

LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 20th November 2019 at 8pm in the Village Hall, Little Berkhamsted.

Present;

Cllr Downes (Chair), Cllr Hunter (Vice-Chair), Cllr Standbrook, Cllr Stokes, Cllr Holt, Cllr Morris

In Attendance: 20 members of the public, Leader of the Council Linda Haysey and Laura Brooks-Payne (Clerk)

- 1. To receive apologies for absence and approve;** District Cllr Ken Crofton and welcomed Rev'd Theresa Musiwacho
- 2. To receive declaration of interest and dispensation;** Cllr Morris declared that he has an interest in item 10.3 because the bridleway goes through part of his land.
- 3. To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of the Council; Wednesday 18th September 2019** – Cllr Downes briefly went through the minutes, unanimously approved, proposed by Cllr Morris and seconded by Cllr Standbrook.
- 4. To receive questions and comments from the public;**

A resident reported that the lights being out along the path next to the church to Goddards close is currently dangerous and a health and safety risk on dark evenings with visibility being virtually zero. The resident reported that she did carry and use a torch but that this wasn't a good enough light source. Cllr Downes explained that the PC had made representations to sanctuary housing, who own the lights, and had been assured that the lights will be dealt with. Cllr Downes also explained that residents have different views on the situation and therefore the PC are trying to help where they can and please all parties. Another resident has written to Herts Highways to ask if they will adopt the streetlights in question. Cllr Haysey gave the clerk an alternative contact at Sanctuary housing who she will contact.

- 5. To receive the chairman's report:** Cllr Downes explained that most items would be covered within the meeting – it being a busy time with much to cover but did express his delight at the wonderful recent remembrance day church service at St Andrews Church.
- 6. To update on new website design;** Cllr Stokes reported that she had obtained four quotations that ranged from £350 to £18,000. Cllrs had been briefed on all quotations previous to the meeting and it was suggested by Cllr Downes that any expenditure needed to be kept to a minimum with the current financial position. If the PC are able to update the current site to enable the functions the PC would like for the future then we should ask our current provider to update our website for us. Cllr Stokes will further communicate with our current provider to first ensure that the necessary functions are possible going forward.

- 7. To receive an update on the future of Little Berkhamsted Recreation** Committee – Cllr Downes reported that the PC recently had a meeting with the members of the Recreation Committee (RC), because they were concerned for its future and dwindling numbers of volunteers. It was made clear at the meeting, at which the clerk was present, that the current RC members did not want to continue running the committee and wished to stand down with immediate effect. It had been agreed that the PC would take over responsibility of their finances and funds would be moved to the PC account. The RC has therefore regrettably been suspended until further notice.

The RC chair reported that after holding an additional meeting with no cllrs present, that the finances should however stay 'dormant' in the existing account and that funds should be used for community projects. The PC agreed with the proposed expenditure but were unsure that a bank account could continue to stay open without a committee to look after it. It was explained by the clerk again that if the funds that the RC currently hold were transferred to the PC bank account they would be held in allocated reserves for such projects. Cllr Downes assured the members of the RC that funds would be only be used as discussed.

- 8. To discuss supporting The Local Electricity Bill** - deferred to the next meeting due to current political situation.

- 9. To update on the village questionnaire** – Cllr Stokes reported that the majority of the village surveys had already been hand delivered and householders were in general very receptive and pleased that a local cllr had knocked at their doors. They were to be collected personally after a week and if the surveys came back with an email address on them they would be entered into a raffle draw for a meal at The Beehive pub donated by Cllr Downes.

10. OPEN SPACES

- 10.1 **To report on playground issues** – Cllr Standbrook reported good progress with repairs and maintenance to the playground equipment. The bench and playhouse already having been repaired. Ground surfaces under gate areas were yet to be dealt with but work is ongoing. Bark pits have been refurbished. A quote of £200 plus vat had been sought to deal with the worn surfaces under the gates and it was agreed that this was very reasonable and approved for Cllr Standbrook to go ahead. The playground sign needs to be replaced and a quote will be sought for this.
Cllr Standbrook had received just one quote for the tender put out for grass cutting in the village which was substantially more than the current contract which the PC is happy with. The new contract will include strimming round the bus shelter and new village signs. Cllrs agreed to continue with the existing contractor and will advise the company. It was noted that a local resident voluntarily cleans and maintains the bus shelter weekly.
- 10.2 **To update on siting another dog waste bin** – Cllr Stokes had been in contact with the Diocese of St Albans and is awaiting confirmation for permission to site the bin on Glebe land which belongs to the Diocese. East Herts Council have confirmed that collection can take place on this site. This site was thought to be the best location by cllrs for an additional dog waste bin.
- 10.3 **To discuss issues concerning Bridleway number 18** – Cllr Standbrook explained that in 1952 a definitive footpath map was drawn up. If habitual use for many years can be proven, the right of way could be accepted. Cllr Standbrook has taken expert advice on the issue, there are two ways forward; to provide evidence that the house obstructing the

bridleway was always there, or, to obtain statements from the public to prove continual use. Either way the process is lengthy and complex. The resident who owns the house involved simply wishes for the issue to be resolved. Cllr Standbrook will attempt to move the process along.

11. PLANNING

- 11.1 To receive the latest Planning Report circulated by the clerk** – the clerk had circulated the latest planning application report prior to the meeting which Cllr Downes went through briefly.
- 11.2 To update on the retrospective planning refusal at Dene Orchard 3/17/1621/HH**
Cllr Morris explained that a large summer house as well as a large car port has now been erected and that perhaps the PC should seek clarification on the rules governing permitted development. The clerk will write to the planning officer to ask how much permitted development is allowed in a conservation area.

12. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

- 12.1 To report on the Village Hall** – Cllr Standbrook; Cllr Standbrook reported that the gutters needed to be cleared and Cllrs agreed payment for this. Cllr Morris will deal with new security lighting which needs replacing. The exterior rendering will need some maintenance in the future.
- 12.2 To report on pavilion roof issues and refurbishment – Cllr Downes** – Cllr D welcomed Rhys – a member of the cricket club and reported that sadly, a part of the pavilion roof had recently become dangerous and required substantial works. To maintain safety for users and the public, security fencing had been erected and tarpaulins put in place for protection to the roof and building, reporting that the pavilion needs to be restored and refurbished. Cllrs Standbrook and Morris had conducted a site visit and organised three companies to view the building. It was thankfully found that the building structure and roof trusses were generally sound, and a surveyor to carry out a structural survey would cost in the region of £1200 should the PC wish to go down this route. Two quotes received so far for a full roof repair had come out as £17,000 and £27,000 (including scaffolding). Currently the PC do not have these funds. A discussion on the funding sources for such expenditure included the Community Grants Scheme, of which Cllr Haysey offered to help approve a grant for £8,000.
A working group has been formed and will progress the matter.
- 12.3 To report on Cllr meeting discussing the new cricket club contract** – Cllr Downes reported that a new contract will be drawn up when the pavilion is back to fully functioning.
- 12.4 To report on meeting with cottage tenant and new tenancy contract** – Cllr Downes is in process of formalising a job description and landlord's contract for the village hall cottage tenant. Cllr Downes will meet with her to discuss the matter.
- 12.5 To update on training for new defibrillator** – Cllr Stokes had obtained quotes for training and will progress a training date with the Red Cross and advertise dates and times in the parish. Cllr Downes thanked Cllr Stokes for her work put in on this.

13. HIGHWAYS

- 13.1 To discuss white line painting in The Boundary** – Cllr Holt reported that a complaint had been made of cars continually parking across the end of The Boundary blocking residents from leaving the road. Cllr Holt had spoken to Dist. Cllr Ken Crofton who had advised that in order to make an application for a yellow line marking the PC would need to approve. This was approved by Cllrs.
Cllr Holt will progress the matter.
- 13.2 To discuss possible replacements for 'slow down for children' signs;** Cllr Stokes reported that a resident had spoken with her regarding the faded and tired signs. A quote had been obtained of £40 per sign to replace them. It was discussed and agreed by Cllrs that a competition could be held for children to design a new sign, this potentially having more impact on motorists.
Cllr Stokes will take this idea forward.

14. FINANCE

- 14.1 To approve the financial statement and payment of accounts;** Clerk had circulated the latest accounts prior to the meeting to cllrs. Cllr Downes reported that spending has been in line with budget to this point of the year.
- 14.2 To discuss and approve budget and precept for 2020-2021;** Clerk had prepared a draft budget and circulated to cllrs for discussion and comment prior to the meeting. Discussion ensued as to the need to raise the budget and precept for the period 2020-21 and the reasons for this. It was agreed (5 approvals, 1 abstention) to request £12300 precept at approx. 25% increase on previous year.
- 14.3 To approve cost for new field sign;** Cllr Stokes had ordered a new sign for the field gate, the previous sign having been weathered and illegible. This cost was approved.
- 15. To co-opt a new councillor;** Cllr Downes welcomed Peter Kent who had applied for the vacant councillor position. Peter briefly explained a little about himself and his background and his desire to be a councillor. All cllrs agreed to Co-Opt Peter onto the PC as a new Cllr.
- 16. Matters for future consideration, dates for events for 2020 and confirmation of the date of the next meeting on Wednesday 15th January 2020, 8pm;** No new matters were raised and next meeting date approved.
- 17. To receive correspondence (for information only)** None
- 18. To close the meeting** – Cllr Downes closed the meeting at 9.50pm.

Laura Brooks-Payne, Clerk
2nd December 2019.