

LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 15th July 2020 at 8pm in the Village Hall, Little Berkhamsted.

COVID 19 NOTE - *This meeting was held during the Covid-19 Pandemic against advice from NALC and the Director of Public Health of Herts County Council who recommended at this time meetings were not held physically. Councillors unanimously agreed to go ahead with a physical meeting. Every action was taken to ensure attendees were safe including a thorough Covid-19 risk assessment. Hand sanitisers were available and social distancing measures applied. Only 7 members of the public were permitted as a result of social distancing measures of 2 metres. Contact details were obtained from the public for track and trace.*

Present;

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

In Attendance: 7 members of the public, District Cllr Ken Crofton and Laura Brooks-Payne (Clerk)

1. To receive apologies for absence and approve; Leader of the council Linda Haysey, Cllr Jim Holt

2. To receive declaration of interest and dispensation: Cllr Wayne Morris declared an interest in item 10.3 on the agenda and dispensation was given to Cllr Jim Holt for not attending council meetings for more than 6 months to continue as a councillor.

3. To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of the Council Wednesday 15th January 2020: One slight amendment to the minutes and approved, proposed by Cllr Downes and seconded by Cllr Morris.

Standing orders suspended to allow members of the public to speak if they wish

4. To receive questions and comments from the public;

A resident asked why it was acceptable that the PC had been donated a sum of £25,000 to be put towards the refurbishment of the cricket pavilion and yet the public did not know who the donor was. Cllr Downes explained that it was initially an anonymous donation but having spoken to the donor he was happy for his name to be made public. The donation was given by a Mr Sri Lohia, a fairly new resident and businessman to the village, passionate about cricket and the community in which he lives. It was briefly discussed that the PC should officially thank Mr Lohia, and that this would be discussed further with cllrs out of the meeting.

Standing Orders reinstated from here

5. To receive the chairman's report – Nothing that will not be discussed within the agenda

6. To update on new website: Cllr Stokes reported that the new updated website went live in March. The PC can upload and add to the site itself but it is a tricky process. The newsletter has been online through the Covid-19 pandemic which is also on the website. There are currently 82 residents on the mailing list to which Cllr Stokes regularly sends updates.

7. To receive an update on Little Berkhamsted Recreation Committee: Although the committee is currently suspended Cllr Downes reported that he has recently had a conversation with Simon Hedley regarding the future of the committee. It had been discussed that there may be a couple of residents that would come forward to help out. Cllr Stokes suggested that the best way forward was to have specific residents running specific events, so that the committee did not feel overwhelmed with just a few residents doing all the work.

8. To adopt the Health & Safety Policy March 2020, Code of Conduct & Standing Orders:

It was noted that a line in reference to the Covid-19 situation needed to be added to the Health & safety Policy which the clerk will attend to. These were all unanimously re-adopted.

9. To approve the new Apple Daycare & Cricket Club agreements & Facilities Booking

Form: It was noted that the PC were in process of writing the Apple Daycare agreement. The Cricket Club agreement had been agreed for the 2020 season by Cllrs and the Facilities Booking Form for both the village hall and pavilion had recently been written and unanimously approved.

10. OPEN SPACES

10.1 To report on playground issues: Cllr Morris reported that the cradle swing was now back on in fully working order. Cllr Stokes reported that the playground had been antibacterial cleaned, the grass had been cut in surrounding areas and litter removed. Covid-19 pandemic related safety signs had been put up around the playground. It was decided that hand sanitiser dispensers were not going to be put in outdoor areas of the village, but that it was the responsibility of users to take sensible precautions.

10.2 To update on new dog waste bin: Cllr Stokes reported that the additional new bin had been installed on 6th march which so far is being well used. Cllr Standbrook will liaise with the grass cutting company to trim around the bin when and if needed.

10.3 To update on latest information for Bridleway number 18: There was no new news to report on this item other than that the PC were grateful that the investigation was pushed forward to be dealt with sooner rather than later.

10.4 To report on the poor state of the new Village signs: Cllr Standbrook reported that the signs were in a poor state of repair after having been in situ for only a short space of time. Communications had been ongoing with the manufacturer of the signs who had not been very helpful. The manufacturing company had offered to pay £100 per sign and the paint to repair, as a goodwill gesture.

10.5 To consider purchase of new noticeboards for Howe & Epping Green & village hall: Cllr Stokes reported that the Howe Green and Epping Green signs are in a very poor state of repair. It was agreed to add this to the budget for the next financial year. Cllr Stokes will investigate pricing.

10.6 To consider the purchase of an additional litter bin: Cllr Stokes reported that two of the village waste bins are broken. Cllrs will consider purchase of new ones for the future. Clerk reported that with the recent expenditure it would need to wait.

10.7 To update on the issues with sanctuary housing lighting in Goddards Close:

Cllr Stokes reported that the LED lights are now working but 1 of the 4 is owned by the PC.

11. PLANNING

11.1 To receive the latest Planning Report circulated by the clerk: Cllr Downes advised that the planning applications had been scarce during the last few months during the pandemic lockdown period. Cllr Standbrook noted that the recent approved application at Howe Green to move the garages had been passed, but the application to erect an annexe above the garages refused. Building work is going on so it was agreed that the clerk would liaise with East Herts planning department to ensure that only the agreed work was taking place.

11.2 To discuss how the PC consider new planning applications: It was noted by Cllr Stokes that in the interest of village relations that the PC could consider visiting the properties who put in a new planning applications. The clerk explained that this process varies enormously from one PC to another. The PC has useful local information that could be passed on to the planning officer looking after the case. It was agreed that the clerk will email the planning department to ask if they would attend a PC meeting to advise on how best the PC deal with new applications.

12. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

12.1 To report on the Village Hall: Cllr Standbrook reported that the gutters had recently been cleared. Heater guards are very old and could do with replacements. Small holes are appearing in the floor which need to be repaired. Cllr Standbrook will investigate pricing. A resident had cleaned the exterior decking at the back of the hall which had become extremely slippery. It was noted that no items were to be stored in the passageway because it was a fire escape.

12.2 To discuss reopening of the playground and approve the Covid-19 specific risk assessment; Playground re-opening had been discussed in item 10.1. The risk assessment was unanimously approved.

12.3 To update on pavilion refurbishment & open day; Cllr Downes reported that there had been much work behind the scenes in recent months in the absence of PC meetings due to the pandemic lockdown. The pavilion refurbishment is nearly finished and thanked Cllr Standbrook and Kent for overseeing the process. Cllr Kent explained that he is looking at the possibility of a celebrity to officially open the pavilion with an open day for all, and is currently looking into this. Cllr Ken Crofton kindly offered to fund the catering. It was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting because the date could still not be set because of the ongoing pandemic.

12.4 To report on the new Apple Daycare agreement for use of the pavilion: this had been discussed in item 9

12.5 To update on the new agreement with Sahibs cricket club: this had been discussed in item 9

12.6 To approve facilities booking Form and T & C's of hire form June 2020: this had been discussed in item 9

12.7 To update on the new tenancy agreement for the village hall cottage: This was currently in discussion with the tenant and Cllr Downes hoped to have this resolved by the end of July 2020.

13. HIGHWAYS

13.1 To update on white line painting in The Boundary: Cllr Downes reported that this had been completed and was an improvement.

13.2 To receive an update on completion of the circular village accessible path: This is now complete but it was agreed that improved signage is needed. Kissing Gate is still broken. Cllr Standbrook will get in touch with Nick Maddox – Rights of Way officer for East Herts.

13.3 To receive an update on the installation of the SID: In recent weeks it was reported a few residents had voiced their dissatisfaction about the siting of the SID in Church Road. Cllr Downes explained that the exact location for the sign location is determined by Highways with many factors taken into account but that Cllr Holt was currently in discussion with Highways in regard to the issue.

13.4 To report on 'slow down for children' signs: Cllr Stokes reported that these were now in situ and that the children were happy with their designs being out on the road and on display. Cllr Downes thanked Cllr Stokes for organising the project.

13.5 To receive an update on the DriveSafe Petition: Cllr Stokes has submitted two suggested locations to use to assess speed of traffic. These being the junction of Bucks Alley & Robins Nest Hill, and Church Road. These were dismissed as inappropriate locations so two further suggested locations have been submitted. PC now awaiting confirmation.

14. FINANCE

14.1 To approve the financial statement and payment of accounts: clerk had circulated the accounts to Cllrs prior to the meeting. The figures were approved, proposed by Cllr Hunter and seconded by Cllr Morris.

14.2 To receive and update on grant application: Cllr Kent reported that this had been successful, the PC had received £5000 prior to the project and had just received the remaining £3000. Additionally, East Herts Lottery recently set up brings a small amount of revenue to the PC for the project and continuing upkeep but ticket sales have been disappointing to date. Notably, no tickets have been purchased by the members of Sahibs Cricket Club.

14.3 To approve quotation for repairs to the cricket & community pavilion: Cllr Kent explain that due to an absence of PC meetings due to the Covid-19 pandemic, an email audit was kept by the clerk for expenditure of the project, with a successful procurement model. A slight overspend occurred due to work that arose as a result of works already having taken place which were approved by cllrs. The refurbishment has been very successful. Cllrs unanimously approved all expenditure relating to the refurbishment. It was also noted by the clerk that there was over £5000 of VAT to be claimed back and that would done sooner than year-end, it being a substantial figure.

14.4 To approve costs for the refurb of bus shelter & maintenance of outfield on cricket pitch: Costs were approved and resident Simon Hedley was thanked for his work on the refurb of the bus shelter. Proposed by Cllr Kent and seconded by Cllr Standbrook.

14.5 To approve costs for the 'Slow Down for Children' signs: Costs were approved, proposed by Cllr hunter and seconded by Cllr Morris.

14.6 To adopt the latest financial regulations & financial risk assessment; these were re-adopted by the PC, proposed by Cllr Morris and seconded by Cllr Standbrook.

14.7 To approve the Internal Audit for 2019-2020: Clerk had circulated the paperwork from the recent internal audit undertaken. This was unanimously approved.

14.8 To approve the figures for the external audit 2019-2020 and sign paperwork: Clerk explained that due to the large donation that the PC had received, a full audit had been undertaken and the PC could not declare themselves exempt for the financial year of 2019-20. The appropriate paperwork had been completed and was approved, proposed by Cllr Morris and seconded by Cllr Standbrook.

15. To approve the date of the next meeting: Wednesday 16th September 2020 plus an additional meeting on Wednesday 19th August 2020.

16. To receive Correspondence (for information only): No further correspondence to that had been already discussed.

17. To close the meeting: Chair closed the meeting at 9.50pm.