



## LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall in Little Berkhamsted.

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

**Cllrs not present:** Cllr Noble (No apologies)

**Others present:** Parish Clerk – Laura Brooks-Payne, 2 members of the public, Bob Deering – Ward Cllr

- 1 To receive apologies for absence and approve:** Cllr Eaglestone (Covid)
- 2. To receive declaration of interest and dispensation:** None
- 3. To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023:** Cllrs unanimously approved the minutes.
- 4. Chair's Report:**

Cllr Stokes thanked individual members of the PC for the time and effort they have put into the issues on the agenda over the past few months.

A great deal of work has been done in recent weeks to get the new website 'launch ready', Cllr Stokes thanked the Clerk for the additional time she has given to this project and really hope that she finds it saves her time in the future.

The PC receive a monthly police report about local crime and in the future this will be available to everyone on the new website. A trailer has been reported as stolen from a field in the village between 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October. The police are appealing for information, so please contact them on 101 if you can help.

Cllr Stokes thanked Cllr Hunter for leading on our involvement in The East Herts Healthy Hub. This is a free one-stop-shop for health and wellbeing information, advice and support. Through the Friday Community Café and other local events we can help publicise this county-wide scheme in rural areas.

Cllr Stokes thanked Cllr Standbrook who has spent a great deal of time working on the village hall insulation project. This is a major piece of work that when completed will not only improve the green credentials of the building but make it a warmer and more inviting place for residents and hirers.

This year it is the turn of Little Berkhamsted to host the Remembrance Day service. I apologise for not being able to attend but as Vice Chair of the Parish Council, Cllr Hunter has kindly agreed to lead our tribute to the fallen on Sunday.

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

## **5. To receive questions and comments from the public:**

Sandie Ash advised that work will be carried out on trees in the church grounds in January.

A resident advised that the traffic cones used recently on Church Road were accidentally taken by Affinity Water. Cllr Stokes will get in touch with the company to try and have them returned.

### **Standing Orders reinstated from here**

## **6. To update on new PC Website:**

The Clerk and Chair have been working on the new website with the new provider, having recently attended several meetings. Work is continuing, adding content and organising the online calendar.

## **7. To update on work being done with archive materials:**

Cllr Noble was not present. Cllr Morris has attempted to liaise with Cllr Noble to no avail. Cllr Morris now has an A3 scanner with the intent to scan in archive materials. Work is ongoing. Cllr Stokes to contact new website provider to check there will be room for the scanned archive on the new website.

## **8. HIGHWAYS**

### **8.1 To update on traffic calming:**

Cllr Stokes advised that frustratingly, no options have been suggested by Highways after The PC having had data collected in May and a meeting with relevant HCC staff. Cllr Stokes has chased for further information but nothing has been forthcoming. Cllr Deering will liaise with Highways on behalf of the PC to attempt to gather ways in which the PC can progress.

### **8.2 To discuss the overgrown hedgerows on Robins Nest Hill & Church Road:**

Cllr Standbrook advised that the hedgerows adjacent to both roads are now affecting drivers' vision. There is also a 30mph road sign missing from Robins Nest Hill. It was noted that although the PC could help with reducing the hedgerow, it is preferable to ask landowners to keep the hedgerows on the highway at an acceptable level at all times. Cllr Eaglestone (joined meeting via phone) suggested that we try and gain public support to put pressure on HC Council to trim the hedges, and should have a jurisdiction to do so especially where road signs are obstructed. It was discussed and agreed for the PC to obtain details to enable the PC to write to landowners. Cllr Fellowes will follow this up.

## **9. PLANNING**

### **9.1 To receive & discuss the latest Planning Report circulated by the clerk:**

The Clerk had circulated the summary prior to the meeting. It was noted that there were no new planning applications since the last meeting.

## **10. OPEN SPACES**

### **10.1 To report on playground issues:**

Cllr Standbrook has asked Paul (litter picking) to rake the bark in the playground area when he empties the bins, so it is kept more evenly distributed. The high fence appears to be misshapen along the top edge. Cllr Standbrook to investigate further.

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

Cllr Stokes has written a draft contract for use of the pavilion and the field from March to September 2024. This had been circulated to Cllrs. It was agreed that the draft contract will be issued to the company with the inclusion of a 3 month trial period.

- 10.3 To discuss the replacement of the stile on footpath number 11:**  
Cllr Stokes advised that this stile comes out onto Church Road. Nick Maddox (Rights of Way Officer at Herts County Council) has looked at the area and has suggested that a staggered entrance would be preferable. Cllrs agreed. It was agreed that the PC will liaise with Nick Maddox to confirm this so that he can liaise directly with the landowner going forward.
- 10.4 To update on hedge cutting and strimming work:**  
Cllr Standbrook advised that the grass cutting has now stopped for the season. The PC are awaiting a quote from the Cricket Club who have expressed an interest in taking on the contract.
- 10.5 To discuss seeking quotes for replacing the field path and improving drainage:**  
Cllr Stokes reported that there may be more funds available from the Shared Prosperity Fund. Cllrs discussed and agreed that a new path is required. Cllrs Standbrook and Eaglestone agreed to obtain quotations.
- 10.6 To update on salt delivery and the application process for further salt bins:**  
The 30 free salt bags from HCC have been delivered to the Boundary. Cllr Stokes advised that we have one salt bin in the Parish that is filled by HCC. Should the PC require additional bins, this should be applied for via Cllr Crofton. It was noted that there is a need for salt bins in Epping and Howe Green, these hamlets do not have a salt supply currently. Cllr Stokes will liaise with Cllr Crofton.
- 11. PREMISES MANAGEMENT**
- 11.1 To update on registering the management of Parish premises as Charities:**  
Cllr Stokes reported that a meeting is still being chased with the solicitor. The Clerk is attending training next week re Charitable trusts to ascertain whether the PC can go ahead and meet the criteria. A meeting will be held with the Solicitor in due course.
- 12. Village Hall**
- 12.1 To update on insulation and redecoration works:**  
Cllr Standbrook reported that the work will start next week. Cllrs discussed redecoration of the hall. Three quotes have been obtained. Cllrs unanimously agreed a quote of £4600. Secondary glazing will also be installed – this will be completed after the re-decoration.
- 12.2 To update on maintenance work carried out:**  
Cllr Standbrook advised that the windows have been cleaned and the cupboard doors eased.
- 12.3 To discuss the flue from The Limes:**  
It was noted by Cllr Standbrook that the flue, just to the back of the village hall, is situated very close to the exterior wall of the village hall. The heat/steam emitted from the flue has over time, removed the putty and paint off the side of the hall exterior wall. Cllr Stokes will liaise with the owners of the house to discuss how this can be avoided.
- 13. Cricket & Community Pavilion (C&C Pavilion)**
- 13.1 To receive latest report on the C & C Pavilion:**  
Cllrs Hunter reported that the carpet has been professionally cleaned. CC have still to clear the bar area. It was noted that it has become apparent that the CC contract is not being adhered to. Cllr Stokes will write to the CC. Cllr Hunter recently attended a meeting regarding Hertfordshire Healthy Hubs, the pavilion being a Community Hub for the project. Information can be sought from Cllr Hunter at the pavilion or the Clerk.
- 13.2 To update on the Cricket Club end of season meeting:**

Cllr Stokes reported that the meeting has taken place although all items discussed have not been completed or put in place. Cllr Stokes to follow up. The PC has yet to receive a grass cutting proposal.

**13.3 To update on maintenance work that has been carried out:**

Cllr Morris advised he has yet to complete the painting or replace the light above the table tennis table. Cllr Standbrook will ask the PC's handyman to look at increasing the flush rate on the pavilion toilets.

**13.4 To update on the Apple Day Care contract for 2024:**

Cllr Stokes advised that she has liaised with the immediate neighbours of the Pavilion regarding a possible new contract for 2024. The Clerk has not received any comments on this. Cllr Stokes will advise ADC that in principal they can go ahead with year round use.

**13.5 To update on the Cricket Club contract for 2024:**

Cllrs discussed and agreed that compliance with the terms and conditions of the contract this past season has been poor. It was discussed and agreed that a security deposit of £200 will be added to the fee for the 2024 contract for additional cleaning, breakages, etc. A draft contract for 2024 has been issued to the CC.

**14. FINANCE**

The clerk reported that she had been approached again this year by the Citizens Advice Bureau for a donation. It was agreed previously to donate £150 and to add donations to any future budgets.

**14.1 To approve the financial statement and payment of accounts:**

The accounts were circulated prior to the meeting to all Cllrs and were unanimously approved.

**14.2 To approve Precept and Budget for 2024-25 (previously circulated to Cllrs):**

The Clerk circulated the document prior to the meeting, discussion having been had prior to the meeting. It was agreed that to enable projects such as the traffic calming measures in the very centre of the village which are much needed, the precept would have to be raised slightly. A figure of £24,500 was unanimously agreed. The Clerk will submit the relevant form to East Herts Council.

**14.3 To approve the purchase for the paint for the exterior of the pavilion:**

£500 spend was unanimously agreed and approved.

**14.4 To approve the ongoing annual costs for the new website and emails:**

The current costs, excluding technical assistance should the PC chose to use it, will currently be £10 a month. This figure was agreed.

**15. To approve 2024 Meeting dates: Wednesday evenings: 17<sup>th</sup> January, 20<sup>th</sup> March, 24<sup>th</sup> April (APM), 15<sup>th</sup> May, 17<sup>th</sup> July, 18<sup>th</sup> September, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024:**

All dates approved.

**16. To approve the date of the next Parish Council meeting – January 17<sup>th</sup> 2024:** Date approved.

**17. To close the meeting:** Cllr Stokes closed the meeting at 9.50pm.

**Parish Clerk**

**Mrs Laura Brooks-Payne**

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