

PITSTONE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 29 May 2025
at Pitstone Pavilion, starting at 7.30pm and concluding at 10.10pm

PRESENT: Parish Councillors: Cllr Nicholls (Chairman), Cllr Saintey, Cllr McCarthy, Cllr Mrs Crutchfield, Cllr Blunt, Cllr Dr Frearson and Cllr Hawkins.
Parish Staff: Laurie Eagling (Clerk) and Dave Burton (Facilities Manager).
Keith Milmer, Trading Standards Scam Champion.
Buckinghamshire Councillors Peter Brazier and Chris Poll.
Mark Robinson, Pitstone Town Lands Charity.
Rev James Grainger-Smith, United Benefice of Ivinghoe with Pitstone.
PCSOs Mike Coker and Tina Dodson, Thames Valley Police.

Plus 19 members of the public.

APOLOGIES: Parish Councillors: Cllr Weber and Cllr Mrs Nash.
Gill Lowe, Pitstone Town Lands Charity.

AA1/25 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

See above. The Chairman officially opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He explained that an 'Annual Parish Meeting' is a local community meeting, and not a constituted meeting of either the Parish Council, Buckinghamshire Council, or the other bodies presenting. So whilst no resolutions could be passed, any issues that were raised during the evening would be taken back to the respective bodies for consideration.

AA2/25 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY held on 16 May 2024

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes were a true and accurate record, and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as such.

AA3/25 PRESENTATION BY PCSO MIKE COKER ON PITSTONE CRIME RATES IN 2025

Crime rates remain low vs the towns. The highest incidents were related to thefts from vehicles with 10 in the 5 month period. To help protect your property, TVP encouraged residents to ensure that nothing was left on display when they departed their vehicles and that vehicles were always locked. There were also 8 general thefts over the same period, so make sure property is not left unattended (eg in front gardens) and bikes are always locked etc.

They also reported a general rise nationwide of fraud both online and in person. Residents were advised to be cautious with any contact that they haven't instigated themselves.

TVP provided an update on staff shortages, advising that PCSO Tina Dodson had been the only PCSO for the area since September. PCSO Mike Dodson has now joined, further recruitment to take place. We previously had 5. They hope to increase patrols in the village as staffing rates improve.

TVP confirmed that they would be providing updated posters with their contact details. Like all other bodies, TVP don't monitor local Facebook groups etc, so residents were advised that they needed to get in touch with TVP direct to report any issues otherwise they would not be seen and could not be taken into account when building intelligence or tackling crime.

TVP had also been working with the parish council and Brookmead school on a road safety campaign. Their assembly had been well received by the school children and they were providing goody bags to the winners of the art competition to design signs for erection around the village.

The PCSOs answered questions raised by the public and council, and were thanked for attending. PCSOs Dodson and Coker departed to continue their duties.

AA4/25 PRESENTATION FROM KEITH MILMER, TRADING STANDARDS SCAM CHAMPION

Mr Milmer gave an insightful presentation into the most rapidly increasing type of crime, fraud, which led to over £10bn being lost last year. The <25 years age bracket are the most vulnerable group and the most likely to become a victim of online fraud, with older people forming the second most vulnerable group and the most likely to lose the most money to fraud.

As well as explaining about the different types of common scam, some helpful advice to help protect yourself was provided, including:

- Postal scams – take special care to securely destroy any pre-printed forms eg from charities, that sometimes pre-populate a return form with your personal data
- Phone scams – the caller may sometimes have some of your personal data and use this to convince you that they are a genuine caller. Don't ever use the same phone to call them back as they can keep the line open. Don't answer any unsolicited calls. Request a free call blocker by emailing trading_standards@surrytc.gov
- Doorstop scams – such as distraction burglary or assessing properties with vulnerable occupants, so never engage with unsolicited visitors, never engage any such person to undertake work for you, fit a door-chain and don't let visitors into your property. If the visitor says they are from an official company, go indoors and contact them direct to verify. Never pay for unsolicited work by bank transfer as you can't recoup your money, whereas credit cards often provide a level of security. Consider opening a window instead of your front door and saying "sorry we are busy" and shutting the window again, the caller will often go away.
- Online scams – the most rapidly growing sector. Never click on attachments to emails from unknown senders. Move all unsolicited emails to your junk folder so your operator starts to build up a better profile of what is junk. Don't reply to any unsolicited email.
- Text scams – increasingly common and include messages like 'hello it's xxxx, I've got a new phone so please delete the old number and save this one', always make sure you call your known contact to verify.

As general advice to protect yourself : use 2 factor authentication wherever possible, avoid weak passwords, don't complete online surveys as they often reveal your personal information, use different passwords for each account (use a password book if necessary), have good anti-virus software on all your devices, don't use the 'unsubscribe' option on unsolicited emails and consider using an 'official birthday' that you give out when completing forms so that your real birthday remains protected information.

Mr Milmer answered questions from councillors and residents and was thanked for his insights and advice. He was available during the refreshment break for residents to speak to for further advice and there were materials such as sticker packs available to collect. Information to be posted onto our website to assist residents that had been unable to attend.

AA5/25 HOW TO USE A DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING

The Parish Council has been working on a project to install additional defibrillators in the village to ensure that every resident can access this life saving equipment within a few minutes travel time of their home. The Council is grateful for the support of Colbree Engineering and Little Rothschild House Surgery for permitting defibrillators to be mounted on their exterior walls. An additional three units are planned to be installed in 2025 if the necessary permissions and funding can be secured.

Residents are encouraged to check the www.defibfinder.uk website, which shows the location of all public access defibrillators in the village, and the times they are accessible. In an emergency, call 999. If appropriate, the operator will ask someone with you to fetch the defibrillator and provide you with the location and access code for your nearest unit. The defibrillator is automatic and will provide voice prompts to tell you what to do.

A video was shown to everyone present, which demonstrates how to use the defibrillator, and answers the commonly asked questions. Being familiar with the unit and its use may help you to feel more comfortable using it in an emergency, so if you couldn't attend the assembly please visit <https://pitstone.co.uk/ppcinfo/defibrillators/> to view the video.

Councillor Dave Nicholls answered questions from those present in relation to public access defibrillators.

AA6/25 VICAR'S REPORT ON THE BENEFICE (OUR GROUP OF PARISHES) IN 2024

Rev James Grainger-Smith spoke about the annual report which was recently published in Pitstone Parish Post (copy available here: <https://pitstone.co.uk/ppcpubs/pitstone-parish-post-issue-144/>).

He highlighted the importance of partnerships, and working towards improving the village, despite any personal differences. The success and importance of the Foodbank was used as an

illustration of a collaborative project between several bodies, which provided a hugely important service for all those who needed it.

Residents were encouraged to open those conversations, so the appropriate bodies could be identified, to work towards the best solutions.

Rev James Grainger-Smith took questions from those assembled and was thanked for his time and attendance.

AA7/25 PRESENTATION OF PITSTONE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025

The Parish Council Chairman presented Avril Davies with the Volunteer of the Year Award 2025 for many years of service to the village of Pitstone, in numerous capacities, including that of previous County Councillor.

The award was particularly to reflect Avril's contribution to the establishment and ongoing support of the Beacon Villages Community Library and its associated projects such as the BeaconLit Festival which raises funds for the library.

The Parish Council runs the Volunteer of the Year scheme to celebrate the unsung heroes within our community. Winners receive a framed certificate, card and £50. If you know someone who goes that extra mile and provides an outstanding voluntary service to the residents of Pitstone, please submit your nominations to the parish clerk so that they can be taken into consideration for the 2026 award.

There then followed a refreshment break, with the opportunity for the members of the public to speak to Keith Milmer, Rev James Grainger-Smith, any of the parish/unitary councillors or any of the other guest speakers.

AA8/25 REPORT FROM PITSTONE RECREATION GROUND CHARITY

Dave Nicholls provided an update on the history and purpose of the Recreation Ground Charity which looks after the Recreation Ground, which is also a registered village green. The Parish Council as a body is the sole trustee. The public have the right of access for exercise or recreation. The charity manages the site and raises funds where it can. This is primarily by charging businesses and other organisations that use the land. For example, the football clubs and cricket club. All funds are used for maintenance. In practice the charity relies on support from the Parish Council.

Cllr Nicholls advised that we were seeing increasing amounts of commercial use of our facilities, sometimes without our knowledge, eg outdoor classes. Residents were encouraged to ensure that any group/individual they were thinking of enrolling with was both registered with the parish council and held the correct public liability insurance and DBS checks.

A question regrading Fields in Trust was responded to.

AA9/25 REPORT FROM PITSTONE PARISH CHARITY / STEP-UP GRANTS

The Pitstone Parish Charity was created in 2004. It was formerly known as Allotments for the Labouring Poor and owned land adjoining the recreation ground. The Parish Council as a body is the sole trustee. In 1970 the Charity Commission allowed some of the land to be licenced for use by the Recreation Ground Charity. This is the land on which the play equipment and skatepark now stand. This land was purchased by the Parish Council in 2020. The other half of the charity's land was sold to Nicholas King Homes as part of the PDA development. This raised just over £1.2m which has been used to create the Pitstone Step-Up Grants. Step-Up Grants are designed to relieve hardship, need or distress by enabling the long-term transformation of the recipient's quality of life in some way. This could be through removing barriers to enable an individual to pursue a life-improving opportunity that would otherwise have been unaffordable, or to complete some form of training or upskilling that will demonstrably improve their professional or earning potential, where funding is not available from another source.

Dave Nicholls was delighted to advise that over the course of the first year, £8,295 of grants had been awarded to six recipients. A Career Step-Up grant had funded vital computer equipment to enable a resident to undertake an Open University Degree. A Helping-Out grant had installed a disabled access ramp to enable use of a rear garden. Two Education Step-Up grants had provided some assistance towards university accommodation, and one Education Step-Up grant had paid for a bus pass to access further education in Aylesbury. A Life Step-Up grant had been awarded to assist with costs towards an educational visit to Kenya to construct a school playground.

No questions were raised for the Parish Charity.

AA10/25 REPORT FROM, AND QUESTIONS TO, PITSTONE TOWN LANDS CHARITY AND WILLIAMSON TRUST

Mark Robinson, trustee for the charity, explained the history and purpose of the two local charities and how they were supporting the local community.

The Williamson Trust operates from an endowment fund and had been able to make payments to those of retirement age (65+) this April.

The Town Lands Charity had now extended its remit and was supporting residents of all ages (e.g. by working with Brookmead school), by reaching out to organisations supporting residents (e.g. the foodbank) and working with local charities that support local people (e.g. Rennie Grove). This charity also owns and operates for flats on Cheddington Road. Mark was delighted to report that they had been re-roofed during the financial year, the brickwork had been repointed, and they had new windows. Work was due to commence on the outbuildings in the next few months.

Two new trustees had been recruited, so the Charities had now returned to their full complement of seven trustees. A new Facebook page is due to be launched next month, to help raise awareness and encourage residents to reach out for funding support.

A question was tabled regarding how residents could register with the Williamson Trust and details were provided. Mark was thanked for his attendance and presentation.

AA11/25 REPORT FROM, AND QUESTIONS TO, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL WARD COUNCILLORS

Buckinghamshire Councillor Chris Poll introduced himself and Councillor Peter Brazier. He explained that both had been re-elected, having represented our parishes for the last five years. He explained that the new structure at Buckinghamshire Council meant that our area had seen a reduction in Councillors appointed, from three to two, which meant that it was more difficult to cover all their BC duties and still attend every parish council meeting for every parish in the ward (over 100 parish council meetings currently tabled over the course of the next 12 months) but they intended to attend as many meetings as possible. He thanked previous Buckinghamshire Councillor Derek Town, who had chosen not to stand for re-election, for his service to the parishes over the last 10 years.

Chris Poll advised that the Buckinghamshire Council AGM had taken place the previous week and he provided information on the appointments that both Peter Brazier and he had accepted.

Echoing Rev Grainger-Smith's earlier comments, Chris talked about both the Repair Café and Youth Café as being good local examples of what can be achieved when we all work together towards a common goal.

Buckinghamshire Councillor Poll responded to questions from the public and council. Residents are welcome to come along and speak to Chris and/or Peter at any Pitstone Parish Council meeting or to contact them direct.

Councillor Poll was thanked for his attendance and presentation.

AA12/25 REPORT FROM, AND QUESTIONS TO, PITSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Nicholls introduced the parish councillors and explained the changes in membership since last years' assembly.

In particular, Cllr Nicholls paid tribute to both Cllr Anil Mitra and former Cllr Mrs Gillian Arney, both of whom sadly passed away during the year. Both had been fantastic councillors who did so much for the village and will be greatly missed.

Cllr Nicholls also thanked Bob Saintey for his previous service as Vice Chairman. Cllr Saintey remains on the council, and as Chair to the Sports and Leisure Committee, but has relinquished the Vice Chair role, which has been taken up by Cllr Mrs Frances Nash, who was thanked for stepping up.

Nine previous members of the Council had been re-elected, and they were thanked for their commitment to the village and for re-standing. Two vacancies remain, and residents were encouraged to consider coming forward to join as councillors. Cllr Nicholls explained about the

various committees and working parties that the Parish Council operates, including a new working party investigating a possible review of the Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan.

A number of projects had been undertaken during the year including: the installation of the bus shelters on Westfield Road, the defibrillator project and the increased number of silent soldiers. Financial assistance had been provided to Pitstone Memorial Hall, Brookmead School and the Toy Hub. Cllr Nicholls advised that replacement Christmas lights for the Recreation Ground were coming in 2025 as the prior set had reached the end of their life. A number of new benches had been provided on the Recreation Ground during the previous year and upgrading the old stock would continue in 2025/26 plus a new suicide prevention bench was being donated by PRS Office Furniture – a project that the Parish Council was very happy to support. Work continues at the Pavilion site to improve the grounds for both football and community use. The skate park is proving to be a very well used facility and one of the best in the local area. The Council is currently running a Road Safety Competition in conjunction with Thames Valley Police and Brookmead School, which will see the winning artworks converted into temporary signs and displayed around the village. The Council has agreed to take on responsibility for some grass cutting in the Pitstone Churchyard, which had previously been carried out by volunteers.

We continue to push both Buckinghamshire Council and Nicholas King Homes to resolve the issues with the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). Buckinghamshire Council continues to work with Taylor Wimpey and Bellway regarding the adoption of these developments. The parish council has recently adopted the Croudace streetlights and the Bellway playground.

Cllr Nicholls also wish to thank Kelsey Edwards for volunteering as Editor to Pitstone Parish Post. He extended a warm welcome to her and encouraged residents to get in touch with any stories and/or photographs they would like included.

The council produces a budget intended to fund our normal activities, as well as accruing funds for specific purposes. This budget is used to calculate the amount of the precept that is collected on our behalf as part of your council tax bills. This year the precept was set at an increase of 7.5%, but when viewed in monetary terms, this only equates to a rise of £9.23 per home per year.

No specific questions were raised for the Parish Council.

AA13/25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A number of questions were raised, which related to Buckinghamshire Council services and were responded to by Cllr Poll, including:

- Concerns relating to the volume of parking outside Brookmead School – a situation that seems to be replicated in every village.
- Potential breaches of the Ivinghoe Freight Zones – it was stressed that those that needed to access locations inside the zone were perfectly entitled to do so eg those currently engaged at the site on Westfield Road, but residents could report any potential breaches to Buckinghamshire Council or Thames Valley Police for investigation
- The poor carriageway surface along Marsworth Road in particular by the speed humps – BC is aware, and it is currently on the wish-list to be actioned when funding & capacity permit
- Highways issues causing problems for cyclists – BC is aware, and residents were encouraged to report any problems to BC via Fix My Street
- Requests for the road sweeper – BC attend on a fixed rota each year, but any specific problems can be reported via Fix My Street for BC to resolve
- Requests for gully drainage – This is now carried out on a reactionary basis (rather than proactive planned visits) so problems should be reported via Fix My Street for BC to resolve.
- Problems with footway surfaces, especially the section of Queen Street – BC has been aware of Queen Street for some time, Chris Poll advised that he will make enquiries with the appropriate department. Any issues residents identify should be reported by Fix My Street for BC to resolve.
- Upgrade of the pedestrian refuge to a zebra crossing on Marsworth Road – had been investigated last year and advised that this was not appropriate given the volume of traffic and pedestrians, but improvements to the visibility and prominence may be possible during the next phase of the Ivinghoe and Pitstone Safety Scheme currently under investigation.

Questions were also raised about potential new housing developments in the village and how much new housing Central Government had told Buckinghamshire Council each village and town had to deliver (a mandatory 10% uplift in the existing number of dwellings).

No further questions were tabled by those present.

AA14/25 CLOSURE OF MEETING

The chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting, especially the guest speakers for their contributions.

There being no further business to be transacted, the chairman closed the meeting at 10.10pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairman

DRAFT