

**HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL
HERTFORDSHIRE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 23 May 2022 starting at 6.30pm

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Ed Moore, Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk)

1. Appointment of Chairman

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Barrett be appointed Chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing year.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Moore to the meeting. Councillor Moore had recently been elected as District Councillor for Harpenden North and Rural.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Ayres be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing year.

3. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2022

Subject to the substitution of the word 'Ayres' for 'Holder' in line one of minute 6, and the insertion of the words 'The Chairman had written in an individual capacity to the Head of Planning and Building Control' in place of 'The Chairman had written to the Chief Executive' in line one, paragraph two of minute 12, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2022 were approved.

5. Matters Arising

(a) Minute 5 Queens Green Canopy and Platinum Jubilee

The Clerk said that he had now received the promised grant from Hertfordshire County Council for the Jubilee Tree planted on Kinsbourne Green Common.

The Parish Council discussed the Jubilee picnic, due to be held on the triangle of Common Land on 5 June, that has been organised by local residents. It was noted that some safety tape was being purchased to help separate the event from traffic on The Common. The Parish Council discussed making a small grant towards the cost of the event, but in conclusion it was agreed that Councillor Sheffield would approach the local scouts to see if they could loan residents some safety tape.

(b) Minute 13 Parish Council Policy - Freedom of Information

The Clerk said that the Freedom of Information and the Data Protection Policies were now on the Parish Council website.

(c) Minute 16 Our Common Land

The Clerk said that he had purchased the guide to Common Law land published by the Open Spaces Society.

Councillor Randall said that the owner of the Common was proposing to sell 7.2 acres of Kinsbourne Green Common on the south side of The Common/ Annables Lane. A minority of residents had purchased common land in front of their properties in the past, but for most residents there was no benefit in buying land that was of little practical use and that they already maintained on a voluntary basis.

6. Internal Audit Report 2021/22

The Internal audit report as prepared and signed by the Auditor, Alex Sage was received and it was noted that there were no issues of concern that had been raised during the audit of the 2021/22 financial statements. Mr Sage had noted in passing the high level of bank charges levied by Barclays and had asked about receipt of the HCC grant for the Jubilee tree. In respect of the latter, the grant had been received, but post year end.

The audit work had been undertaken pro bono, but as per the budget a gift of wine had been made in lieu of payment. The audit report together with other financial information would be published on the Parish Council's website in the coming weeks.

7. Summary Receipt and Payments Accounts

The Clerk said that the summary Receipts and Payments Accounts for 2021/22 showed expenditure exceeding income by £280. Part of this was down to the timing of grants, but dog waste collection cost had increased significantly in year. More generally the workload and cost involved in running the Parish Council, reflected in the Clerk's time, was increasing and this trend was likely to continue.

It was suggested that the District Council be approached to see whether they would be prepared to take over dog waste collection from the Parish Council. While the District Council might charge the Parish Council for this arrangement, it could result in a cost saving overall.

It was RESOLVED that the Accounts of Harpenden Rural Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 be approved and that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Summary Receipts and Payments Accounts 2021/22.

8. Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

The Parish Council considered the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 contained in Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Each section of the Statement was considered and it was agreed that each point had been met apart from point 9 which was not applicable.

It was RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 be approved and signed by the Chairman and Parish Clerk

9. Accounting Statements 2021/22

The Parish Council considered Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) - Accounting Statements 2021/22. It was noted that the amounts set out in this document had been extracted from the Receipts and Payments Accounts as discussed under Minute 7.

It was RESOLVED that the Accounting Statements 2021/22 be approved and that the Chairman be authorised to sign Section 2 of the 2021/22 AGAR.

10. Certificate of Exemption from Internal Audit

The Clerk said that it was not necessary for the Parish Council to undergo a limited assurance review by P K Littlejohn LLP, external auditors, as long as the Parish Council certified itself as exempt. There were a number of requirements for exemption, the main one being that both income and expenditure in year were less than £25,000. In addition, the Parish Council had to comply with the Transparency Code for Small Authorities by publishing certain financial information, including the Certificate of Exemption, on the Parish Council website by 1 July 2022.

It was RESOLVED that the Chairman and Parish Clerk sign a Certificate of Exemption, AGAR 2021/22 Part 2 for submission to P K Littlejohn LLP, the External auditors.

11. Insurance Renewal

The Clerk said that the Parish Council had insured with Zurich Municipal for around five years, and although there had only been a marginal increase in the annual premium during the last three years, it would be worthwhile obtaining a couple of other quotations to ensure that the rate was still competitive.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk obtain two competitive quotes to consider in time for the next renewal in June 2023

12. Schedule of cheques for payment

The following cheques were approved for payment.

	Cheque	Description	£
(i)	100708	TBS Hygiene Dog waste collection April to June 2022	249.60
(ii)	100709	HAPTC annual subscription	293.23
(iii)	100710	Open Spaces Society	45.00
(iv)	100711	Zurich Municipal Insurance Review	337.68
(v)	100712	Clerk expenses April to May 2022	112.07
(vi)	100713	St Nicholas PCC Room hire May 2022	20.00

13. Survey report on trees on the triangle of Common land

The Chairman said that the report from Alan Elderton on the condition of trees on the triangle of Common land had been received earlier in the day and too late to consider the content prior to the meeting. Copies would be circulated via email

and discussion and a decision on next steps would need to be taken via email given the Parish Council would not meet again until September 2022.

If the cost of any remedial works recommended were significant, then it was felt that the landowner should be approached for a contribution.

14. Internet Banking Arrangements

The Clerk said that he had contacted Barclays Bank to ask them to transfer the balance of the Parish Council's Business Reserve Account to the Business Current Account as the first stage of transferring the Current Account to Unity Trust Bank. Barclays Bank had advised however that this action could only be authorised by bank signatories.

The Clerk then tabled a letter addressed to Barclays Bank, which was duly signed by the Parish Council, requesting the action as outlined above.

15. Planning Applications and decisions - 1 March 2022 to 13 May 2022

The Parish Council considered a list of planning applications and decisions since the last meeting. As agreed at the last meeting, each one was considered in turn to see whether the Parish Council should make any representations. It was agreed that no representations should be made on any application.

16. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held on Monday 12 September 2022 at 6.30pm

17. Councillor Moore

The Chairman invited Councillor Moore to address the Parish Council.

Councillor Moore said that he was new to being a Councillor but that he would be very much focussed on tackling the blight of fly tipping. There were, in his view, a number of actions that could be taken that would help in dealing with the problem.

More generally, he said that James Gurney, Parking Services Manager (Operations), St Albans District Council would be willing to talk to the Parish Council about parking problems at a future meeting.

On the subject of speed markings/traffic calming at the junction of The Common and Kinsbourne Green Lane, he suggested contacting the relevant County Councillor. This was Annie Brewster (not Paul de Kort). Councillor Sheffield said that she would take this forward.

18. Exclusion of press and Public

It was RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded under the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 in view of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed under Minute 19.

19. Planning refusal

The Chairman tabled a paper setting out the timetable relating to a retrospective planning application that had been refused by the District Council, but which had not been followed up by enforcement action. The current situation, including the recent transfer of this issue to a case officer in April 2022, was noted and accepted.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.17 pm

Clerk to the Council

Chairman