



LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on 30th March 2022 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Little Berkhamsted.

Present; Cllr Stokes (Chair), Cllr Hunter (Vice-Chair), Cllr Standbrook, Cllr Morris, Cllr Eaglestone

In Attendance: 17 members of the public.

1. Opening of the meeting:

Cllr Stokes welcomed members of the public to the meeting and explained proceedings.

2. Apologies for absence:

Cllr Ken Crofton, residents Brian, Brenda and Leiselle Bristow and Georgie Deering.

3. To approve minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2021:

Cllr Stokes noted that the minutes had stated that the PC Facebook site would be kept up to date, although the Mailchimp system has rather taken over the work of communicating with residents in the past year.

The minutes were unanimously approved, proposed by Cllr Eaglestone and seconded by Cllr Standbrook.

4. To discuss matters arising from the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2021:

None

5. Parish Council review of the year:

Cllr Stokes thanked Cllrs and the Clerk for their work over the past year. It was noted that Cllrs have given a great deal of time to the many ongoing projects over the last year and this time is obviously given voluntarily.

Tributes were paid to Cllr Peter Kent who sadly passed away at the end of 2021. Cllr Kent was a fun member of the team who is, and will be, greatly missed.

Cllr Stokes asked those present if they had received the Chairman's annual report, this had been delivered to all households in the Parish the previous weekend. (see Appendix 1.)

In addition, Cllr Stokes added;

Traffic Management

Speed indicator device (SID) – The SID had, in recent months, been moved from a location that wasn't deemed appropriate to a much better location in Church Road. Anecdotal evidence was showing that traffic had perhaps slowed in the area.

20's Plenty scheme

Cllr Stokes had met with HCC Highways officials, and Phil Bibby, Executive member for Highways and Transport in the last week to discuss the measures. Herts County Councils (HCC) view on the scheme is to favour traffic calming schemes such as village entrance gateways, road narrowing, chicanes and road bumps, to try to reduce speeds to 20mph. It was suggested that initially, the PC ought to look at ways for motorists to reduce their speeds to the current legal limit of 30mph before we go any further. A meeting is currently being arranged with the PC, Highways, Police Commissioners office and the local County Cllr to look at other ways the PC could utilise to slow down the traffic through the centre of the village especially.

If residents are interested in getting involved, please get in touch with any PC member.

Closure of Recreation Committee

Though the committee closed some time ago, this has had quite an effect on the PC. Although the PC will always be involved and help with events etc, they cannot take on the organising of all future events because Cllrs already have a heavy workload with the many projects already on the go.

However, The Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations are well under way and any help will be gratefully received. If a firework display is to be held this year the arrangements need to be started now. A new Committee is much needed and if any residents would like to be involved, please contact the PC.

Ukrainian Crisis

Cllr Morris reported that he attended a meeting at The Rectory the previous weekend. It was explained that The Diocese of St Albans will be obtaining details of and co-ordinating the relocation of refugees. The Hartford Hundred West group of Parishes, of which Little Berkhamsted is a member, have put together a group to help in the implementation of these plans in their local areas. The group now have a dedicated email address for anyone wishing to help with accommodation or any other skills that may help. Hartfordhundredukraine@gmail.com.

Cllr Stokes asked residents to stand for a minute of silence to pay their respects to the many people affected by the ongoing crisis.

6. Update on the year gone by and local plan: Linda Haysey, Leader of East Herts District Council:

Cllr Haysey reported that this past year has been another very difficult one for the District Council. Staff are exhausted and unfortunately there has been a high loss of staff. This is for a number of reasons including natural retirements, the new realisation by some during the time of the pandemic that they aspired to try different vocations and also those that are downtrodden by recent events. It was noted that some staff have been on the receiving end of rather abusive emails from residents in the district and that this is not acceptable.

Cllr Haysey explained that as far as possible service had been maintained through the Covid Pandemic. Refugees from Afghanistan and more recently from Ukraine have started to arrive. The District Council have been instrumental in the organisation to help this to happen in our area, increasing workload still. It was explained that there is a mismatch in that background work is required on potential refugee homes, together with visas sought from the refugees themselves resulting in added issues to an already complicated process. This is extending the time taken to get refugees to the UK and into safety.

Cllr Haysey reported that compared to some Councils, East Herts council are in a fairly favourable position financially. Major projects to note in the last year completed and ongoing, are the full refurbishment of Hertford Theatre and Hertford Leisure Centre and the installation of a new playground at Hartham Common (partly funded by crowdfunding). Grants are still being applied for and allocated too for Community benefit.

7. Questions from the public:

A resident commented that the playground at Hartham Common is excellent and well used by all.

A resident praised the PC for the amount of grants that have been obtained in the last year. Cllr Stokes explained that after the first Covid lockdown there had been a 'Welcome Back grant' for Town Councils to use towards encouraging people back into town centres. After the second Covid lockdown this grant was extended to rural areas and the PC had been able to purchase picnic benches, a new waste bin, grass matting on the recreational field for additional event car parking, gazebos to be used with the Pavilion and a Jubilee Beacon.

Two oak trees had also been purchased via The Queens Canopy Project recently planted at the back of the cricket pitch.

A resident advised that the footpath that runs from behind the bus stop in the centre of the village to Goddards Close, was uneven and becoming dangerous for pedestrians. It was discussed that previous research had concluded that the PC do not know who owns the footpath and that more investigation is needed.

A resident commented that the playground was in need of replacement or refurbishment. The Clerk explained that she is carrying out a project for two other parishes currently and that playground equipment is extremely costly. It was discussed that in fact the playground is safe and in a good state and the variety of equipment is generally good. Cllr Linda Haysey advised the Clerk to get in touch with the Section 106 officer at East Herts Council to ascertain if any S106 money could be available for such a project.

8. Close of meeting: Cllr Stokes closed the meeting at 8.15pm and invited all to stay for drinks and nibbles.

Laura Brooks-Payne
30th March 2022

Appendix 1

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held in the village hall on Wednesday 30th March and EVERYONE is very welcome. This is not a PC meeting. It is a village meeting where residents can ask more about the work of the PC, provide feedback and tell us what they would like to see happening over the next year. The actual meeting will be fairly short and then we invite you to socialise over a glass of wine (or a cup of tea) and nibbles afterwards.

Here I provide a report of the Parish Council's activities over the last year. It has been a challenging time with life starting to return to normal but Covid never quite going away. Through our work this year the Parish Council has been focussing on encouraging villagers to safely reconnect with each other, making full use of the lovely facilities we are lucky enough to have.

Much of the PC's work revolves around the management and maintenance of the Village Hall, Community & Cricket Pavilion and the recreation field and other open spaces. This year, in an effort to make it more attractive to renters, we reinstalled the internet into the Village Hall and put down matting on the field. Parking in the village has always been difficult and the matting protecting the grass at the top of the field will provide hirers with parking throughout the year and not just in the summer months. In addition, we have ordered more picnic tables and benches, a cycle rack and permanent outdoor table tennis table for the field and we have replaced the old litter bins. This has been made possible from grant money provided by the European Commission to help communities recover from the effects of the Covid pandemic and lockdown.

The work refurbishing the Community and Cricket Pavilion has continued this year with the improvement of the bar area. This has been a joint venture with the Cricket Club and we are keen to see villagers enjoying this facility alongside the cricketers during the summer.

Every Friday morning from 10am to 12 noon the pavilion has been hosting the Community Café. It has been lovely to see residents supporting this venture and baking delicious home-made cakes to share. The rubbish littering our roads is a dreadful eye sore and thank you to all those who regularly pick up litter outside their properties and on walks around the village. There is now a box outside the village hall containing litter picking equipment for anyone to borrow. The Spring litter pick had to be postponed but in early June over 30 wonderful volunteers came and helped clear up the village roads. The Five Horseshoes kindly provided a sandwich lunch for everyone after the event, and the sun even managed to make an appearance. This is not a glamorous task but there is great satisfaction to be had in seeing the hedgerows litter free and everyone has fun working together. The next litter pick is on Sunday 3rd April, meeting at 10.30am on the field. If you are available to help, please contact Councillor Elaine Hunter elaine_hunter@sky.com

The war memorial was cleaned by a specialist company this year just in time for a short Remembrance Sunday ceremony and now looks very smart.

During lockdown many people seem to have decided to make home improvements and there has been a marked increase in the number of planning applications submitted to East Herts Council. We aim to be supportive in this process and visit sites where possible. The Parish Council however is only a consultee and does not decide on the outcomes of applications.

Fast traffic through the village has always been a major concern to residents and 20's Plenty for Little Berkhamsted have continued to campaign alongside 20's Plenty for Hertfordshire for a 20mph speed limit where people mix with motor traffic. Not only do these schemes typically lead to 20% fewer casualties, they also tie in closely with other policies to address climate change, improve air quality and enable more people to walk and cycle – especially for short journeys. Herts County Council are starting to put in heavily engineered schemes on a few roads across the county but villages like ours are ranked very low on the list. The Parish Council are committed to supporting the campaign for 20mph speed limits throughout Hertfordshire where people live, work, shop, play or learn. If you are interested in helping with this campaign, please contact littleberkhamsted@20splentyforus.org.uk

Without a Recreation Committee it has fallen to the PC to encourage residents to come together and organise social events. Unfortunately, the resurgence of Covid cases before Christmas meant the much-anticipated fireworks evening and 'Strictly the Final' night had to be cancelled. We did however hold a very successful village picnic last August which allowed everyone to get together again and enjoy a relaxed family day.

We have started planning further community events and over the June bank holiday weekend we join the rest of the country in celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. On Thursday 2nd June the Cricket Club will be hosting a BBQ on the field and they will have the bar open. Apple Day Care have kindly sponsored a live singer for the evening and we will mark, with a plaque, the two oak trees planted on the field as part of the Queen's Green Canopy Project. The Welcome Back Fund has enabled us to commission a village beacon from Mill Green Forge, Essendon which will be lit at the same time as the hundreds of others across the country and the Commonwealth. Sunday 5th June will see 'The Big Jubilee Lunch' on the recreation field along with fun and games for the children and a light hearted cricket match. Please come along to both of these events with your families and friends and join us in marking this historic occasion. I would like to thank all the councillors who work tirelessly in their own time to make all these things happen for the benefit of the residents of Little Berkhamsted. Very sadly Councillor Peter Kent passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in December from a rare form of blood cancer. Peter was very involved in all areas of PC work and is greatly missed.

I would also like to acknowledge the village's unsung heroes who give their time in many different ways for the benefit of everyone. To name a few: Bridget, who is responsible for the pretty planters in the village, Doreen, who keeps the bus shelter clean and Jerry, who cuts the grass at the War Memorial and keeps the area clean and tidy. A huge thank you to you all – and everyone else who goes out of their way to make Little Berkhamsted a beautiful and friendly place to live.

The PC have decided that in the interests of the planet, this is the last year we will publish a hard copy of this report. In future the Chairman's Report will be available on the website and will be emailed to all residents whose details we hold. If you would like to be kept up to date about life in the village and in the East Herts area, please sign up on the home page of the website, at www.littleberkhamsted.org.uk I look forward to seeing you all on Wednesday 30th March at 7.30pm.