

HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council, held in the Janet Campbell Room, St Mary's Church on Monday 17 January 2022, 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). Jo Bateman, Victoria Boast and Paul Hughes (SADC)

1. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

2. Community Governance Review

The Chairman welcomed Jo Bateman, Victoria Boast and Paul Hughes from St Albans District Council, to the meeting.

Ms Bateman said that the District Council was conducting a Community Governance Review (CGR) following on from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of St Albans Electoral arrangements. The purpose of the CGR was to ensure that an area's electoral and community governance arrangements were appropriate and continued to reflect local identities. In addition, as some District ward boundaries had changed, some parish boundaries that used to follow district ward boundaries no longer did so. The review would take 12 months, with final decisions being taken by the District Council in December 2022. The first consultation stage would conclude on 31 March 2022. It was anticipated that this would be a light touch process with minor tweaking of parish boundaries, rather than radical change. The CGR would be communicated to the public in various ways and the Clerk said it could be publicised on the Parish Council website.

In terms of any response by Harpenden Rural Parish Council, it was suggested that this should emphasise the distinctive rural character, as opposed to urban aspect elsewhere. In terms of process, Ms Bateman said she would supply the Parish Clerk with large scale maps of the parish for distribution to parish councillors. Any comments on existing boundaries would then be reported to the Clerk who would in turn draft a formal response for approval at the March meeting of the Parish

Council. This would allow sufficient time to meet District Council's deadline of 31 March 2022 for responses.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Chairman thanked all three District Council representatives for attending the meeting and for their presentation.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on October 2021 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

(i) Minute 4 (ii) - Matters arising

The Clerk said that he had accepted a quote for £200 plus VAT from Townsend Nursery to clear two piles of debris on the triangle of Common land and replace two wooden posts. The cost would be covered by the Locality grant previously allocated for a dog waste bin.

(ii) Minute 13 - Banking Arrangements

The Clerk said that St Michael Parish Council were likely to choose Metro Bank for electronic banking. For Harpenden Rural, an account with Metro Bank would replicate existing cheque banking by requiring two parish councillors to approve payments. In order to open the account, all parish councillors would have to visit the nearest Metro bank branch which was in St Albans. The Clerk said he would wait to see how St Michael Parish found Metro Bank before recommending that Harpenden Rural choose the same provider.

5. Cheque authorisations and review of expenditure v budget

The Clerk said following on from his email to the Parish Council in November 2021 about the number of hours needs to undertake the role of Parish Clerk, he had submitted a claim for 18 additional hours for the period October to December 2021. A further twelve hours had been allowed for until the end of March 2022, which meant that this budget head was likely to be overspent by around £400 in the current financial year. In addition, the price increase for dog waste collection costs would mean a further overspend of around £200. However, underspent budgets in other areas meant it was likely that total overspend for the year would be fairly small. The annual assessment of trees on the triangle was provisionally scheduled for February.

The following Cheques were approved and authorised:

	Cheque	Description	£
(i)	100695	TBS Hygiene dog waste collection Oct to Dec 2021	268.80
(ii)	100696	Townsend Nursery grass cuts Sept/October 2021	112.80
(iii)	100697	Clerk salary October to December 2021	665.98
(iv)	100698	HMRC tax on salary	166.40
(v)	100699	Townsend Nursery grass cut November 2021	56.40
(vi)	100700	St Nicholas PCC room hire January 2022	20.00

6. Budget 2022/23 and approval of Parish precept 2022/23

The Parish Council considered the draft budget for 2022/23 as prepared by the Parish Clerk. This set out income and expenditure for the forthcoming financial year.

The Parish Council noted that the projected expenditure for the year was £6778, about £1100 higher than the previous year. Increased costs were due to projected additional hours for the Clerk together with higher dog waste collection charges. Although the VAT refund from 2021/22 was likely to be higher than in 2021/21, maintaining the precept at the 2021/22 level of £5350 was not an option unless money was taken from reserves.

The Parish Council considered this in some detail noting that most of the Parish Council expenses were compliance costs. It was felt that raising the profile of the Parish Council would be a laudable goal and that c £1000 could be used from reserves for this purpose. Suggestions included road safety improvements in The Common/Annables Lane, and provision of small information signs/markers that could be placed by trees on the Common. In conjunction with this, the precept would need to increase so that income matched expected expenditure. It was noted that at the Parish precept was a very small part of the overall Council tax bill, and that even a large increase would equate to a very small increase on a Band 'D' property.

It was RESOLVED that the budget for 2022/23 be approved and that the Parish Council's precept be set at £6,500 and that the District Council be notified accordingly

7. Queens Green Canopy Update

Councillor Sheffield updated that Parish Council on this matter and said that the ideal time to plant a tree on the Common would-be February and that she would arrange a doodle poll to identify the most suitable date for planting. The tree had yet to be ordered and, although a grant was available, Whitebeams were out of stock from the preferred supplier.

The Parish Council also discussed whether the Parish Council could hold/be involved in some specific Jubilee activity in June, possibly in conjunction with the local scout group. Councillor Sheffield said she would follow that up with a family she knew with scouts' involvement.

8. Fly tipping update

It was noted that the District Council's Public Realm Committee had been held in December 2021 when the issue of fly tipping had been discussed in some detail. It had been agreed that where appropriate the Council would consider seizure of vehicles involved in fly tipping and scrap metal offences and/or not being registered as a waste carrier. Furthermore, the Council was proposing to recruit a fly tipping officer in the near future. So, it appeared that some progress was being made. District Councillor Wren had offered to attend the next meeting of the Parish Council to provide a further update.

Councillor Sheffield said that she was still pressing for waste at the rear of The Fox public house to be removed.

9. St Albans District Council Local Plan

The Clerk said that there was no further progress to report and that the District Council was still considering the results of the request for sites.

10. London Luton Airport expansion

It was noted that Luton Borough Council had been served with a notice stating that a decision on the planning application to increase the number of passengers from 18mppa to 19mppa could not be taken until Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had decided whether or not to call in the application.

11. Risk Register 2021

The Clerk said that the updated risk register was very similar to the register considered in 2021, as existing risks were unchanged and no new risks had been identified.

It was RESOLVED that the Risk Assessment Policy 2021/22 be approved.

12. Planning Applications and decisions to 4 January 2022

The Parish Council considered planning applications and decisions between October and December 2021.

13. Parish Council Policy - GDPR

The Clerk said that following the last meeting, he had started the process of preparing a series of Council policies, the first of which was a General Data Protection Policy. These policies would be published on the Parish Council website. It was noted that although the Parish Council held minimal personal data it was good practice to have a GDPR policy in place.

It was RESOLVED that the Parish Council's GDPR policy be approved and published on the Parish website.

14. SADALC meeting - 10 January 2022

The Chairman reported on the meeting of the SADALC held on 10 January 2022.

15. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Parish Council be held on Monday 21st March 2022 at 6.00pm*

*Start time changed to 6.30pm subsequent to the meeting.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 7.42 pm

Clerk to the Council

Chairman