Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 30 April 2025 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllrs. Andrew Nebel, Jon Whowell, David Wilby, Kevin Corby, Phil Davis and Sarah Markwell-Cook.
In Attendance: 17 members of groups and public.

1. The Parish Clerk nominated Cllr. Andrew Nebel to chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr. Debbie Rolfe, this was unanimously agreed.

2. **Apologies for absence** received and noted from The Ryhall Bowls Club, Cllrs. Debbie Rolfe, Richard Ludlow and David Denman.

3. **Minutes** of the previous year's Annual Parish meeting held on 9 April 24 had been signed as an accurate at a Parish Council meeting dated 22 April 2024. There were no outcomes from these minutes.

Agenda

Andrew Nebel opened the meeting by thanking everyone for coming along**.**

4. Bekkie Wright, **Methodist Chapel** Minister introduced herself and gave an overview of her work in Ryhall and 4 other nearby parishes. She expressed her love for the village and its "fighting spirit" (especially trying to save the library). Ryhall Methodist Church has 8 new members, children growing in faith, and she thanked Maz and Charlotte for all their hard work in keeping the church active. Sunday worship is 10:30am, led by a different preacher each week. Every fourth Sunday of the month is a 'cafe church' service in the school room with a more relaxed style (e.g. discussion & crafts) and plenty of refreshments (cake) on offer. All are very welcome to any of the services.
During term time, primary-aged children are welcome to attend S4K (Sundays 4 Kids) during the church service in the school room - with fun, games, crafts, singing and discussion.
Other events include a monthly coffee morning (first Thursday of each month 10am - 12pm); fortnightly Bible Study (Thursdays 2-3pm) and a school holidays club for primary-aged children.
As part of "Churches Together" with St John's in Ryhall an Walk of Witness is organised every for Good Friday. The Methodist Church building is let to local groups including a cancer support group and singing groups.
You can find out more about the church and events by visiting Facebook https://tinyurl.com/RyhallMC or the Circuit website: https://stamfordmethodistcircuit.org/ryhall-methodist-church/
Minister: Rev Bekkie Wright Address: Mill Street, Ryhall, PE9 4HF Telephone: 07355 981564
Email: revbekkiewright@gmail.com

5. **Churchyard Champions** - Sandra Chapman gave an overview of the tremendous work done by the group of volunteers. There is a core group of about 20 volunteers who meet between Mar – Oct on the first Saturday of each month. Since starting work a few years ago, many improvements have been made resulting in a noticeable increase in biodiversity.
Questions: Michelle Nebel asked if a dusk to dawn light could be installed in the churchyard path.
She also mentioned the vegetative growth on the tower.
Andrew Nebel also mentioned the chippings on the path being hard to walk and wondered if an alternative topping could be used to enable easier access for wheelchairs/pushchairs etc.
Action: Sandra noted these comments for the PCC.

Andrew Nebel mentioned the wall that has fallen down on the side of the footpath.
Action: The Parish Council to follow this up with Rutland County Council

6. **Ryhall Allotments -** Dave Pearce chairman of the Allotments committee gave an overview of the recent upgrades to the clubhouse and watering facilities. He thanked the Ryhall Fete Committee and the Parish Council for funds which helped this to happen. There had recently been a very successful Scarecrow Festival. Plans for future events include a cream tea in June and a pumpkin event in the autumn. Amanda Carter (secretary) expressed the drive from the new committee to include the wider community, the allotments are a fantastic asset to the village. They would like to work with residents to put on events that would be inclusive with existing groups such as the churches and any new ideas are welcomed.

Jon Whowell added his compliments to the allotment committee for their work to create a thriving and pleasant allotment group and space. He added that the scarecrow festival event had been very enjoyable.

7. **Church Clock** - as Simon Fenn was present at the meeting he and his family were thanked for their continued work on keeping the church clock working. The PCC are setting aside funds to overhaul the clock.

8. **Village Hall** - Sandy Collin gave a brief outline of the village hall and the groups that take place in the hall, which are numerous. There is continual maintenance required to keep the hall running, a damp survey has been recently undertaken. Andrew Nebel and Sandra offered help if fund raising applications grants were required in future. Full Report Below

9. **Meadow Lane Action Group -** Sarah Markwell-Cook updated everyone on the newly formed WhatsApp group with regards to the new development at the end of Meadow Lane. This group has been formed to open dialogue with the developers and to try and have input into the design and layout of this new development. A leaflet drop to all the houses on the affected side of the village has taken place resulting in 20 people expressing an interest in joining the group.

Andrew Nebel added that the Parish Council are involved as a consultee. The Community Infrastructure Levy payment will come to the village as well as perhaps securing any green spaces.

10. **Ryhall Meadows -** Jo Gresty gave a brief update on things at Meadows Playing Field. The past year had been relatively quiet with One Touch Football managing its use well and the playground and tennis courts continuing to be very popular with villagers and visitors. JG thanked Chris Killigrew for volunteering to be treasurer of the charity and also her husband Del who had helped with several repairs and maintenance jobs recently.

11. **Meadows Application -** Andrew Nebel raised the matter of the applications for the field next to the playing fields to be made a Village Green. The indications were that the application will be refused by Rutland County Council. Andrew Nebel said that he had a barrister friend who may be prepared to give the parish legal advice regarding an appeal should the application be refused.

12. **Ryhall CE Academy.** Mandy Rogers spoke as chair of Ryhall AGC - 'Living life in all its fullness, making memories, and building futures.' Our village school is flourishing! We presently have 191 children on role and 7 classes. The school is a happy place of learning, where children feel valued and everyone's voice is important.
In the past year we have experienced a SIAMS inspection. SIAMS stands for Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools. Our previous OFSTED inspection had an extremely good outcome, and we are pleased to say the result of the SIAMS inspection was excellent too.
The SIAMS report highlights the school's Christian Vision, underpinned by our Values. "Relationships are respectful and kind….Pupils flourish due to the care and compassion provided. Staff thrive in response to the professional and personal support they receive."
Overall, it has been a successful year for the school. As well as everyday learning, children are involved in a wide range of activities such as fund-raising, community based projects, eco awareness and a variety of sports and creative arts.
FORA [Friends of Ryhall Academy] is brilliant in supporting and fundraising throughout the year. The AGC [Academy Governance Committee] is responsible for monitoring many areas and also plays an important role in the life of the school. The Principal, Mr Alan Reed, and the entire staff team do a wonderful job in educating our children in the widest sense of the word – encouraging children to truly 'live life in all its fullness', by making special memories and providing firm foundations for building each and every child's future.

Question Raised: The question of parking and speeding of parents was brought up. It was noted that Cllr. Debbie Rolfe is working with the school to help address these issues. Jo Gresty confirmed that the Playing Fields Committee had on several occasions in recent years discussed using the playing field car park on the basis that significant improvements to the car park would be necessary, not least for the safety of pedestrians, and at the school's own cost. Although the school had made occasional use of the car park for specific events, it had not shown a willingness to invest in the car park for the benefit of parents and pupils alike.

13. **St John's Church -** Rachel Szyszka thanked the church Wardens, Win Peck and Marian Taylor, for their tireless work over the past 3 years during our time without a Vicar to keep the church running. Services most Sundays continue and the congregations have increased to about 20-25 people. We have held Remembrance

services and Christmas services all of which were well attended. Unfortunately, we have had a few incidents of vandalism recently which sadly has resulted in having to close the church earlier in the evenings. We hope to welcome a new priest in the future.

14. Village Fete - Sandra Chapman gave a quick update on this year's fete, due to be held on 12 July this year with a potential extension to 7pm with a bar and music. She thanked all the volunteers who support to make the fete happen and all the people who attend the event. Funds from the Fete are distributed back directly to the community, half to St John's Church and half to local groups.

15. Ryhall Bowls Club had submitted a report which was read by Sarah Gresty -

Last year we were very low on members, due to illnesses and members moving out of the area. It was often very difficult to raise a team for matches. It was inevitable, therefore, that we ended the season bottom of the division and start this year relegated to the lowest division.

This year, we have had our usual recruitment drive and managed to interest 8 new potential members, which is fantastic! Whilst we welcome the new members with open arms, they are all completely new to bowling so require coaching.

Over the winter, sadly we had a water leak in the clubhouse which caused considerable damage. We are currently in the process of obtaining builders quotes for the remedial work to submit to the insurance company.

However, the bowling season at Ryhall is still going ahead, the green is open and matches start next week. Onwards and upwards!

Anyone interested in calling for a look or trying bowls, our roll ups/coaching sessions are every Wednesday evening 6pm and Saturday afternoons at 2pm. Kind Regards Sharon Mosley, Captain

16. Belmesthorpe Neighbourhood Watch Report submitted -

This has been an active year for the Neighbourhood Watch. The Committee of seven has met twice and new members successfully inducted. Likewise, Welcome packs have been issued to new arrivals in the village, helping to maintain the high level of membership in the scheme. We have procured quantities of the new NHW door stickers and will be issuing them to all households in the near future.

Good communications are fundamental to our continued success. Email is now our default medium for regular information output, and our circulation list of 66 accounts for the big majority of homes in the village. A new WhatsApp group has been introduced for emergency instant interactive messaging: this has amassed 44 members to date, and was put to excellent use in November when it was used to alert residents to the presence of an unwanted doorstep caller and to track his movement round the village.

No crime has been experienced in the village itself, but outlying properties have suffered unwelcome attention from criminals, including most recently an attempt to steal an industrial woodchipper from a property in Belmesthorpe Lane. Our communications media enable us to report such incidents immediately and to request information about them.

Our biggest problem continues to be vehicle speeding through the village, and we were pleased to have the opportunity, at very short notice, in early April to mount a Community Speedwatch for four days in Main Street and along Belmesthorpe Lane. Four vehicles were recorded at speeds of 36 mph and over, and many more at speeds of 31 – 35 mph, proving beyond doubt the seriousness of this issue. We hope that these results will bring us the opportunity for a further Speedwatch in the future at a more suitable time than in a school holiday, and also the introduction of some form of speed limiting measures at the village entry points.

The village looked particularly attractive during the months of March and April, thanks to the efforts of Committee members in planting in the autumn large quantities of daffodils and crocuses at various points around our verges, and also to the generosity of the late James Allen, who left us the funds to purchase the bulbs.

Finally, we organised a successful pub social in the Blue Bell Inn in the autumn, which we plan to repeat in the summer. This has proved a particularly good way of helping new arrivals to integrate into the community. We are also exploring the possibility of a Safari Supper event.

Our thanks this year to the Parish Council for the grant which enabled us to fund our printing needs, including our newsletters and welcome pack contents, as well as to purchase the new NHW stickers.

Adrian Gombault Chairman, Belmesthorpe Neighbourhood Watch.

17. Ryhall Parish Council

Cemeteries - improvements to the walls in the old cemetery opposite the church have taken place and there are more repointing works to be done this year.

New Cemetery extension - Work has started on commissioning the cemetery extension. The area has been fenced and a wildlife hedge with some trees planted. The next stage will be to extend the road into the area. An expensive exercise so the Parish Council will need set aside funds over the next 2 years for this.

Kevin Corby gave a brief outline on the **planning process**.

Andrew Nebel gave a brief outline of the conclusion of the **24/25 accounts** and drew attention to the information leaflet explaining the precept. No questions were raised.

Neighbourhood Plan (NHP). Our new Cllr. David Denman will be heading up the process of trying to produce a NHP. Unfortunately, he could not be at the meeting tonight but more information will follow so please watch for more information.

Mallard Pass Solar Farm. Andrew Nebel said that the Parish Council is now working with Alicia Kearns MP, the new owners, Quinnbrook, and neighbouring Parish Councils to formulate the process of a "Community Benefit Fund".

Ryhall Library - On Tuesday 7th January 2025, a journalist made a member of Ryhall village aware that there was an agenda item for the following week's RCC Cabinet meeting that included the recommendation of Ryhall Library closure. This was a shock to our local County Councillors, who had only recently met with RCC to discuss the upcoming library refurbishments which would make it a more community-usable space.
The news article quickly spread, and soon many local residents were shocked and wanted to know how they could help to save the library in Ryhall.

On Wednesday 8th January, a public meeting was called for anyone who wanted to form a group who could help fight the proposals of closing the library. Over 30 residents attended and offered to help with two key actions: to get as many local people to sign our petition as possible, and to attend a demonstration on the day of the Cabinet meeting to present the petition.

In the coming six days, volunteers garnered 1,356 paper signatures and 774 online signatures on our petition. This action was shared at the Parish Council's extraordinary meeting on Monday 13th January, and an invitation extended to all to present the petition the next day.

On Tuesday 14th January, volunteers met in Ryhall to share lifts to Catmose Council Offices. From 9:30am, they demonstrated with a banner (kindly donated by UK Printwear) and homemade placards to urge RCC to save Ryhall Library. The paper petition was then presented to Democratic Services, and members of the demonstration entered the Public Gallery to observe the Cabinet meeting. Sadly, all of the recommendations were voted through.

Since then, RLAG and the Parish Council has written three comprehensive reports which can be found online: https://ryhallactiongroup.co.uk/reports/
Since then, RCC launched a consultation which closed at the end of February. The results were not discussed at their April Caninet meeting, and instead they released a statement to say they needed more time and would like to talk with 'community leaders'. Watch this space..!

18. Ryhall & Belmesthorpe Warm Spaces - Michele Nebel talked about this project, funded by the parish Council, the Fete Committee and the Pier Point Trust, to provide winter hot meals. 184 meals have been served over the past winter. A grant has been applied to obtain a better microwave and a slow cooker to enable meals for this coming winter starting October 25. A day trip is being planned for those who attending with the surplus funds. Michelle thanked all the volunteers who made this happen.

Cheese and Wine and soft drinks were enjoyed by all those that attended enabling everyone to circulate, chat and share.

Ryhall Village Hall Chair's Report for Parish Meeting April 2025

The past 12 months have seen the hall navigate a series of interesting moments and I thank everyone, particularly Martin Virgin, our clerk, for the success we have achieved in reaching this point at the end of another financial year.
After Martin and his wife Anne stepped back from their all-embracing roles last year, we appointed Stephen Dagg to be our new cleaner. Under Martin's tutelage he has kept the hall well up to standard. Thank you Stephen.
Our concern with school parents over parking has been alleviated greatly with the help and co-operation of Ryhall Academy and its governors. There was a hiccup recently with a clash in times between a yoga class and a school play, but this was unforeseen and hopefully can be avoided in the future.
2024 saw the playgroup close down. We always thought it a useful asset to the community, but no leader was found and the project foundered. Happily, though, the time slot was readily taken up. Indeed, this is one aspect of the hall's life that we can be proud of: there is always interest in hiring the hall whether for regular groups or one-off parties.
Our hall users are hugely valued and I am grateful for their continued interest. There have also been voluntary donations from time to time and I was touched that after the passing off Brian Haynes last year his family very kindly donated more than £250
Such moment are reminders of our privileged standing in the parish. We are, after all, about community service, not big profit.
To help the community, we have accommodated, at a reduced rate, the Warm Space's group where village residents are offered hot meals/drinks at lunchtime through the cold months. This project appears to have gone down well and will be maintained.
That the hall is a popular attraction in the parish is reflected in our finances. We are, as the report by our treasurer John Saunders illustrates, paying our way although hiring fees must reflect our costs and these have been increasing.
We decided against putting up the fees last year, but I believe we have to revisit the issue and make a decision for the 2025-2026 period.
We have overseen a change in electricity supplier to save money yet along with the charges for standard utilities we regularly have to tackle maintenance on a building, parts of which date back almost 200 years.
There has been repair work carried out on window sills and the dishwasher. More costs loom with the floor in the main hall needing sanding and new sink units or taps in the kitchen.
One major topic that may well impact heavily on the hall's finances is damp in the main building. Piloted by committee member Sandy Collins, we had a survey carried out which identified certain areas where damp is prevalent and what is needed to remedy the problem.
The project will be major and take time with much expense. How we tackle this will be decided at a later meeting.
There has been another issue.
We have been in contact with Ryhall Parish Council over land ownership. The parish council asked us for clarification after Rutland County Council indicated they thought they owned the car park area. This land was formerly the playground when the building was used as a school.
Rutland's assertion was news to us as we have been maintaining that land for 50 years at our own expense. After some research we produced documents that we believe refute Rutland's claim, but we wait to hear the outcome as the ramifications are profound, particularly with the future of the library building opposite the hall being in doubt.
Overall then, a year as busy as any other and I thank the hall management committee, Anne, Sandy, Simon Houghton, Nick and Lynda Bellairs, for their support, John Saunders for keeping our finances under scrupulous control and Martin for playing a vital role in admin, Stephen for maintaining our high standards.
With the difficulties mentioned earlier needing resolution, let us hope that 2025 will be kind.
Thank you all again.

Paul Huddleston, Chair Ryhall Village Hall Management Committee.
April, 2025