MINUTES OF MEETING OF AMENITIES COMMITTEE
16 June 2025
15:00, Woolton Hill Church Hall

Chairman:	**Cllr Rand (Chair)**
Present:	**Cllr Hurst, Cllr Blakeway**
Clerk:	**Amy White**

1. **Welcome and apologies**
   Cllr Roots and Cllr Cooper sent their apologies.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   None**.**

3. **To Agree Minutes of Previous Meeting**
   The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2025 were agreed and signed by the Chairman, Cllr Rand.

4. **To update on actions from previous meeting:**
   - **Action**: Cllr Blakeway to contact CPRE regarding hedging support for HE recreation ground area and the parish field. Actioned- Cllr Roots has spoken to the CPRE contact and discussions are ongoing.
   - **Action**: Cllr Titcomb will design a survey some of the users of the hall (e.g. scouts) to see what ideas they have for the HE recreation ground (Cllr Titcomb to also liaise with Cllr Hurst). Actioned. Also see item 6.
   - **Action:** Cllr Hurst to design a survey for Meadowbrook residents to ask about their opinion on the use of the parish council-owned land (to liaise with Cllr Titcomb). Actioned: Cllr Hurst has got a representative of Meadowbrook who is happy to lead a group of residents to discuss ways that the Parish Council can support this area.
   - **Action**: Boardwalk opening: Cllrs Blakeway, Rand and Hurst to meet at WHCH on **02 June at 09:00** to discuss actions required for the boardwalk official opening. Actioned. See item 7.
   - **Action**: Cllr Hurst will contact MP Kit Malthouse and ask whether if Kit is still available on 27th (a date suggested by Kit)- Cllr Rand will meet with him and show him the boardwalk. Actioned: Kit is available and will meet with Cllr Rand on 27th June who will show him the boardwalk.
   - **Action:** Clerk to ask Ultimate Signs to quote for a "Please clean up after your dog" sign for the Trade St end of the boardwalk. Actioned- Paul is happy to do this but currently the committee is deciding whether these signs will be required.

- **Action**: Clerk to confirm the quote from Ultimate Signs for replacement signs for the WH recreation ground and WH playground. Actioned; these have been placed on the gates.
- **Action**: Cllr Roots will research the specification for tree supports with triangle stakes for the parish field. Actioned.
- **Action**: The Clerk will contact Town and Country Fencing for a quote for installing the triangle stakes (once info received from Cllr Roots). Actioned- waiting for a quote.
- **Action**: Cllr Rand will recommend to full council to accept the Lampards quote of £2951 (see previous Amenities Minutes) for parish field drainage. Actioned- see full council Minutes of 19 May 2025.
- **Action:** Cllr Hurst will write an article for Spectrum on the APM feedback and a paragraph on the boardwalk. Actioned.

5. **Scribbens Reserve**
   Cllr Hurst and Cllr Titcomb attended the St Martin's fete where they managed to obtain 51 responses to questions posed on the Heath End play area (see below for results). Cllr Hurst has sent this to the full council.
   Action: Cllr Hurst will bring up the project idea of creating a scout camp to full council. Cllr Hurst to liaise with the scouts regarding the idea of creating a scout camp area.

6. **Footpaths**
   Cllr Rand has been asked by a few parishioners for ideas of local walks. It was discussed how to promote visibility of the footpaths in the area. Once the boardwalk opening is complete, the Amenities Committee will focus on how to promote our paths.

   Land for tenancy via HCC:
   https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/county-farms/become-a-tenant/farms-land/woolton-hill
   The Clerk has heard back from HCC- the parish council can view the land unaccompanied. This will be arranged over the next few weeks.

7. **Boardwalk opening**
   The NWN reporter and photographer is now unable to attend the opening. Cllr Rand will take photos and responsibility for writing the article that NWN can publish.
   The Clerk will stand at the Trade St end just before 3pm to direct people to the end of the boardwalk. Cllr Rand, Blakeway and Hurst will be at the Fullers Lane end.
   Gemma Clinch of HCC Rangers will be doing some more work installing handrails over two culverts and some vegetation clearing as part of her apprenticeship at HCC on 26th June.

8. **Recreation Grounds**
   Nothing to report. The Clerk has chased DRS Ltd regarding the stepping logs in the playground that they have quoted (and EWPC has accepted) to repair.

9. **Parish Field and biodiversity update**
   The path is looking clear since Scofell has placed weedkiller down the sides. Cllr Root has sent a report on the trees and wildflowers, see below.

10. **Lengthsman- 01 July**
    It was agreed to ask the Lengthsman to repair the fence along the boardwalk, and then to repair the fence at the doctor's surgery end of the parish field.

11. **Spectrum**
    Action: Cllr Rand will write a report on the boardwalk opening.

12. **ASB on EWPC property**
    None reported.

13. **General Maintenance**
    Nothing identified.

14. **Items to take to next meeting:**
    Promotion of footpaths, Woolton Hill Federation of Schools pond discussion.

Next meeting: Monday 04 August 2025, 10am.

Actions from June meeting

Cllr Hurst survey report on Heath End:

Hi all, at St Martins Fete a survey was carried out of the use and views of the Heath End recreation ground, focusing on the area to the rear of the tennis court. The majority of people were happy to be surveyed and gave some good insights.

Virtually all of the people surveyed lived within the parish, only two from outside the parish were included who knew the area (Highclere - including one lady who was a trustee of Highclere Village Hall and loved EWVH and the recreation ground and gave good feedback). People who lived outside the parish and did not know the recreation ground were not surveyed.

The following questions were asked in an open manner.....

Are you aware of the play area at the side of the hall (beyond the tennis court)?
What aspects of the area do you like? does your family use this area?
What improvements would you like to see made to this area?
Additional comments?

Summary of responses...

There were 51 responses.

The majority of people were aware of the recreation ground and the area to the rear of the tennis court.

Of those that use the recreation ground or used to use it, most mentioned that the tennis court was the primary destination. This attracts quite a few people from Woolton Hill who mentioned they regard the court as better to use than the one at Woolton Hill. All mentioned it was good quality.

Those using the area discussed they highly value the combination of the children's play areas along side the court. This combination appears to be an attraction, including those from Woolton Hill with a good recreation area.

All mentioned they valued the openness of the whole area, especially the children's play areas (including the rear section).

Families felt the area was very open and they could play tennis and watch their children play on the equipment at the same time. Those from Woolton Hill said they cannot do this at the Woolton Hill recreation ground. One person described it as "all the area is family orientated".

The feeling of a "safe environment" kept being used and this was highly valued - a quote "the area is open and fenced, it feels safe for my children". This was particularly mentioned by grandparents looking after their grandchildren.

Those families that use the play areas discussed that the main equipment used was to the side of the courts and their children occasionally use the area to the rear.

Occasional use of the rear play area was often mentioned ("for variety") but again the openness of the rear area was valued.

The other aspect people valued was the "peace and quiet" of the area. a number of people mentioned they just like to sit in the area watching their children play in peace.

All liked that the area was not used by a lot of people at any one time - a comment that it was nowhere near as noisy as the Woolton Hill recreation ground (I dared mentioned the word "underutilised" to one person but was told off as he said "my family use it").

Surprisingly (to me) there was no view from anyone questioned to change or improve any of the areas. People kept saying keep the whole area for families and appeared to like it as it is.

When asked if the play equipment was adequate (in both areas) people said their children were happy with the variety of equipment and they were therefore happy. They did not wish to see anything change. Only one person said it would be good to have new play equipment in the rear area.

When ideas were put to people in discussion, the only change mentioned was additional picnic tables or benches on the hard standing area to the rear of the court. Most mentioned these would need to be circular to enable full view of the area to watch children ("to keep my view open" - again people appeared to value the openness of the area).

The majority mentioned they do not use the area at all in winter and then tend to use Woolton Hill recreational area. The area is therefore very seasonal in usage.

The main words that I picked out that characterised peoples feedback were "open", safe", "peaceful", "quite" and "a family space".

As mentioned the tennis court clearly attracts people from Woolton Hill but few of these said they use the Hall or were aware of events at the Hall.

There were a few outliers in comments.....

- move the recreation ground by the tennis court to the rear and make a another car park for the Hall
- put in another tennis court in the rear area.
- create a scout camp area to the rear of the tennis courts (from the scouts).
- cut down the front hedges so you can see the Hall

I felt overall some good insights. The safe family space of the combination of the children's play area and the tennis court clearly brings in families from Woolton Hill. However, the other aspect of the survey were the people who lived in Woolton Hill and did not use the area not the Hall as it was "much too far away".

Parish Field report, Cllr Roots, June 2025

Trees: After a very wet 2024 and early 2025, May has been one of the driest on record. The high water table and poor drainage in the field highlighted a few problems: water logging around the central area of the path, natural drainage towards the lowest point of the field impeded by the path. This should be remedied by the installation of land drains. The high water table and excessive rain made planting and establishment of trees very challenging. Replacements are doing well except for one oak which, a larger tree, appears to be failing. It is almost always much better to plant small trees which although slower to reach their optimum height, usually establish more readily than larger specimens. If the tree fails completely, I suggest replacing with a small seedling (I have several) and avoid the expense of buying a tree.
A very simple specification has been put forward to create triangular timber protection around each of the Nine trees we have planted. This is in order to keep machinery away from the trees and metal guards when the field is cut.

Wildflowers and grass: In the four triangular areas where we have put down seed the results are a bit variable. The triangle (marked by three stakes - one broken) nearest to the Church still shows evidence of yellow rattle (parasitic, reducing vigour of grasses and good for meadow establishment), both knapweed and clover are more in evidence. The other original triangle at the other end of the field is also showing a slightly increased mix, but neither of the original areas are showing a very wide variety of plants. I will endeavour to do a few plant identification trials so as to see how much variety we actually have.
The triangles formed by the trees planted in a triangle at the Surgery end of the field, are interesting. The seeding furthest from the Surgery is doing very well with a good showing of yellow rattle (this is not an easy plant to establish so its success in the field is exciting) and

knapweed and clover. As to the triangle nearest to the surgery there is no evidence (yet) of any wildflower establishment.
However, in the field as a whole there is a lot more knapweed, several clumps of oxeye daisies, and more clover. The buttercups are endemic, although it looks as if they have been less prolific this year perhaps affected by the high water table. Generally they tolerate damp but perhaps it was too much for them. It is very easy to see (especially from about midway along the path looking west), the area which is lowest in the field, which is at the moment paler, but distinct.
There is still some reed, it was more evident earlier in the year.
There are several species of grasses evident and (unfortunately) bracken, in the SW quadrant, which is gradually extending. There is a much bigger crop of thistles this year (west of the path in particular) but all these plants have a part to play in nature. There is a good stand of cranesbill (geranium) near the Surgery gate and it is increasing slowly.
I will contact the CPRE Wildflower 'guru', Rachel Remnant, and discuss with her more ways we can improve the field and increase wildflowers. I am very aware that we do not have resources for any expensive or complicated maintenance, but it would be useful to research our options more comprehensively.

Hedges: The boundary to the south of the field is now very overgrown. It might be a haven for some species (birds, small mammals and insects) but it increasing height and width needs to be reduced and managed before it gets out of hand. The trees by the Surgery end gate have quite a bit of dead wood. The removal of these branches might be worth doing. They were not identified on the recent tree survey but so close to pedestrian movement it might be worth tidying them up.
The Church Road hedge has been cut back (winter) and is doing well this year. The western boundary is as has already been recorded, a mix of evergreen (laurel) and deciduous hedging with a new solid fence (Old Post Office) and post and rail in some parts. There is no cohesion, for historic reasons. The Northern boundary hedging has been extending into the field but it is deciduous and largely in keeping with the rural and nature friendly aims we are pursuing.

Thanks to Cllr Blakeway, a good contact is being established with CPRE who are extremely active in promoting and assisting in the establishment of hedges wherever they can be justified as providing a corridor for wildlife and improving habitat. We have spoken previously about planting a hedge in the field beside the post and rail fence in front of the Surgery. It appears that we may well be able to get a grant through CPRE to supply hedging and I will explore their terms for doing so. The initial areas proposed for hedging are by the gate at the church end of the field and along the post and rail fence at the surgery end. We might discuss further areas before submitting a request for a grant and also the implications of what is required to be done to successfully get a grant.

The post and rail fence by the surgery is not in a very good state. Repairs have been made but the secondary support posts are failing (rotting) at the base and the fence is unstable and leaning. Top rail repairs are also needed. Technically this is the job of the tenant, who (I imagine) has carried out the repairs so far. We need to be aware of this potential cost, should it fall to EWPC.

Overall, the field is full of life and constantly changing. The range of wildflowers is still not as rich as I would like to see, so I think a conversation with Rachel Remnant is worth having. The Trees are (mostly) doing well, and providing extra protection (timber triangles) should keep them safe from damage. Dog owners are not all clearing up after their pets; this is antisocial and not in accordance with the terms of using the path. The path should be weather protected to a greater extent by land drains and it will be interesting to see how that affects the general drainage of the field.
I will explore all the information I have been sent by Boyd at CPRE and draw up proposals for planting hedging , applying for a grant and also for investigating wildflower improvements we might be able to make and I will report back when I have done so.