



Newsletter

January 2024
Issue #002

HEYTESBURY, IMBER AND KNOOK PARISH COUNCIL

Now we have entered 2024,
a new Newsletter

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

We hope these articles will be of interest:

The purpose of the forthcoming Questionnaire.

How Team Work solved a long-term problem.

How our Parish Elections are organized.

We explain how the Budget and the Precept are set.

Preparations for the "Best Kept Village" competition.

How we co-operate with Wiltshire Unitary Council.

A revised Councillor contact list.

Our Code of Conduct Policy.

Updates on other current issues.

Our web sites details and other links.

The year 2024 brings new possibilities and opportunities for our community. In this our second Newsletter, we would like to continue introducing you to how the Parish Council operates. We highlight some items we believe you may like to know about and others that are opportunities for you to participate in our Villages' activities.

The Parish takes first steps on our new Heritage Trail

Following discussions with an adjacent property owner, the Council has permission to display, what is hoped to be, the first of many Blue Plaques forming a Heritage Trail through the Parish. The Blind House, once used as an overnight lock-up for miscreants, is one of the village assets owned by the Parish Council. Other possible sites for future plaques could include, with the owners' permission, the residences of Lord Heytesbury (Lord Lieutenant of Ireland), and Siegfried Sassoon (famous war poet) and also, the Hospital of St John, the Old Court House, the home of last village blacksmith and the Church of St Peter and St Paul. We would welcome further suggestions for possible worthy sites in our three villages.



Why are we delivering a Questionnaire to all residents?

The present Parish Council seeks ways to engage far more directly with all members of our community and to involve as many residents as possible in our decision-making and in shaping a vibrant future for our community. Your views are very important to us. To this end, among other strategies, we have set up informal "drop in" or surgery sessions to meet your Councillors in person and have started this Quarterly Newsletter to keep you better informed on what we are doing.

To attempt to gauge our progress, we have also designed a questionnaire to be delivered to every parish resident who is on the electoral roll. We plan to deliver a copy to each resident in exactly the same format each year. From an independent analysis of your responses over the years, we can gauge our progress. We hope that it will also point us towards future projects and other village improvements. When you receive the questionnaire we would be very grateful if you could spare the time to complete it. Please drop your anonymous completed questionnaire in at the Post Office. Thank you all in advance.



Above: The Easter Duck Race recently supported with a Raymond Trust Fund grant.

How your Parish Elections are organised

Our Parish Council has 11 Councillors: ten who represent Heytesbury and Tytherington Ward and one who sits for the Knook Ward. Every four years the entire Council must resign. The next four-yearly election is to be held in May 2025. If there are the same or fewer declared candidates than the number of Ward seats available, then all declared candidates are automatically elected without the need for a voting election. If however there are more declared candidates than available ward seats, then a full voting election must take place in that ward.

If a Councillor resigns **between** these four-yearly elections, and there are no requests for a by-election, a 'casual vacancy' is created which can be filled by 'co-option'. Anyone meeting certain simple criteria may apply to be 'co-opted'. (See criteria details on our website). When more than one candidate has applied for a vacant seat, a formal vote is taken at the next Parish Council meeting and a new Councillor is co-opted by majority vote.

For the first time in the May 2025 elections an, as yet unspecified, 'per capita charge' is to be levied by Wiltshire Unitary Council on any local Parish Council where a voting election has been triggered in a Ward. We note that no per capita charge is ever levied when a general election takes place. All Local Authorities are strapped for cash but some question the wisdom of levying a charge on local residents when exercising their very basic democratic right to cast a vote for their local representatives?

"Team Work" solves a long-term village problem

It is a huge boost to the Parish Council when it can be instrumental in sorting out a long-term village problem. Cllr Trish Fellowes has looked after our Parish Council owned playground equipment for over six years. For probably the last 30 years, the village access into the playground field has suffered from a regular flooding problem caused by excess storm water run off. (See flooding image below.)

Trish's many approaches to Selwood Housing Association, which owns the approach area in front of their nearby garage block finally bore fruit this Summer. Selwood appointed Pipework, a specialist drainage firm, to design a permanent solution. This extensive scheme (see image right) has now been completed and a long-term solution to the flooding problem is now in place. Many grateful thanks from all residents to Selwood and also to the splendid Pipework engineering team.



Flooding at playground access

Poo bag dispenser or waste bin?

Our Code of Conduct

All Councillors, whether elected or co-opted, agree to abide by our Code of Conduct (see our web site) which addresses general conduct as well as bullying and harassment of fellow Councillors and members of staff. Likewise, we expect our parishioners to do the same when dealing with the Parish Council.

We also enforce a "zero tolerance" of all forms of intimidation. Councillors should be able to carry-out their role without abuse, bullying or threatening behaviour from anyone including the general public.

Why Visit Our Website?

Our Newsletter is issued quarterly but to get the very latest announcements and news from the Parish Council. Please do visit our website via the links below:



<https://heytesburyparish.co.uk>

Update on the "Sports Field"

In November 2023 we learnt, belatedly, that the owners of the land north of Park Street had asked Wiltshire Unitary Council earlier in September to review the approval of the Asset of Community Value (ACV) status of the site. We were informed later in November that the ACV had been refused on review and the land had been removed from the approval list. At present we are not aware of any changes to the ownership or to the land's status.

Dog Poo Bag Update!

We receive many complaints about dog fouling and have recently renewed or refurbished a number of dog poo bag dispensers in the Parish. We would encourage you to politely ask dog owners to take their dogs' mess to a waste bin or home. Also, not to post used poo bags back into a dispenser or use it as a waste bin! (Image opposite:- dispenser or waste bin?)

We believe many of the offenders (people not dogs) are from outside the Parish and here to enjoy our villages. Fortunately, the vast majority of our residents (dogs and people) are well trained!

Flood Protection and Responses

Recent storms and flooding have highlighted the threats to our Parish. A small team of flood wardens, lead by Cllr Barker Bennett (01985 840323), monitors the threat. We have a number of road signs to warn people of serious flooding and a limited supply of gel sacks to help protect properties; this is on a first come, first served basis. The main issue is flooding of the footpath from the Park Lane Bridge to the Mill Pond and around the junction of Rise Road and Mill Lane where clearing drains helps to keep water entering the back stream. As the Wylde is the main river from here to the confluence at Wilton, the Environment Agency has the principle responsibility for maintaining current structures and managing flood risks.



Our Budget and Your Precept

In the last edition of the Newsletter, we introduced the Precept, but how is it set? At the end of each financial year (April) the Parish Council will have a sum of money remaining in its bank account. This is the General Reserve and marks the starting point for the financial plan for the next year.

A few months before 'Year's End', the Parish Council must set a budget. This forms our Precept request to Wiltshire Council for the coming year. We endeavor to estimate our forthcoming planned expenditures and revenues. Some Councils have other income sources (e.g. from car parking, social clubs or property). These may help off-set what is requested for the Precept. Alas, our Parish has no other significant income. The Precept is almost our sole source of funding. This should be borne in mind when comparing precepts set by other villages.

Some of the General Reserve may be earmarked for major future expenditure (e.g. traffic calming measures or planned repairs).

This coming year's Budget and Precept have been set and we are pleased that, with only one exception, it is the lowest increase (5.33% for Band D) since 2015. This is despite high yearly inflation (RPI 8.8% in Sep 2023). This equates to a total yearly increase for a Band D property of £2.99 and brings the new yearly Band D total to £59.09.

The Council expenditure may be divided into three categories namely: Statutory expenses (insurance, professional fees, legal notices etc), Running costs (training, staff salaries, subscriptions etc) and Community Benefit costs (ground maintenance, outside equipment, allotments, play areas etc). Most costs rise with inflation, some well above it and can distort the balance between the three cost types. The Council attempts to maintain a balance between these three categories.



Our Allotments in their full glory

Meet Your Parish Councillors at "Drop-Ins"

Each month there is an opportunity to meet some of your Parish Councillors at informal "Surgeries" held at locations around the Parish. You can express your views on parish matters or raise issues you feel need to be addressed. Provisional times and venues are shown below and latest information at the link below.

Councillor Surgeries 2024

Day	Date	Month	Time	Place
Wed	7th	Feb	10:30	Outside the phone box
Sat	9th	Mar	10:00	Heytesbury Church market
Sun	7th	Apr	14:00	Knook Allotments
Sun	12th	May	11:00	Tytherington by the bench
Sat	8th	June	14:00	Heytesbury play area
Sun	14th	July	11:00	Mill pond
Sun	11th	Aug	11:00	Knook Allotments
Sun	8th	Sept	14:00	Tytherington by the bench
Sun	6th	Oct	14:00	Heytesbury play area
Sat	2nd	Nov	11:30	Heytesbury Church market
Wed	4th	Dec	10:30	Outside the phone box

<https://heytesburyparish.co.uk/councillor-surgeries/>

The Raymond Trust Fund (RTF)

The present Raymond Trust Fund (RTF) is a charity set up in 1986 when the then Parish Councillors agreed that the Council itself become the Trustee of the Fund. An individual Councillor is not a trustee but contributes to the decisions of the Trustee and must **only** act in the best interest of the Trust.

The Trust can apply its property or assets towards the costs of a village hall (land and buildings). It may also apply its "clear income" (Revenue less costs and other grants) for charitable purposes that benefit the inhabitants of our three villages or those in the close vicinity. Small grants, deemed suitable by the Trustee, can be dispensed as detailed on our website.

Our "Green Credentials"

All Parish Councils have a duty to provide allotments if requested to do so and it is feasible. Our Parish Council owns a piece of ground in Knook for this purpose. (See picture on the left). We receive no income from these allotments but are required to administer the scheme. For example, we pay for the regular survey of all standing trees on site and undertake recommended maintenance-often at significant cost.

Forthcoming “Best Kept Village” Competition 2024



Each February, local councils are notified of the Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPRE) “Best Kept Village” competition, given links to the application forms and appropriate advice via the CPRE website.

Recently the Council realised that our Parish had not entered any village into the competition since 2006 and decided that it was time to try again,.

Each village provides a map and a list of points of interest for the judges, who then make two separate visits in early Summer; the first round for the West Wiltshire area category and second for the whole of Wiltshire.

Tytherington shone throughout the competition, coming **first** in the West Wiltshire group and a **joint second** in the “small village category” for the whole of Wiltshire; yielding them £80 in prize money. The judges commented in their report on how the village was a “Another hidden gem” and admired the well maintained open verges with mature trees.

To celebrate the victory, Parish Councillors and residents planted a tree and plaque marking the event.

This is an event to which we can all contribute in 2024. If you would like to join a small team to help entering the villages in the competition this year, then please get in touch with a Parish Councillor via the contact details below.



Parish Council Meetings

Regular Parish Council meetings are held ten times a year and are open to all residents. Currently, thanks to the trustees, they take place in The Hospital of St John on a Tuesday starting at 7pm. The first 15 minutes of the meetings are open for attendees to express their views on any matter. Additional “Extraordinary” Meetings can be called as needed. Forthcoming agenda items and previous meeting minutes are available on-line. Parishioners may ask Councillors to submit new agenda items.

Planned meetings for 2024 are below:

27 February	25 June
26 March	23 July
23 April	24 September
14 May Annual Parish	29 October
21 May Annual PC	26 November

How to contact your Councillors

Our Parish Council's full quota is **11 Council members** who sit to represent our two separate electoral wards. Ten Councillors represent the larger ward of Heytesbury (together with a part of Tytherington) and one Councillor represents the smaller separate ward of Knook. We have two vacancies at present.

- 1. Caroline Barker Bennett**, Tel: **01985 840323**. Email: carolinebarkerbennett@gmail.com
- 2. Charlie Blake**, Email: charlieraine04@gmail.com
- 3. Ben Coombes**, Email: bjcoombes@hotmail.com
- 4. Trish Fellowes**, Tel: **07484 683470** or **01985 841001**. Email: pmdfellowes@icloud.com
- 5. Susan King**, Tel: **07568 574918**. Email: susanking21@mail.com
- 6. Josephine Sneddon**, Email: josephinesneddon866@gmail.com
- 7. Vanessa Sturmey**, Tel: **07847 941133**. Email: vsturmey@hotmail.co.uk
- 8. Nick Williams**, Tel: **07799 300778**. Email: nick@nickwilliams.com
- 9. Anthony Wilson**, Tel: **01985 840223**. Email: ant.wilson3@btinternet.com

Parish Clerk, Tel: **01985 217144**. Email: clerk@heytesburyparish.co.uk

How to Contact Wiltshire Unitary Council

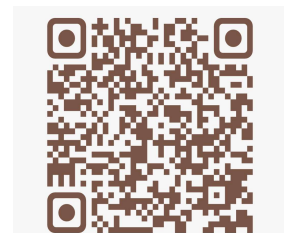
By Phone:

You can report potholes, blocked drains, faulty street lighting, fallen branches, fly tipping and many other nuisance items wherever you spot them. Your help will always be very much appreciated.

Contact Wiltshire Council customer services by Telephone on: **0300 456 0100**

Via the Internet:

If you are an internet user, download the *My Wilts* app. Use the QR Code or link below:



<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/mywilts-online-reporting>

Working with Wiltshire Unitary Council

Due to budget cuts at County level, some services formerly offered and funded from County Hall have been withdrawn. Some Parish Councils are able to take-on issues such as pothole repairs and overgrown footpaths themselves. We are not eligible to do so and must therefore fund all extra work needed from our Precept. For example, Wiltshire Council now only funds a single parish grass cut each year. We must fund all the extra work needed to keep our village verges, green-spaces and footpaths tidy and safe to use. Volunteers sometimes help out. We would welcome any additional help from the community.

We also use the *My Wilts* app (see opposite) to report issues. In addition, we receive a once monthly visit from the Parish Steward employed by Wiltshire Council. We provide a priority task list of up to five issues for him to accomplish during his visit. In addition Wiltshire Council has recently set up a Local Highways and Footpath Improvement Group (LHFIG) to upgrade local roads and footpaths. We can apply for grants but must contribute 25% of the cost of each project approved. Occasionally we can also apply to the Warminster Area Board for grants.