

RANGEWORTHY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE ASSEMBLY HELD ON FRIDAY 28th MAY 2024 AT 7.30PM IN THE KING GEORGE V MEMORIAL HALL

Those Present

Parish Councillors: Miss. W. Moody (Chair), Miss. L. Haigh, Mrs. M.J. Steer, Mr K Livall
SGC Councillors: Cllr. C. Young, Cllr. T. Clark,
Andrea Wheal (Clerk)

12 members of the public were present including invited attendees to represent local village groups

1. Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 Annual Assembly

The Minutes of the 2023 Annual Village Assembly were adopted without alteration.

2. To receive Report from the Parish Council Chairman- Cllr. W. Moody

The Chairman of the Parish Council read out her report, which is appended to these minutes

4. To receive Report from SGC Representatives

SGC Cllrs presented their report – a copy is appended to these minutes. The report covered specific budget challenges, the balanced budget going forwards for the next three years and the progress of the emerging local plan/preferred strategy. Adoption of the Local Plan is expected late 2025.

It was confirmed that the current adopted local plan has to be used to determine speculative housing developments as the emerging plan is at too early a stage to be given any weight. Once the emerging plan becomes the preferred strategy then it can be given material consideration when judging applications.

A member of the public (MoP) expressed dissatisfaction with the current bus service options and how wasteful the Westlink service can be. Cllr Young confirmed that WECA is responsible for public transport and that SGC officers are trying to influence decisions about the service to bring about improvements.

Cllr Haigh pointed out that settlement boundaries are out of date and this is making it hard to oppose developments. Cllr Young confirmed that the emerging local plan would deal with this issue.

A MoP queried whether the effect of parking charges on local businesses and leisure facilities in Thornbury had been considered bearing in mind the free parking available at Yate and Chipping Sodbury. Cllr Young confirmed that various options are being looked at to mitigate any adverse impacts, for example allowing users of the sports centre to avoid charges. A MoP pointed out how many shops are closing in Thornbury and predicted that parking charges would hasten the town's demise as a shopping centre. Cllr Young pointed out that there are many other factors effecting the viability of small retail centres such as Thornbury and that the increase in empty units had been going on for some years.

Cllr Haigh asked why the extension of soft plastic recycling was so slow. Cllr Young confirmed that this is part of a national pilot scheme and processing facilities for the collected material are still being developed.

5. To receive financial report from Parish Clerk

The Clerk read out her report, which is appended to these minutes. There were no questions from members of the public.

6 To receive reports from Parish Organisations

All available reports from parish organisations are appended to these minutes

a Jubilee Committee

b WI

c Primary School

The deputy head gave updates on recent Ofsted inspections, changes to class groupings and current initiatives at the school.

d Hall Management Committee

e Parochial Church Council

f Village Agent

Village agent only in post so far for 3 weeks. Pilot two year project. Role is to link residents in rural villages and provide support and advice and information about existing services that are available.

g Iron Acton FC

Iron Acton FC outlined their plans to base the club at Rangeworthy recreation ground at some point in the future. They are currently progressing plans to refurbish and extend the pavilion to bring it up to current building and Football Association standards.

7. Open Question Time

No further questions.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

Reports

Parish Council Chair's Report

As you will recall from last year, the Parish Council election was uncontested and four councillors were returned. We are still looking for someone to fill the fifth seat, so if anyone is interested please contact the Clerk. The Parish Council has also had a change of personnel, as after ten years of loyal service, Paula Evans resigned and we appointed Mrs Andrea Wheal in August of last year.

A recurring theme that arose from last year's village assembly was volunteers. Many of the community groups we will be hearing from this evening are in need of volunteers to help run these various organisations. None of us is getting any younger and I know many of the treasurers, secretaries and committee members have been in post for decades and would like to stand aside for someone else to take the reins. If residents wish for these clubs and societies to continue now is the time to give it some serious thought and come forward to offer your help. I am sure there are people out there with skills and talents that could greatly benefit our community.

PRECEPT

You will have noticed on your Council Tax bill this year that the parish precept has risen considerably compared to previous years. This is because we have kept it deliberately low for the past three years to help residents through the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis. However costs beyond our control, as in any household, have caught up with us, so with increases in insurances, energy, grass cutting, Clerk's salary, emptying of waste bins – to name a few, we have had no alternative but to increase the precept to make a balanced budget. Next year the rise won't be such a large increase.

HIGHWAYS

Patch Elm Lane was finally resurfaced during the last two days of June last year. After a frenzy of activity we were left with a wonderful pot-hole free surface.

We are still trying to recruit volunteers for a speed watch group. If anyone is interested please contact the Parish Council. The police beat officer has suggested combining groups with Tytherington and Cromhall to share the workload – so an option worth considering.

After consultation with the school, the Parish Council purchased two traffic buddies with CIL money. These are caricature figures of children holding speed advisory signs to bring to the attention of drivers that there are children crossing. Other schools in the area use these figures to alert drivers, and the school thought that anything that contributed to road safety was beneficial. Unfortunately, on the very first day they were displayed on the pavement, one of them disappeared and its where-a-bouts remains a mystery.

The West Link dial-a-ride bus service has been running for twelve months of a two year trial, and it is good to see more people using it, and reports from passengers say it is reliable and on time.

PLANNING

It is anticipated the 'New Local Plan' will be adopted in July of 2025. This will give everyone an up-to-date framework when deciding planning applications. The Parish Council hosted a drop-in session in January for residents to scrutinise the proposed sites for thirty additional houses in the village, and question our three District Councillors. The topic of conversation which arose was sewers. It transpired there are many properties having problems with backing-up and over-spilling drains. Absolutely no-one wants sewage spilling into their bathrooms but Wessex Water are not keen to attend unless this actually happens. They say the sewer system has enough capacity for the existing houses

and more, and it is not a planning reason to object to building on these grounds. However. It doesn't seem right if the sewer system only works properly during six months of dry weather and the other half of the year, due to exceptional rain, the system fails. Do let the Parish Council know if you are experiencing problems during wet weather. We can monitor the trouble spots and report to Wessex Water.

A letter the Parish Council sent to them during the winter led to a promise of remedial work this summer, which will involve sealing the pipes to stop the ingress of storm water. This will be a 'wait and see' solution, the success of which will be revealed with the winter rain.

BIG SPRING CLEAN

The Big Spring Clean took place on 6th April 2024, a week later than usual because of the early Easter. An enthusiastic group of nine volunteers attended on the day, and with bags and gloves supplied by South Gloucestershire Council, ventured to the boundaries of the village, returning with a large amount of litter, along with the ubiquitous hub-caps, and information about fly-tipping incidents in ditches along the minor roads. This was reported, with map references, to the Council's fly-tipping team.

A big 'thank-you' to all those who helped on the day, and to everyone who continue to litter pick throughout the year. It was heartening for us all when passers-by said 'well done' and 'good job'; we felt our efforts were appreciated.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

There have been no reported blockages of footpaths in Rangeworthy, but with heavy winter rain some routes become very muddy and flooded and are perhaps best avoided until ground conditions improve. Just to remind you, keep dogs on leads when crossing farm land, and be especially careful when passing through livestock.

RECREATION GROUND

The recreation ground has always been self-funding with the rental income covering the running costs of grass-cutting, heating, utilities, cleaning and general maintenance. Post-pandemic, and with the decline of Rangeworthy Football Club, we have had no rental income other than an occasional match fee for a friendly game.

As announced last year, Iron Acton Football Club have expressed an interest in using Rangeworthy as their base. They have three teams, which would mean on any Saturday during the season there would be two teams playing at the recreation ground. This would require an expansion of the pavilion to make two more changing rooms, and facilities for match officials.

Our first concern was the parking arrangements for two matches and spectators. It was obvious there wouldn't be enough space in the roadside carpark, therefore an improvement of the access track through the woodland would be needed, and mesh plastic squares, through which grass can grow, set out in the field to make a parking area. The pavilion has been surveyed and no hidden nasties, like asbestos or crumbling concrete, have been found.

The Parish Council do not want to borrow money to fund this work, which would put the burden of repayment of the loan onto the precept. We have Section 106 money available from the Harford Close development, part of which is hand-cuffed for providing sports facilities, and also CIL monies from the smaller developments. Iron Acton Football Club have been investigating a grant from the Football Foundation which funds grass-roots football.

There are many strands to this project which need to be carefully aligned. This is an ongoing project which we want to progress in order to see the recreation ground in regular use once again. We will report developments in the Parish News as they occur.

WOODLAND

It is amazing to think the woodland has been planted for nearly twenty five years. We have had a Local Nature Action Plan (LNAP) drawn up which identifies areas that can be further improved to provide wild-life habitat such as bat and owl nesting boxes, especially important when old barns are converted into dwellings. We hope to have a community planting day of wild flowers, in the autumn when the rain returns. This will be advertised in the Parish News for anyone who would like to come along and help.

The Jubilee Grove of birch trees in the recreation ground has finally taken hold, and this spring the trees displayed catkins, an indication they are growing well. There will be a commemorative bench installed near the trees as the finishing touch to this corner of the field.

COMMUNITY LIBRARY

The library continues weekly on Friday afternoons, 2.30 – 4.00. Sadly we are down to just four volunteers after starting with ten, so if anyone would like to help please let me know. We often receive generous book donations from residents so grateful thanks to them. Readers can always be assured of a selection of new and interesting titles, so do come along and support this invaluable resource.

OTHER ITEMS

The defibrillator guardians go about their checks unobtrusively each month, so thanks to them for keeping the units in good order. There was one use of the defibrillator last year, which turned out to be a false alarm with good intent.

Murray Tool Hire continue to keep the cemetery neat and tidy, which save the parish much expense, so thanks to them.

Our District Councillors have continued to attend our meetings, even though there was a change of administration after last year's local elections. Cllr Young was elected joint leader, and Cllrs Clarke and Lean both chair committees. With more demand on their time we marvel how they fit their many commitments into their day. They are a fount of information for us, and are always willing to find answers to our often obscure questions. Thank you to them and I know they will readily help any residents who contact them directly.

As I mentioned earlier we appointed a new Clerk in August, but sadly Andrea has tendered her resignation due to a change in family circumstances which requires more of her time than the Parish Council job will allow. She has exemplary office and IT skills, and we thought Andrea was a perfect fit for the role, so we are very sorry to see her leave. We are now looking for a new Clerk, and if anyone is interested please contact Andrea for details. In the meantime thank you Andrea, from all of the councillors, for the hard work you have put in during your time with us.

Finally, thanks for my fellow councillors for their continuing support. With one seat vacant it means the extra workload has to be shared between the four of us, resulting in attending more meetings, real and virtual, practical tasks around the village, dealing with phone calls from residents, in addition to our monthly meetings. Much work goes on behind the scenes which is greatly appreciated by me – so thank you all.

District Councillors' Report

Budget for 2024/25 Approved

On Wednesday 21st February South Gloucestershire Council approved its budget for 2024/25. At the start of the budget consultation process the council was open with residents about the scale of the challenges facing it as it needs to resolve a budget shortfall of approximately £50 million over the four years. Despite local authorities facing significant financial pressures, due to inflation and the rising costs of providing social care, the council has managed to produce a balanced budget for the next three financial years. It contains additional investments in children's services and focusing on the twin priorities of cost-of-living support for those in financial difficulty and addressing the climate crisis.

The new budget will increase Council Tax by 4.99%, of which 2% will be specifically ring fenced to help meet the ever-growing need for adult social care. In balancing the budget last year, a target to raise new revenues was set at around £2 million. Accordingly, the council will introduce a £10 administration charge to apply for a Blue Badge, which are valid for three years, in line with most other councils in England. The subscription cost for green bin/garden waste collection service will also rise, from £30 to £60, so that it is no longer subsidised by all council taxpayers. Again, this will bring South Gloucestershire into line with neighbouring authorities.

The central aim of the budget, which must legally be balanced, is to ensure that residents in the greatest need are supported with the cost of living, while maintaining essential and statutory services and taking action to respond to the climate and nature emergencies.

Headline investments include:

- An additional £1,055,000 for Children's Services for 2024/25 to maintain and build on the progress made following the recent lifting of the Improvement Notice by Ofsted.
- Providing Free School Meal vouchers for one week at Easter and one week of Summer, helping approximately 6,500 young people.
- Debt and benefits advice to an additional 680 complex cases, bringing the total helped to approximately 2,000 people. This is anticipated to secure an additional £2.5m in financial outcomes for residents.
- A pilot scheme to help landlords reach current the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) for their properties, protecting both renters and the environment. This will help renters save money as well as improving the environmental performance of more homes in the district.
- A pilot scheme to expand youth services, namely the Youth Activities Offer (YAO), providing some additional support to secondary schools and expanding the Education Inclusion Project (EIP).
- Energy efficiency measures such as radiator panels, draught proofing, LED lightbulbs, kettles, and slow cookers for eligible residents, which will again help address the cost of living and climate challenges facing residents across South Gloucestershire.

The council has chosen to prioritise support for those most in need of cost-of-living support because of current uncertainty over whether the Household Support Fund, which is worth £2.8m for South Gloucestershire, will be continued after March 2024. The Fund, and its previous iterations, has been used to provide a significant amount of the Council's cost-of-living support to date.

The financial settlement provided to the council from central government does mean that, in order to meet the £2 million income generation target set out in last year's budget, a scheme of car parking

charges will need to be implemented, in line with most local authorities across the country. The details of this will be worked up over the coming weeks, with a phased implementation plan starting with council owned off-street car parks before progressing to on-street parking.

A scheme will be developed that balances the need for the council to balance the books with the needs of residents and businesses to maintain access to shopping facilities and footfall in local shops, for example. The specifics of these charges, for example where they will apply and how much they will be, are yet to be determined, but in light of community concerns about the potential impact of this, which was widely expressed in the consultation process, the scheme will include an element of free parking and the introduction of business permits where appropriate.

In order that these measures do not lead to drivers congesting local residential areas, there will also need to be new regulations to street parking in some areas to protect local residents, and a balance will be struck so that parking near to local shops is not blocked by all-day parking commuters.

No new proposals to reduce services are included in this budget as the council continues to implement the existing savings programmes in the coming financial year and monitor its impact upon its delivery of services. From 2014/15 to 2023/24 the council will have made savings of £84 million and £101 million by 2026/27.

Local Plan Phase 3 Consultation Completed

In the past year South Gloucestershire Council undertook a public consultation on its draft Local Plan Phase 3 document. It commenced on Wednesday 6th December and closed on Friday 16th February.

The Emerging Preferred Strategy set out how South Gloucestershire could meet its expected housing demand without embarking on large-scale building projects to create entirely new freestanding communities in the countryside. Development should instead be focussed on the urban fringe and, where appropriate, to have small schemes in rural communities. And where necessary, improvements will need to be made to existing services for new and existing residents.

The updated Local Plan Delivery Programme timetable envisages that the final draft of Local Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities in October 2024. It will, following a public examination at the start of 2025, ultimately be assessed by the Planning Inspectorate to ensure it meets its legal requirements. Following the publication of the Inspector's Report the aim would be for the council to formally adopt the Local Plan in the Autumn of 2025.

Alongside the updated draft Local Plan, new policies on a range of issues managed through the council's planning process are also being published. These include draft policies on:

- Providing space for renewable energy generation
- Supporting the council's commitment to net zero covering: renewable and low carbon energy systems, climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience, embodied carbon, energy management in new development, community energy
- Provision for Gypsy/Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities
- Affordable Homes policy
- Economy and jobs policy
- Town centres policy

Updated Position on South Gloucestershire Council's Housing Land Supply

The council's latest Annual Monitoring Report Local plan monitoring demonstrated a Housing Land Supply (HLS) of 5.86 years. The council's 2023 Housing Delivery Test (HDT) score is 133%. There is no longer a blanket requirement for a 5% buffer, following changes made to the NPPF in December, as only a 20% buffer applies where the HDT shows delivery under 85% of the requirement over the previous 3 years. This does not therefore apply to South Gloucestershire Council.

In addition, in assessing HLS, the council benefits from the new provisions in paragraphs 77 and 226 of the December 2023 NPPF. These apply for 2 years from the date of publication of the NPPF (i.e. until December 2025) and state that a local planning authority need only deliver a minimum of 4 years HLS if they "have an emerging local plan that has either been submitted for examination or has reached Regulation 18 or Regulation 19 (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) stage, including both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need."

Accordingly, given the stage to which the council's emerging South Gloucestershire New Local Plan has reached, and that it includes both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting its housing need, (see section 5 Towards an Emerging Spatial Strategy), the council is only required to show a 4 year HLS.

The new provisions of the NPPF therefore act as a material change of circumstances justifying the HLS oversupply of 1.86 years. This is also capable of reducing the weight to be applied to the benefit of housing delivery (both general market and Affordable Homes), in any planning applications for housing on a case-by-case basis.

Parish Clerk Financial Report

Along with everybody else, Rangeworthy Parish Council had to contend with rapidly rising costs during the 2023/24 financial year (FY). As a result, by the end of the year, general reserves were down when compared to the previous year as a small number of budget categories had been exceeded during the year. At the end of the year general reserves stood at £10,618.77 representing just over six months of predicted annual spend.

The main factors contributing to overspends were inflation, warmer weather in the Autumn necessitating additional grass cuts in the children's playground and costs associated with the changeover of Clerk. The costs bearing the greatest inflationary pressures are insurance costs, staff costs and utilities. These overspends were offset to an extent by additional income from rent received for land adjacent to The Old Post Office (historic rent arrears) and bank interest received.

Costs are predicted to continue to increase throughout the coming year and this, along with a need to build general reserves back up to a more sustainable level nearer 9 months of predicted annual spend, means that a larger than average rise to the precept request was required this year. This follows a number of years when the precept was raised by a minimal, sub-general inflation amount.

Total receipts for the FY were £18250 against total outgoings £18974. During the year the Parish Council funded repairs to the roundabout in the children's playground and purchased a bench for the recreation ground to commemorate the Jubilee.

The Parish Council does have a very healthy amount of CIL funds to spend within the parish over the coming years. £55,767 is available to spend on "the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on it". The Parish Council always welcomes suggestions from parishioners regarding new infrastructure projects that may benefit from this money. These would need to be on Parish Council land.

Jubilee Committee Report

Jubilee Committee

The Jubilee Committee has only four members.

So organised their last Childrens Christmas party last year

The reason for this is lack of volunteers when arranging events such as this also the take up of tickets was slow. We are willing to help or support anyone who wishes to arrange the children's party. It would be nice to see younger families get involved.

We are still going to decorate the Hall for Christmas .

Just before Covid struck we thought we had a new larger committee organised but that came to nothing after lockdowns ended.

Some great successful Events were held though with people willing to help with these

The late Queens Jubilee . The Hall was packed to capacity for the tea party and the Hall looked good with the decorations .

The Coronation of King Charles was celebrated with a picnic in the Pub and Rec (games and a ride in a carriage drawn by two beautiful Horses.)

Then the next day a Coronation Café in The village Hall this was so popular we had to put out extra tables.

We wish to thank all those who helped with these events

I wish to thank Sue Romaine for sorting out photos of these events framing and hanging them in the hall.

Rangeworthy WI although a small group (18) is a friendly and active group. We try to have interesting speakers, this is much more difficult these days but this year so far we have had reflexology ,Thornbury Castle and Gods of Ancient Egypt. The speaker who came and talked about and showed us the beautiful Quilts she has made has now inspired some of our members to learn how to do this Wendy Moody will running a special workshop for them. Our Treasurer Liz Edmonds also runs a craft club in the Village Hall once a month.

When there is a Vintage Fare in the Hall WI provide the refreshments.

Visits to the theatre Quizzes and skittles matches (we have reached the finals with Skittles) and the annual garden party are all part of the WI calendar

We also enter the Hawkesbury Upton show. The annual Flower Show is another WI event which has run for many years .

Every year for a long time WI has given a party for senior Citizens. But due to changing circumstances the event this year will be a Village afternoon Tea that all villagers can come to. This will be a very relaxed afternoon and is being held on Sunday 14th July .3pm – 5pm.

Rangeworthy Hall Committee Report

The past last year has seen an increase in activity of both regular weekly and less frequent hirers. Some new hirers have included Cook Stars, Little Mess and Glow, U3A Ukelele group and the Good Evening Choir. An increase in activity has led to us needing to increase the frequency of cleaning, which we have recently done.

We have on ongoing programme of maintenance and refurbishment at the hall. In the past year we have replaced the internal strip lights with more energy efficient LED lighting and improved the lighting around the outside of the building. We were also grateful to the Parish Council who funded the removal of the old metal shed in the car park, and the installation of bike racks in its place.

We have had to put back plans to refurbish the main hall floor until we have completed works to replace the main roof ridge tiles. We also ensure that ongoing maintenance such as clearing gutters, painting steps and miscellaneous repairs are carried out.

We have a website www.rangeworthyvillagehall.org.uk and Facebook page 'Rangeworthy Village Hall', which are maintained by the committee, and through these we hope to raise our profile and generate more business.

The hall has a dedicated and hardworking management committee who each take on a range of tasks and together perform a valuable role in contributing to the running of the hall. In the past the committee tended to be made up of representatives from the various groups of hall users, however over time and with the shift in groups to more commercially run activities, this has meant that the committee is made up of individuals who simply wish to contribute something to their community.

Of the current committee of 9, only 3 members now live in Rangeworthy or Bagstone. Having recently moved away from the village myself, I intend to resign from the position of Chair at the next AGM in October 2024. The current committee, some of whom have contributed in excess of 20 years already, will not wish to continue indefinitely and we have had no new members join us for several years.

This presents a risk to the long-term running of the hall. We are concerned that the hall will not be able to function without a productive and willing committee and we urgently need more villagers to come forward to help care for and run this valuable community asset. The alternative would be to employ a hall manager for which there would obviously be a cost implication to hirers, the village or both.

The committee meets on the second Monday of each month at 7.30 in the Lister Room and we would welcome anybody to come to the meeting if they are considering joining us.

Please contact us via the Facebook page / website / email Rangeworthyhall@gmail.com for general information or booking information, or contact me direct on RangeworthyChair@gmail.com if you wish to discuss joining the committee.

Rangeworthy Church Report

Rangeworthy Church has existed on its present site for around 1000 years, and provides worship services most weeks – usually a Sunday morning at 9.30am.

Rangeworthy is part of a Benefice of 5 churches, but we are without a Rector following the retirement of David Russell. The part-time priest, Rick Williams, based at Charfield (also in the Benefice) has been a very great support and encouragement in all 5 parishes during this period, and will guide the churches through this time of change.

At Rangeworthy the Church provides a number of services to the community, as well as regular worship services plus baptisms, weddings and funerals. It is the collection point for Foodbank donations, always very gratefully received at the Thornbury Foodbank run by the Baptist Church there. It has close links with the School – Dawn Hardwick is a governor there – and the school uses the church building for meetings, interviews, and services, for example at Christmas. And the whole school came to see and experience the Easter “stations of the Cross” which Dawn had, very creatively, set up in the Church. The church also runs the well-loved ‘Carols in the Hall’ at Christmas. And Parish News is edited and provided by the Church – many thanks to all the volunteers in the village who help to distribute it.

The cemetery and churchyard are a valuable resource for those who have relatives and friends buried there, and visitors often provide support in various ways including helping with upkeep of the grounds. We are also maintaining a wild flower area and hedgehog haunt following a successful visit by Daisy Finniear from S Glos Council last summer. Churchyards, which have never been built on, are often very valuable sites for local wildlife, plants, animals and birds. And Daisy has also recently visited the Woodland in Rangeworthy owned and managed by the Parish Council.

Watch out for the History talks taking place in the Church on Wednesday evenings in June starting on June 5th from 7 – 9.00pm. Check Rangeworthy Church Facebook page for further details.

As a Parish Councillor I am pursuing the urgently required repairs on Church Lane, but you will appreciate that many roads in S. Glos are in a very poor condition, and a relatively little used lane cannot be top priority.