

ZEALS PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AT ZEALS VILLAGE HALL
6.00 PM THURSDAY 21st MAY 2026
<https://zealspc.org.uk/>

The meeting was opened at 1802

PRESENT: Cllrs C Spencer (Chair), J Gray, P Thomas, M Gibbons, L D'Ambrumeni, A Patch
Ms Lisa Gilby (Clerk),
Cllr G Jeans – Wiltshire Council
And 9 members of the public.

APOLOGIES: None

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **CHAIRMAN – Cllr Charles Spencer** started by thanking all those who were present. The Parish Council meets 6 times a year and he highlighted that while planning applications were always discussed, the PC can only give opinions to Wiltshire Council.
The PC have recently taken responsibility for the playground from Wiltshire Council and have also overseen the kitchen replacement in the Village Hall. Roof repairs still need to be happen.
Also highlighted that Seeds4Success and Leaping Frogs are a huge asset to the village.
Thanks were given to Cllr Gibbons for overseeing the speed indicator, Cllr Patch for organising the litter pick, Cllr Gray for taking over when Cllr Spencer can't attend, to Lisa for the clerking and allotment management and Adrian Light for all the work he does including all the mowing.
3. **SEEDS 4 SUCCESS - Jaki Farrell** told us that they have received significant funding from The Cranbourne Chase to make the pavilion wheelchair accessible, they have had a community donation from Howdens to enable them to put in a new kitchen.
Mere cubs are now using the space regularly and they would like to get more community groups using the space. They now have 70 children across Zeals accessing the project in different ways.
4. **ST MARTINS LCC PARISH– Rev G Southgate** gave thanks to the Chair and Council for the invite. St. Martins church is part of the Upper Stour group including Bourton/ Stourton and Kilmington and as a place of worship is well attended. They have bell ringing 3 Wednesdays out of 4 and new ringers are always welcome.
5. **WHITESHEET ACADEMY REPORT** – Unfortunately, no one could be with us, but we were sent this report.
This academic year has seen several staff changes at Whitesheet:
 - In November 2025 we were joined by Caroline Watkins and Nadine Bird who work in the school office (replacing Jamie Smart). Both are settling in well, getting to grips with their jobs, and enjoying being part of the school community.
 - In January 2026 Leah Hare joined the staff team taking on the youngest children as Turtles class teacher. She has quickly become a valued member of the team.
 - In the summer term, Emily Mullord stepped away from her role as Executive Headteacher of Whitesheet, taking the decision to work in schools closer to her home in Devizes. Her role has been taken over by Richard Boase, the Head at Wilton CE Primary School. Richard is spending a couple of days a week at Whitesheet, getting to know the children and the staff team.
 - And finally, Tamsin Edmed, the Assistant Head and Seahorses class teacher, who has been with the school for 9 years, will be leaving at the end of this academic year.
 - This means that the school is currently in process of recruiting a teacher who will act as

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Head of School.

The children:

- Turtles class (Reception and year 1) have had a busy term, learning about lifecycles. They have had the opportunity to watch several chicks hatch here in school and to learn how to care for them. Last week they had an amazing trip to Longleat.
- Seahorses (Yrs 2 & 3) recently had a really informative and exciting trip to the Ancient Technology Centre in Cranborne, supporting their history learning, especially around their topic of Vikings.
- Dolphins class (Yr 4,5,6) have been really enjoying learning about World War 2 and are planning their own VE day celebration as part of the topic.
- Looking forward: our two year 6 children will be leaving us at the end of the year and we are hoping to be joined by seven new Reception children in September.

Generally:

- The school has an Ofsted rating of Good, with the Inspector saying that ‘Pupils are at the centre of this small, inclusive school. Leaders have high expectations. They are determined that all pupils achieve well. Pupils feel valued and appreciate the opportunities staff provide both in and beyond the classroom (2021). We are currently expecting to be inspected again soon.
- Rev Graham Southgate comes to the School every Wednesday to take Assembly and we also get regular visits from ‘Open the Book’.

6. **LEAPING FROGS - Becky and Victoria** were sadly unable to be with us, but sent this report.

Leaping Frogs Nursery continues to thrive in our beautiful rural setting, which remains one of the things families value most about our nursery. Parents consistently tell us how much they appreciate the balance we offer between a peaceful countryside environment and convenient access for commuting, particularly with our close proximity to the A303. Being able to provide children with an enriching outdoor childhood experience, while still supporting busy family life, is something we are incredibly proud of.

Our unique mini farm environment continues to be a huge attraction for families choosing childcare in the area. This year alone, we had a waiting list of over 150 families competing for just 60 available places, which reflects both the demand for high-quality early years provision locally and the reputation the nursery has built within the wider community. As always, when allocating places we prioritise siblings and local families wherever possible, helping to maintain our strong community links and support local residents.

Outdoor learning remains firmly at the heart of everything we do. We strongly believe children learn best through exploration, adventure, fresh air, and hands-on experiences. Whether they are splashing in muddy puddles, planting vegetables, collecting eggs, building dens, or caring for animals, our children spend a huge amount of time outdoors in all seasons and all weather. We fully embrace the changing seasons and the countless learning opportunities they bring — from spring planting and summer nature walks to autumn foraging and winter wildlife discovery.

Our animals continue to play a very special role in nursery life and are adored by the children. Peanut, Pickle, Cassie and Buster, our goats, Bluebell and Blossom, our miniature Shetlands, and our ever-entertaining gaggle of free-roaming ducks are all very much part of the Leaping Frogs family. A particular highlight of each day is watching our dedicated “Animal Helpers” — a keen and enthusiastic group of three-year-olds — care for the animals every morning. The children help feed them, check their water, groom them, and learn valuable lessons about responsibility, kindness, empathy, and respect for nature along the way.

This year has also seen continued growth within our team, and we are proud to have increased our workforce to 33 members of staff. We are passionate about investing in our team and actively encourage ongoing professional development and training opportunities. It has been wonderful to see several members of staff progress to become fully qualified Early Years Teachers, developing their skills and confidence while continuing to provide exceptional care and education for our

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children.

The nursery grounds themselves are constantly evolving and improving. Over the past year we have created a wide range of imaginative new outdoor play equipment, including handmade spaceships, racing cars, and role-play areas, all designed to encourage creativity, physical development, teamwork, and imaginative play. Seeing the children fully immersed in these environments every day is incredibly rewarding and reinforces our belief in the value of child-led outdoor learning.

Leaping Frogs is certainly a busy and energetic place to be, and we feel extremely fortunate to receive such wonderful support and positive feedback from families and the wider local community. It is always lovely to hear how valued the nursery is by those around us, and we never take that support for granted.

We are also incredibly proud to continue holding our Outstanding rating in all areas. Maintaining these standards requires enormous dedication from our entire team, and this achievement reflects the passion, care, and commitment shown by staff every single day.

Looking ahead, we are already excited for one of the highlights of our nursery calendar — our much-loved “Frogsbury” festival this summer, our very own miniature Glastonbury designed especially for the children. Complete with music, outdoor performances, creative activities, dressing up, muddy fun, and plenty of laughter, it perfectly captures the adventurous, outdoorsy spirit that defines Leaping Frogs Nursery.

Finally, we would like to extend an open invitation to any members of the Parish Council who may wish to visit us at any time. We are incredibly proud of what we have built here and would be delighted to show you around and share more about the work we do within the community.

Thank you for your continued support.

7. **WILTSHIRE COUNCIL – Cllr G Jeans** discussed the possible closure of Mere Fire Station and Wiltshire Councils unanimous vote a couple of days previously from the motion from Wilton Councillor and Cllr Jeans, that none of the stations should be shut. He also asked people to attend and support the meeting on 30th June in Salisbury to decide about the stations future
8. **PCSO – PCSO Alice Moore** told us there are 11 PCSO / PC’s covering the 450 square miles of Westbury Rural and Mere. She had been to the coffee morning in the Village Hall to meet locals and wanted to commend the cake, it was amazing! In the last year there have been 25 crimes – a decrease from 28 in the previous year. 4 burglaries, up from the 3 last year / 5 thefts and 4 of criminal damage, this is of crimes that have been reported.

They also assist the community in other ways through the Rural Crimes Team who have dealt with 4 Anti Social Behaviour / 2 Road Traffic collisions / 1 Road Related Offence – no insurance and support the Bobby Van.

9. **ALLOTMENTS** – The Clerk reported that we had 18 plots available this year as several are half plots. The majority have been kept on, but there were a couple of notices given, due to relocation and lack of time.

We are still waiting for payment for one plot or confirmation that it has been given up and a couple of tenants still need to sign and send their tenancy agreement to the clerk.

There are 4 uncultivated plots – 2 full size and 2 half size, these have been advertised in the parish news and there has been some interest, but as yet no one has taken up a tenancy, there are two more possibles to look at the allotments in the next week or so.

Therefore, if there is any interest, please contact the clerk.

Over the forthcoming year there may need to be some work done on the hedge bordering the paths around the allotment as it is starting to encroach slightly.

Cllr Spencer thanked all those that had been present at the meeting and the organisations who had

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submitted reports; the reports will be available on our website or by emailing the clerk on clerk@zealspc.org.uk

10. OPEN SESSION

No questions from the members of the public.

The meeting closed at 1838

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