



LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 20th September 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall in Little Berkhamsted.

Cllrs present: Cllr Stokes (Chair), Cllr Hunter (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Morris

Others present: Parish Clerk – Laura Brooks-Payne, 1 members of the public, Bob Deering – Ward Cllr and County Cllr Ken Crofton

- 1 To receive apologies for absence and approve:** Cllr Fellowes and Cllr Standbrook, apologies approved. Cllr Eaglestone & Cllr Noble sent apologies within a couple of hours of the meeting start, therefore apologies not accepted.
- 2. To receive declaration of interest and dispensation:** None
- 3. To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 19th July 2023:** Approved and Signed.
- 4. Chair's Report:**

Cllr Stokes thanked everyone who participated in the Open Morning on 19th August. Master Arts Workshops, Apple Day Care and the Community Café all attracted new clients. The Hedgehog Highway Project got off to a flying start and the alpacas enjoyed meeting village residents.

There were no crimes reported to the police in Little Berkhamsted in July but in August a standalone garage was broken into: Fortunately, nothing was stolen. The Police report that number plate thefts are on the increase in the East Herts area and recommend people look out for their 'Plate Events' where number plates can be secured. Keyless car thefts continue to rise nationally. On most makes of vehicle, keyless entry can be disabled or alternatively when not in use keys can be stored in signal blocking/Faraday pouches. Residents are encouraged to sign up to the OWL Neighbourhood Watch Scheme for further information from local policing teams.

Thanks were given to volunteers who work at keeping the village looking clean and tidy, including Jerry who cuts the grass and maintains the area around the war memorial, Doreen who keeps the bus shelter clean, Bridget who plants up the containers on the bus shelter and the field fence and Georgie who does regular litter picks along the road. Please get in touch with the PC if you know of others who also quietly volunteer their time and energy for the benefit of the village.

Cllr Stokes thanked everyone who has sent her messages, cards and flowers over the past few weeks.

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

5. To receive questions and comments from the public:

Cllr Crofton advised the PC that salt for gritting winter roads is made available and passed on the contact details to the clerk. The bins in the village should be replenished every year. Clerk to ask whether a further two bins can be installed in the village.

Standing Orders reinstated from here

6. To update on new PC Website:

Cllr Noble not present. Cllr Stokes reported that she and the Clerk will take on more of the workload due to Cllr Noble's work commitments. A meeting will be scheduled in due course to go through the new booking system.

7. To update on the meeting held to start work on the archive materials:

Cllr Noble not present. Cllr Stokes reported that there has been one meeting and materials started to be sorted through. Cllr Noble will be arranging further dates in due course. It was noted that legal documents may need to be filed by the Clerk and other documents could be archived at County Council, so that they can be accessed at any time. It was also discussed that historical documents/photographs could be displayed in the village hall. Cllr Morris offered to help and will liaise with Cllr Noble to progress the project. To be discussed further at the next meeting.

8. To update on the Police Priorities meeting:

Cllr Morris reported that the meeting was held on 10th August. The Safer Rural Neighbourhood Team were present. Cllr Morris noted that a full complement of the East Herts Rural Team are just 6 members of staff (with 5 current vacancies) and who cover 184 square miles. Current priorities include dog issues, fly tipping, drug misuse and the theft of farm machinery. Cllr Morris suggested an improved Police visibility within village centres and the surrounding rural areas, to help improve 'all' rural issues. Cllr Morris will follow up the decision on the priorities decided for 2024.

9. HIGHWAYS

9.1 To update on traffic surveys:

Cllr Stokes advised that a meeting was held to discuss speeding issues last Monday, attended by, Rupert Thacker - HCC Highways Officer, Hope Merriman, HCC Highways Officer, Ken Crofton - County Councillor, Cllr Stokes, Cllr Hunter and Cllr Morris.

Church Road – according to the recent traffic survey undertaken, generally, outside the village shop, vehicles are travelling at or below 30mph. Rupert advised that the easiest and cheapest way to slow vehicles, is to narrow the road by adding parking bays on the road on both sides, this naturally slows the traffic.

Robins Nest Hill – according to the recent traffic survey undertaken, vehicles are travelling too quickly. Rupert Thacker suggested to try the Drive Safe (residents using speed cameras). Rupert suggested installing a 40mph zone before the speed limit changes to 30mph and installing markings that alert drivers that they are entering the village.

Rupert is putting together a report of the suggestions discussed and will forward to Cllr Stokes. It was agreed that Cllrs will discuss this further.

Potholes were also discussed, an ongoing issue. Cllr Crofton offered to help where he can.

Residents were reminded to keep reporting potholes on the Herts County Council website portal.

10. PLANNING

10.1 To receive & discuss the latest Planning Report circulated by the clerk:

Cllr Stokes briefly went through the latest applications. It was noted that no new applications had come through since the last meeting.

Cllr Deering updated the PC on the Robins Nest Hill ongoing planning enforcement. The planning application has been refused, the landowner has been informed that they must reinstate the hedging that has been removed.

Cllr Hunter noted that work is already taking place at Jesmond cottage despite a recent planning application being refused and an appeal still ongoing. Cllr Stokes will arrange for a Cllr to speak with the owner of the property.

11. OPEN SPACES

11.1 **To report on playground issues:** No current issues.

11.2 **To update on the possible contract for Alpaca Walking on the field:**

Cllr Stokes advised that the owner of the alpacas is currently in negotiations with a local landowner to use his land for part of the walking route. Further discussion will then be held with the PC.

11.3 **To discuss/approve the trial of the clothing bank:**

Cllrs agreed and approved that the clothing bank can continue in situ. The Clerk advised that the PC has received the equivalent so far, of £250 a year. As more residents become aware of the clothing bank this may well increase so it is worth having the bank there because little is needed to be done for the revenue. The PC will continue to ensure that the surrounding area stays tidy.

11.4 **To discuss possible D-Day Celebrations for June 2024:**

Cllr Stokes reported that there is interest in holding an event. A committee will need to be formed to organise the event. Cllrs will discuss this further.

11.5 **To update on the Hedgehog Highway Project:**

Cllr Stokes advised that 10 hedgehog highways have been sold so far. It was discussed that these could be sold in the village shop (Cllr Stokes to ask) and local schools, including Bayford. Cllr Morris will liaise with the schools for interest. It was noted that there may be some increased interest due to the time of the year.

There have been further reports of hedgehogs getting entangled in the net along the boundary. Cllr Stokes to speak to CC about lifting the net after every game. Net to be removed after the last game of the season and Cllrs approved the cutting of the hedge.

11.6 **To discuss a possible Bonfire night:**

No residents have offered to organise an event. Cllr Stokes advised that she will speak with residents who have been interested in the past, but there is not much time left now.

12. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

12.1 **To update on registering the management of Parish premises as Charities:**

Cllr Stokes has been in touch with another solicitor. A zoom meeting will be held to discuss progressing this forward. The Clerk is attending training in November to gain further knowledge on the subject.

13. VILLAGE HALL

13.1 **To update on grant for insulation & secondary double glazing:**

Cllr Stokes reported that the PC has been successful in obtaining the grant of just over £9000. This will be received in due course after paperwork has been signed.

13.2 **To update on maintenance work carried out:** None

14. CRICKET & PAVILION (C&C Pavilion)

14.1 To receive latest report on the C & C Pavilion:

Cllr Hunter reported that ADC finished for the season and the Cricket Club finish at the end of the month. Friday Club is being well attended.

14.2 To discuss hire on a skip to clear sheds:

Cllrs discussed the need for the hire and approved.

14.3 To update on the Cricket Club (CC) end of season meeting:

Cllr Stokes and Standbrook will contact CC to organise a meeting.

14.4 To update on maintenance work that has been carried out:

A broken window has been replaced. It was noted that the outside of the pavilion requires painting and cement rendering needs repair in certain areas. Cllr Morris will organise for this to be completed within the next 6 weeks before the weather turns for the winter.

14.5 To update on the Apple Day Care (ADC) contract for 2024:

The owner of ADC has asked the PC (subject to obtaining government funding) if they would consider allowing the nursery use of the pavilion between the hours of 8am until 1pm, three days a week term time only. This would probably start in September 2024. Cllrs will investigate this further, including liaising with immediate neighbours.

15. FINANCE

15.1 To approve the financial statement and payment of accounts:

The Clerk had circulated the accounts prior to the meeting, these were approved. Invoices were signed.

15.2 To approve wedding package costs for Pavilion hire:

Cllrs had been in discussion re the cost of weddings being held on the field with use of the pavilion, not least because recent wedding events had been labour intensive for some Cllrs. The PC is currently not on par with other venues in terms of costs. Cllrs agreed a fee for a package of a 3 day hire fully inclusive, at a cost of £750. It was noted that some exclusions need to be added to the Terms & Conditions.

15.3 To update on the External Audit:

The Clerk reported that the Final External Audit review had now been received, signed off by external auditors PKF Littlejohn with no recommendations.

16. To approve the date of the next Parish Council meeting – Wednesday 15th November 2023:

The date has been changed to **8th November 2023**. Date agreed and approved.

17. To close the meeting: Cllr Stokes closed the meeting at 9.35pm

Parish Clerk

Mrs Laura Brooks-Payne

Email: clerk@littleberkhamsted.org.uk