ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held at the Village Club (small hall) on
Tuesday, 20th May 2025 at 7.00pm

MINUTES

PRESENT

CHAIR: Amanda Foister CLERK: Jo Pugh

The meeting was also attended by the following Parish Councillors: Geoff Bond

and 24 members of the public

Cllr. Amanda Foister (AF) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council and Chair of this Annual Parish Meeting. She went on to say that the new Chair of the Parish Council, Andy Bryan sadly couldn't be at the meeting, but had sent apologies and a letter to be read out.

1. **Approve the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th May 2024**
   The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) held on 14th May 2024 were approved as a true record.

2. **Introduction and Welcome**
   AF read out the letter from Andy Bryan, newly appointed Chair of Nettlebed Parish Council. In the letter, AB introduced himself and acknowledged that while his appointment as Chair was unplanned, he was delighted to take on the role. He apologised for not being there, but thanked AF for stepping in to host the meeting in his absence. He outlined his background, noting his previous experience as a councillor in Moulsford, and expressed enthusiasm for working on village improvement projects. He emphasised that the Parish Council exists to represent residents and encouraged community members to share their ideas and concerns through active engagement. In the letter, he announced four current vacancies on the Parish Council and described various opportunities for involvement, including playground inspections and redesign, allotment management, responding to planning applications, reviewing grant applications, finding traffic management solutions, and handling financial matters. He clarified that no special experience is necessary - only a commitment of a few hours per week and a willingness to participate. AB ended his letter by expressing appreciation for discovering the full extent of village activities during the preparation for this meeting, and wished all attendees an enjoyable evening.

3. **Reports from Parish Council & any reports from village groups.**
Where reports were presented in their entirety during the meeting, the following notes summarise the key points discussed. Full copies of all submitted reports can be found in the accompanying 2024-25 Annual Parish Meeting Reports document.

CLLR. BEN HIGGINS, OCC – was unable to attend the meeting. Report attached

CLLR. JO ROBB – was unable to attend the meeting. Report attached

Nettlebed Parish Council – AF presented the report. The Council held 10 regular and one extraordinary meeting in 2024-25, plus three Crocker End Green Common Management Committee meetings and two extraordinary meetings. It responded to 20 planning applications. **Play Area:** New carousel top installed and wetpour surface repaired. Equipment cleaned annually and quarterly safety checks carried out. The play area retains a clean sheet with no accidents reported. Annual RoSPA report guides maintenance. A feasibility study, partly funded by the Council, is underway for relocating the play area to the recreation ground. **Bus Shelters:** Algae removal, minor repairs, and re-staining completed. Grass-cutting contractors now also sweep shelters during visits. **Wildflower Verges:** Native wildflowers along Watlington Street are establishing well, enhancing biodiversity despite a less manicured look. **Traffic Management:** Following traffic survey in June 2024, 20mph roundels were installed. A follow-up survey is planned in September to assess and consider the need for further measures such as Speed Indicator Devices (SID). **Crocker End Green Common:** Three byelaw signs with QR codes to full byelaws have been installed. Plans to update outdated bylaws. Conservation work continues with mowing and bramble control, protecting wildlife as per management plans. The Committee is monitoring recent infrastructure works (SSE and Gigaclear) and any impact on Crocker End Green Common. **Community Website:** New Parish Council website launched (www.nettlebed-pc.gov.uk). Potential merger with Nettlebed.org is under consideration - community feedback is being sought. **Community Litter Pick:** Annual event had a good turnout, supporting village pride and Bartholomew's Church Council (churchyard path). £500 for land clearance for playground relocation feasibility. £300 to Citizens Advice Bureau. **Comet Shopping Bus:** Continued support for this vital service. Current organiser Sue Abbott is stepping down and seeking a volunteer to handle financial coordination and applying for grants. **Financials:** 2024-25 accounts closed with internal audit completed. Council holds healthy reserves for contingencies, repairs, and planned projects including traffic management and playground equipment replacement. Report attached

Beechcroft Developments – unable to attend the meeting. Report attached

The Chiltern Society, Paul Wisdell – Paul introduced himself as the Path representative for Nettlebed. He said that around 40 parishes in the Chilterns have a dedicated Path Rep who inspects local rights of way twice a year - checking signage, accessibility, and the condition of stiles, gates, painted white waymarking arrows, fingerposts, and discs. Minor issues such as overgrowth or damaged/faded waymarks are handled directly – more significant problems are escalated to the Area Secretary, who may contact landowners or organise a Path Maintenance Volunteer's (PMVs) workday. The PMVs, working under Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), run 3–4 informal work sessions per month – typically from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm – followed by a pub lunch! About 9–10 volunteers attend each

session, equipped with tools such as pole pruners, hedge cutters, and chainsaws. Tasks include replacing waymarker posts and improving path infrastructure. A key focus has been replacing stiles with gates to improve accessibility. Over 400 stiles have been replaced in the past 17 years – and Nettlebed is now the first stile-free village in the area the Chiltern Society cover. Following OCC-provided training, the group's work has recently expanded to include building steps on steep paths. Their third step project of this kind is scheduled for Watlington this coming weekend. Labour is volunteer-based – tools, equipment, and training are provided by OCC and the Chiltern Society covers insurance and first aid. Gate replacements, which cost around £600 each, are funded through Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE), the Chilterns National Landscape, Ramblers, Parish Councils, and individual donors.

New volunteers are always welcome – there's no obligation to attend every session, and any help is greatly appreciated.

Nettlebed District Commons Conservators – Diggory Laycock. Ongoing maintenance continues across Nettlebed, Highmoor, Kingwood, and Nettlebed Priest Hill, with recent clearance work completed. At Kingwood, a former hospital site with old concrete tracks has been significantly cleared, creating a circular, wheelchair-accessible route. The AGM takes place tomorrow evening (21st May) at the Community Hall. Donations are always needed and very welcome to support ongoing work. Report attached

Bell Ringers – Susan Byers. The Nettlebed bells have been rung consistently throughout the year for Sunday services, practice sessions, and special occasions. The team continues to face a shortage of local ringers and depends on support from neighbouring villages, especially a committed family from Sonning Common. New ringers aged 10 and above are warmly invited to join, with the requirement that children be accompanied by an adult. Practices are held on Wednesday evenings at 8pm, though advance contact is advised. The church clock's electric winder and regulator have recently been repaired and are now fully operational. The Chair highlighted how much the village appreciated the ¼ peal rung to mark the VE Day celebrations. Report attached

Quiz Team – Susan Byers. Nettlebed and the South Oxfordshire Village Quiz League 2025 Each autumn through to May, villages in South Oxfordshire compete in friendly quiz matches. Currently, Nettlebed is short of players. Matches are played either home or away. Matches are usually held on weekday evenings (excluding Fridays) and include a social tea break. The quiz covers a wide range of topics, from sport and music to literature and gardening, so diverse knowledge is an asset. More details are available at www.soquiz.co.uk. If interested in joining the Nettlebed team, please get in touch susan.byers1980@gmail.com Report attached

Frends of Nettlebed School (FONS) – Vanessa Hoare addressed the meeting. Key areas covered were: FONS is a registered charity run by parent and carer volunteers to strengthen the school community and raise funds. FONS has raised over £15,000 so far this school year through 11 events, including the Nettlebed Stinger, which alone raised £8,382. Thanks were extended to sponsors, local farmers, and the Cheese Shed for their vital support. Funds have supported trips, IT and sports equipment, Forest School, music lessons, and more.

Upcoming fundraising includes Nettlefest (7 June, 3pm-7pm), with a longer-term goal to raise £15,000–£20,000 to redevelop the Key Stage 2 playground. Report attached

Nettlebed Community School – Savannah Foister reported the school has its highest ever number of pupils (170), with a Reception waiting list for the fourth consecutive year. A new Home School Link Worker has been introduced to support families in need. The Nettlebed Educational Trust continues to fund activities for disadvantaged children, including trips, sports, and lessons. Plans are underway to redevelop the aging temporary classroom into a larger, multi-use space – fundraising will begin soon. School facilities are widely used by the community, with new upgrades including a sound system. FONS fundraising continues to thrive. A recent Ofsted inspection praised pupils' values, behaviour, and enthusiasm – highlighting a kind, respectful, and supportive school culture. Report attached

Nettlebed Art Society (NAS) – Jane Williams reported that NAS was founded in 1949, and held its 70th show last year with great success! Despite having only a small (but hardworking) committee, the society is thriving and continues to operate as a non-profit, raising funds for local charities. In 2024, NAS donated £1,800 (£300 more than the previous year) to groups including Friends of Nettlebed School, Nettlebed Commons, and St Bartholomew's Church Fund. Thanks to generous support from local business advertisers, NAS covers hall rental and publicity costs. The 2024 show featured 160 entries from 55 artists, with 21 paintings sold and strong visitor numbers approaching 600 over the weekend. Craftspeople further enriched the event, including garden designer Christine Gibbs - local plant expert and former NAS Chair, who speaking about the outdoor space, attracted many visitors and buyers. Harriet Archer recently joined the committee and manages advertising and social media. With Parish Council support, NAS bought display screens now available for community hire. The committee invites villagers to join and attend the August show at Nettlebed Community School to enjoy art, crafts, refreshments, and support this valued event. Report attached

Nettlebed Royal British Legion (NRBL) – David Challis reported that this year marks the centenary of the Nettlebed branch of the Royal British Legion, founded on 6th May 1925 by Major Philip Fleming. Nationally, the RBL celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2021.

The RBL supports both serving and ex-service personnel and their families, including children, through partnerships with other charities and six dedicated care homes. We also campaign in Parliament on behalf of the armed forces community and work to preserve the memory of those who served. A core part of our mission is remembrance - safeguarding the memory of those who served. Our annual Poppy Appeal remains central to this, and this year it raised over £3,500. We are, of course, always grateful for more support. Donations can be made either to the national Poppy Appeal or directly to our branch. We now have a committee of seven members, and I've personally been involved with the branch for nearly 40 years. To mark our 50th anniversary, the branch purchased the memorial in the churchyard, and this year, for our 100th, we have added a new memorial by the church door. David also noted the success of the VE Day celebrations but mentioned his email to the editor of the Nettlebed News Network (NNN) to advertise the event had not been published. The Parish Clerk advised that any

communications intended for NNN can be sent via email to herself or Susan Byers to ensure they are shared.

Upcoming fundraising events:

- Coffee Morning & Plant Sale – Saturday 7th June, doors open at 10am. Donations for the tombola or raffle are very welcome. Last year's event raised a record £1,000.
- Jumble Sale – Saturday 7th September, featuring pre-loved clothes and more.

We hope to see you there and thank you for your continued support. Report attached

Nettlebed & District Good Neighbour Scheme – Wendy Ayre-Tilbury reported that, Nettlebed and nearby villages enjoy a strong network of social activities supported by AgeUK Social Prescriber Charlie Haynes, the Nettlebed GP Surgery team, and dedicated volunteers.

- Monthly Lunches: First Tuesday each month at 12:30pm. Two-course meal with tea/coffee for £5. Booking required
- Coffee Mornings: Third Tuesday monthly, 10–11:15am at the Village Club. £1 for unlimited tea/coffee, cakes, sausage rolls, and a raffle.
- Henley Shopping Service: Weekly minibus trips – free Handybus on Tuesdays and shared-cost service on Thursdays. Door-to-door pickup.
  Contact Sue: 07968870408 or email: susan@theabbotts.co.uk. for more details.

Thanks to Peter Willis-Flemming and all volunteers for their vital support. Report attached

Volunteer Drivers – Wendy Ayre-Tilbury. Volunteer Drivers support Nettlebed Surgery by providing transport for patients facing mobility, transport, or navigation challenges to medical appointments. Drivers stay with patients during appointments and can deliver prescriptions if needed. Wendy Ayre-Tilbury coordinates the service, matching patients with volunteer drivers. A small petrol contribution is requested. Currently, six drivers serve Nettlebed, Henley, Checkendon, and Harwell, with more volunteers welcome.
Contact Wendy to request transport: 07944 696329 / 01491 641597 / 07761 604308
Report attached

St Bartholomew's Church – John Thompson reported that there is fresh energy on the Parochial Church Council, with new members joining. A heartfelt thanks was expressed for the extraordinary community support, raising £20,000 – a plaque will be installed to acknowledge this once Rector Mark Ainsworth returns from his sabbatical. The new organ has been installed and sounds magnificent. Repaving of the deteriorated church path has been completed, part-funded by the Parish Council. As mentioned by David Challis this evening, some issues have since arisen and will be followed up with the installers. Looking ahead, there is interest in paving the muddy path towards the Cheese Shed to improve accessibility. Two educational charities – the Nettlebed Educational Trust and the Highmore Educational Charity – are now fully up and running, providing support for local young people in need. Anyone aware of a potential beneficiary is

encouraged to get in touch. In Rev. Mark's absence, Assistant Hugh Balfour is providing valuable support to the parish.

Churchyard Gardeners Group – Linda Adams reported that the Churchyard Gardening Group, established by Nan McDonnell over ten years ago, continues its work maintaining the churchyard, and Nan is still kept updated. A small team of four volunteers meets on Wednesday mornings between 10am and 12pm (weather dependent), with a winter break from Christmas to February. Tasks include weeding, trimming paths, cutting back shrubs and hedging, and managing ivy, wisteria, and roses. Over the years, snowdrops have been split and replanted, now encircling the church in early spring. Recently, new shrubs were planted near the Cheese Shed wall to support church flower arrangers. New volunteers are warmly welcomed. Report attached

Allotments – Rosemary Passmore reported that there has been renewed energy at the allotments this year, with several enthusiastic new tenants taking up the offer of a free first year. The Parish Council is considering deer-proof fencing for the site, though approval is required from both the Nettlebed Estate and Oxfordshire County Council Footpaths. Five or six plots are still available, and new plot holders are warmly encouraged - having an allotment is extremely rewarding…the only downside is that you have to work at it! Contact: clerk@nettlebed-pc.gov.uk Report attached

Oil Buying Group – there was no representative from the group, however Cllr Geoff Bond advised that Patrick Amory is seeking someone to take over the administration of the group.

AF gave heartfelt thanks on behalf of the village to:

- All contributors to this evening's meeting.
- David Byers, for his dedicated litter-picking, defibrillator checks, and all-round community support.
- Everyone who participated in the Annual Litter Pick.
- Jodi Butler and her team for organising the Annual Fete and Party on the Rec, which supports local groups and the Sports Association.
- Rosemary Passmore for her continued overseeing of the allotments.
- Barry Lambden for his ongoing care of the play area.
- Patrick Amory for managing the Nettlebed Oil Buying Group, and for his many roles including Chair of the Commons Conservators and Head Cheesemaker at Nettlebed Creamery.

4. To invite the public to raise any matters of interest

Norman Gibson said that while waiting at the bus stop early this afternoon, a man in a cap greeted him – it was Dr Jim McWhirter. He was on his way home. It was good to see him again!

Before closing the meeting, AF encouraged everyone to reflect on how to inspire more people to volunteer. There are currently four vacancies on the Parish Council, and many local groups are also in need of additional help. She noted that whilst the 25–30 people

in the room actively contribute to village life, there are hundreds more in Nettlebed who are not yet engaged. A representative from Friends of Nettlebed School highlighted that 75 parents volunteer annually, demonstrating that younger residents do get involved. However, both they and Rosemary Passmore noted that while many are willing to help, long-term commitment is often a barrier.

AF thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Meeting Closed