

LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 20th January 2021 at 8pm held online via Zoom.

COVID 19 NOTE - *This meeting was held during the Covid-19 Pandemic via Zoom*

Present;

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

In Attendance: 5 members of the public, Laura Brooks-Payne (Clerk), Leader of the Council, Linda Haysey

- 1. To receive apologies for absence and approve:** none
- 2. To receive declaration of interest and dispensation:** Cllr Morris for item 7.2
- 3. To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of the Council Wednesday 18th November 2020:** approved, proposed by Cllr Morris, seconded by Cllr Standbrook

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

- 4. To receive questions and comments from the public:**

Simon Hedley reported that the owners of the village shop have removed their waste bin. Cllr Stokes reported that she has contacted the relevant waste officer at East Herts who is looking into the matter. Cllr Kent will speak to the owner of the shop.

Simon Hedley mentioned that the field on the other side of the church and the two fields on either side of Church Road leaving the village are becoming derelict and asked the PC if they can do anything about this. Cllr Standbrook advised that the PC would need to pay for the details of the landowners in order for the PC to send them a letter. Although the PC has no power to enforce this but will investigate the matter further.

Simon Hedley asked if the PC has plans to advise residents that they are able to access funds in the PC account for community events having just received the recreation account funds. Cllr Stokes explained that this will be advertised in the newsletter and website and that this will be discussed further into the year when the pandemic allows events to take place.

Sandie Ash reported that the traffic is still travelling through the village at high speeds. Cllr Downes advised that this would be discussed further into the meeting.

Linda Haysey briefed the PC that the council is extremely busy, everyone is working from home during the pandemic. Reduced income means that the budget will be a challenge this year, and this is partly the reason why garden waste will now be chargeable. Covid matters have increased workload, and issues change daily. Vaccination programme is going well in this area. A community reassurance cell has been set up going forward so that folk feel comfortable going back out again when Covid-19 is over. Cllr Downes thanked Linda for her work during such a busy period and for regularly supporting the village.

Standing Orders reinstated from here

- 5. To receive the chairman's report (including discussion of the Annual Parish Meeting to be held in March):** APM will be discussed later in item 13. On behalf of the Parish Council Cllr Stokes thanked Linda Haysey, St Andrews Church and the PC for contributing towards the

Christmas hampers delivered to elderly and vulnerable residents for Christmas, which were very well received.

- 6. To update on the Apple Daycare Contract:** Cllr Downes reported that discussions are ongoing. Covid-19 has stopped proceedings but ADC would like to use the pavilion for childcare from April 1st. The PC have taken on a solicitor to formalise the contract for use all year round with caveats to allow use for the community.

7. OPEN SPACES

- 7.1 **To report on playground issues:** Cllr Standbrook reported that the boundary broken fence between number 26 and the playground has been replaced and thanked the residents for doing so. The playground bark and surrounding area will need some attention in the Spring. The Risk Assessment has been given to cllrs and areas for attention noted. It was suggested that the play area could benefit from a refurbishment overhaul when funds allow.

- 7.2 **To update on the latest information for Bridleway number 18:** Cllr Downes read a short statement, see addendum Part 1.

Cllr Downes also advised that Richard Cuthbert had sent an email today to update on the ongoing investigation. It was noted that the members of the decision meeting reconvened on the 13th January and managed to finish the review of all original evidence, and those extra items that had come-in during, or, as a result of the consultation, and review the User Evidence Forms. A decision was reached for the case which is currently being written up, for review by the lawyers before release to all stakeholders. The lawyer's next availability is on the 25th January so they are working to get a Decision Report to her beforehand so it can be checked in advance, for completion on the 25th and sent out to all interested parties after. This includes the Parish Council and all those who have made contact and expressed an interest in the case. The document will be sent via email to all those who have given their contact details and put on the HCC web page (under the Register of Applications).

- 7.3 **To update on the refurb of village signs:** Cllr Standbrook reported that the overlays have been adhered to the damaged signs and they look much clearer.
- 7.4 **To update on the replacement and purchase of new litter bins:** Cllr Stokes reported that the new bin had been installed. Many thanks go to resident Tony Robinson from Epping Green for installing the bin free of charge. As funds allow the PC will replace other waste bins around the village.
- 7.5 **To discuss a 'Keep little B tidy campaign':** Cllr Stokes reported that the PC have been mindful that Litter Picks are not going ahead due to Covid. A message has been added to the newsletter to ask residents to kindly clear the area outside their properties which may help. The clerk suggested it may be possible to buy our own litter picking equipment to carry out litter picks and that it is possible for one to go ahead at the moment. Cllr Downes suggested we could hold a pick in the summer and carry on encouraging residents to collect rubbish. This will be discussed further by cllrs.

8. PLANNING

- 8.1 **To receive the latest Planning Report circulated by the clerk:** Cllr Downes reported that it has been very quiet for new applications, and the PC had no objection to the one recent new application.

9. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 **To report on the Village Hall** – Cllr Standbrook noted that every 5 years the electrical fittings certificate needs to be updated. Cllr Morris will attend to this by April which is the deadline. Cllr Standbrook has spoken to Simon Hedley who has agreed to do some maintenance tasks for the

pavilion and village hall. Terms and conditions will be discussed in due course. There are a couple of minor repair jobs that are on the list for attention.

9.1 **To update on pavilion refurbishment and management;** Cllr Kent reported that the next round of grants is available from East Herts and has spoken to the relevant department and is awaiting information. Cllr Standbrook reported that the loft space needs tidying and clearing and a meeting would be helpful next month to discuss. Cllr Downes has spoken to Martin Squirrel in reference to refurbishing the bar area who is keen for the cricket club to get involved. Cllr Kent suggested obtaining tentative quotes for this refurbishment sooner than later and will work on this.

9.2 **To approve the new tenancy agreement for the village hall cottage:** Cllr Downes reported that discussion is ongoing and will be agreed shortly.

10. HIGHWAYS

10.1 **To receive an update on the re-siting of the SID:** Cllr Stokes explained that the positions that have been suggested were considered inappropriate by Highways. Conversations are ongoing. The PC are still trying to ascertain if the PC have funding to re-site the SID. Linda Haysey advised that EHDC do not deal with Highways but that the PC deserve a full explanation as to why the positions are inappropriate. Cllr Kent noted that Herts Police have also advised the current siting is not ideal. Cllr Stokes will liaise with Highways again.

10.2 **To update on Traffic speed management issues & discuss implementing the '20's Plenty' scheme:** Cllr Stokes asked for the approval of the PC to take on a campaign to reduce the speed limit. The speed limit through the centre of the village has been an ongoing issue for many years. Bin stickers with '20's plenty' logo on can also be purchased. Cllr Downes agreed that it would be a great idea. Linda Haysey suggested a campaign across the villages across Hertfordshire would hold much more importance. It was proposed and unanimously approved for the PC to get behind a 20's plenty campaign in sections of the village.

10.3 **To update on the overgrown hedges/verges, obscured/damaged traffic signs, in the village & on Lower Hatfield Road:** Cllr Standbrook reported at the last meeting that he had logged 7 items on the Herts Highway faults reporting system. Highways are currently working on this stretch of the road and 2 of the incidents will be repaired during the closure. 30mph signs in Church Road area are still covered in vegetation and Highways have agreed to deal with this. Contact will be made with the landowner.
Cllr Kent reported that the Salt Bins are empty, Cllr Kent and Morris will get them filled up with the bags of salt recently delivered from EH.

11. FINANCE

11.1 **To approve the financial statement and payment of accounts:** Clerk had circulated the latest accounts. Cllr Downes noted that the PC have stayed in line with budget and that the PC have a modest cash reserve despite expenditure in 2020. Accounts were approved, proposed by Cllr Hunter and seconded by Cllr Stokes.

12. **To co-opt a new Councillor to the PC:** Cllr Downes reported that and in line with standing orders the position had been advertised in the usual media, word of mouth, newsletter, and on the noticeboard. Resident Kate Noble has expressed an interest to become a Cllr and was present at the meeting. Cllrs were happy to Co-Opt Kate which was proposed by Cllr Downes, seconded by Cllr Hunter and unanimously agreed by all cllrs.
Kate introduced herself. Kate's family are from the local area. Kate owns a production company and has also recently purchased a farm in the parish. Activities include psycho-therapy activities and the farm work with local charities too. Kate is keen and very eager to get involved and pleased to have been co-opted onto the PC.

- 13. To approve the date of the next meeting, Wednesday 17th March 2021 and the APM on 24th March 2021:** It was noted that unfortunately the APM will take place via Zoom due to the pandemic but arrangements would be made later in the year to organise a social gathering for residents when the pandemic allows.
- 14. To receive Correspondence (for information only):** none
- 15. To close the meeting:** 9.40pm.

Addendum Part 1

Cllr Downes read out the following statement -

1. At PC meeting 15th January 2020, when referring to BR18, I stated Mr Moore, the owner of Breach House believed there was a discrepancy between definitive map and definitive statement.
2. This was recorded in the minutes and circulated in a subsequent mail shot.
3. Mr Moore made a complaint to Herts County Council alleging they had mis-stated his views which I had subsequently repeated believing they reflected his views. They investigated and published a report dated 4th December 2020.
4. Quoting (selectively) from the report :“I have previously written an article in the Parish Magazine in which I stated: "The owners of Breach House believe there is a discrepancy between the "Definitive Statement" and the "Definitive Map", and using the legal investigation process to which they are fully entitled to pursue, have asked Herts County Council to resolve the issue. It is important to clarify that the responsibility for doing this rests with Herts County Council. Little Berkhamsted Parish Council has no legal powers or responsibility to investigate or make a ruling in this right-of-way dispute.” The wording above is the same as the wording within the Parish Council mailshot that Mr Moore provided to me. I can only presume that the mailshot (which is undated) and the parish magazine article are the same. The chair’s email referenced Gavin (Harbour-Cooper’s) email of 15 January 2020 and he confirmed that he had read it out in the Parish Council meeting of the same day. The phrase above, written by the chair, is incorrect. Mr Moore has never stated (as far as I can tell) that there is a discrepancy between the definitive map and definitive statement. Instead, Mr Moore believes that the used route of BR18 (running through his property) is incorrect. It was the County Council who informed Mr Moore that there appeared to be an anomaly or discrepancy between the definitive map and statement after this issue had been raised by other residents. I cannot find any evidence that Gavin advised the chair of the Parish Council that Mr Moore believed that there was a discrepancy.
5. The report says : There is a further sentence in the mailshot which is also incorrect. This sentence says: “The owners of Breach House has contacted Herts County Council because they believe the map designating the Right of Way is incorrect and does not conform to the Statement designating the Right of Way.” I cannot find any emails where Gavin Harbour-Cooper or other County Council officers have made this statement or suggested it. It is not included in Gavin (Harbour-Cooper’s) email of 15 January 2020 and nor is it suggested in that email. Given that these statements were made in a document produced by the Parish Council, I do not uphold Mr Moore’s complaint against the County Council. There is no evidence that Gavin Harbour-Cooper made either of these statements.

Following the HCC report dated 4th December 2020, I am happy to acknowledge the report confirming I misrepresented Mr Moore’s views at the Parish council meeting of 15th January 2020 with regard to these two specific issues, and welcome the opportunity of correcting my factual error.

