



LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 15th May 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall in Little Berkhamsted.

Cllrs present: Cllr Hunter (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Standbrook, Cllr Fellowes

Cllrs not present: Cllr Morris, Cllr Eaglestone, Cllr Bob Deering

Others present: Parish Clerk – Laura Brooks-Payne, 4 members of the public

1. **To elect the Chairman for 2024-25:** Though Cllr Morris was not present, he had emailed the Clerk acceptance of taking on the role. This was proposed by Cllr Hunter and seconded by Cllr Standbrook.
2. **To receive the Chairman's declaration of Acceptance of Office:** This will be signed at the next meeting.
3. **To elect a Vice-Chairman for 2024-25:** Cllr Hunter accepted the role, unanimously voted in. Cllr Hunter Chaired the rest of the meeting.
4. **To receive the Vice-Chairman's declaration of Acceptance of Office:** Cllr Hunter signed the form.
5. **To review Policies & Documents held; Registers of Interest, Standing Orders, Financial regulations, Asset Register, Financial Risk Assessment, Data Protection Policy, Complaints Procedure, Website Accessibility:** The Clerk explained that all documents had not been changed since the last review in 2023, other than there had recently been a re-model of the Financial Regulations which the Clerk will go through in due course. The rest of the policies (other than Financial Regulations) were unanimously re-approved.
6. **New Councillors to Sign their Declaration of Acceptance Office:**
No new Cllrs Co-opted in as yet.
7. **To receive apologies for absence and approve:**
Cllr Morris, Cllr Eaglestone, Cllr Bob Deering, all approved.
8. **To receive declaration of interest and dispensation:** none
9. **To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 20th March 2024:**
Unanimously approved.
10. **Chair Report:** Former Chair Penny Stokes had recently produced a review of the year which was presented at the APM in April. This is available to all and on the website.

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

11. **To receive questions and comments from the public:**

A resident (Simon Hedley) had a question in reference to the archive photographs. He asked if there is still a group of interested residents to form a group to decide what is best to do with the material. Simon suggested a book/CD of photographs that could be purchased by residents. Cllr Morris now has the archive materials from former Cllr Kate Noble. Former Chair Penny Stokes explained that forming a group would be a good idea to make a decision as to what to do with the archive material going forward, the project is likely to take many hours of time to scan material in, to enable an electronic copy to be saved. Cllrs/Simon agreed that Simon will liaise with Cllr Morris to discuss further.

Simon Hedley mentioned that he could not find the former Recreation Committee funds document on the website. The Clerk will ask the website provider to add the document back on under 'events' with a paragraph to reference to it.

Standing Orders reinstated from here

12. To update on new PC Website:

Former Chair Penny Stokes reported that she had gone back to the new provider with suggested amendments. The company have advised that some are quite major changes and would need to charge another days work to carry these out. It was noted however, that the PC were not happy with the overall website in its current state and that the changes were part of the ongoing development of the website. Cllrs discussed the various levels of changes, and that some of the changes the provider could not complete because their website format does not support them. The feedback list from the website provider will be sent to Cllrs for perusal. A decision will then be made as to whether to go ahead.

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

See item number 11

14. HIGHWAYS

14.1 To update on traffic calming implementation:

Former Chair Penny Stokes had reported that she had spoken with the officer, Hope Merriman, at Herts Highways for feedback on the recent traffic surveys. Highways have agreed to do a feasibility study for measures for traffic calming in the village. This is unlikely to take place until October. The Clerk will forward the email trail to Cllr Fellowes who will take over the project.

Cllr Standbrook suggested that the PC contact the landowners adjacent to the highway to cut hedges and clear foliage at a similar time to any traffic calming being implemented.

15. PLANNING

15.1 To receive & discuss the latest Planning Report circulated by the Clerk:

The Clerk had circulated the latest planning summary prior to the meeting.

Cllr Deering (not present) had sent an update on the Bellswood Development, legal advice is currently being sought to ascertain if the landowner requires planning permission or can develop using the existing caravan licences. Cllr Deering is in contact with the legal officer at EH and will update in due course.

Cllr Morris had commented that there is a large structure erected in the garden of number 26 Church Rd. It was discussed and agreed that Cllr Hunter will speak with the resident to ascertain if planning permission is required.

It was noted that the PC had sent a comment of NO objection to East Herts regarding the application for retrospective planning permission for a dog park and will advise an interested resident of the PC's decision.

16. OPEN SPACES

- 16.1 To report on playground issues:** Cllr Standbrook reported that a fallen Ash tree had been safely removed.
- 16.2. To update on quotes for replacing the field path and improving drainage:**
In Cllr Eaglestone's absence, Cllr Standbrook reported that quotes had been received, he will arrange with Cllr Eaglestone to meet with one of the potential contractors.
- 16.3 To update on the Shared Prosperity Fund grant (SPF) application for a new path running from the playground to the Pavilion:**
Former Chair Penny Stokes reported that the grant has been applied for. The Clerk will contact Andrew Figgis from East Herts for the latest progress.
- 16.4 To update on the situation with bridleway number 18:**
Cllr Standbrook advised that the case is being taken to a Public Enquiry.

17. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

- 17.1 To update on registering the management of Parish premises as Charities:**
Cllr Fellowes reported that this item is to be deferred until a full complement of Cllrs is on board.
- 17.2 To update on advertising for both venues:**
The PC continue to advertise the venue on Halls for Hire, noticeboards, the website and on mail chimp. The Clerk will add information when relevant to the Facebook page. Sandie Ash who takes bookings for the venues, offered to help with advertising and seek other avenues for further advertising. Advice to be sought from Tim Hayward-Smith of CDA Herts.

18. Village Hall

Local company Master arts Workshops asked the PC to provide a village event in collaboration with the PC, using the Village Hall free of charge and using the ring-fenced recreational committee funds to be used to purchase alcohol for a 'Sip and Paint' event on 8th June. Councillors discussed this and it was decided that the village hall could be rented because it was considered a commercial event. Alcohol would need to be purchased by Master Arts who would need to arrange for an appropriate alcohol licence for the evening. It was unanimously agreed that 'recreational committee' funds are provided to residents looking to organise non-commercial events, which are beneficial to the entire village and where proceeds could be provided back into the ring-fenced fund. The recreational committee funds are not available to independent commercial enterprises.

- 18.1 To update on maintenance work carried out:**
Cllr Standbrook reported that the gate has had a replacement return spring attached to improve safety. New blinds have been installed. Posters were stuck to the wall during polling day which removed some paint which has now been repainted. It was agreed that a notice would be added to the noticeboard to ask users not to stick anything to the walls. The EPC Energy Certificate is still being chased. The water heater in the cottage has a leak, a plumber has attended and has ordered parts.
- 18.2 To update on the issue with the Limes boiler flue:**
Former Chair Penny Stokes advised there is no update. Penny will send the Clerk contact details to contact the owners again.

19. Cricket & Community Pavilion (C&C Pavilion)

- 19.1 To receive latest report on the C & C Pavilion:**
Cllr Hunter advised that Cricket has started again for the season. Apple Day care have asked the PC if they could potentially use the Pavilion from September from Tuesday to Thursday for

5 hours per week. It was discussed that the Pavilion is not a suitable building for use for childcare over the winter months, as there is no insulation, though the village hall could be. It was agreed that Cllr Hunter/Fellowes will contact Apple Day Care to arrange a meeting nearer to September to discuss in more detail.

Cllr Standbrook will endeavour to gain figures of electricity use from the heaters in the pavilion to approx. work out heating costs over the winter.

The Clerk reported that the April payment for the contract for the alpaca walking on the field has not been paid despite two reminder emails having been sent. Former Chair Penny Stokes had just received an email from the organiser indicating payment would be made soon.

- 19.2 To review of the Cricket Club's final season payment due at end of June:**
Cllrs discussed a possible increase in cost because some terms and conditions of the contract are not being met in relation mainly to cleaning. It was agreed that as play had only just started for the season that the fee would be kept the same.
The Clerk confirmed that the £200 retention payment has been paid. Cllrs agreed that this should be increased next year.
- 19.3 To update on maintenance work that has been carried out:**
Cllr Standbrook reported that the ceiling has been repainted. The batteries in the alarm have been replaced. It was noted that Cllr Morris had yet to paint the outside of the building as agreed.
- 19.4 To discuss the offer from EHDC re Climate change & sustainability project:**
An email had been received by the Clerk suggesting a meeting to discuss the project. It was noted that funds could be sought to insulate the Pavilion. Cllrs agreed that a meeting would be agreeable. The clerk will contact the officer.
- 20. FINANCE**
- 20.1 To approve the financial statement and payment of accounts:** The Clerk had circulated the latest accounts summary prior to the meeting. The Accounts were unanimously approved.
- 20.2 To approve the Internal Audit:** The Clerk reported she has been working with our internal auditor, Janet Pearce, on the external audit figures. The clerk had circulated the internal Audit. This was unanimously approved.
- 20.3 To approve figures for the External Audit and Chair to sign audit forms:** The external Audit form (AGAR) had been duly completed by the Clerk and were signed by both in Chair and Clerk.
- 20.4 To approve cleaners new hourly rate:** Cllr Hunter reported that the hourly rate had increased by £1. Cllrs unanimously agreed to the increase.
- 21. To agree and approve to advertise for remaining Cllr vacancies:**
The Clerk advised that there are now 2 vacancies for the position of Cllr on the PC. It was discussed, agreed and approved to start the process to Co-Opt 2 new Cllrs. This will be advertised in the usual sources. The Clerk will also add the information to the Facebook page.
- 22. To approve the date of the next Parish Council meeting – Wednesday 17th July 2024:** approved

23. To close the meeting: Cllr Hunter closed the meeting at 9.40pm

Parish Clerk
Mrs Laura Brooks-Payne
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