

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly
held on Monday 4 March 2025 at 7.00pm**

Present:

Parish Councillors:

Cllr B Ahier, Cllr D Bird, Cllr N Crampin, Cllr S Ellahi, Cllr M Fance, Cllr B McShee, Cllr N Mitchell (Chairman of the meeting), Cllr B Nagle,

Staff:

Clerk to the Council – Mrs G White

Assistant Clerk – Mrs V Fear

Also present were:

Zoe Franklin MP, Borough Councillor Bill Akhtar, Bob Shatwell (West Surrey Badger Group), Dave Williams and Jo Baulch (Surrey Dormouse Group), Tim Rickard (Surrey Bat Group), Helena and Chris Finden-Browne (Swift Conservation), Thomas Lashbrooke and Sarah Gross (Zero Carbon Guildford), Christa Emmett (Surrey Wildlife Trust), Pauline Lane and Peter Jones (Guildford Bee Keeping Association), Howard Brown and Clive Davidson (Surrey Tree Wardens), Sarah Bunce (Thames Basin Heaths Partnership) and nine members of the public.

Apologies

Apologies were received from: Parish Councillors Cllr M Price, Cllr C Riley, Cllr J Snowball, and Cllr T Wright, Mr A Tanner (Guildford Angling Society), County Councillor Keith Witham and Borough Councillors Cllr Honor Brooker and Philip Brooker.

Networking Session

The following organisations had stalls at the event, which commenced with a 35-minute networking session:

- Zero Carbon Guildford
- Swift Conservation
- Surrey Bat Group
- Surrey Dormouse Group
- West Surrey Badger Group
- Thames Basin Heaths Partnership
- Tree Wardens
- Guildford Bee Keeping Association
- Surrey Wildlife Trust

Introduction

Cllr N Mitchell welcomed those present to the meeting and invited Christa Emmett to give her presentation.

Christa Emmett – Wilder Communities Coordinator - Surrey Wildlife Trust

Surrey Wildlife Trust was founded in 1959 to protect and promote biodiversity. It is now Surrey's largest conservation charity with 62 reserves and over 100 staff. It is part of the Wildlife Trusts – a federation of 46 conservation charities covering the entire UK.

At present, 1/6 of species are at risk of being lost from the UK. 15% of species are threatened with extinction from the UK. 113 of 8,431 assessed are already extinct in the UK. Since 1970, more species have seen their populations decrease than increase.

1/3 of Surrey's species are lost or in decline. Of a total of 404 species samples, 31% are already extinct locally, while 37% are threatened and/or remain in worrying decline. The water vole is extinct in Surrey. The smooth snake and sand lizard are now very rare.

Without nature, we cannot live. We require clean air, food and clean water.

Daily contact with nature is linked to reduced levels of chronic stress, reductions in obesity and better wellbeing – nature could be considered the Natural Health Service (NHS).

Nature offers economic prosperity – Ecosystem services are globally estimated to be valued at more than USD 150 trillion per year, or at least one and a half times global GDP.

Surrey's nature matters... collectively there is a plethora of habitat comprising: rare heathland, wetland, gardens, rivers, woodland, and chalk grassland. The connectivity of these habitats is important. In 2022, the UK made a commitment to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030. This is known as 30x30. There is a push to reverse the decline of nature within the UK and everyone needs to play a part for this to be a success.

To achieve this, Surrey Wildlife Trust has introduced a number of aims being:

- Targeted projects
- Community engagement
- Direct land management
- Education and learning
- Advising others
- Effective campaigning

Surrey Wildlife Trust has a number of priority areas (known as Biodiversity Opportunity Areas), which include sites within the Parish of Worplesdon, which aims to reconnect the various areas of heathland. Worplesdon is important in terms of linking the urban areas of Guildford and Woking.

The nine Worplesdon commons offer important corridors for wildlife.

Surrey Wildlife Trust is working hard on its reserve management which has included scrub clearance of excess birch, gorse and pine from Whitmoor Common using hand clearance as well as chainsaw contractors. This is targeting habitat for the very rare Window Winged Caddisfly.

Surrey Wildlife Trust are currently successfully using virtual fencing to prevent grazing cattle from wandering off. Collars are fitted to the cows, which provide a low-level electric shock if the cattle stray beyond the invisible boundary. The cows are trained by the use of a bell and are quick to pick up on the area over which they can graze.

Over the past year, volunteers have provided 500 hours of support. The Friends of Chitty's Common have also provided volunteer time, which makes a tremendous contribution to the work of the Wildlife Trust.

One of the most useful activities that residents can do to assist the Wildlife Trust is to record the species found in local areas. Surrey Wildlife Trust is able to lend equipment to families to facilitate this. The project is referred to as [Citizen Science](#). The data obtained is subsequently fed into the Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre, which provides valuable information about the state of nature within the County.

Additionally, by leaving some grassed areas of gardens longer, by providing water, and by being varied in planting, gardens can make an enormous contribution to biodiversity. Small lifestyle changes can make a big difference.

The Chairman thanked Christa for her informative presentation and invited Sue Gross to give her presentation to the meeting.

Sue Gross - Zero Carbon (Guildford)

Zero is a community space run by Guildford residents. Their aim to address local climate and environmental issues by empowering fellow residents to get involved in projects that reduce waste, protect our countryside and improve our health.

Community Fridge

Our Community Fridge project saves surplus food from going to waste and redistributes it to the community for free. Our volunteers collect surplus food from local grocery stores, bring it into ZERO, weigh it, so we know how much food we're saving from going to waste, and then give it away to residents for free. It's important to realise that this project is not an extension of a food bank to help those on low incomes; this project is to reduce emissions caused by food waste and we encourage all residents to take food and help us reduce waste. It is a common-sense solution that is having great impact on our local community. This initiative has saved 29 tonnes of food waste, 73 tonnes of CO₂ emissions have been avoided, and £73,768 has been saved by residents.

HEAT project

Our HEAT project addresses residential energy at a time when the price cap is on the rise. We offer free home energy surveys to residents in Surrey to understand where heat is escaping from their home and what cost effective measures they can implement to reduce the heat loss. Our trained energy champions will visit your home with a thermal imaging camera and then send you a report with our recommendations. If you'd like to request a free energy survey please go to our website zerocarbonguildford.org. This initiative has provided 1,066 home visits, £345,384 worth of free support, and has trained 120 Energy Champions - as a result of which 78% of respondents stated they would be 'more likely to install significant retrofit measures'.

Library of Things

The Library of Things is like a library, but instead of borrowing books you borrow useful things! Things that you might use a couple of times per year but sits in the back of a cupboard the rest of the time. Things like pressure washers, camping equipment, tools, gazebos etc. So we're encouraging people to save money and save space - Why buy when you can borrow? Every item is free to borrow, you just have to be over 18 and bring ID with you. Go to guildfordlibraryofthings.org for more information.

Interesting tips:

The average drill is only used for 14 minutes throughout its entire lifespan.

Our most borrowed items: In the summer it's the pressure washer and in winter, the thermal imaging camera.

To date, the Library of Things has made 929 loans, saved 5,354kg of waste, 17 tonnes of CO₂ emissions have been avoided, and residents have saved £104,986.

Water Rangers – Helping communities monitor their rivers

Our water rangers go out and test the local rivers for pollutants on a monthly basis and E. coli on a weekly basis. They then upload their findings to a national database where we can monitor our rivers at a national level. We have our own community water testing lab in ZERO that was funded by the University of Surrey, and we work very closely with the River Wey Trust.

Fire retardant is the pollutant that is most common in rivers. It's on all our clothing, fabrics, etc and washes out whilst being laundered.

E. coli: The national recommended legal limit for recreational activity in the river is 1,000 coliform parts per million. After rainy conditions we are testing sites that register many times that limit, with our highest result being 29,000 parts per million downstream of Slyfield. We want to encourage everyone to look after our rivers and indeed use them but perhaps keep the water away from your mouth.

To date we have trained 500 volunteers, conducted 1,479 tests, and have the first ever community-led E. coli testing lab supported by the University of Surrey: 1 of 7 CaSTCO (The Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative) projects nationally.

Urban Greening

Urban greening is helping to improve biodiversity and air quality in our urban areas.

A collaborative discussion between the Sandfield Primary School (York Road, Guildford), researchers from GCARE, ZERO Carbon Guildford, parents and residents' groups came up with green infrastructure solutions to try to curb the effect of air pollution on the school children and staff. A living green gate now protects the school entrance, one of the first in the UK. While an ivy screen acts as a natural filter along the main road, the gate consists of 140 plants, which students actively helped to plant. This has provided a **44%** pollution reduction in the playground. **75%** of parents feel positive about the green gate.

Rosamund Community Garden

Nestled between orchards, wildflower meadows, and woodland, Rosamund Community Garden lays on the outskirts of Guildford. It is open daily to its members and offers residents a way to get their hands dirty and meet like-minded people who find community and wellbeing in the presence of nature.

The Community Garden works closely with Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Guildford Environmental Forum to protect wildlife and to conserve the environment. In 2019, Rosamund was awarded the Surrey Wildlife Trust Gold merit and won Best Community Garden for its approach to wildlife gardening.

Rosamund support pollinators including birds, bees, bats, moths, butterflies, beetles, and other small mammals. This is done by creating habitats, choosing plants carefully and making a lot of room for nature.

The Chairman thanked Sue for her interesting presentation and then invited Pauline Lane to give her presentation.

Pauline Lane - The Guildford Beekeepers

Pauline advised that the Guildford Beekeepers Association (GBA) has over 200 members covering Guildford, Woking, Horsley, Cranleigh, and the surrounding villages. It is a division of the Surrey Beekeeping Association, which is a member of the BBKA (British Beekeeping Association).

With a training apiary sited at Birley House in Bramley, GBA aim to offer training, support, and development to all beekeepers both new and experienced, and promote a better knowledge of bees and the environment to the general public.

Honeybee

The honeybee is unique, in that they are awake and clustered in the winter. The bees need stores and spend July and August gathering and saving nectar to produce honey for winter. Surplus

honey is available for the beekeeper. The bees need 40lbs /25 kg of honey as a minimum to last winter. Warm Autumns are creating problems for them.

Bees

There are 250 types of bee, including 25 types of bumble bees. Some are at risk of extinction. There are solitary bees as well as bumble bees. A mated Queen hibernates. Bumble bees overwinter as a colony.

Why keep bees?

Honey is often considered to be the main reason. A colony requires 25kg to see them through the winter. Surplus honey can be taken by the beekeeper, which is a bonus. More importantly, bees are pollinators. As they enter flowers, pollen attaches to them. The bee brushes the pollen into baskets on their legs. Lots of other insects are also pollinators. Ladybirds pollinate when they enter flowers to eat the aphids.

80% of plants need pollinators. 33% of our food is from plants pollinated by bees. 1/3 of the pollinators are bees. Pollinators are, however, in huge decline. Without pollinators, life expectancy is very low. Food would become very expensive. A study set up in 2019, indicated that there has been a 41% decline in pollinators in a decade.

This is extremely frightening. Without pollinators, flowers have to be manually pollinated (as has happened in one area of China). This is not very efficient. One colony of bees can achieve in a day, what would take days to be manually pollinated manually by humans. The global decline is understood to be a result of agricultural intensification and the use of pesticides.

Last year, the weather conditions were so poor that the Queen bees were not mating. The beekeepers were therefore leaving the honey for the bees.

Residents can help by growing plants throughout the year, mowing grass less and looking for pollinator friendly plants. Bedding plants are not pollinator friendly. Water should be left available. Bee hotels are great for solitary bees.

No pesticides, herbicides or fungicides should be used in gardens. One beekeeper's colonies were badly impacted when the bees had entered an orchard that had been treated with pesticides. The colonies managed to be saved, but for the solitary bees, the impact was lethal.

There are a number of pressure groups that may be of interest to residents. These are: [Pesticide Action Network UK](#), [Bumblebee Conservation Trust](#), [Plantlife](#), [Buglife](#).

If we all do a little, it will add up to a lot! Anyone who thinks they're too small to make a difference has never met the honeybee.

The Chairman thanked Pauline for her educational presentation.

Report of the Chairman

The Chairman of the Parish Council then gave his report to the meeting, which covered the following topics:

- **Parish Councillors** – our councillors are unpaid holders of public office. If cllrs were paid it would add £1:71 per month to a Band D property. The Chairman thanked the councillors for their assistance during the year. There are currently three councillor vacancies on the Parish Council. Applications are invited.
- **Biodiversity** – in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, a new duty has been placed upon Town and Parish Councils. As a result of this new duty, the Parish Council has obtained a grant from Surrey Wildlife Trust and has sown yellow rattle at Harry's Meadow, in readiness for sowing more wildflower seeds in the meadow. A new wildlife pond has been dug at Nevins Copse (Pinks Hill, Wood Street Village), and planters are being located at Perry Hill Green (part of the Environmental Improvements arising from S106 monies obtained via the Bluebell Rise development off School Lane, Perry Hill). Over the past ten years, Worplesdon Parish Council have planted approximately 1,000 trees on land for which the Parish Council is responsible.
- **Flooding and Climate Change** – Flooding remains an issue across the parish. The severity of the issue has resulted in several S19 Reports being carried out by Surrey County Council, who are the Lead Flood Authority. Worplesdon Parish Council organised a Flood Awareness and Resilience Event on 25 February 2025 in the Fairlands Community Centre.
- **What does WPC do** – Owns and maintains seven parcels of land across the Parish, grass cutting of land for which Worplesdon Parish Council is responsible, maintains three play areas across the Parish, maintains the community car park in Wood Street Village, works with schools and Merrist Wood College, works with various Residents' Associations and other organisations, provides grants to local organisations, work with other councils and statutory undertakings, communicate with residents via our Facebook page and bespoke website, comment on planning applications, provide Christmas lights across the Parish, review consultation documents from local and central government, store roadside food waste caddies which can be collected by residents (saving money, time and carbon), maintain war memorials and a plethora of assets, as well as dealing with other numerous Parish related matters.
- **What WPC spent on Projects in 2024/2025** – Perry Hill Biodiversity Improvements (S106 monies) £7,217, the provision of four parking spaces and improved track in Jacobs Well Recreation Ground £24,500, grass cutting £14,670, Christmas lights £8,134, biodiversity improvements Harry's Meadow, purchase of a water bowser £6,000.
- **Grants to Wards** – During 2024/2025 the Parish Council awarded eleven grants to local organisations totalling £4,008.

- **Community Speed Watch** – Worplesdon Parish Council coordinate the Worplesdon Community Speed Watch group (CSW). CSW is run for educational purposes. Those taking part have all passed a web-based test to establish that they understand their duties on a deployment. Worplesdon Parish Council has a number of volunteers, including Councillors, to carry out deployments across the Parish. The deployments are on a weekly basis at one at one of 8 locations across the Parish. At each deployment, the equipment is calibrated to ensure that it is working within allowed parameters. Data obtained at each deployment is uploaded to a website. Surrey Police then issue warning letters to all recorded offenders.
- **Worplesdon United Charities** - At the request of the former Trustees of the Worplesdon United Charities, and with the assistance of Worplesdon Parish Council, Worplesdon Parochial Church Council (WPCC) agreed to merge the charities – the former WUC funds being kept within a restricted church fund.

WPCC have, through contact with Guildford North Food Bank, been able to give food vouchers to a number of families in need.

WPCC have been surprised by the number of families in need in Worplesdon.

Peter Trevena – Retirement

After 15 years, Peter is retiring. We thank him for all his hard work over that time and wish him a long, happy and healthy retirement. Andy Connor has been promoted to Senior Groundsman and a vacancy now exists for a second Groundsperson (2 days per week).

Devolution - Local Government

The Chairman advised that the Government is pushing forward with its devolution and gave a brief update on what is known at this moment in time. It should be noted the timetable will be fast paced.

- 5TH February 2025, the government confirmed that Surrey is to be part of the first wave of areas looking to take the opportunities presented by the government's devolution agenda.
- In January 2025, the government invited councils across the country to consider being part of its accelerated programme for reform, which aims to simplify and streamline local government.
- The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution has confirmed to Surrey County Council's Leader, Tim Oliver, that the government has decided to postpone Surrey's local elections in May until 2026.
- Surrey County Council and all eleven borough councils will be abolished and a new Unitary Authority (or possibly two or three unitary authorities will replace them).
- Surrey County Council will develop a business case for reorganisation and submit a draft to government in March.

- A Mayor for Surrey will be elected in 2027.
- A Communities White Paper is to be issued at the end of the month which will provide information regarding the future of town and parish councils.

Open Forum - Question and Answer session

The following points were then raised:

Q: How big is Harry's Meadow. A: Five acres.

Q: Why are a number of the North Moors Allotments empty? A: These are owned by Guildford Borough Council and run by The Guildford Allotment Society. We are unable to assist with this question.

Q: Do you consider the Canadian geese will be safe now that the parking spaces have been introduced? The parking spaces are located where the geese travel across the track. A: A material was selected that will be favourable for the geese.

Q: What did the Parish Council do to help prevent flooding at Halifax Close? Worplesdon Parish Council objected to the planning application, but our objections were ignored. A S19 investigation has been carried out by Surrey County Council, who will be taking enforcement action.

Q: Will there be an opportunity for residents to feed into the Local Government Review (LGR)? A: At present, it is our understanding that our county association and the National Association of Local Councils are making direct contact with the Government. Residents' view will be sought in due course. A Communities White Paper is expected at the end of March.

The Chairman thanked all those present for their presentations, stalls and for attending the meeting.

Meeting finished 20:48

Signed:

Chairman of the Council
10.4.2025