

Woodcote Volunteers AGM 2026

Chair Report

Introduction

This has been my **first year as Chair**, and I would like to start by saying a very warm thank you to **the Committee** for the **welcome and support** I have received. It has been greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank **Helena, our previous Chair**, for her generous help and guidance during the handover.

And I would also like to extend a **heartfelt thank you to Irene Lawmon**, who stepped down after many years of dedicated service, both in the office and on the Committee. Her contribution over the years has meant a great deal to the charity.

Our Mission and Governance

As you know, Woodcote Volunteer's **aim** is to help residents of Woodcote and the surrounding villages **live happier and healthier lives** by **negating the possible effects of isolation** due to lack of access to **transport**, or when they are affected by **social or digital isolation**.

To do this, we provide

- **volunteer drivers** to get people to their medical appointments, shopping or social activities, which they might not get to otherwise;
- we organise **tea parties**
- we offer support with **Blue Badge applications**; and
- we run **digital advice sessions** to help people with everyday online tasks and services safely.

The Board and Committee continue to **meet regularly** to ensure the charity is well run, well governed, and focused on meeting the needs of our community.

Our Achievements in 2025

2025 has been another busy year for Woodcote Volunteers.

Over the year, we provided **633 drives** for **80 different clients** and **driven a total of 9651 miles**. These journeys included local trips within the village, visits to nearby villages, and regular drives to hospitals in Reading and Oxford. A short summary of these drives is available for you today.

Following the rising cost of living, in late 2024 we introduced our **Winter Wheels** initiative. This offered free drives to clients between December and February, made possible by generous donations and fund raising. Due to the positive feedback, we **repeated the scheme** in 2025/2026. This resulted in **139 free drives** saving clients a total of **£1,477**.

None of these drives, across the year, would be possible without our **volunteers** who generously give their time and care.

We welcomed **five new volunteer drivers** this year: Das, Jenny, Jackie, Nick and Erica. At the same time, we would like to thank Brian Carter, Kathrine McDougall and Brian Cheadle, who stepped down during 2025 after many years of helping clients reach where they needed to go. We are very grateful for their service.

Supporting Digital Inclusion

Digital isolation is an increasing concern for many of our clients. In response, we launched our **Digital 1-to-1 sessions** in September 2025.

These sessions are **free**, with clients being able to **book individual support with a volunteer for any digital issue they are facing**. Common topics include learning how to use a new phone, tablet or laptop. Many clients worry about “breaking” a device, which can stop them from using it fully. These sessions help build confidence and independence. If you or someone you know who might benefit from this, **please spread the word**.

We also ran **two well-attended talks**: one by Phil on the move from landlines to digital services, and another by Ishaan and Ruth on staying safe online.

Our sincere thanks go to the volunteers who supported these activities: Jane, Tim, Ruth, Robin, Martin, Phil, Dan, Liam, Damian, Henry and Ishaan.

Social Events and Community

Jan continues to successfully run our **much-loved social activities**. During the year we held **3 coffee mornings** and **12 tea parties**.

Thank you to everyone who helped organise and run these events: Jan, Chrissy, Angela, Marion, Jane and Anne. Special thanks also go to our wonderful bakers — Caroline, Isobel, Wendy, Carol, Gill and Jackie — whose cakes are always a highlight.

Blue Badges

With the council no longer allowing charities such as ourselves to **hold our own blue badges** for parking access we have been helping our clients who need them to apply for their own badges.

Listening to Our Clients

In 2025, we carried out **our first client survey** to better understand what is working well and where we can improve. The results were very positive, with clients expressing high levels of satisfaction with our service. One clear learning was the importance of helping clients understand the likely cost of a drive, in advance, and we continue to encourage this with our drivers.

Office move

During the year, we **moved into a larger office space at the Community Centre**, which has made a big difference to our day-to-day work. As always, thank you to Dave, the office team, and Jackie Anderson who joined the office team this year.

Volunteer socials

We were also pleased to hold **two volunteers' thank-you events** during the year — a Summer gathering and a Christmas social — as a small way of recognising the huge contribution our volunteers make.

Financial Overview

Alongside our volunteers and the time they give, **donations are essential** to keeping the charity running. This year we raised funds through our coffee mornings and by supporting community events including the Woodcote Rally, Whitchurch Fete and Woodcote Fete, as well as receiving donations from Woodcote and Checkendon Parish Councils.

Our Treasurer Richard will give more detail shortly, but I can confirm **the charity is in a sound financial position.**

Priorities for the Year Ahead

While we are **proud of what we achieved in 2025, but we are always looking ahead.** As we **continue** with our drives and events, fund raising, charity admin and management, our **key priorities** for the coming year are:

- Recruiting more volunteer drivers
 - Encouraging drivers, where possible, to take on just one more drive
 - Strengthening our Digital 1-to-1 sessions and ensuring everyone who needs support knows about them
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Thanks and Closing Remarks

To conclude, **Woodcote Volunteers simply could not operate without its**

- **Volunteers** — drivers, bakers, office staff, digital helpers, committee members, tea party organisers, coffee morning teams to name just a few; and
- **The funds** it receives, either through fund raising events or donations.

On behalf of the Board and our clients, thank you all for your time, kindness and continued support.