

HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council, held in the Janet Campbell Room, St Mary's Church, Kinsbourne Green , Herts, AL5 3QE on Monday 11 April 2022, starting at 6.30 pm

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

Also in attendance: Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk). Councillor Dr Allison Wren (SADC)

1. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

2. Fly Tipping update

The Chairman welcomed Dr Allison Wren to the meeting.

Councillor Wren said that although progress was being to tackle the problem of fly tipping, it was taking considerable effort to drive change. So, the news she had was mixed. A proposal to establish a working party comprising Councillors, concerned residents, the police, Veolia and others to use lanes in Kinsbourne Green as a test area for solutions, had not, to date, been taken up.

Veolia's contract was due for renewal at the end of 2023 and there would be a competitive tendering process. Under Veolia's existing rules, waste in excess of 4 cubic metres needed special internal authorisation, which often meant delay in removing waste This clause needed review.

Wildlife cameras had proved to be unfit for purpose in tackling fly tipping.

On the positive side, the District Council had now agreed to remove fly tipped waste from farmland at no cost to the landowner. The District Council would now issue fixed penalty notices could impound cars. Furthermore, the green bin levy had been very successful and money raised from this levy would be used to employ extra enforcement officers to tackle the fly tipping problem. At a national level, the Government had just announced that local authorities would no longer be allowed to charge for building waste taken to refuse disposal centres. This was another step in the right direction.

Councillor Wren answered a number of questions from Parish Councillors and said that if re-elected on 5 May 2022, would continue to press for more action.

3. St Albans District Council Local Plan

Councillor Wren updated the Parish Council on progress made with the District Council's Local Plan and the methodology that was being followed. The request for potential development sites had resulted in over 300 being submitted, which was far more than the 142 submitted for the previous unsuccessful Plan. An analysis of these sites was due to start shortly. The District Council had recently taken on three more senior staff in the planning department, but even so the deadline for producing the Plan had been pushed back to 2025.

The District Council had appointed Ove Arup, who had provided a green belt review for Runnymede District Council, as consultants to assist with the Plan process. They would divide the whole District into parcels and there were 170 sub areas within the parcel system. In terms of site selection, Ove Arup would look at sustainability, infrastructure delivery and sustainable patterns of development, such as different types of dwellings. There would also be co-operation with neighbouring boroughs. The Plan would ensure there were 250 metre buffers between settlements. It was noted that there were a number of sites within the Parish included in the 300 submitted.

Councillor Wren answered questions on the Local Plan and said she would keep the Parish Council informed of progress.

The Chairman concluded by thanking Councillor Wren for attending the meeting.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2022 were approved.

5. Matters Arising

Minute 7 - Queens Green Canopy

The Clerk said that a Whitebeam tree had been planted on the Common in February 2022 and a Jubilee plaque had been put in place. The tree was looking healthy thanks to the Chairman and Councillor Sheffield watering the tree during the recent dry weather. Councillor Sheffield said that the Scouts were away on the weekend of the Queens Platinum Jubilee but she would approach another contact about a possible Jubilee Event.

6. Cheque authorisations and review of expenditure v budget

The Clerk said the schedule of income and expenditure circulated in mid-March was now slightly out of date. The main changes to report were that the grant for the Jubilee tree would fall into the 2022/23 financial year, as would the costs of the tree survey on the triangle of Common land. The Accounts for 2021/22, showing the end of year position, would be submitted to the next meeting. The Chairman said that the tree survey was scheduled to take place in the next two weeks. The cost of the Jubilee plaque would have to be met by the Parish Council.

The following Cheques were approved and authorised:

	Cheque	Description	£
(i)	100701	Townsend Nursery Removal of debris and installation of fence posts	240.00
(ii)	100702	K Sheffield. Reimbursement of Jubilee tree costs	166.72
(iii)	100703	TBS Hygiene Dog waste collection January to March	230.40
(iv)	100704	Clerk salary January to March	603.22
(v)	100705	Clerk tax on salary	151.00
(vi)	100706	Clerk expenses October 2021 to March 2022	110.21
(vii)	100707	St Nicholas PCC. Room hire April 2022	15.00

7. Appointment of Auditor

The Clerk said that Alex Sage had indicated that he would be willing to undertake the audit of the 2021/22 accounts once again.

It was RESOLVED that Alex Sage be appointed to audit the 2021/22 Accounts.

8. Community Governance Review

The Clerk said that he had submitted the Parish Council's response to the District Council's Community Governance Review. No comments on the draft previously circulated to Parish Councillors in March, had been received. The District Council's proposals would become clear in the early summer.

9. London Luton Airport Expansion

Councillor Holder reported that Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had decided to call in the planning application to increase the number of passengers from 18mppa to 19mppa. This was good news.

Separately the Clerk said that an objection to the recent consultation to increase the number of passengers to 32mppa had been submitted jointly by St Michael and Harpenden Rural Parish Councils.

10. Financial Regulations

The Clerk said that there were no changes that he wished to propose to the Parish Council's Financial Regulations, although further changes could depend on the Internet banking decision (Minute 11)

11. Internet Banking

The Clerk said that following on from previous discussions, St Michael Parish Council had decided not to switch to internet banking for the time being in view of the small number of transactions that took place each year. However, the situation at Harpenden Rural was different in that there were considerably more transactions in a year and most payments took place outside of the quarterly meetings.

The Clerk said that both Unity Trust Bank and Metro Bank could replicate the existing cheque-based system by requiring two Parish Councillors to release payments raise by the Clerk. Currently charges at both banks were a flat £6 a month. The Clerk said that he had used Unity Trust Bank in the past with success and that they promoted themselves as an excellent choice for the local government sector. It would be necessary for the Parish Councillors releasing the payments to have sight of invoices before releasing payments.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk to put in place arrangements for setting up internet banking with Unity Trust and transferring balances from Barclays Bank plc.

12. Planning Applications and decisions to 4 March 2022

The Parish Council considered planning applications and decisions between January and March.

The Parish Council noted that the Chairman had written to the Chief Executive at the District Council seeking an assurance that enforcement action in respect of a planning refusal would be enforced. If no satisfactory reply was received by 29 April, the matter would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Parish Council.

There was some discussion about the Parish Council not being consistent in the way it considered planning matters and it was agreed that going forward, the Parish Council should devote more time to this item and consider each application individually.

13. Parish Council Policy - Freedom of Information

The Clerk said that this was the second Parish Council Policy and that it would be published on the Parish Council website.

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

14. SADALC meeting - 2022

The Chairman reported on the meeting of the SADALC held on 4 April 2022. Three items of particular interest were fly tipping, jubilee celebrations and the Local Plan.

15. Traffic issues in Harpenden Rural

The Chairman reported on the growing pressure to tackle the dangerous situation that existed at the junction in Annables Lane and Kinsbourne Green Lane and more generally the problem of speeding traffic along Annables Lane which was not helped by the existing signage. Councillor Sheffield said she would contact the local MP Bim Afolami, who was aware of the problem.

Councillor Mrs Ayres said she would look into the possibility of electronic signage that had been used successfully elsewhere in the District.

16. Our Common Land

The Clerk said that the Open Spaces Society had recently published the Seventh edition of a book entitled 'Our Common Land', which covered the law and history of common land and greens. This was the first new edition since 2006. In view of that fact that Kinsbourne Green Common was in the Parish and the Council had obligations in respect of part of the Common, it was AGREED that a copy of the book be purchased at a cost of £25.

17. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Parish Council be held on Monday 23 May at 6.30pm.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Clerk to the Council

Chairman