



LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 17th January 2024 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, Cllr Eaglestone

Others present: Parish Clerk – Laura Brooks-Payne, 1 member of the public, District Cllr – Ken Crofton, Ward Cllr Bob Deering, PC Ryan Willis, PCSO's Rhona Blackman and Sally Brooks

- 1 To receive apologies for absence and approve:** Cllr Eaglestone – approved, Cllr Noble – not approved, no apologies given.
- 2. To receive declaration of interest and dispensation:** None
- 3. To approve minutes of the PC Meeting held on Wednesday 8th November 2023:**
The Clerk had circulated the minutes prior to the meeting, these were unanimously approved.
- 4. Chair's Report:**

Cllr Stokes thanked the East Herts rural PC & PCSO's for attending, as well as Bob Deering and Ken Crofton for the help and support that they give the Parish Council and the village. Cllr Crofton has been liaising with HCC officers over the closure of Bridleway 18 and this is being followed up with the inspectorate acting for the Secretary of State in an effort to resolve this longstanding issue. He has also made money available from his Highways Locality Budget for the resurfacing of the badly damaged section of Church Road between Bush Farm and Epping Green. Cllr Deering has been supporting us with various planning enforcements and if Council decides to apply, will endorse an application to EHC for grant money towards the village hall insulation project.

The current phase of work on the hall is nearing completion and it is hoped that it will reopen next week. Thanks go to Cllr Standbrook for the many hours he has spent getting this done. It is now important to be proactive in raising awareness of the improved facility.

Village Halls Week in March this year is focussing on how communities can 'go green' and as this has been the whole thrust of our project it would be good to get involved in the campaign.

Cllr Stokes advised that she had been asked to correct a piece of information sent out in an email about the Parish boundary. She confirmed that both sides of the Lower Hatfield Road do fall within the Parish.

The 80th Anniversary of D Day is on 6th June. The PC have agreed that the village should mark this historic occasion and are asking for volunteers to help organise the event.

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

5. To receive questions and comments from the public:

PCSO Sally Brooks advised that thankfully crime is low in the Parish of Little Berkhamsted. In other local areas there is a man that is walking the streets at night trying car doors, many of which are found to be open. Parishioners are advised to always lock their car doors.

It was noted that speed controls continue periodically.

PCSO Brooks advised that the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is due for some big changes which will be advertised shortly. Caroline Peat currently heads up the Neighbourhood watch scheme.

Cllr Stokes advised that another traffic survey will be taking place in the coming weeks.

Standing Orders reinstated from here

6. To update on new PC Website:

Cllr Stokes and the Clerk showed Cllrs progress made on the new website. The website is almost ready to 'go live'. There was some discussion had and further suggestions put forward. It was noted that there will need to be further training to enable Cllrs and Clerk to make ongoing edits to the website.

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

Cllr Morris had contacted Cllr Noble to obtain information and collect the archive materials to no avail. Cllr Morris will attempt contact again to get hold of the materials so that he can work on them going forward.

8. HIGHWAYS

8.1 To update on traffic calming: Cllr Stokes reported that another traffic survey will take place in the next few weeks on Robin Nest Hill, in a slightly different location to the last survey at no cost to the PC. This data will be required to ascertain if the road warrants additional traffic calming measures.

8.2 To update on overgrown hedgerows on Robins Nest Hill & Church Road:

Cllr Fellowes reported that most hedges have now been cut back. The Electoral Register has been viewed to ascertain landowner details, but this is proving difficult. It was discussed that the hedges still need maintenance along Church Road. The Clerk will contact the landowner. Cllr Fellowes will investigate other landowners.

9. PLANNING

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

The clerk circulated the planning summary prior to the meeting. It was agreed that The Clerk will send comments in for Bush Farm 3/23/1956/FUL though it was noted that the time has elapsed.

Cllrs will contact the landowners for 15 Stockings Lane & 1 Woodcock Lodge Farm to visit.

Cllr Deering has been following the enforcement case for the potential increase in numbers of large 'mobile homes' at Bells Wood in the Parish of Bayford. This development could have a huge detrimental affect on the Parish of Little Berkhamsted. It was suggested that a Cllr attend the Bayford PC meeting next Monday.

10. OPEN SPACES

- 10.1 To report on playground issues:** Cllr Standbrook reported again that the fence has been damaged at the rear of the playground. Signs have been made to ask children not to climb on the goal posts or fence. The rosebush will also be trimmed back.
- 10.2 To update on contract for Alpaca Walking on the field:**
Cllr Stokes reported that the contract has now been agreed and signed.
- 10.3 To update on quotes for replacing the field path and improving drainage:**
Cllr Eaglestone was not present, although had been obtaining quotes for the work. Cllr Stokes advised that there may be money available through the Shared Prosperity Fund Grant to help with the cost.
- 10.4 To discuss and/or approve the grass cutting contract for 2024 season:**
Cllr Standbrook reported that three quotes have been received for the contract, including one from the Cricket Club. The contracts were discussed, it was unanimously agreed and approved that the Quote from NDC Grounds Maintenance will be accepted. Cllr Standbrook will advise those that have quoted.
Cllr Standbrook reported that the two oak trees at the far end of the recreation field require their canopies to be lifted in due course and will obtain quotes.

11. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 To update on registering the management of Parish premises as Charities:**
Cllr Stokes advised that the Clerk had now completed a course explaining how this will work. The idea was discussed by Cllrs. Cllr Stokes advised that she is unlikely to stand again as a Cllr from May 2024 and therefore did not want to be influential in the final decision. It was discussed that creating charities for the premises has various benefits for the Parish Council including zero business rate costs and obtaining grants that the PC are not otherwise accessible to.
The Clerk advised of reservations going forward, including not having the relevant knowledge required to move forward on her own, this is a specialist subject and a solicitor will need to be taken on board to see the process through.
A consultation with the village was discussed, to gauge interest and to potentially gain members to sit on the charity and run it going forward, however a blanket consultation may not be useful in the first instance, due to the complexity of the understanding for the project. It was instead agreed that Cllrs will discuss whether there are any parishioners in the village that would be either interested to be involved and/or willing to lead on the project, and they will be approached in the first instance.

12. VILLAGE HALL

- 12.1 To update on insulation and redecoration works:**
Cllr Standbrook reported that insulation, secondary glazing and redecoration is now complete. The PC are happy with the work.
- 12.2 To update on maintenance work carried out:**
Cllr Standbrook advised that new exit lights and alarms have been fitted. These need to be tested monthly by the PC and yearly by an external professional. Cllr Morris will deal with the missing alarm in the WC. Draught excluders will be fitted in the next week.
- 12.3 To update on the flue issue re, The Limes:**
Cllr Stokes has spoken to the owner who will get back to the PC.

13. CRICKET AND COMMUNITY PAVILION (C&C PAVILION)

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

Cllr Hunter reported that bar area has been cleaned. The Cricket Club are due to remove their beverages. Friday Club is still continuing and is a success.

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

Cllr Standbrook has drained the water tanks for the duration of the cold weather. Roofing felt is being replaced on the shed roof.

13.3 To update on the Cricket Club contract for 2024:

Cllr Stokes advised that the paperwork still has not been received, though the first instalment for the 2024 contract has been paid.

14. FINANCE

14.1 To approve the financial statement and payment of accounts:

The Clerk had circulated the latest accounts prior to the meeting. Accounts were unanimously approved.

14.2 To discuss applying for funding from East Herts DC Environmental Sustainability Grant for thermal blinds and heaters for the hall:

14.3 Cllr Stokes reported that the PC could apply under the environmental sustainability grant for the entire cost. It was unanimously agreed to progress the grant. The form has been partially completed.

14.4 To discuss and approve donation to Essex & Herts Air Ambulance:

The Clerk has received correspondence for another donation. Cllrs had previously approved £150, this was unanimously approved.

15. To approve the date of the next Parish Council meeting – Wednesday 20th March 2024: approved.

16. To close the meeting: Meeting closed at 9.35pm.

**Parish Clerk
Mrs Laura Brooks-Payne
Email: clerk@littleberkhamsted.org.uk**