

Little Berkhamsted Parish Council

MINUTES of a meeting of Little Berkhamsted Parish Council
held on
Wednesday 23rd March at 8.00pm in Little Berkhamsted Village Hall

PRESENT: Cllrs Ellis Downes (in the Chair), Mrs Elaine Hunter (Vice-Chair), Derek Standbrook, Jim Holt, Ms Leanne Davey, Richard Chaplin and Wayne Morris

In attendance: 4 members of the public
Linda Middleton Parish Clerk

87. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – There were no apologies for absence.
88. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST** – The Chairman advised the meeting that as he was acquainted socially with Mr and Mrs Clark, he would not take part in discussion or vote on a planning matter relating to The Old Rectory 4 Robins Nest Hill
89. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** – The minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2016 were approved and signed, proposed by Derek Standbrook and seconded by Elaine Hunter. The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2015 were signed, having been approved at the meeting on November 2015.
90. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** – A number of potholes remained unrepaired in the Parish, Jim Holt will contact the Chairman, Herts Highways Committee to express the Parish Council's dissatisfaction with this. A member of the public mentioned that the sign for Little Berkhamsted at the bottom of Robin's Nest Hill had has a "horses crossing" sign attached to it, Jim Holt would mention this to the Herts Highways Chairman. The Chairman advised the meeting that he had been contacted by a lady from Bedwell who was concerned that a golf ball from Essendon Golf Club had come very close to her children when they were riding nearby, he had subsequently spoken to Paul Densham, Director of Golf, who was meeting the lady concerned and advised that the golf club were investigating preventative measures that would stop balls straying.
- The Chairman had received a phone call from a concerned resident regarding a large number of trees being cut down in the copse by Danes. The trees were being replaced by an avenue of birch trees. The resident had also contacted East Hertfordshire Council's arborist who had advised that although the trees in the copse should not be felled without the Council's permission, the cost of taking legal action against the owner would be in the region of £8-10,000. The maximum fine for cutting down a protected tree is around £2500 and in view of the cost involved, East Herts Council were not planning to take action against the owner. The Chairman will follow this up with Councillor Linda Haysey. A member of the public suggested that it might be useful for maps of the conservation area and notable trees to be made available and publicised to new residents.
- Concerns about Apple Day Care had been raised by a member of the public, The Chairman

advised the meeting that the organisation were using additional premises and that the situation appeared to have quietened down recently. The Cricket Club were still required to set up a contract with Apple Day Care and the Clerk was asked to investigate the legal situation regarding this.

A member of the public advised the meeting that there was a lot of litter on Robin's Nest Hill and advised that she had asked the water board if they could tidy up the land under their control and suggested a litter pick for the area.

91. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** - the Chairman reminded the meeting of the three projects that the Parish Council wished to progress during the year and suggested that these be standing items at future meetings.

- a) The creation of a wheelchair/pushchair accessible path around the village: Jim Holt would lead on this and Jim advised that creating a loop of 3.8 miles was under consideration. He had walked the route and was in discussion with the Field Care Trust regarding funding, he was also investigating district council funding. This loop would join up a number of bridleways and footpaths and the land owners that he had spoken to so far had not objected to the proposal. It was hoped that another loop could also be considered.
- b) Signage for the village: to celebrate the 950th anniversary it is hoped to have a sign in the village. The Chairman has been investigating options.
- c) Investment and upgrading of the play area/recreation field: Derek Standbrook advised the meeting that the recreation committee had looked at a number of possible improvements, most favoured was the creation of a path around the field which would enable better use of areas that were currently underused. The introduction of some memorial benches would provide seating was also being considered. The field had some drainage problems and funding options were being considered. It was agreed that this proposal should be discussed at the Parish Meeting in May as it currently appeared there were mixed views amongst residents, to ascertain if there was support in the village for this initiative.

92. **FINANCE** – It was resolved:

- a) To approve the financial statement as at 14th March 2016, proposed by Derek Standbrook and seconded by Elaine Hunter. Members were also shown a statement of the bank accounts.
- b) To approve payments made since the last meeting and payments now due – proposed by Jim Holt and seconded by Wayne Morris.
- c) The revised Financial Regulations were presented and unanimously approved.
- d) The revised Risk Assessment was presented and unanimously approved.
- e) The Insurance Schedule was discussed and there was some discussion on the replacement costs for play area equipment and Wayne Morris undertook to send some information to the Clerk regarding this. The Policy is due for renewal at the end of May and the Clerk will obtain quotes.
- f) The asset register was discussed and it was agreed that only assets worth £500 or more would be listed. The Clerk was asked to provide a revised Asset Register to the next Parish Council meeting.

93. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS** – The Chairman drew the attention of councillors to two planning matters which had been decided and to two planning matters which had been issued for consultation.

1. Erection of a double garage at Tile Cross Epping Green-planning permission had been refused.
2. Demolition of existing side extensions and construction of new west wing at Robins Nest Farm Little Berkhamsted-planning permission had been granted.
3. Change of use and alteration of existing sheds and extension into a guest annex at The Old Rectory 4 Robins Nest Hill – the Parish Council did not wish to object (6 Councillors voted to in favour, the Chairman abstained) but wished to remind the Planning Authority that the proposed accommodation should remain as part of the main property.
4. New front entrance porch with pitched gable roof feature over and alterations to fenestration. Single storey rear extension for Dene Orchard Little Berkhamstead-the Parish Council did not wish to object (three Councillors opposed this application and three were in favour- the Chairman’s casting vote was in favour).

The Clerk was asked to respond accordingly.

94. **To receive an update on hall, cottage and open spaces** – Derek Standbrook commented that there was a need to engage with the Cricket Club regarding the drainage issues in the field and the Chairman advised the meeting that he would be attending the Cricket Club’s first meeting of the year. It was reported that the swings required new chains and cradle seats, the Clerk was requested to order these. Following recent high winds, a branch had come down in the recreation area and it was agreed to put trees on the agenda for the next meeting.

95. **To receive an update on highways matters** – the Clerk advised that she had spoken to Herts Highways who had been unable to provide dates of when pothole repairs would be carried out. Wayne Morris reported that during the churchyard clear up, a large blocked drain had been uncovered and cleared. Jim Holt will contact Herts Highways regarding gully clearance, particularly around the Beehive, Church Road Epping Green.

96. **To receive a report from Little Berkhamsted Recreation Committee** – the meeting was told that the Recreation Committee had decided that they would not hold a village fete this year but will hold a picnic in the field with a BBQ. The Recreation Committee are hoping that residents will attend and that volunteers for a fete in 2017 will come forward. The Recreation Committee are also considering arranging an outing and would be making a donation to the Parish Council to help maintain the play area.

97. **To receive an update on minerals and landfill activities** – the Chairman advised that the Ombudsman is investigating why East Herts were not taking any action on the quarry and that whilst the investigation was taking place, there would not be a meeting to discuss this issue with the District Council.

98. **To receive the Auditor's Report** – the report had been circulated to all councillors and the contents noted.
99. **To consider the requirements of the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities** – the Clerk had circulated a report prior to the meeting and the Parish Council unanimously adopted the Transparency Code. The Clerk advised the meeting that an application for a grant from the Government to help the Parish Council meet the requirements of the code had been successful and a grant of £963.40 had been awarded.
100. **To set a date for the Annual Parish Meeting and Parish Council meetings for the remainder of 2016** – it was agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting would be held on Thursday 12th May – The East Herts Council Arborist will be invited to attend. Parish Council meeting dates were agreed: Thursday 19th May, Wednesday 20th July, Wednesday 21st September and Wednesday 16th November.
101. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** – it was agreed that the 4 Parish Councillors who had retired from the Parish Council in May 2015 would be invited to the Annual Parish Meeting where they would be presented with tokens of appreciation. Elaine Hunter would arrange for the purchase and engraving of these.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Thursday 19th May 2016.