Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Cherhill Parish Council held at Cherhill Village Hall on Thursday 12th November 2026, 7.00pm

FULL TEXT OF MINUTES AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE – www.cherhillparish.gov.uk

Present:

Dave Grafton – CPC Councillor and **Chairman**
Martin Purslow – CPC Councillor
Rob Pooley – CPC Councillor
Andy Sadler-Smith – CPC Councillor

Doug Price – CPC Councillor and Vice Chairman
Jane Page – CPC Councillor
Charlie Oram – CPC Councillor

Wilts Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Council

Peter Johnson – Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

Plus 11 members of the public

4898 Welcome from Chairman Cllr David Grafton

Cllr Grafton welcomed all to the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting, convened as a forum for questions to put to the Leader of Wiltshire Council.

4899 Apologies

Received from Cllr Nick White, Cllr Sean Hickey, Cllr Hislop, Cllr Rob Hislop, Wilts. Cllr Ashley O'Neill.

4900 Declarations of Interest

None received nor required.

4901 Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 22nd October 2026

Cllr Page proposed approval of the 24th September Minutes as a correct record, seconded by Cllr Pooley. Cllr Grafton signed off the Minutes.

4902 Introduction to Cllr Ian Thorn – Leader of Wiltshire Council

Cllr Grafton welcomed and introduced Cllr Thorn, who lives on the Cherhill side of Calne, and thanked him for making time to attend and field questions. He had been provided with the range of issues in advance.

4903 Waste : Domestic Waste Collections and Household Recycling Centres

Chaired by Cllr Sadler-Smith who referenced the now well-known plans of Wiltshire Council to close the 2 HRCs at Lower Compton (Honeyball) and Purton, to be replaced by a new facility, possibly close to Royal Wootton Bassett. Such proposals have caused great concern amongst residents in both locations and their surrounding areas. Cllr Sadler-Smith outlined the 3 main points and questions for discussion:

- **The need for a Costs Benefits Analysis for the proposed changes to Wiltshire's HRCs**. This had been put by Cherhill PC to Wilts Cllr Gordon King, Cabinet Member for Waste and the Environment, who had written to indicate there had not been time to address this before the proposals had been made. This lack of analysis is astounding so when will it be done?
- A **Carbon Footprint Assessment f**or the proposed changes. This had also been addressed to Cllr King, with the same response. When is this assessment going to be done?
- The Trialling of the **HRC Booking System**. The consensus across the affected parishes is that this is a solution in search of a problem. Where is the household waste going? Into household waste or, worse, fly-tipping?

Cllr Thorn first outlined the many financial issues and dilemmas that WC had to contend with. Closure of the 2 HRCs was not in the Liberal Democrat manifesto but the budget gap for 2026-27 is around £44M on a turnover of £567M. When his party took control in May 2025 they had what could be called the 'bad news meeting' when they were briefed by officers on the severe financial issues.

Household Recycling Centres Out of 10 Wiltshire HRCs only those at Lower Compton and Purton are owned and operated by Hills Waste Management, rather than Wiltshire Council. Late in 2025 a series of waste contracts was coming up for renewal. The Council had been keen to break the Hills monopoly but in any event the contracts offered by Hills for HRC recycling were quite unaffordable and much higher than offered by FCC Environment (UK) Ltd. After negotiations Hills did offer reduced figures thus the contracts were extended until a new council-owned HRC is running. The Council has set up 2 local authority trading companies, Ubico for kerbside collections and Norse Group to run the MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) at Lower Compton.

The **Booking System** currently being trialled is up to capacity and there are multiple reasons for it. There have been queuing issues though, admittedly, not at Lower Compton. There are also parking issues causing conflict. Elderly people worry over these things. Swindon residents have been visiting Purton HRC so that's another issue. The trial will continue to March 2027 and it's costs would be recouped. He did not expand on how savings would be made but they will see what the results are.

The **Costs Benefits Analysis** and **Carbon Footprint Assessment** had not yet been progressed for a number of reasons but he would commit to each of these being produced by Wiltshire Council.

Questions from the floor:

- Q – ***Is there funding available for the planned weekly kerbside waste collection?***
- A - Several million pounds had been budgeted, much of which from central government.
- Q - ***Where will the waste go after collection?***
- A – Food waste will go to a number of locations in Wiltshire. Recyclable waste from all HRCs goes to the MRF at Lower Compton. This transportation may look inefficient but that MRF is now managed by Norse Group more effectively than under Hills.
- Q - ***How does this save money?***
- A - Cllr Thorn would try to find out and get back to the PC.

Cllr Sadler Smith added that when the Wiltshire Local Plan is finally agreed it will no doubt allow for increased housing which in turn will heap additional pressures on waste management capacity.

4904 Planning Issues – The Planning Process and Wiltshire's Local Plan

Chaired by Cllr Price who outlined the main points for discussion:

- **Recognition and application of Neighbourhood Plan policies.** The Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan 2 forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the relevant areas of the parish. Cherhill PC however is concerned that CCNP2's policies are not always given appropriate weight in the assessments of planning officers and are often overlooked by other statutory consultees e.g. Highways and Landscape, as well as by applicants.
- **Delays and uncertainty in Planning Decisions.** Some planning applications remain undetermined for many months, or even years, often without any indication of when a decision can be expected. Two applications for much-needed community infrastructure, both with overwhelming local support, appear to have stalled without any clear timetable for resolution. One of these is a proposed farm shop on the edge of Lower Compton that would create jobs.
- **Wiltshire Local Plan – implications for smaller rural parishes**. The emerging Local Plan potentially has huge implications for communities such as Cherhill Parish, particularly re housing development. Are housing targets going to be cascaded down to parish councils?

Cllr Thorn responded as follows:

Re **Implications for Local Plans** – He could not rule out a 'target hierarchy' and thus some sort of housing target for parishes such as Cherhill, which would however be very much at the bottom, lying within a National Landscape (aka Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Housing targets arising out of the new Local Plan are likely to be distributed to parishes in around 6 months. Wiltshire Council was

facing a 'Mission Impossible' as there was an 83% increase in housing targets. WC is therefore looking at building wherever possible, including 'new communities' and using brownfield sites. WC was also keen to increase housing densities.

Questions:

- Q - ***Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), there is an emphasis on council officers rather than councillors taking decisions. What chance now will parish councillors have to influence the planning process? The democratic process is undermined.***
- A – Much less chance of this now, obviously, as very few applications will now be called in by councillors. The final decisions will indeed be made by Planning Officers
- Q - ***What about the mix of housing? It is striking how many applications we now see for house extensions. Will WC be looking for a good mix of housing?***
- A – Yes, the previous version of the Local Plan had a target of 40% for affordable housing.
- Q – ***It can take years to get applications approved, even when land has been given for housing. Why is there such a huge difference in the quality of planning inspectors and officer?***
- ***A –*** Probably because some are newly qualified and therefore they can be a little over zealous.

Cllr Price concluded by saying that there remain huge inconsistencies in the planning process. Developers paying for Wiltshire's Planning Officers to review their applications seems like a conflict of interest.

4905 Highways – Road Infrastructure and Road Safety

Chaired by Cllr Purslow who outlined the main points for discussion:

- **Weight Restrictions on Roads** – If weight restrictions can be placed on roads around Lyneham why not on the road from Devizes to Blackland? Also, why does WC not have an HGV policy given the increase locally in HGV traffic, particularly the uncategorised road from Quemerford to the A361, past Blackland?
- **Applications for 20 mph Speed Restrictions through LHFIG** – What was the basis for deciding that parish councils should now pay 100% of the costs of implementing 20mph limits. The estimated cost for the Calstone scheme was roughly £20,000, due to the temporary traffic controls needed during installation. Was the severe financial impact on councils such as Cherhill Parish ever considered?
- **Road Safety and Potholes** – How can the need for keeping traffic moving be balanced with the need for safety? If the A4 between Cherhill and Quemerford had it's limit reduced from 60mph to 50mph it would slow journey times by only 7 seconds but could have a huge impact on road safety on that stretch. There have been many accidents there but Wiltshire Council shows little interest in the scheme. Also, the standard of repair of potholes and road surfaces was often poor, such as at Calstone and Yatesbury.

Cllr Thorn responded as follows:
Weight Restrictions on Roads. He referenced a Cabinet meeting coming up in Bremhill where WC is going to be considering a more consistent approach regarding weight restrictions and enforcement. This should help protect urban and rural areas from the effects of HGVs.

20 mph speed limit applications
When he first joined Wiltshire Council it would agree 2 such speed zones in a given year. Ordinarily WC would be paying the legal fees and the parish council would pay for the signage, therefore there should not be a substantial impact on parish councils. He was though surprised at the estimated costs of £20,000.

Cllr Price added that WC does not appear to follow what other unitary authorities, Somerset and Oxfordshire, are doing which is to have much longer stretches of 50mph zones to avoid too many changes in limit along a particular road. Does there really need to be a fatality before WC takes this seriously? As Council Leader Cllr Thorn must take the lead here.

<u>Cllr Pooley</u> said that as well as road signage that needs improving, there are street lights every 30 metres on this stretch of road which suggests that a more appropriate speed limit would be 30mph.

<u>Road Safety and Potholes</u> This was the number one issue for the Council when he is out canvassing. There are still major issues but the extreme weather this year has not helped. The summer heat has affected the underlying clay in some parts. WC has leased a number of Bobcat (4WD) machines for road repairs which have proven very effective. A greater number of Bobcats would improve matters but the cost is high. AI software is now being used by WC for monitoring the condition of roads and can predict where potholes are likely to appear.

4906 <u>General Discussion and Agreed Actions</u>

Discussion centred on further questions from the floor:

- Q - ***Does WC own anything outside the county?***
- Nothing of which he is aware.
- Q – ***How much did it cost to give free parking back to disabled people?***
- A - Around £45K. This was in the Liberal Democrat Manifesto before the May 2025 election.
- Q – ***Why are there are no street lights at all on the Lower Compton main road (from A4 to the HRC) even though traffic rushes up and down that road?***
- A – <u>He will find out</u>.
- Q – ***Where can we find the data on the planned HRC closures?***
- A – This is available in the Wiltshire Cabinet papers of, he thinks, November 2025. They were therefore available online but he will check the date and confirm this.
- Q - ***A resident had written to question the consultation process. It did not appear to be very democratic.***
- A – Yes but the problem is how widely do you consult? The Council is supposed to make decisions but consultation is an intensely philosophical question. The trialled booking system is itself a form of consultation but as Council Leader he has to balance everything.

Agreed Actions : In summary Cllr Thorn had committed to ;

1) Wiltshire Council carrying out and publishing a **Costs Benefit Analysis** and a **Carbon Footprint Assessment in respect of the planned HRC closures,**
2) Finding out why Wiltshire's planning officers were routinely ignoring the provisions of **Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan (CCNP2).**
3) Finding out how, and quantifying, **financial savings** might be made on using the Lower Compton site as a single processing facility, with incoming waste coming from all other Wiltshire HRCs.
4) Finding out why **Wiltshire's planning officers and other statutory consultees were not taking sufficient notice of CCNP2** when making their planning decisions.
5) Finding out why there was so much **delay in Wiltshire's planning process**.
6) Looking into the delays and obstacles placed in the way of the referenced **farm shop application** once the applicants had sent him the documents and information.
7) Looking into the **proposed speed reduction on the A4 between Cherhill and Quemerford** and why this was not being supported by WC.
8) Reviewing Wiltshire Council's road speed limit policies, particularly re 50mph limits.
9) Finding out why there were **no street lights on the Lower Compton main road.**
10) **Attending a further meeting of Cherhill PC** in due course to update on these and other matters.

Cllr Thorn was thanked for coming to the meeting and for spending so much time fielding questions.

4907 <u>Dates of next meetings</u>

Thursday 26th November 2026 at 7.00pm – Cherhill Village Hall. Monthly PC Meeting.
Thursday 17th December 2026 at 7.00pm – Cherhill Village Hall. Monthly PC Meeting

The meeting closed at 9.33 pm.