

HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council, held in the Janet Campbell Room, St Mary's Church on Tuesday 19 October 2021, starting at 6.00 pm

Present: Parish Councillors:

Peter Barrett (Chairman), Penny Ayres, John Holder, Clive Randall and Kate Sheffield.

Also in attendance: Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk). Duncan Jones and Councillor Dr Allison Wren

1. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

2. Fly tipping update

The Chairman welcomed Duncan Jones, Partnership Development Manager, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership; Chair, Hertfordshire Fly Tipping Group; Chair, WasteAware, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership.

Mr Jones gave a powerpoint presentation on the work being taken across the Country and in Hertfordshire to tackle the blight of flytipping. Both in Hertfordshire and St Albans District, fly tipping had spiked during the pandemic but had fallen back in recent months in St Albans. Successful prosecutions tended to be low although there had been a steady increase in fixed penalty notices to relieve pressure on the courts. Mr Jones outlined successes to date, such as the introduction of the Waste toolkit and outlined issues that needed to be addressed, in particular to ban cash transactions to remove waste and introduce a new offence of advertising waste services without a licence.

Councillor Wren said that she was a member of the District Council's Public Realm Committee and would use that position to press for funding and support to instal cameras in Kinsbourne Green Lane and Kennels Lane. Mr Jones said that he in turn would supply several hundred copies of the Waste Aware leaflet for distribution and several covert wildlife cameras, at no cost to the Parish Council. Councillor Wren would press for a magistrate's order via the District Council's enforcement officer, in order to use them. It was agreed that this was significant progress.

Separately, the Chairman said that Harpenden Town Council were looking to introduce a programme for litter picking and that Harpenden Rural Parish Council had been invited to participate. No further details were available at this time.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Chairman thanked Mr Jones for attending the meeting and for his presentation.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2021 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

(i) Minute 3 - Matters arising

The Clerk said that following the last meeting he had arranged for some changes to be made to the Parish Council website. These were primarily to deal with a plugin that was no longer supported. However, the opportunity had been taken to introduce a more modern theme and add news and events on the home page. It was noted that Councillor Sheffield had some suggestions for future content and the Clerk said he would be discussing these further. Some of the existing content needed updating and this would be undertaken when time allowed.

(ii) Minute 6 - Disposal of debris on triangle of land

The Clerk said he had emailed the County Council about reallocating the £250 locality grant received for a new dog waste bin to pay for clearing debris from the triangle of Common Land and replacing two wooden posts. This reallocation had now been approved.

(iii) Minute 5 - Triangle of Common Land - History of Parish Council's involvement

The Chairman said that he had made some inquiries into the cost and feasibility of cutting back hedges on the edge of the Common adjacent to the road. However, the cost would be prohibitive and there did not appear to be any pressing need to go down this route.

5. Cheque authorisations and review of expenditure v budget

The Clerk said that dog waste collection costs had increased from £5 to £8 a bin from 1 October 2021 which would result in a budget overspend of around £200 for the year. The contingency budget was also overspent because of the need to address problems with the Parish Council's website. The grass cutting budget appeared underspent but invoices from Townsend Nursery were outstanding.

The following Cheques were approved and authorised:

	Cheque	Description	£
(i)	100684	Townsend Nursery grass cut 21 May 2021	56.40
(ii)	100685	SADALC subscription	10.00
(iii)	100686	TBS Hygiene dog waste collection May to July 2021	156.00
(iv)	100687	Cheque cancelled	0
(v)	100688	Townsend Nursery grass cuts June/July	169.20
(vi)	100689	The Poppy Appeal	17.00
(vii)	100690	G Reading website work	150.00
(viii)	100691	Clerk net salary July to September 2021	478.94

(ix)	100692	HMRC tax on salary	119.80
(x)	100693	Clerk expenses/office costs May to September 2021	114.34
(x1)	100694	St Nicholas PCC room hire 19 October 2021	25.00

6. Dog waste collection

The Clerk said that about six weeks ago a problem with discarded poo bags being left near the dog waste bin at the top of the triangle had been reported to TBS Hygiene. They had responded to say that the two bins owned by the Parish Council were now heavily used and it was necessary for their operatives to take the bags out by hand as the plastic sacks could not bear the weight. This was more time consuming and inevitably meant higher disposal costs. Consequently, collection costs would rise from £5 a bin to £8 a bin from 1 October 2021.

Separately the Clerk and Councillor Sheffield had put a notice on the bin at the top of the triangle asking people to take their poo bags home or use the ordinary waste bin if the dog waste bin was full. This seemed to be having a positive effect.

The Clerk said he had contacted Redbourn Parish Council for their experience of this issue and had been advised that they also used TBS Hygiene. There was only one other contractor locally and he was more expensive.

The Parish Council discussed the issue recognising that this was an important service for local residents and should be maintained.

7. Planning Applications and decisions to 8 October 2021

The Parish Council considered planning applications and decisions to 8 October 2021. The Clerk said that the District Council would notify him directly of the more significant applications and that he in turn would email those to parish councillors. It was then up to the Parish Council to decide if it wished to make any observations.

8. District Council Local Plan 2020-2028

The Chairman welcomed District Councillor Dr Allison Wren to the meeting, recently elected District Councillor for North Harpenden.

Councillor Wren gave a presentation on progress with the District plan and the call for sites as it affected Harpenden. More sites had been submitted than had been anticipated which had lengthened the process for considering them. The intention was to have the Local Plan in place by the end of 2023, which was a tight timetable. In reply to a question, Councillor Wren said that the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan would stand and be incorporated within the District Council's Local Plan.

The Clerk said he would circulate the slides subsequent to the meeting and the Chairman, on behalf of the Parish Council thanked Councillor Wren for her presentation and for attending the meeting.

9. Queen Elizabeth's Green Canopy. Plant a tree for the Jubilee

Councillor Sheffield updated the Parish Council on this matter and said that further to her recent email to the Parish Council, the purchase of a Whitebeam tree had been supported. The landowner had given provisional approval with the actual siting to be finally agreed. The planting season would take place over the

next 2/4 months and Councillor Sheffield said that she would email round a proposed event timetable.

It was noted that the tree and tree guard would cost £100, and there was also the cost of a Jubilee plaque.

It was RESOLVED that £200 be allocated to purchase a whitebeam tree and Jubilee plaque

10. 2022 District Ward Boundary Changes

The Clerk said that the Local Government Boundary Commission had made a number of recommendations regarding ward boundaries in the St Albans District, and that following a 40 day period of Parliamentary scrutiny, the changes would come into effect at the local elections in May 2022. Under these new arrangements, Harpenden Rural would become part of a new Harpenden North and Rural Ward and no longer be part of Wheathampstead.

Further background information was on the Parish Council's website

11. Community Governance Review

The Clerk said that following the Ward Boundary changes, the District Council would be undertaking a Community Governance Review (CGR), of Parish and Town Councils electoral arrangements concluding in November 2022 and taking effect from the 2023 elections. The purpose was to ensure that an area's electoral and community governance arrangements were appropriate and continued to reflect local identities. Unlike the recent boundary commission review, a CGR could alter the boundaries of Parishes. There would be a full consultation with residents and Parish Councils. There was no suggestion that the Review could lead to any merging of authorities.

Further background information was on the Parish Council's website

12. New Local Government Association Code of Conduct

The Clerk said that the Parish Council had adopted a Code of Conduct under the Localism Act 2011 designed to promote and maintain high standards of behaviour by its members when they conducted the business of the Parish Council. Every new Parish Councillor either received a copy of this, or it was drawn to their attention.

An updated model of this Code of Conduct has recently been prepared. The Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils had advised that parish councils should adopt the new Code once it has been adopted by the District Council, where it is was currently under discussion.

13. Banking Arrangements

The Clerk said that he had not had an opportunity to finalise recommendations on this matter yet. St Michael Parish Council were undertaking a similar exercise and he was waiting to see what they proposed.

The Clerk suggested that if as expected the final decision was to transfer to another bank, rather than opening a deposit account as well as a current account, all money should be transferred to a current account given the very low interest

rates available. A deposit account could be opened at a subsequent date if interest rates improved. This was supported.

The Clerk also sought the Parish Council's view on the banking arrangement provided by Metro bank whereby the Clerk could raise a payment and it would then require two Parish Councillors to log in and release the payment. This would in effect replicate the current process whereby two cheque signatories were required. This was felt to be a suitable arrangement subject to all parish councillors having authority to release payments and having evidence of invoices.

14. Parish Council Policies

The Clerk said that he was looking at drawing up policies on GDPR, and Freedom of Information for approval by the Parish Council for approval at a future meeting.

15. St Albans and District Association of Parish Councils - meeting held on 4 October 2021

The Chairman updated the Parish Council on the meeting held on 4 October 2021.

16. Date of Next meeting

Following discussion, it was agreed that the next meeting be held in January 2022. Date to be agreed.

17. Letter from local resident

The Parish Council considered a letter from a local resident on the subject of fly tipping.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Clerk to the Council

Chairman