

# HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

## HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in the Bell Room, St Mary's Church, Kinsbourne Green, on Monday 14 January 2019 starting at 7.30pm

Present: Parish Councillors Barrett (Chairman), Mrs Ayres, Mrs Bell, Holder and Newby-Ricci

Also in attendance: Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk)

1. Declarations of interest

No interests were declared.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2018 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

**Minute 5 - Banking Arrangements**

It was noted that Councillor Holder had now been added to the Bank Mandate.

**Minute 15 - Access road to the rear of properties in Luton Road**

Councillor Holder updated the Parish Council on the discussions taking place regarding the upkeep and repair of the car park to the rear of St Mary's church and the access to the car park.

4. Cheque Authorisations and review of expenditure

The Parish Council noted that expenditure to date during the financial year totalled £4,318 against income of £4,759. A further invoice had subsequently been received for hosting costs, thereby increasing expenditure by another £119.94. As the decision had been taken not to spend money on repairing/replacing a bench, there would now be small in-year surplus. However, moving to an arrangement whereby the Clerk was paid in-year rather than 13 months in arrears, (Minute 15 refers) would result in a deficit because both the 2017/18 and 2018/19 salaries would be paid in the same financial year. However, the auditors, H W Controls and Assurance, had confirmed that this was acceptable providing there was a note to the Accounts and the decision was minuted. The following cheques were approved and authorised.

	Cheque	Description	£
(i)	100603	TBS Hygiene dog waste collection July to September	82.68
(ii)	100604	Townsend Nursery - grass cut September 2018	56.40
(iii)	100605	Townsend Nursery - grass cut October 2018	56.40

(iv)	100606	P Barrett -reimbursement - Remembrance Day wreath	17.00
(v)	100607	Townsend Nursery - grass cut/leaf clearance Nov 2018	112.80
(vi)	100608	TBS Hygiene dog waste collection October to December	82.68
(vii)	100609	A Reading - reimbursement of LCN hosting costs	119.94
(viii)	100610	St Nicholas PCC room hire - 14 January 2019	15.00

## 5. Budget 2019/20 and Parish precept

The Parish Council considered the draft budget for 2019/20 as prepared by the Parish Clerk. This set out expected expenditure and income for the forthcoming year. The Clerk drew attention to the following matters.

First, if the Clerk was paid in year rather than a year in arrears, then this would increase his salary by about £60 to reflect the 2019 National Salary award. The Chairman also advised that having reviewed the Clerk's remuneration, he would be proposing (Minute 15 refers) that the Clerk be moved from Point 22 to point 25 on the NALC salary scale, which would increase costs by a further £191.

Second, the Clerk advised that if the Parish Council changed its auditor as proposed (Minute 7 refers), then this would result in a saving of around £300.

Third, election costs of £75 had been included in the draft budget. This assumed that the Parish election would not be contested.

Finally, £500 had been included for maintenance/replacement of existing bench(es). Allocation of this money could be discussed at the next meeting.

The Parish Council considered a precept for 2019/20, noting that it had been frozen in each of the last two years, and agreed that it would be prudent to agree a small increase.

It was RESOLVED that

- (i) The Parish Council precept for 2019/20 be set at £4,800 and that the District Council be notified accordingly.
- (ii) The draft budget for 2019/20 be approved but that the Clerk restate this, taking into account decisions made at the meeting.

## 6. Risk Assessment

The Clerk said that the Parish Council was required to conduct a risk assessment each year. This year, the risks and how they were mitigated had been formally documented and this statement could be made available to the Auditors. It would be updated as required. At a high level, risks were covered through the Parish Council's insurance cover, which provided cover for Public, Products and Employers Liability, Loss of money, Fidelity Guarantee and Legal Expenses. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were reviewed annually. Furthermore, the Parish Council considered and approved a budget for the year and monitored income and expenditure at each meeting.

It was AGREED that the 2019 Risk Statement, as circulated, be adopted.

## 7. Appointment of Internal Auditor

The Parish Council considered the appointment of an auditor for the 2018/19 accounts and having considered the CV of Alex Sage, agreed that he be appointed.

It was noted that Mr Sage currently undertook similar work for St Michael Parish. While, Mr Sage had offered to undertake the work Pro Bono, the Parish Council agreed to provide a small gift, similar to that provided by St Michael Parish, in recognition of the work involved.

It was RESOLVED that Mr Alex Sage be appointed as the Parish Council's auditor for the forthcoming audit of the 2018/19 accounts.

8. Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Chairman said that a referendum of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan would take place on 7 February 2019. A lot of background information about the development of the Plan and the question that would be asked was contained in the latest issue of Harpenden Forum. Assuming the Plan was supported, then it would become a more detailed part of the St Albans District Plan, which would also be the subject of a referendum in due course.

9. Planning applications and decisions to January 2019

The Parish Council considered a list of planning applications and decisions to January 2019. There were considered to be no significant matters.

10. Planning application for incinerator plant at East Hyde

It was noted that to date, a planning application had not been submitted to Central Beds District Council.

11. SADALC meeting - 17 October 2018

The Chairman reported on the meeting of SADALC held in October 2018 when Councillor Mary Maynard had given a very interesting talk about the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan. The next meeting was scheduled for 26 February 2019 at Harpenden Town Council. The Chairman said that he planned to attend.

12. Direct Debit - Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

The Clerk said that it would be administratively more straightforward to pay invoices by direct debit or standing order where possible. In this connection, Councillor Mrs Ayres was looking into whether the £1 annual peppercorn rent for the triangle of common land could be paid by standing order. The Annual Data Protection registration fee could be paid by direct debit and was the ICO's preferred method of payment.

It was RESOLVED that a direct debit be set up to pay the Annual Data Protection registration renewal fee.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting the Clerk was advised that paying the ICO fee by direct debit would result in a £5 discount.

13. Parish Council elections- May 2019

It was noted that the Parish Council elections, held every four years, were due to take place in 2019. The Clerk said that he would receive a nomination pack from

the District Council in March, and would aim to get the various forms signed off at the next meeting of the Parish Council. Following the result of the election, the Parish Council would need to meet between 13 and 21 May 2019. Councillor Newby-Ricci said that he would not be seeking election for a further term.

#### 14. Payroll Provider and Clerk's remuneration

The Chairman said that the Clerk was currently paid each May for the previous financial year and had asked to move to an arrangement whereby he was paid quarterly in-year. The Chairman supported this change and said it was a fairer and more usual arrangement. In addition, the Chairman said he had reviewed the Clerk's salary point, which had been unchanged for three years and proposed that the Clerk be moved from Spinal Column point (SCP) 22 to SCP 25, as this was comparable to similar neighbouring authorities

Currently the Clerk undertook the payroll function using HMRC software. However, this would become quite onerous if four salary payments were made each year, given that income tax was payable. Consequently, the Clerk had approached three other organisations to see whether they would be willing to undertake this service. Of the three, the cheapest, which was also used by Wareside Parish Council was T P James and Co. They would process payroll on a quarterly basis, advise the Clerk of tax payable and complete year end payroll returns. The cost of this would be £65 plus VAT a year. However, the low cost meant that payments would not be made electronically by BACs, with salary and HMRC cheques having to be signed at Parish Council meetings. A standing order would need to be set up to pay the payroll provider.

It was RESOLVED that

- (i) the Clerk be paid on a quarterly basis in year with effect from the 2019/20 financial year with salary cheques being signed, where possible, at each meeting
- (ii) The Clerk be moved to spinal column point 25 from 1 April 2019 and that an updated contract of employment be prepared
- (iii) TP James and Co be appointed to run the HRPC payroll
- (iv) The Clerk's 2017/18 and 2018/19 salaries be paid in the current financial year (Minute 4 refers)

#### 15. Date of future meetings

It was agreed that the next meetings be held on 18 March 2019 and 20 May 2019.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting, it was agreed that the next meeting be held on Wednesday 20 March 2019.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.58 pm

Clerk to the Council

Chairman