

WHITELEAF & CADSDEN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION CIC (WCRA)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Whiteleaf Golf Club on Wednesday 1st October 2025

Present: Andy Vere (Chairman), Catherine White (Hon. Secretary), Mark Weiner (Hon. Treasurer), Kate Symons and 17 members.

The Chairman welcomed everyone, especially new residents, and Buckinghamshire Councillor and Mayor of Princes Risborough, Matt Walsh.

- 1. Apologies** – were received from Dom Larose, Robbie Francis, Fionnuala McKibbin, Angeline Vere, Hannah Purcell, Florence & Mike Brain, Rich & Paula Clayton and Richard & Hazel Scully.
- 2. Approval of 2024 AGM Minutes** – there being no comments or matters arising, the minutes of the AGM held on 2nd October 2024 were approved.
- 3. Chairman's Review of Activities 2024/25** – The Chairman began by reminding everyone of the WCRA's Mission Statement, with the three strands of infrastructure, people and social overarched by an ethos of openness and transparency; the AGM plays an important part in this. To help ensure participation we have a time limit of nine years (three terms) before directors have to step down. We want to draw directors from as broad a spectrum as possible with a wide range of skills to support our company. If you are interested in joining the Board of Directors of WCRA CIC, please contact the WCRA Secretary, Catherine White at catherine@bruce-white.com.

Now nine years on from the catastrophic fire at the cottages, the Chairman reported that we haven't seen the progress that we hoped we would. In February this year, our MP Greg Smith visited the site. Soon afterwards, the site was cleared by the Developer of much of the vegetation that had built up over recent years, but there has been no tangible progress since then. The Developer has had to satisfy the onerous requirements of the Bucks Council Heritage team (due to listed building status) and will have to pay the not inconsiderable Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) of around £50-60, 000 once building work commences. WCRA did try to support the Developer in getting this fee waived by Bucks Council, but they were unwilling to do this. Kate Symons has worked tirelessly as conduit between the Developer and the community. Sadly, the Developer has not responded to our recent calls and messages, and we have no further information.

The Chair said that he was personally disappointed with the lack of action to reduce the speeding in our hamlets. The proposal made by Bucks Council circa. five years ago, for white edge road markings at the Peters Lane/Upper Icknield Way junction was stymied by the Bucks Council Heritage team as it is at the southern end of the Whiteleaf conservation area. He is now liaising with Matt Walsh to get a site meeting with Bucks Council representatives from Highways and Heritage to find a satisfactory way forward. He hoped that the existing 30mph restriction would be extended up the

hill to the end of the conservation area, enhancing the safety of pedestrians walking over Peters Lane from under Whiteleaf Cross.

The Chairman also showed recent results of traffic speeds recorded by the Vehicle Activated Sign which he had positioned outside Cliffe House. Around half of vehicles coming downhill appeared to be exceeding the 30mph limit, increasing the danger coming into the narrowing at the Peters Lane/Upper Icknield Way junction. Also noted was the difficulty of trying to get around parked cars when coming up Peters Lane.

Concerns were also raised regarding speeding on the Cadsden Road, in particular where the speed drops down from the National Limit to 40mph. The sign is poorly positioned just before reaching The Plough. This is a very tricky exit and there have been two nasty road traffic accidents at that point within the last year. It was noted that in one of these, a wall was knocked over and the second involved a motorcyclist. The Chairman undertook to raise this with Bucks Council.

Regarding MRPC land registry issues; things are moving along, albeit slowly. All the land parcels are now in the process of being registered with Land Registry and we are hopeful of some solid news soon.

The Chairman was pleased that WCRA had been able to publicise the sale of the Holloway field last year and put residents in touch with the Agents selling the land. He thanked the two residents who eventually purchased the land and have hopefully secured it against development.

There has been relatively little progress on reworking the History pages on the WCRA website. The list of house names on the website has been largely superseded by a new app developed by Robbie Francis that anyone can use on their phone to locate every property within the hamlets. A QR code linking to the app will be posted on the noticeboard next to the post box on the Upper Icknield Way; delivery drivers will be able to access the app on their phone by using the code. We will also include a link on the website.

Regarding the last year's social events; the Chair reported that a successful and as-ever enjoyable Sausage Sizzle was had in July with a very good turnout of children and parents. The Litter Pick in March also had a great turnout. Village Suppers have been a little more difficult to organise this year as we have not had the use of The Red Lion but The Plough at Cadsden have been fantastic in their support and we have had a Christmas Supper and drinks & free ice-creams for children over the August bank holiday, making The Plough a real community asset.

The Chair explained that we have had initial results of the survey sent to residents regarding their choice of social events going forward, these would be discussed in the second half of the meeting. He also reiterated the Treasurer's comments that we now include on all our correspondence, details of CIC's bank account and include a QR code just to remind people of the opportunity to donate and that we are looking for a modest £5 donation annually.

- 4. Annual Accounts & Treasurer's Report** – The Annual Report and Accounts for 2024/25 and CIC34 form were approved. These documents will now be filed with Companies House, within the statutory filing time limit.

The Treasurer noted that last year we had an increased turnover of £550 primarily because of the Sausage Sizzle, which was a great success. He reported that we have broken even for this year. He stressed that our running costs are increasing every year, with main costs being insurance, Companies House compliance and information Commissioners registration. He also informed that Lloyds Bank are now charging a £90 annual levy, and the costs of running the website and dealing with Stripe payments cost £180. Our overall running costs are around £500 per year which is the minimum we need to cover. The Treasurer stressed the point of the QR code and that if residents could see their way to contributing £5 per household that would easily cover our costs, we are not looking to build up a massive fund. The current balance is £713 as of meeting date and that this will only go down to the end of the year (March) but anticipates the WCRA will organise a couple of fairly small revenue generators which should end up at around £300.

- 5. Election of Officers** – Mark Weiner was re-elected as Treasurer, as proposed by Peter Miles and seconded by Gwen Miles.
- 6. Any Other Business** – None.

The formal meeting closed at 20:45.

Matt Walsh gave an update on Buckinghamshire Council issues.

Town Council: Matt is thrilled to be back as a Councillor and Princes Risborough's Town Mayor. He reports he is pushing Town Council Officers to get the council back to basics and push for good community events to support local groups as they do with the Minor Grants policy and to not worry about some of the other issues that have crept in over the past four years. He has gone through every single line of the Town Council budget and states that savings need to be made. There has been no investment in children's playground equipment over the last four years which needs to change, there is an urgent need for new benches and like throughout Princes Risborough and this was approved by the Town Council the previous evening. A Restoring Risborough fund which he is starting with £25,000 worth of seed funding from the cuts that have been made in other budgets, taking in additional funding from grants that have been put forward to Bucks Council. He is hoping during the course of this year that there will be about £100,000 going into our parks and local areas to try and bring Risborough a little more to where it needs to be as he feels it's been drifting somewhat over recent years.

Matt reports that the £5,000 scheme for road markings at Peters Lane/Upper Icknield Way remains in the budget and will again be recommending that this is carried over into the following year.

Matt has requested an update from the Council on the Ragpit which has been leased out to one of the two adjacent properties, he suggests there is quite a bit of tree work required along with the removal of ivy covering boundary walls. The Chairman asked Matt if (as agreed before Covid) we could have a tour of the Ragpit organised for residents, Matt agreed to this and asked for a formal request to be emailed.

He reports that Kop Hill 2025 was again, another fantastic and successful event.

He was appreciative of our presence at each Town Council meeting and stressed the importance of this.

Buckinghamshire Council: Matt thanked those who had voted for him to be re-elected. He informed that Bucks Council went from three councillors in the Risborough ward to two, himself and Gary Hall. He explained they do have a different political set up than those prior to the election and that they fell one seat short of having a majority Conservative administration. The new leader is Councillor Stephen Broadbent, a former Deputy Leader and cabinet member for Transport and that things are moving rapidly at the council as the new leadership takes the helm.

He has continued to push for progress on the fire damaged cottages, to gain some sort of agreement to move forward but being honest, does not think the CIL is the problem. He explains when the proposal for the cottages was drafted, the cost of the capital was a very different position to what it is today. Interest rates were below 1% and today are much higher and that the cost of this capital may well have impacted viability. He has this evening already sent emails to ensure we get an update.

Local Bloor Homes Planning Application – Matt reports he and Gary Hall went to the Planning Meeting asking officers to reject it. They did not feel the application was correct and hadn't dealt with the transport implications, especially around Mill Lane. Unfortunately, this was not the view of the Planning Committee. They believed that it was, in effect, policy compliant. So, this scheme now has planning for approximately 390 new homes. Officers have been working away with Bloor Homes over the last five weeks to draw up the Section 106 Agreement. Matt yesterday had a meeting with the head of Infrastructure at the Council and believes there are some stumbling blocks at the moment. Bloor Homes are obviously very concerned. He noted that they need to make a big contribution to the relief road whilst not paying too little or less. He is hoping the details will come out within the next few weeks, by law it is supposed to be six weeks. Matt acknowledged this development will impact every part of Princes Risborough and will need to have a very close eye kept on it. He explains that the new government has massively increased the new housing numbers for Buckinghamshire by 45% and that they are having to deliver 90,000 new homes in the County, which duty calls to cooperate with. We've always had protected Green Belt but now we have Grey Belt, Matt assures that officers are taking the strongest and firmest line with the government on their interpretation. If 90,000 new homes can be squeezed in across Bucks, we may be under obligation to take in some of our neighbouring counties housing numbers as well.

Bloor South Development is for just under 400 new homes and there is an argument that the transport & school capacity cannot accommodate this. He urges us, as residents, to go on the Bucks Council Planning Website to put forward your comments on what you think is right for Princes Risborough. He then went on to say that Affordable Housing is very mixed across Buckinghamshire, housing is affordable to those who can afford it and states that Princes Risborough is 48% affordable which presents a very large challenge to local infrastructure. He explains that a Developer will build a house with only a 7% profit margin for Social Housing but then sell it onto a Housing Association who will in turn rent it or put it into a part-ownership scheme. This is something which is being consulted on currently and again urged residents to comment if you believe that Affordable has not been adequately explained.

Finally, Matt explained Fair Funding Settlements; the government are planning to allocate money across the country and that they are going to remove a lot of money from the South East to reallocate to the North and Midlands, which for Buckinghamshire is looking like a £45 million hole over the next three years. He discussed that we are a rural county and spend millions of pounds each year on school transport alone (Buckinghamshire has the highest cost of the UK), and that the government do not get this reality, likewise the cost of residential care homes is far more expensive than other areas of the country, Bucks CC pay £80,000 per vulnerable child per year, all the above add up tremendously.

Some good news; Bucks CC have signed off on a massive partnership with the National Film and Television School that will create 200 jobs for young people. One of our three Enterprise areas, Westcott, has just taken on four new major rocket companies as part of the investment there. Silverstone Park and another Enterprise zone that the Council runs, have each got new developments in sport and swimming that are creating hundreds of new jobs too.

Matt thanked us for inviting him and if we are kind enough to do so again next year, he'll be back with more cheering news and rather less gloomy.

Residents Q & A Session

- 1. Does anyone have any strong feelings on the spread of solar farms in the Vale, as the proposal for the new Kimblewick Farm is in process?**

MW – Apparently this is going to a government appeal. It was recommended for approval but was rejected by the Planning Committee. The matter is now going to the Planning Inspector for determination. Whilst people increasingly want to see the use of solar power and making good use of Brownfield sites (eg. Calvert Waste Transfer station) it was generally agreed that the use of high quality, versatile agricultural land for solar production was not desirable. The use of solar panels on individual properties was discussed and MW promised to share our opinions with Greg Smith.

- 2. Overgrown footpath on Rectory Meadow from The Holloway to Monks Risborough School, reported to Bucks CC Public Rights of Way, nothing has been done, how do I chase this up? Much like reporting on Fix My Street, the case has been closed, and no action has been taken.**

MW – First and foremost, general maintenance is done under Devolved Services to the Town Council. And then we have, along with every other parish, paid The Chiltern Society to do it on our behalf with their team of volunteers. The problem is the total footpath maintenance budget for Princes Risborough Town Council is a grand total of £243.00 per year. MW says he is happy to meet with any resident to go out for a walk and look at any effective footpath so he may then interject at a higher level within the Council to see what can be done.

Is there any way we could volunteer locally to sort out our footpaths?

MW – I would be very happy to be involved, the ownership of land needs to be established first. Footpath and maintenance vary throughout. Some cross into Bucks Council Highways, some are privately owned. It's not a one stop solution; it's a multitude of different factors. The issue with the way the contract is set up with The Chiltern Society is they are all volunteers which generally means they come out once a year en-masse and do bits and bobs. He explained that for those of us wishing for a more reactive response, they are just not set up to offer this. He confirmed that local volunteering is a great thing, but any would have to be 110% certain that this is on a public right of way.

3. Prevention of trespassing on private land and what can be done to stop cyclists and motorcyclists using public footpaths?

MW – There is a Rights team at the Council to follow up on these issues.

4. Fix My Street does not appear to work, multiple reports of trees or other obstructions reported and telephone conversations with someone from the Council with additional ownership detail given, nothing is actioned and the case is closed.

MW – if you have reported this on Fix My Street, you should have a reference number and I would be happy to take this up.

5. Discussion regarding owners of precarious trees/branches should have a Health & Safety survey carried out, if they don't and the tree or branch comes down, any insurance will be void. Discussion about a number of dead trees at a property on Peters Lane with many reporting this and no action has been taken.

MW – said he would follow this up and thought maybe a Health & Safety Tree survey was not a responsibility most people were aware of, unlike woodland owners who are very mindful of this fact.

General discussion regarding the clearing of overgrown trees/branches and that when a large portion of a tree came down in a storm earlier this year onto the powerline at the Cadsden Road/Upper Icknield Way junction, the electricity board got straight in and cleared all of the overgrowth.

Also discussed was the series of electricity mini-outs earlier this year; UK Power Networks came out and did tree/branch clearing which worked. Certain parts of the hamlets are again experiencing this and still chasing for action.

MW – I would be more than happy to raise this with UK Power Networks because we deal with their parliamentary team, if the Chairman would like to send us an email explaining that residents are concerned with mini blackouts in the Whiteleaf area.

6. Resident spoke of the procedure for following up on a referral to Fix My Street; if you follow up you are then given a new reference number which seems to totally confuse the entire system.

MW – we have raised the reference number issue with Fix My Street, which on the

whole, is a great tool. It costs seven pence per incident recorded vs eleven pence to deal with an email and £45 to deal with a telephone call.

It was noted by residents that the general feeling was that the moment a conversation was had with a different contact to the original everything was lost in confusion!

MW – one of my new roles is I am now the Chairman of the Audit Government Committee and one of the things we have scheduled for Spring 2026 is to review Fix My Street and I will be on the case.

- 7. I know that Monks Risborough Parochial Charity has a Trustee Vacancy and was wondering if this vacancy has a job description and whether that role was advertised to ensure that somebody experienced in land management and in dealing with tenders and leases is appointed to the role, rather than somebody the Town or Parish Council appoints from within their own body? You are effectively appointing Trustees to a Charity that owns public land without any community engagement. Are you going to do anything to improve community engagement and communication for the Monks Risborough Parochial charity, which owns 33 acres in three different parishes?**

MW – The issue of the Monks Risborough Parochial charities was an issue throughout my first five years as Mayor. We do need to check this to see if there is actually a way. You can see that Alan Turner has taken one of these spaces and I think we need to look in general terms of whom we want to appoint. I take on board your point regarding qualifications and then obviously any clear conflict of interest would disqualify. I am happy to set a meeting up and to chair it with representatives from the CIC, these things should be transparent. I think the underlying point is that MRPC does some great work in line with charity commission rules and that Trustees are fit for purpose. You are key stakeholders in most of the land plots in these hamlets and as before, I am happy to facilitate a meeting.

- 8. The possibility of a footpath from The Plough going downhill towards Whiteleaf was discussed several years ago. Could we try to resurrect this, there is space on Council land to build something?**

MW – An engineer did come to look, and I am happy to resurrect this, it could be incorporated as part of our walk.

- 9. Blue and orange road markings appeared earlier this year outside Marks & Spencers, what were these?**

MW – it was for underground surveys for utilities to work out where everything is.

- 10. Nuisance motorbikes on footpaths, what are the plans to get more than one CCTV camera to aid the Battle of the Bikes?**

MW – we did put an additional camera along the Earl Mitchell playing field which was knocked down within one day! The police have only offered us one camera so far and I know it's the time of year when it starts to become a problem again, I honestly don't know what the answer is. We are in partnership with the police office now and I think we're going to have to wait and see how this one camera works out, if it doesn't, we will have to look at something else.

General agreement regarding the danger of the footpaths being used as a race track up the hill, on the footpaths and for the hours it goes on for.

- 11. We have two eyesores in Whiteleaf, the first being the fire damaged cottages which we spoke about earlier. The second is The Red Lion pub which has all sorts of problems and to my mind, seems for to be being run into the ground. Do you**

have any advice for us? This was our main, central hub of the village which has now gone, we have nowhere to meet up anymore.

MW – feels very sad as he remembers The Red Lion being a great community asset back in the day. The pub has not been operating properly for a long time, so the investment required to bring it up to acceptable levels is huge. Community bought pubs have worked (eg. The Russell Arms at Butlers Cross) but these are generally one or two big backers who fund an investment of this nature rather than single bricks. Matt also reported that he believed The Red Lion had been revisited by Food Hygiene and had been granted license to serve food once again.

12. **Going back to the cottages again, heads really do need to be knocked together to get this issue dealt with, they have been an eyesore for the last ten years and unless this is now dealt with urgency by all parties, they will remain an eyesore for the next ten years or literally, just fall down. There have been some ridiculous requirements that need to be addressed. Somebody needs to take a sensible view to encourage proceedings.**

MW – I completely agree with your view. What is a worry is when the Developer is fighting a £50,000 CIL from across five properties, the margin must be so low that it is undeliverable.

But from a local residents perspective, how far do you go before you end up having seven properties to make the numbers work?

MW – I could easily ask if this is viable and as things like the cost of rules and construction has risen so much, that the whole thing needs to be reworked.

People have got to look at the human aspect of this; the most horrendous thing of this is not only the detriment that it is now to our hamlet, it's the fact that the people who live in close proximity, their hopes are blighted. They cannot sell, they have had tarpaulin rattling through the night in the wind all the time, what are you trying to do? There has to be a way through, it is not going away, can you do anything to move this on? It may be that we just have to accept that actually these cottages are not what they were made out to be. Can we have a much cheaper way to reconstruct them that would be attractive?

MW – The planning is due to expire very soon. It's a great catalyst for me to say that I've attended this with the officers and could you come up with something?

MW advised that changing to a more modern design would prompt a NO from Planners and Heritage.

Residents agreed that the status quo is not acceptable any longer.

MW – asked the Chairman to write to him with all the issues raised.

The Chairman wanted to relay the recent Survey results before closing the meeting. He reported that we have received 34 responses thus far, many of them who were families with children. It is clear parents are looking for events for their children. Most voted for informal get-togethers; a pub quiz got a good vote which will be re-visited for the first time post-covid. Wine tasting and a Fish 'n' Chips night scored well and the most voted for family event was an Easter Egg Hunt.

In terms of popularity of current events; the Sausage Sizzle, Litter Pick, Suppers and Halloween.

Suggestions of a Footpaths clear-up, having occasional talks with Speakers and a Chris Kingham walking hamlet tour were put forward. Agreed to continue with our popular events and to organise new suggestions as above.

The meeting closed at 21:45.

The 2026 AGM is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 14th October.