



LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 20th November 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall in Little Berkhamsted.

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

Cllrs not present: Cllr Cookson

Others present: Parish Clerk – Laura Brooks-Payne, Cllr Bob Deering, 7 members of the public

- 1. To receive apologies for absence and approve:** none, approved. Cllr Cookson was not present, unauthorised attendance.
- 2. To receive declaration of interest and dispensation:** none
- 3. To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 25th September 2024:** These were unanimously approved and signed.
- 4. Chair Report:**

Cllr Morris welcomed members of the public and explained that everything is covered in the agenda.

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

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

A resident asked if the PC had put into action the issue of overgrown, and in some places, impassable footpaths through Mrs Vavirades, a local landowner, land. It was noted that the Clerk has emailed the landowner on several occasions in the last year, and has not received a reply on any occasion. Cllr Morris advised that he has now written a letter, via Royal mail recorded delivery, to the landowner. In the light that the PC are unlikely to receive a reply, it was suggested that the Rights of Way department are contacted in order to clear the footpaths. The Clerk asked Cllr Morris for a copy of the letter. Cllr Morris will action.

It was noted that the same landowner hedging, directly adjacent to the highway, is also dangerously overgrown. Cllr Morris advised that he is aware that the County Council highways teams have limited funds for this type of work, of which are also low on their priority list. The same resident was also noted that footpath 9&10 have now been repaired.

Penny Stokes, previous Chairperson, asked why she had not received a response to her questions about the new website sent to the PC prior to the last meeting or to her email of 14th October regarding the lack of respect shown to her and the extensive work she had done on the new website. Cllr Morris responded that as he had not been previously involved in the project, he had organised a meeting with the new website provider, Shy Studios, to ask for training on the back end of the website, for when it goes live, and advised he also discussed how PC emails will work going forward.

Cllr Morris apologised for the fact that Mrs Stokes felt side-lined from the project. It was noted however that the website has still yet to go live and that Cllr Morris would liaise again with Shy Studios the next day. Penny asked Cllr Morris to report back to her which he agreed to do.

A resident reported that on the exterior of her neighbours property (Dene Orchard, 5 Little Berkhamsted Lane) there are 16 lights that stay on all night and day, causing much light pollution to surrounding neighbours. She has liaised with the resident to no avail. This was discussed and noted that the PC can do very little to intervene in cases such as these but The Clerk will email her contact at East Herts Council to ascertain if anything can be done, after the resident has emailed full details and photos.

A resident has some photos for the archive that will be given to Cllr Morris.

Standing Orders reinstated from here:

6. To update on new PC Website: See item 5

7. To update on the meeting held to start work on the archive materials:
Cllr Morris advised that archive material has been looked through and any thing suitable has been added to the website.

8. HIGHWAYS

8.1 To update on traffic calming implementation:

Cllr Fellowes reported, that as agreed, he spoke to the Highways department of the County Council in October. Accordingly, in order for the PC to receive help from Highways, the PC would need agreement to the measures and funding when Highways' longer term plans are developed and signed off by the County Council (normally a year in advance). It was noted that the PC has already paid for traffic analysis and data through the village centre which was requested, and this should be revisited with representatives of the Highways department and Ken Crofton. It was suggested that Cllr Fellowes contact Rupert Thacker and Cllr Crofton again, as they were involved in the original discussions with the PC.

9. PLANNING

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

Cllr Eaglestone advised that Cllrs had discussed the application for 7 new dwellings at Robins Nest Farm, Robins Nest Hill. Cllrs felt that the scale of the development was significant which would greatly increase traffic on an already busy stretch of rural highway. It was felt that this type of development sets a precedent that I think could have longer term implications for the village and surrounding area.
Cllrs unanimously agreed to send in a comment of OBJECTION for this application to EH Planning Department.

Cllrs had previously discussed the application for North Cottage in Epping Green for dwelling amendments and conversions.

Cllrs unanimously agreed to send in a comment of NO OBJECTION for this application to EH Planning Department.

The Clerk advised Cllrs that the Bellswood development (current ongoing enforcement case) has a dedicated page on Face Book 'Bellswood'.

9. OPEN SPACES

Essendon Primary School had asked if they could erect a banner advertising the school for a few weeks on the fencing surrounding the recreation field. Cllrs agreed and approved to this.

- 10.1 To report on playground issues, including Playground inspection:**
The Clerk had forwarded the recent playground inspection to Cllr Standbrook and Cllr Morris. Cllr Standbrook reported that there were several issues with moderate risk which are currently being attended to. Several climbing frame poles will be replaced. There was a report of mildew on several on the pieces of equipment. Cllr Standbrook proposed that all equipment is cleaned in the first instance. This will allow the PC to inspect the equipment more accurately. This was unanimously approved. Cllr Standbrook will obtain quotes for this.
- 10.2 To update on use of old path paving slabs:**
Cllr Standbrook reported that he had received 3 quotations to lay the slabs along the front of the pavilion entrance creating a patio/hardstanding area, which will be especially useful in the winter months when footwear is muddy. Cllrs unanimously approved and agreed to accept the quotation submitted from local builder, James Robinson.
- 10.3 To update on refurbishment of the goal mouth on the recreation field:**
Cllr Standbrook reported that ideally the area should be reinstated, soil should be excavated, raised and re-turfed with matting for a hard-wearing surface. Cllr Standbrook had sought two quotations. Cllrs agreed and approved to use our existing landscaper to undertake the work in the spring.
- 10.4 To discuss possible planting around village signs:**
It was discussed that planters would be preferable though would require regular summer watering and could potentially be stolen. Cllrs agreed that the idea was worth further consideration and deferred to the next meeting.
- 10.5 To discuss maintenance of highway hedges:**
Cllr Fellowes explained that the hedges fronting the highways are either owned by the Local Council or by private landowners. Some of these in the Parish are currently hazardous, and require trimming right back. This was discussed by Cllrs and it was noted that it is sometimes difficult to get some landowners to comply with trimming back their hedges which is a legal obligation.
Cllr Fellowes suggested that in the first instance, the PC should identify the hedges that need urgent attention to send to East Herts (EH) Council who can then advise which hedges are owned by EH Council and which are not and then add to their list to maintain. The PC can then identify the other hedges/landowners to write to.
Priority areas were noted as;
Church Rd – both sides of hedging
Robins Nest hill leading to Stockings Lane – overhanging trees
Breach House hedging

11. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 To update on advertising for both venues:**
It was noted that the venues are advertised in the newsletter and on the website. Sandie Ash continues to speak to local residents and passers by about the facilities.

Village Hall

- 11.2 To update on maintenance work carried out:**
Cllr Standbrook reported that the rendering has been repaired. The chimney in the bedroom in the cottage has a patch of dampness, an inspection will take place of the stack.
- 11.3 To update on the issue with the Limes boiler flue:**
Cllr Standbrook advised that quotes were sought, and additionally the Clerk had received correspondence from the owners of the Limes and that the owners of the property have arranged to have the work carried out at their expense by Simon Hedley – the PC's maintenance operative. This was unanimously agreed by Cllrs.

11.4 To update on new playgroup regular usage:

The Clerk advised that an agreement had now been drawn up for The Stay and Play Den to regularly use the Village Hall on Wednesday and Friday mornings. The group have recently started and seems a success. The company advised that the front door/fire exit handle needs replacing, the replacement is in hand. The Clerk thanked Sandie Ash for her input.

Cricket & Community Pavilion (C&C Pavilion)

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

Cllr Hunter reported that the cricket Club have finished for the season. The bar has been cleared. A deep clean and carpet clean has been arranged which will be charged to the cricket Club.

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

Cllr Standbrook reported that the gutters are overflowing and will be cleared when the leaf fall has finished.

11.7 To discuss the offer from EHDC re Climate change & sustainability project:

Cllr Standbrook reported that the PC have been approved for a grant which will be used for the new heaters in the village hall. Cllr Standbrook has ordered the new heaters for the village hall which will be installed by Cllr Morris.

11.8 To update on the painting of the exterior of the pavilion:

It was agreed at an informal meeting attended by Cllrs last week that the job was too big for Cllr Morris to undertake alone. Cllr Standbrook has obtained several quotes for the work to be undertaken by an external company at circa £1700. It was suggested that a working party could be organised. The Clerk will add the item to the next agenda.

Bus Shelter

11.9 Updates on maintenance work etc:

Simon Hedley has recently repainted the bus shelter and the recreation shed.

War Memorial

11.10 Updates on maintenance work etc: Nothing to report

12. To receive the latest Crime Report:

The Clerk receives a monthly Crime Report from the local rural PCSO's, there were no crimes reported in the Parish of Little Berkhamsted in October 2024. The Clerk read out other useful information, as follows;

'As per our current policing priorities, the local Neighbourhood Policing Team based in Buntingford, have been patrolling hotspot areas for hare coursing and poaching. Various vehicles of interest have been noted and/or stopped, with suspected hare coursers currently under investigation, and a group of poachers recently caught and sanctioned.

There has been pro-active work related to fly tipping in the county, with various suspects identified. Officers from East Herts Environment Agency are currently investigating and looking to sanction and/or prosecute several offenders. You can report fly tips via their website: <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/bins-waste-and-recycling/dumped-rubbish-fly-tipping-and-littering>

In the past month, officers have arrested members of three different criminal organisations in relation to vehicle thefts and burglaries in East Herts.

With the clocks going back and the nights drawing in earlier, there can be an upward trend in crimes such as shed break ins or theft from motor vehicles. Please always ensure doors and windows are always closed and locked, and do not leave any valuables on display.

If you need to report a crime in progress, please call 999, for all other please use 101 or online reporting <https://www.herts.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

The Herts Connected system delivers Hertfordshire police's crime alerts. Registered local residents can receive the latest crime or emergency updates and alerts, as well as information about policing events in your area. Local residents can get involved in helping to make their local area a safer place, tell us what police should be doing in their area, shape the initiatives that help to keep people and property safe, and tell us what matters are causing local communities harm.'

13. FINANCE

13.1 To approve latest accounts summary circulated by the Clerk:

The clerk had circulated the latest accounts to Cllrs prior to the meeting. These were unanimously approved and signed.

13.2 To approve the budget already circulated to Cllrs and discussed:

The Clerk had prepared the budget for 2025-2026 based on previous spend and upcoming project spend. This had been circulated to Cllrs for perusal prior to the meeting and discussed at an informal meeting of Cllrs last week. It was briefly discussed again and agreed to ask for £28,000 Precept from EH Council for the forthcoming financial year. This was unanimously approved. Cllrs signed the precept request form.

14. Items for future consideration:

Additional defibrillator purchase with use of an available grant.
A working party to paint pavilion exterior.

15. To approve the date of the next Parish Council meeting:

Cllrs approved the date of 15th January 2025.

16. To approve dates for 2025 meetings:

15th January
19th March
2nd April - APM
14th May
16th July
17th September
19th November

Dates unanimously approved.

17. To close the meeting: Cllr Morris closed the meeting at 9.25pm.

Parish Clerk - Mrs Laura Brooks-Payne
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