council had been looking at the implications of the proposed Devolution in Essex but re-assured those present that Parish Councils would retain an important role, perhaps more so under the proposed new regime. He went on to thank Cllr S Bosworth for organising the annual village litter pick, and Lesley Clough & Tom Young for continuing to produce "What's on in Willingale" for which the Council was very grateful. He also thanked Cllr J Bianchi for undertaking the ongoing inspections of the play equipment and bin emptying, and noted all the good work which had been undertaken around the village, maintaining, cleaning and repairing various street signs etc. He was also pleased to report that the new fingerpost had eventually been installed at the bottom of Beech Rd. He said that discussions about "affordable housing" in the village were ongoing, but that progress was slow due to the number of stakeholders involved.

3) The minutes from the meeting on 30th May 2024 were presented, proposed by Cllr D Stokes, seconded by Cllr L Fresco and duly signed.

4) The meeting then received a presentation from PC Dane Wyatt from the Essex Police Rural Engagement Team ("RET"). The presentation is available on the Parish Council's website – PC Wyatt explained how the RET covered the entire county of Essex, and their remit included wildlife protection, theft of plant and equipment, fly tipping prosecutions, traveller encampments and road safety. There had been a lot of work for the RET created by criminal gangs involved in hare coursing, the successful prevention of stolen vehicles, plant and equipment being exported, and some success with hidden "trail cameras" in detecting rural crime. A programme of targeted "road traffic stops" had uncovered crimes relating to Class A drugs, and vehicles potentially involved in fly tipping. Cllr N Pavyer thanked PC Wyatt for his informative presentation and for joining the meeting.

5) In the Clerk's absence Cllr D Stokes talked the meeting through the end of year finances. He noted that the Council had made every effort to keep the precept rise as low as possible, and that the weather conditions during the year meant that savings were made on verge cutting leading to a broadly balanced financial year. The main cost to the Council is the salary of the Clerk, and Cllr D Stokes said that the Council had been delighted with her support for the Council and her experienced guidance to the Team. The Council has a good reserves position.

6) The meeting then heard presentations from various organisations in, or connected to the village:

Aylett's Almhouses – Bernard Living introduced the Aylett's report as one of the trustees. These are the four cottages to the right of the Church and were bequeathed by Frederick John Cleminson in 1943 for the benefit of the older generation who were poor. A busy year for the trustees had involved organising repairs and replacements of some windows, doors and rendering. The finances are in reasonable shape having got grants from the "Almshouses Association". Works to the properties are always complicated by their Grade 2

listed status involving close working with the Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Heritage Team.

St Christopher's Bellringers – Ian Kerwin presented and said that the ringers have continued supporting 4 services a month at St Christophers, they practice on a Wednesday evening and host visits from other ringing teams. Willingale has been accredited to provide ringing courses to other ringers, and they have also had quite a lot of success in various competitions. New members are always very welcome, and the ringers would particularly like to attract a younger generation of new ringers.

Whats on in Willingale – Lesley Clough explained how WOIW is funded by the Parish Council and advertisements. She and Tom Young wanted to record their thanks to Heather Gingell for arranging the distribution of the magazine and the team of volunteers that go door to door. She mentioned that WOIW was available on the village website and was also distributed via the Village WhatsApp group. The year has seen a move to new publishers "YouLovePrint" after Steve Arnold's firm was no longer able to print it and Lesley thanked Steve for his invaluable support over a number of years. Advertising in the year produced around £360 of income, but she mentioned that they didn't want it to become too advertising "heavy" so that there was always space for local organisations. She said that suggestions for content were always very welcome.

Friends of St Andrews – the Church is owned by the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) and the small group of volunteers who undertake the beautiful displays were thanked. The church doors are open 24/7 to see the displays and for quiet reflection and prayer. Dawn Stokes advised the meeting that the CCT have in their work plan repairs to the porch and porch door.

Willingale Archives – Dawn Stokes said it had been a quieter year due to illness, but she did have the privilege of supporting the EFDC Museum at Waltham Abbey in a display relating to VE Day entitled "calm and courageous". She was invited to the opening ceremony as a VIP guest and made some useful contacts.

St Christopher's Church – Reverend Stewart Gibbs continues to lead the services and was pleased to report that more than 60 people attended on Mothering Sunday and more than 50 on Easter Sunday. Bishop Bradwell had led an evensong service which was well supported and there have been many events over the last year with the Rogation Walk and Chilli upcoming. On a practical point, maintenance work to the fabric is ongoing and the church decided to leave some areas of the graveyard unmown to encourage wildlife and to save on cost!

Willingale Tea Rooms – continue to open 3rd Monday of every month 10am to 12pm with homemade cakes and pastries all served with tea and coffee. The cost is just £2.50 which remains great value for money. There are regularly 15/20 people who come along, and all are welcome, whether from Willingale or surrounding areas.

Village Hall Committee – Andrea Weissner said that all trustees are volunteers and there have been a number of trustee changes during the year. Village Day or the Village Fete, is under review after Val Thomas stepped down after many, many years organising the event. The Trustees expressed their sincere thanks to Val for her unstinting efforts over this period and they are reflecting with other stakeholders about what might happen in 2026 – there will be no village day in 2025. The hall has employed new cleaners after Barry Hodgkinson retired, and the Trustees thanked Barry for his many years of service. Various projects are complete or ongoing including electrical works, energy efficiency measures, a new IT system and an online booking system. The big upcoming project is the roof which is showing its age and may need comprehensive repair or even replacement. The Trustees continue to organise fundraising events such as the Barn Dance, Craft Fair, Kids Christmas, Plant Fair and others.

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Friday Catch-Up Club – Dawn Stokes said that “Catch-Up” turned 13 this year and it continues to have an informal “home from home” culture where everyone “mucks-in”. They have been experimenting with putting on craft activities and these have been very popular. A lighter brunch is now on offer for those that don’t want a “Full English”. Typically, 15-20 attend and all is going well.

Willingale Sports & Social Club – Gemma Crouchman presented in Steve McFaul’s absence and said it had been a quieter year with costs impacting on the finances. They continue to provide the regular weekly Friday evening and Sunday afternoon bar service and have also put on activities for their members and their guests including the Pub Quiz, Bingo Night, Tapas Banquet to name but a few. They continue to collaborate and support the Church May Day celebrations, and the Village Hall more generally, which is seen as a valuable partner.

Cllr N Paver thanked everyone for their reports and hard work acknowledging what a great community Willingale is and the invaluable contribution that volunteers and volunteer groups make to the life of the village.

6) Public Questions

- Ian Kerwin asked whether it would be possible for a volunteer group to expedite the increasingly necessary repairs to the St Andrews entrance rather than wait for CCT to do it. Dawn Stokes explained that it was for the CCT to decide, but procedures had to be followed carefully as it was a listed building. She thanked Ian for his offer of help and said she would liaise with the CCT to see what could be done.
- Emma wanted to know how many Trustees the Village Hall had. Andrea W said there were currently six, but more were needed, especially those who had practical skills, fundraising skills etc

Cllr N Pavyer closed the meeting at 9.04pm and thanked those who had attended.

Signed as a true record…… Cllr……..……Date