

HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held via Zoom, on Tuesday 19 January 2021 starting at 7.30pm

Present: Parish Councillors Barrett (Chairman), Mrs Ayres, Holder and Randall

Also in attendance: Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk) and Kate Sheffield

1. Declarations of interest

No interests were declared

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020 were approved.

The Chairman welcomed Kate Sheffield to the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

(a) Minute 6 - Provision of dog waste bin

It was noted that the District Council was submitting an application for a litter bin infrastructure grant and had invited Parish Councils to submit applications. The Clerk said he had submitted an application to replace the bin on the common with a dual-purpose litter bin/dog waste bin. This would be included in the District Council's submission.

4. Cheque Authorisations and review of expenditure

The Parish Council noted that expenditure to date during the financial year totalled £3749 against budgeted expenditure of £5375. The Clerk said that expenditure in 2020/21 was likely to be £550 lower than budget, mainly as a result of the decision not to purchase a third dog waste bin, although grass cutting and training costs were lower than had been anticipated. Offsetting these savings were increased dog waste collection costs and website hosting costs to 2023. Income of £5663 included the locality grant of £250 which would probably need to be returned. The following cheques were approved and authorised.

	Cheque	Description	£
(i)	100663	SADALC subscription	10.00

(ii)	100664	TBS Hygiene. Dog waste collection October to December 2020	156.00
(iii)	100665	Clerk salary October to December 2020	351.50
(iv)	100666	Clerk tax on salary	234.00
(v)	100667	Townsend Nursery grass cut November 2020	56.40
(vi)	100668	Clerk reimbursement of hosting costs (cheque post-dated to 1 February 2021)	155.94

5. Budget 2021/22 and approval of Parish Precept 2021/22

The Parish Council considered the draft budget for 2021/22 as prepared by the Parish Clerk. This set out expected income and expenditure for the forthcoming financial year.

The Clerk said that most budget heads were unchanged from the previous year, but drew attention to specific elements as follow:

The Clerk's expenses and office costs had been separated out into two headings for reasons of clarity. This showed that the Parish Council was not charged for internet/telephone. Allowance had been made for a 2% pay increase.

£60 had been allowed for meeting room hire charges, which assumed face to face meetings would be possible from May 2021.

£500 had been allowed for possible tree work on the triangle of common land.

£50 had been allocated for Barclays bank charges. Bank charges had been introduced in 2016 and had increased significantly over the last 18 months. Given that that some suppliers no longer accepted cheques, a move to cheaper electronic banking looked attractive. The Council's Financial Regulations already provided for this.

It was RESOLVED that the budget for 2021/22 by approved and that the Parish Council's precept be set at £5350 and the District Council be notified accordingly.

6. Inspection of trees - Kinsbourne Green Common triangle

The Clerk said further to the discussion at the last meeting, he had tried on several occasions to contact Dave Stevens, Tree and Garden Services, but without success, regarding an inspection of the trees on the triangle of common land.

Following that, the Clerk said he spoken to Franks Forestry, and they had inspected the site and had submitted a quote for the sum of £965 plus VAT.

The Chairman said that he was willing to contact AJ tree arborist who he was sure would visit the site and provide written advice on any tree works needed and could also prepare a written report. It was suggested that the £250 grant for a litter bin might be used for this purpose. Furthermore, the Chairman said he would contact Townsend Nursery to see what they would charge for removing and disposing of two unsightly piles of twigs and grass cuttings on the land. He would also ask Townsend Nursery if in future they could remove the clippings from routine grass cuts.

A more detailed discussion on the responsibilities of the Parish Council for maintaining trees that were now nearly 50 years old would, as previously agreed, be discussed at a future face to face meeting.

7. London Luton Airport expansion

The Clerk said that the consultation on the proposal to grow the number of passengers from 18mppa to 19mppa had concluded on 11 November 2020. This would breach the cap which was due to last until 2028. There had been no further news on this consultation. Councillor Holder said that he had just received information from LADACAN that a further planning application had been submitted designed to relax noise restrictions, that was wrapped up with a request to break current passenger limits. He would circulate further details.

8. Financial Regulations

The Clerk said that the Parish Council's Financial Regulations had been updated by the Parish Council in January 2020 following updated guidance from the National Association of Local Councils. There were no other changes he was proposing at the present time.

9. Risk Policy 2021

The Clerk said that he had made a few minor changes to the Risk Policy agreed by the Parish Council in January 2020 and that these were shown on the document as track changes. The main change was an annual inspection of trees as recommended by the Council's insurers.

The Clerk recommended that an additional risk should be added, namely an unauthorised incursion on to the triangle of common land, as this would be down to the Parish Council to manage. This risk was mitigated by the wooden posts located around the land.

It was RESOLVED that subject to the inclusion of the additional risk identified by the Clerk, the updated Risk Assessment Policy be approved.

10. Planning applications and decisions to January 2021

The Parish Council considered a list of planning applications and decisions to January 2021. It was noted that planning activity had been very low since the last meeting.

11. Meetings of St Albans District Association of Local Councils

The Chairman reported on meetings of the St Albans and District Association of Local Councils held on 9 November 2020 and 11 January 2021. The former meeting had been mainly procedural whereas the latter had covered more matters of parish interest.

12. St Albans District Council Local Plan

The Clerk said that the St Albans Local Plan had now been formally withdrawn and that a timetable for a new Plan had been issued. This proposed a formal consultation in January/February 2022 followed by a submission and examination in spring/summer/autumn 2023 with adoption by the end of 2023.

13. Internal Audit

The Clerk said that Alex Sage had indicated that he would be willing to undertake the audit of the 2020/21 accounts for the third successive year.

It was RESOLVED that Alex Sage be appointed to audit the 2020/21 Accounts

14. Other matters reported by the Chairman

- A. There had been a notable increase in fly tipping on the common and surrounding lanes, but an admirable response from local residents and Veolia.
- B. The Town Clerk of Harpenden had been contacted about the need to ensure that the closure of schools due to lockdown didn't result in food being wasted. Local charities could distribute food to those in need.
- C. Press report of new powers for police to deal with illegal traveller camps.
- D. A Countryfile report on safe use of bridle paths by horse riders.
- E. Inquires made to St Albans District Council about housing policy in the light of residents who might be made homeless because of the pandemic.
- F. Chairman planning to publish a booklet on the life of a lady born in Kinsbourne Green in 1909 who lived in Kinsbourne Green.

15. Co-option to the Parish Council

The Clerk said that following the last meeting, he had notified the District Council of the vacancy resulting from the resignation of Councillor Bell. A Notice had been published on the noticeboard and on the website and, as electors had not requested an election, it was now open to the Parish Council to co-opt.

The Chairman said that Kate Sheffield, a local resident, was active in the community and the Clerk had circulated a short biography that she had prepared. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that Kate would make an excellent appointee.

It was RESOLVED that Kate Sheffield be co-opted on to the Parish Council with immediate effect until the next Parish Council elections in 2023.

(Note: Councillor Sheffield was not in attendance during the discussion of this item but was readmitted to the Zoom meeting to be notified of the decision. The Clerk said he would arrange for a declaration of office form to be completed)

16. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held by Zoom on Monday 15th March 2021 at 7.30pm.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Clerk to the Council

Chairman