

**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 on Monday 27 March 2023 starting at 6.30pm

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

Also in attendance: District Councillors Ed Moore and Allison Wren. Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk)

1. Apology for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Ayres and Randall.

The Chairman said that Councillor Randall was recovering from a recent operation while Councillor Ayres was still recuperating from her fall in January.

2. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2023 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

Minute 18 - Work at Kinsbourne House

It was noted that there had been little change since the last meeting, although it was likely that most of the work in refurbishing the property had been completed. However, part of the Common in front of the property was still in a mess. It was agreed that details of the planning approval be given to Councillors Moore and Wren who would look at the options for taking further action.

5. Schedule of cheques for payment and review of expenditure v budget

The Clerk said that as at mid-March 2023, projected expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2023 was close to budgeted expenditure. As previously reported, the outstanding issue was the £300 VAT refund due from HMRC. After many attempts, an online claim had been submitted in early March using a different Government Gateway password. It was hoped that this would solve the problem and that the money would be received in the near future.

The following payments were approved.

	Description	£
(i)	Clerk salary January to March 2023 (including 10 additional hours)	478.64
(ii)	HMRC tax on salary	318.80
(iii)	Clerk expenses January to March 2023. Primarily working from home allowance, October 2022 to March 2023, and part payment for Chairman's leaving gift	135.08
(iv)	St Nicholas PCC Room hire 27 March 2023	20.00

6. Fly tipping update

Councillor Moore updated the Parish Council on the issue of fly tipping in the Parish. In particular it was noted that it was difficult to be sure whether Veolia were meeting their KPIs for removing fly tips within five days as there was no clear visibility on when the five days started following authorisation from enforcement.

On the plus side, there were now two enforcement officers and this had resulted in an increase in fixed penalty notices being issued and five cases had been forwarded to the Magistrates Court. The Government had separately announced new proposed measures to crack down on waste crime.

It was noted that St Albans District council, faced with significant cost pressures, were looking at joining with other District Councils for waste collection. Veolia had been awarded a new non-competitive four-year extension to their contract, as this would offer a significant financial savings. There had been differing views at the District Council on the merits of this decision.

7. St Albans District Local Plan

Councillor Wren said that the Government was consulting on a new draft National Planning Policy Framework and provided a summary for the Clerk to circulate. The housing number required had been changed from 'mandatory' to 'advisory', although it was unclear precisely what the difference was.

Secondly, a South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan was being developed and a report had been considered by the District Council in January. Councillor Wren provided a copy to circulate to the Parish Council. Once approved, this would ensure Local Plans were accepted by the Planning Inspectorate. The District Council wanted to ensure that growth was concentrated near transport links, rather than in scattered settlements.

Councillor Wren also reported on the Chilterns Beechwood Special Area of Conservation. Because of the damage caused by high numbers of visitors, this

impacted on St Albans District Council's ability to grant planning permission for new residential development within a 'Zone of Influence', which took in some of the western part of the District, including Redbourn.

8. Sandridge Parish Council wildflower initiative/ No mow May

Councillor Sheffield reported on a meeting of Sandridge Parish Council she had attended which was promoting a wildflower initiative that involved providing free wildflower seed to residents who in turn would use a portion of their gardens for this purpose.

Nick Sheriff had advised that Kinsbourne Green Common had a variety of grasses, and so it didn't seem necessary to introduce any new varieties.

The Parish Council was advised that the 'No Mow May' movement was an annual campaign calling all garden owners not to mow during May, thereby liberating lawns and providing a space for nature and free wildflowers in lawns.

9. Triangle of Common Land

The Clerk said that since the last meeting he had been contacted by the son of George Parker, who was Parish Clerk in the 1960s and 1970s, inquiring after the trees on the triangle of common land which he had planted as a student in 1973/74. The opportunity had been taken to ask Mr Parker if he could locate the missing minute books.

The Clerk said that in terms of the work needed on the triangle, the next step would be to commission an up to date tree report, money for which had been included in the budget. It was hoped the report would be available for consideration at the next meeting.

It was AGREED that Elders Consultancy be asked to prepare a further Tree Condition and Arboricultural Assessment on the trees on the triangle of Common Land at Kinsbourne Green, following on from their report in April 2022.

10. Financial Regulations

The Clerk said that there were no changes that he wished to propose to the Parish Council's Financial Regulations, but that over the coming year it would be useful to review this document. It was suggested that Councillor Randall could assist with this review.

11. Internet Banking

The Clerk said that now the current account with Unity Trust had been opened, it would be useful to opening an Instant Access Savings Account with Unity Trust to hold surplus funds, as interest payable was now about 2.25%. However, it would be best to do this after the Parish Council elections in May when it would be clear who the signatories would be. This was AGREED.

12. Planning Applications and Decisions to 15 March 2023

The Parish Council considered the schedule of planning applications and decisions from 20 January to 15 March 2023. It was agreed that no representations would be made on any application.

It was noted that where planning application were just outside of the Parish, these would not be picked up by searching 'Harpenden Rural' on the District Council's website. The Clerk was reliant on being notified specifically by the District Council - and this couldn't be guaranteed. A case in point was an application at 'The Cottage', The Common, Kinsbourne Green, which just fell within the Harpenden Town area but where access to the proposed development was from a road in the Harpenden Rural Parish

13. Planning Application 5/2023/0327 - Land at Cooters End Lane/ Ambrose Lane - Construction of up to 550 dwellings

The Chairman said this application was at an early stage and more information would be made available in due course.

14. Police Priority Setting Forum

Councillor Moore asked whether the Parish Council was aware of the Police Priority Setting Forum and said that he would ensure the Clerk received notifications of meetings.

15. Chairman

The Clerk said that this was Peter's last meeting as Chairman and parish councillor. Peter had been a parish councillor since October 2016 and had served as Chairman since May 2017. During that time, he had been very committed and engaged with the work of the Parish Council and had provided great support to the Clerk. On behalf of the Parish Council, the Clerk presented the Chairman with a voucher for a meal for two at a local restaurant,

The Chairman thanked the Parish Council for its good wishes and said that it had been a privilege to serve as a Parish Councillor for the last six and a half years.

16. Parish Council elections

The Clerk circulated nomination papers to Councillors Holder and Sheffield and said that these would need to be delivered to the District Council Offices by 4.00pm on Tuesday 4 April. A set of papers would be delivered to Councillor Randall who had indicated his intention to stand again. Given the circumstances, it was unlikely that Councillor Mrs Ayres would seek renomination, although the co-opted route would remain open.

17. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Parish Council (The Annual meeting) be held on Monday 15 May* 2023 at 6.30pm. This would be the first meeting following the Parish Council elections on 4 May.

- New date being arranged subsequent to the meeting

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Clerk to the Council

Chairman