



LITTLE BERKHAMSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 19th March 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall in Little Berkhamsted.

Cllrs present: Cllr Morris (Chair), Cllr Standbrook, Cllr Fellowes, Cllr Cookson, Cllr Morris, Cllr Eaglestone

Cllrs not present: Cllr Hunter

Others present: Parish Clerk – Laura Brooks-Payne, Cllr Bob Deering, Cllr Ken Crofton 4 members of the public

- To receive apologies for absence and approve:** Cllr Hunter (unwell)
- To receive declaration of interest and dispensation:** None
- To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 15th January 2025:**

It was noted that the outside light at the pavilion is now working.
It was noted that most hedges had already been cut back along the highways apart from those along Church Road. It was discussed that the landowner had emailed the clerk to advise this will be actioned.
Minutes unanimously approved and signed.

ACTION

The Clerk will email the landowner again, to advise that the PC would like the hedges cutting back within the next 14 days. If this does not happen, and with approval from EH County Council the PC will complete the work and forward the invoice to the landowner.

- Chair Welcome:** Cllr Morris welcomed members of the public.
- Standing orders suspended**

This is the only section in which members of the public are allowed to speak, at all other times, Councillors & Clerk only are permitted to speak.

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

Penny Stokes (previous Chair) asked why Apple DayCare are not renewing their contract this year (at a loss to the PC of approx. £20,000 over a 12 month period). Cllr Morris advised that there were a number of factors that affected ADC's decision. Cllr Standbrook explained that he had spoken with Sam at ADC and a combination of internal had factors affected the decision (including miscommunication and delays in responding to ADC). The Clerk explained that it was also quite clear that the time that the PC took, making changes to the contract and getting back to ADC with information, was a contributory factor.

Penny expressed her dissatisfaction on a number of issues including why the website has been in the design stage for 3 years. She expressed her disappointment that the PC was not valuing the good relationships she had built up with users of the PC facilities

and the PC's apparent lack of focus on the importance of the income that is generated for the benefit of the village.

Penny questioned councillors' commitment to their role. Even though it is a voluntary role those who stand as a Councillor have responsibilities particularly with regard to financial management.

Tony Tyndale asked why the pavilion painting (it had been previously discussed to create a working party of residents to complete of which there was interest) is now being painted by the PC's handyman at a cost. Tony asked why the working party route had not been followed through. It was explained that approx.18 months ago Cllr Morris had said that he would do the work, but this did not happen. The PC have now approved and agreed to pay Simon Hedley to complete the work, which will be started this week.

The Clerk explained that she is dissatisfied with communications and Cllr input, especially between herself and the Chairman, but noted that she appreciates that she is a paid member of the PC and Cllrs are volunteers.

Cllr Deering gave Cllrs information on the forthcoming Local government Reorganisation plans. In Herts there are 10 districts, each with their own hierarchy of management. Central Government would essentially like to severely reduce the number of Cllrs. They have asked all districts to liaise, and form proposals in order that this can be achieved. This will affect services across the county, for example Children's Adult Services, Planning, Highways, Education. It is unclear how this will affect how Parish Council's operate going forward. Central Government are looking for these changes to occur rapidly.

ACTION

The Clerk will get in touch with Home Farm Dog Training and Andrew green (Alpaca walking) to discuss contracts going forward.

Cllr Morris will organise an informal Cllr/Clerk meeting to discuss how the PC can improve internal communications and relationships going forward.

Standing Orders reinstated

7. HIGHWAYS

7.1 To update on traffic calming implementation:

Cllr Fellowes reported that he continues to liaise with Highways. The three stages involved in such a project are as follows - (for consideration if independently funded by PC); Feasibility Study (cost 30k approx) Design (cost 40k approx), Implementation – District Council then involved, public consultations etc and 50% public support required to go ahead. The only other route is through the central Highways budget or the Police and Crime Commissioners budget (PCC). Cllr Crofton & Cllr Deering suggested that Cllrs make their own suggestions for appropriate traffic calming measures to the previous mentioned authorities. The Clerk suggested that as Bayford PC has recently received a large grant for a similar project it would be advantageous to liaise with their Clerk.

ACTION

The Clerk will email the Clerk at Bayford for further information and the possibility of arranging a meeting to gain knowledge going forward. Information will then be passed to Cllr Morris & Cllr Fellowes to follow up.

8. PLANNING

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

There were no new applications received since the last meeting.
No further enforcement updates.

Cllr Morris reported that the decision notice has been published for the public enquiry on the regarding the correct and proper route for Bridleway 18. The decision notice states that the modification order is as it should be. This notice will be published in the local press. Appeals need to be received within 6 weeks after the published date.

9. OPEN SPACES

9.1 To report on playground issues:

Cllr Standbrook reported that the materials required to repair the climbing frame have been ordered. The new litter bin will be installed in due course.

9.2 To update on new hard standing area to the front of the pavilion:

Cllr Standbrook advised that work will commence when the weather has improved.

9.3 To update on refurbishment of the goal mouth on the recreation field:

Cllr Standbrook advised that work will commence when the weather has improved.

9.4 To further discuss planting around village signs:

Options for planting were discussed.

ACTION

Cllr Morris will research planting tubs that sit on the ground for flower planting to the front of the three village signs.

9.5 To update on maintenance of highway hedges:

See item 3.

9.6 To discuss the uneven alleyway between Goddards Close to Church Road:

It was discussed and noted that East Herts have adopted the alleyway as seen in previous minute books. Cllr Hunter has photos of the holes on the surface.

ACTION

Cllr Fellowes & Cllr Morris will liaise with Cllr Hunter and will report the issue as a fault.

10. PREMISES MANAGEMENT

10.1 To update on advertising for both venues:

Defer to next meeting when the website is live.

Village Hall

10.2 To update on maintenance work carried out:

Cllr Morris advised that heaters have been fitted. It was discussed that the picket fence to the front requires painting. Cllr Standbrook advised that better signage for the village hall will be advantageous as discussed at the last meeting. This will be added to the next agenda.

10.3 To update on repair of damage caused by the Limes boiler flue:

Cllr Standbrook explained that there is a kit available to add to the end of a flue to divert the steam escaping. This information has been passed to the owner of the property to look into this further to alleviate the problem going forward.

10.4 To update on repairs to chimney stack & cottage roof:

Cllr Standbrook reported that the work has been completed.

10.5 To discuss ways to improve condensation build up issue in the cottage bedroom:

It was noted that there are also damp issues in the bathroom and the bottom of the stairs that needs action taken.

ACTION

Cllr Standbrook & Cllr Morris will inspect the issue again and if required, will obtain quotations for maintenance work.

Cricket & Community Pavilion (C&C Pavilion)

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

Nothing reported. It was noted that the deep clean has been carried out. The TV has stopped working. It was agreed to buy a replacement.

ACTION

Cllr Morris will measure and advise the clerk of the size/type to purchase.

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

Cllr Standbrook reported that the loft insulation has been completed. It was noted that the rainwater is running along the ground at the corner of the pavilion.

ACTION

Cllr Standbrook will investigate the water issue.

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

Cllr Standbrook reported that Simon Hedley will start the work this week.

10.9 To update on the new contract for 2025 for Apple Daycare(ADC):

The Clerk had sent the information to ADC following the last meeting. Cllr Morris agreed to organise an informal meeting with Cllrs to discuss a potential raise in the hourly rate and parking issues and to contact Sam at ADC with the outcome. During this time, ADC became despondent with the PC and decided to use facilities elsewhere. Also lack of numbers and increased hourly rate affected their decision. Their decision to withdraw was not solely due to delays. It was noted that ADC still have a key to the premises and equipment in storage.

ACTION

Cllr Morris will organise a face to face meeting with ADC to chat about the contract going forward, rid of any possible ill feeling, and organisation of equipment and key return.

10.10 To update on 2025 contract with the Cricket Club (CC):

Cllr Morris & Standbrook met with CC last week. Cleaning & equipment issues were discussed and a new contract signed with a slight increase to deposit cleaning payment but rental the same as 2024. The Clerk is yet to receive a copy of the contract and asked for a copy to be sent by email. Cllr Morris handed the clerk the signed copy. Cllrs approved and agreed the signed contract.

Bus Shelter

10.11 Updates on maintenance work etc: none reported.

War Memorial

10.12 Updates on maintenance work etc:

The Clerk reported that an email had been received from the company that last cleaned the war memorial to ask if the PC require cleaning prior to VE day. VE day was discussed briefly. Cllr Lawrence explained that VE day is an important day. Cllrs discussed VE day and agreed to hold a parish picnic.

ACTION

Cllr Morris will contact Cllrs to organise the picnic, refreshments and music. Cllr Cookson will send out a mailchimp with the date and time to residents.

11. To receive the latest Crime Report circulated by the Clerk:

The Clerk had circulated the crime reports for both January & February. There had been no reported incidents in the parish in either month.

12. To update on new PC Website:

Cllr Morris explained that it has come to light that the PC will need a hosting platform. (despite being advised by Shy Studios at the start of the project that they could host at a cost of approx.150usd a year). It was noted that Opalstack, who the PC are now paying an annual fee of £96, host only the emails. Cllr Morris had researched a company who could host the new website at a cost of approx. £200 a year inclusive.

ACTION

Cllr Morris will organise hosting and liaise with Shy Studios to get the website online prior to the next meeting.

13. FINANCE

The Clerk advised that she has recently renewed the contract with BT for Wifi in the Village hall with a saving of circa £10 a month.

Cllr Standbrook had circulated details to Clerk and Cllrs and advised that there is a slight rise in the two grounds contracts. Cllrs unanimously agreed to both for 2025.

It was noted that a grant had been received towards a new defib which will shortly be installed at The Beehive pub.

Cllr Morris agreed to submit his invoices by the end of the week for payment before the end of the financial year.

ACTION

Cllr Morris to submit invoices to the Clerk.

13.1 To discuss/agree using surveyor who could potentially cut business rates going forward on the pavilion:

The Clerk had emailed Cllrs more information prior to the meeting. It was agreed and approved for the Clerk to engage the services of the company.

ACTION

The Clerk will contact the surveyor to go ahead.

13.2 To approve latest accounts summary circulated by the Clerk:

Accounts unanimously approved and signed.

14. Items for future consideration:

To discuss a sign for front of village hall

ACTION – Clerk to add to May agenda.

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

Date approved - Wednesday 23rd April – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (APM)

It was agreed that refreshments will need to be purchased.

ACTION

Cllr Morris & Fellowes will liaise with Cllr Hunter to organise purchase of refreshments.

16. To close the meeting: Prior to the meeting closing, Cllr Deering made a specific comment that PC roles are not easy and he is appreciative of the efforts of all PC members and their voluntary help with village matters.

Cllr Morris closed the meeting at 10pm.