

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH

MINUTES

**7.30pm on 27th May 2025
Great Bowden Village Hall**

Present

Bob Hooper (Chairman)

Paul Claxton (Vice-Chairman)

John Wilson (Councillor)

2 members of the public

1. Welcome and apologies for Absence

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting

Apologies from Lindsey Wolstencroft (clerk); District Cllr Phil Knowles; Cllr Jon Almond; Cllr Richard Emery

2. Chairman's Report 2024/25

Cllr Hooper presented his report as follows:

He welcomed two new councillors John Wilson and David Hayes.

The Parish council are still working towards a lease allowing Bowden Cricket club security of tenure which will allow them to obtain grants.

Work is needed to repair the drains supplying the public toilets and tennis club. This will be expensive so various options are being considered.

Section 106 money is becoming available for traffic calming within the parish. Comments and ideas will be sought from the public on the various options.

Work continues on the wildflower verges which make a positive contribution to the ecology of the area. Thanks were expressed to the volunteers who give time to make this happen, also to the volunteers who monitor all the open spaces ensuring they can be enjoyed by everyone. The designated open spaces are an important part of the neighbourhood plan.

The Neighbourhood plan is being reviewed by a number of volunteers and the parish council is grateful for their perseverance. The NP allows members of the parish to influence developments in the local area helping to achieve the type of developments which people need.

We now look forward to working with our recently elected county councillor Sarah Hill and Cllr Hooper thanked Barry Champion for all his help and engagement in parish matters in the past.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2024

Cllr Claxton read out the minutes of the annual meeting of 2024. These can be viewed on the minutes section of the Parish Council website.

4. District Councillors Report

District Cllr Phil Knowles sent his apologies as he was not able to be there in person. Cllr Claxton read his report as follows:

Traffic and Parking

Still striving to find solutions/improvements to the problems. Cllr Knowles has been in Discussion with newly elected County Councillor Sarah Hill. He is delighted to welcome her back as she has worked hard for the village in the past.

He congratulated district Cllr Buddy Anderson on becoming vice chairman of HDC and Wished him a good year. Sadly Barbara Johnson , district councillor passed away recently and her funeral was on 30th May.

Potential Changes in Local government

Over the past months Cllr Knowles has been working with other district and borough councillors across Leicestershire to find the best solutions for our community and promoting the 3 unitary solution. i.e. North, City and South. The latter will include Harborough, Hinckley, Blaby, Oadby and Wigston. City will be a stand alone Authority and North will be other parts of Leicestershire with Rutland. There will be 400,000 residents across many 10s of square miles, not ideal but preferable to the alternatives suggested. There will be further discussion in the future and Cllr Knowles will be happy to discuss with the parish as more details become available. The changes bring the need to consider the future of Market Harborough and whether a Town Council will be beneficial or not. HDC have begun a consideration process which will lead to public discussion. Further discussion will lead to a wider review with some parishes looking at mergers.

Community Grant Scheme

This has been a huge success with many groups across the district already benefitting from the 1st £1,000,000. Similar sums are available for the next 2 years. Great Bowden has been active in the first year and he hopes in the following 2 years.

Local Plan

The consultation was recently completed. It is necessary to have an up to date plan in place as without it protection for communities is seriously eroded. This had to be delivered with only 2 days remaining inside the government set deadline and if missed meant developers could decide where they want to build, not necessarily in the best places for the community. HDC would have to find 2,000 more homes above and beyond the figures currently on the table and residents are concerned about where they would be built. These are central government figures.

Rewilding Project

There has been huge excitement about the recently shared rewilding and nature scheme. It is visionary, incredible and of national significance. HDC have purchased 130 acres of land, attracting partner investment which looks to buy 100 or more acres. The support structure is building and many groups wish to be involved. It is hoped to include all groups who want to be part of it. The strategic stages are very complex but excellent progress is being made. HDC have met with Natural England who have offered full support, also Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, East Mercia River Trust and Anglian Water. They also hope to receive support from Market Harborough and the Bowdens charities. Cllr Knowles will share more information as it becomes available.

5. Public Questions or comments for the upcoming year 2025/26

Peter Mitchell thanked Cllr Hooper for the way he had dealt with removal of a hedge on Main St to restore an important open space. The residents involved had been upset and complained about lack of grass cutting in the area. Cllr Hooper however dealt with the process diplomatically and was finally thanked by one of the residents concerned. Cllr Claxton explained that the standard of grass cutting by Spendloves had not been up to standard due to a change in staff. They apologised and now the standard is improved. A mountain ash tree in the area is leaning on to the pavement and may eventually need to be removed.

Carolyn Ford spoke about traffic calming measures citing the need to look well into the future when any alternatives are discussed/chosen. She is particularly concerned about Leicester Lane and has asked that residents should be involved in master planning. Money is about to become available from developers for traffic calming and alternatives need to be considered taking into account proposed new housing developments, schools etc which may increase traffic through the village. Cllr Claxton suggested that the cheapest alternative would be a no right turn onto Leicester Lane. He also said that it is necessary to complete the new Neighbourhood plan then Cllr Emery and himself will engage with LCC to price up the various alternatives within the £330,000 available.

Carolyn's suggestion is that Leicester Lane should become a cul-de-sac so no traffic from the new developments can come through. It is also important to stagger entrance from Dingley Rd, Langton Rd and Leicester Lane with priority gateways.

Cllr Hooper brought the meeting to a close, thanking everyone for their attendance.

Meeting closed at 20.18

