

# LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Parish Council held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at 8pm in the Village Hall, Little Berkhamsted.

**Present;**

Cllr Downes (Chair), Cllr Hunter (Vice-Chair), Cllr Standbrook, Cllr Stokes, Cllr Holt, Cllr Latham-Koenig (L-K), Cllr Morris

**In Attendance:** 11 members of the public, Laura Brooks-Payne (Clerk)

- 1. To receive apologies for absence and approve:** None
- 2. To receive declaration of interest and dispensation:** Cllr L-K for possible new website design
- 3. To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of the Council on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> may 2019:** Cllr Downes briefly went through the minutes, approved, proposed by Cllr Morris and seconded by Cllr Holt.
- 4. To receive questions and comments from the public:**

A resident mentioned the acrimony at the last meeting in May in regard to holding two meetings on one evening. The resident asked the PC if a decision had been made to hold the meetings on separate evenings next May with the Annual Parish Meeting being a less formal meeting where parishioners could air their views.

Cllr Downes answered that in fact the residents are able to have a voice at every meeting and cllrs are always contactable at any time. Nonetheless, Cllrs had met to discuss the May meetings and reported that for the last two years the PC had tried a different way of holding the two meetings and having received feedback there was probably an argument for having separate meetings next May. Though Cllr Downes did report that it was fair to say that relations are of course two way and that certain members of the public that evening were inappropriate in their comments and unnecessarily hostile.

- 5. To receive the chairman's report;** Cllr Downes reported that in any line of work or profession colleagues and co-workers always seem to accuse management of having poor communications and that no one tells them anything. Cllrs have been accused of poor communication and to that end Cllrs have reflected upon this and been quick in improvements in communications; Cllrs have been recently looking at improvements in a range of different media activities, website, parish magazine, and noticeboards to keep residents informed of the PC's activities. Cllr Downes thanked Cllrs for their quick action on this matter, indicating that there is always more to do but that this is work in progress.

Cllr Downes reported that he had received a letter in relation to Waterhall Quarry. There have been recent breaches of planning regulations at the site. The Environment Agency (EA) have produced a report having done recent investigation and the details are concerning. Highlights; the trial pits unveiled significant contaminated waste which seeps into nearby water courses. The estimate is in the 1000's of tonnes. The EA will be serving notice on the quarry to ensure that regulations are adhered to, and are likely to be heavily

fined. They will be asked to remove contaminated waste from the site safely. Any further information that the PC receive will be shared in due course.

**6. To discuss PC communication, new/updated website and approve parish advertising posters:**

Cllr Downes had already reported on the PC improved communication strategy. Cllr L-K reported that posters advertising meetings had been put up around the village centre. He will write a brief in reference to the PC requirements for a new website in due course, circulate to cllrs for their input and obtain 3 quotations for a new website design. This will include our existing website designer and Cllr L-K. Cllr Stokes reported that meeting dates had been added to the parish magazine and suggested that the PC write a short report extracted from the minutes for inclusion in the next edition though this would be the September edition. The deadline for articles to be submitted for the next edition of the parish magazine is 12<sup>th</sup> of the month which falls before a PC meeting. General discussion was had regarding dedicated PC email addresses, privacy policy regulations and the possibility of downloading PC documents to a secure area of the new website to be viewed by cllrs.

**7. To receive a report from Little Berkhamsted Recreation Committee:** Cllr Hunter reported that the last meeting was cancelled due to members having other engagements. Cllr Morris reported that the recent village fun day was well attended, there was a BBQ, silly games and more. It was enjoyed by all and noted that this was not a fundraising event but an event to get the residents together.

Cllr Stokes asked how the Recreation Committee works in conjunction with the PC. Cllr Morris explained that they do work independently but feedback information regularly. It was also noted that there is no current chairperson and that the committee is struggling to recruit new members. It was discussed that a survey was carried out a number of years ago and perhaps a current survey could be carried out which would be a good start to ascertain what the members of the parish want in terms of committees, events etc. and gain some more interest in village life.

**ACTION** – clerk will contact previous Cllr Chaplin to obtain a copy of the previous survey.

**8. OPEN SPACES**

**8.1 To report on playground issues;** Cllr Standbrook reported that the toddler swings are splitting and explained that these new swings had only been in situ for just over two years. The clerk and Cllr Morris have been in contact with Wicksteed, suppliers of the swing, enquiries are ongoing. Another batch of bark is required for the playground area which Cllr Morris will be organising delivery of.

Cllr Standbrook had been in touch with the grass cutting contractor who have agreed to cut the area surrounding the new signs, this was approved. It was also noted that the current contractor had been in place for some time and that the PC should tender for the work for the next season.

**ACTION** – Cllr Standbrook to obtain quotations for the grass cutting contract.

**8.2 To discuss siting another dog waste bin on the church side of the road;** Cllr Stokes reported that this was discussed in the last meeting but no decision was made. It was agreed that there was a need for another dog waste bin but that the location previously discussed on the pub side of the road was unnecessary due to the location of the

dog waste bin on the other side of the road. Discussion was had as to where a new one could be positioned.

**ACTION** – Cllr Stokes will look at various suitable locations and report back at the next meeting.

## 9. PLANNING

9.1 **To receive the latest Planning Report circulated by the clerk;** Clerk had circulated the latest planning application list prior to the meeting. Cllr Downes noted that there had been no new applications since March 2019.

9.2 **To update on the retrospective planning refusal at Dene Orchard 3/17/1621/HH;** Clerk advised that she had received a reply that day from the planning department at East Herts who had advised that a site visit had been carried out and that the enforcement team were aware of the issue. It was agreed that this was an unsatisfactory response. Cllr Morris reported that the building had been demolished but erected in a different more discreet location.

**ACTION** – Clerk will contact the enforcement team again and explain this new information to ascertain if they are aware and to ask for further information.

## 10. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

10.1 **To report on the Village Hall;** Cllr Standbrook had circulated a report to cllrs prior to the meeting. It was explained that mildew had been found growing on the cottage bedroom wall behind the wardrobe. The feasibility of providing insulation is a complex one and it was agreed that the problem could probably be eradicated with increased ventilation, moving the wardrobe away from the wall to allow improved air circulation. Cllrs agreed.

10.2 **To report on new contract with cricket club;** Cllr Downes has spoken informally to a solicitor regarding an up to date contract between the cricket club and the PC. It was noted that it is not legal for the Cricket club to sub-let the building to Apple day Care childcare services; they would need a contract directly with the PC which the solicitor could draw up. The solicitor will also look at the rental agreement for the tenant in the village hall because there is no adequate rental agreement at present. Cllr Stokes asked what the timeframe for renewing all three contracts would be. Cllr Downes responded explaining that he hopes to have all contracts ready for the next meeting in order to share with cllrs.

**ACTION** – The clerk will obtain advice as to whether the PC needs three quotations from different solicitors in this case.

## 11. HIGHWAYS

11.1. **To report on who owns the verges along the roadway and discuss forming a path on Robins Nest Hill:** Cllr Stokes reported that she had visited the owners of High Oaks, Robins Nest Hill who don't own the land on the road side of their boundary fence. They had no objection to an informal path being made through the undergrowth to allow walkers to safely navigate a short distance up Robins Nest Hill. A visual inspection of the area of land showed that is overgrown with young, self-seeded trees; holly, scrubby bushes and weeds. However, it would be possible to cut a narrow 'path' through. This would need to be monitored and maintained regularly. Resident, Simon Hadley, would be happy to co-ordinate a working party to undertake this work.

## **12. FINANCE**

- 12.1 **To approve the financial statement and payment of accounts;** Clerk had circulated the accounts prior to the meeting. Cllr Downes briefly went through the accounts and noted that the PC were in a good financial position. The accounts were approved, proposed by Cllr Hunter and seconded by Cllr Standbrook.
- 12.2 **To approve the cost for the defibrillator and cabinet;** Cllr Stokes reported this in item 12.3 and costs were approved.
- 12.3 **To update on obtaining possible grant for a defibrillator from The British Heart Foundation:** Cllr Stokes reported that having researched the viability of applying for a grant which required a lengthy application process, a commitment to ongoing training and the ability to fulfil certain criteria, that it probably wasn't worth the PC applying. The amount that BHF would fund was fairly low and the PC would need to make a large contribution anyway. This was agreed and approved and the Defib model and lockable cabinet discussed and approved. Cllrs will also contact the local cycle club who regularly pass through, the cricket club and the recreation committee to ask if they would like to contribute to the cost.

**ACTION** – Cllr stokes will order the Defib and contact local groups.

**13. Matters for future consideration and confirmation of the date of the next meeting on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019, 8pm;** No matters for future consideration and date of next meeting approved.

**14. To receive correspondence (for information only):** none

**15. To close the meeting;** Cllr Downes closed the meeting at 9.10 pm and thanked residents for attending.

Laura Brooks-Payne, Clerk  
27<sup>th</sup> July 2019.