

HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held at St Mary's Church, Kinsbourne Green on Tuesday 5 March 2024 starting at 7.00pm

Present: Parish Councillors Sheffield (Chair), Randall and Ring.

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

19/2024 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors Crispin and Holder. Both absences were authorised by the Parish Council.

20/2024 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were declared.

21/2024 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024 were approved.

22/2024 Matters Arising

i. Minute 4 – Matters Arising

Councillor Wren provided the Clerk with contact details of an officer at Ringway who could assist in finding a contractor to undertake tree works on the Common. The Clerk said that these works would slip to 2024/25 as it would now make sense to wait until the results of the next tree condition report were received.

Councillor Ring had now been added as a signatory on the Parish Council's bank account. The reinstatement works of the Common in front of Kinsbourne House had been completed.

ii. Minute 7 – Schedule of payments and review of expenditure v budget.

The Clerk said that Councillor Moore had spoken to The Harpenden Town Council Chief Executive, who had advised that they were bringing their dog waste collection service in-house. There was a possibility that the Parish Council's bins could be included with the Town Council's contract if Harpenden Rural's separate arrangement with the District Council and John O'Connor ended.

iii. Minute 11 Update on Kinsbourne Green Common

It was reported that the suggestion of a park run on Kinsbourne Green Common had been turned down due to parking issues and the risk to biodiversity.

iv. Minute 14 Parish Council Newsletter

It was noted that following the discussion at the last meeting, a new interactive map of the Parish, prepared by Councillor Crispin, had been added to the website.

23/2024 Schedule of Payments

It was noted that there had only been four payments since the January meeting. The following payments were approved.

Description		£
(i)	HAPTC New Councillor course, Councillor Crispin	17.00
(ii)	Townsend Nursery Grass Cut 24 November 2024	56.40
(iii)	St Nicholas PCC room hire 5 March 2024	25.00
(iv)	St Michael Parish Council shared mobile phone use January to March 2024	6.00

24/2024 Revised budget 2024/25

This had been updated with the changes agreed at the last meeting and had been circulated for information.

25/2024 Fly tipping

It was noted that the process for clearing up fly tips was much improved on the position eighteen months earlier. However, the question now was whether more could be done to tackle the problem and if so, what actions could be taken. The Chair said she was planning to meet with Sergeant Mark Essam of Hertfordshire Constabulary shortly, and would discuss the fly tipping situation with him.

Note: the issue had been flagged by the Parish Council for discussion at the Parish Conference on 11 March 2024.

26/2024 Update on the sale of Kinsbourne Green Common and future plans.

Councillor Sheffield said that the sale of Kinsbourne Green Common to the Friends of Kinsbourne Green Charity had been completed in February 2024. The fund raising had been successful with money also having been set aside for future maintenance. The intention was to maintain the land as a natural open space.

It was noted that much of the remaining strip of Common Land to the north of The Common/Annables Lane was still owned by the Piggott family, although the process of offering to sell parcels of common land in front of individual properties was ongoing.

27/2024 Tree condition survey

The Clerk said that each year the Parish Council commissioned a tree condition survey on the trees on the triangle of common land, because of its responsibility to ensure the trees remained in a good and safe condition. Councillor Sheffield said that the Friends of Kinsbourne Green were undertaking a tree condition survey of the trees the charity was now responsible for maintaining. Given that situation, it would be worthwhile asking the same company (TMA), who also carried out work for the Town Council, to undertake the Parish Council's 2024 tree condition survey. The cost would be slightly more than had been incurred in 2023, but there was adequate budget provision.

It was RESOLVED that the Chair approach TMA to undertake a tree condition survey of the trees on the triangle of common land with a view to the survey being undertaken in April/May 2024.

28/2024 Content for the next issue of the Parish Council newsletter.

The Chair invited suggestions for content for the second issue of the Parish Council newsletter. The Clerk said that it had previously been agreed to provide some additional information about the Parish Council. and that it would also be helpful to publicise the new Parish grants scheme. In addition, Councillor Wren had offered to provide a paragraph on her role as a newly elected County Councillor.

Other suggestions included an update of the sale of the Kinsbourne Green Common, a children's photography competition, inviting the mayor to any formal opening of the common, promoting the scouts' fete and mentioning local policing personnel and their roles.

29/2024 Parish Council risk assessment Policy 2023/24

The Clerk said that the updated Risk Assessment Policy was similar to that agreed last year. The most notable point was that the Councillor Crispin was undertaking a review of the Parish Council's website. The last major review had taken place in 2021. A Reserves Policy, flagged in 2023, was now being reviewed by the Parish Council on an annual basis.

It was RESOLVED that the Parish Council Risk Assessment Policy 2023/24 be approved.

30/2024 Reserves Policy

The Clerk said that the Reserves Policy as circulated showed recorded reserves at £7,624 as at 31 March 2023, a small increase over the previous year. However, the Parish Council had earmarked around £3000 of those reserves towards the cost of the category three tree works on the Common, the intention being that reserves would be built up again over subsequent years. This process was underway with the 2024/25 budget projecting a surplus of c £1,000. In response to a question, the Clerk said that reserves were targeted at meeting operating costs for a year of c £6500 plus the potential charge for a contested Parish election in 2027 – estimated at £1500.

It was RESOLVED that the 2024 Parish Council Reserves Policy be approved and added to the Parish Council website.

31/2024 Financial Regulations

The Clerk said that he was reviewing the Parish Council's Financial Regulations. It was unlikely that any recommended changes would be significant as the Regulations were based on the current model version issued by the National Association of Local Councils in 2020. It was hoped to present an updated version to the next meeting.

32/2024 Planning Applications and Decisions 1 January 2024 to 26 February 2024

The Clerk said that there had been very little movement since the report to the last meeting. The various planning applications at Pollards Farm were still shown as pending on the District Council's website.

More generally, Councillor Wren said that planning enforcement at The District Council was well below strength and that this would be addressed following the May council elections.

33/2024 Parish Council website

The Clerk said that he had met with Councillor Crispin to discuss the website and that Councillor Crispin would be reporting to a future meeting on suggestions for change and invite feedback on those proposals.

34/2024 Bank Mandate

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Crispin be added as a signatory to the Parish Council's bank mandate.

35/2024 Land at Redbourn

The Chair reported that the owner of land near Redbourn golf club had been granted permission to clear a large number of trees that had been felled several years ago. The situation there was being monitored.

36/2024 Storage units on land north of Kinsbourne Green Common

The Chair said that while the covenant on the land prohibited caravans from being sited there, there was no mention of portacabins. It was possible that Showman's rights applied. Councillor Sheffield said she would raise the matter with the Chair of the Friends of Kinsbourne Green.

37/2024 Junction of Kinsbourne Green Lane, The Common and Annables Lane.

The Chair said that there had been another accident at this junction which had resulted in a car being written off. A local resident had written asking for action to be taken.

The situation unfortunately was that this particular junction was not considered high priority by the County Council. There might be a possibility of providing larger signs from Councillor Wren's Highways Allocation budget. She and Councillor Moore would hold a site visit.

38/2024 Common land issues

The Chair said that the County Council's enforcement officer, Kevin Moore, together with Hugh Craddock, a case officer from the Open Spaces Society, were looking at the possibility of infringements to the boundary of the Common. Their conclusions were expected shortly.

39/2024 Date of next meeting

It was RESOLVED that the next meeting be held on Tuesday 14 May 2024 at 7.00pm.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.32pm.

Clerk to the Council

Chair