

UNAPPROVED

WIDFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Meeting Tuesday 12 January 2016 at 8pm in the Village Hall

PRESENT: Cllr Jill Buck, Chairman (JB); Cllr Barbara Edwards (BE); Cllr Glen Parcell (GP); Cllr Paul Riddle (PR); Cllr Neil Rogers (NR)

Five members of the public

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 8pm

16.00 Apologies for absence

1

1. Councillors: None – all present
2. Others: District Cllr R Brunton, on EHC business; Head Teacher Di Penn, attending another meeting. *Received after the meeting: County Cllr Roger Beeching, family matter*

ACTION

16.00 Declarations of Interest

2

Cllr J Buck declared a Pecuniary Interest in the planning notification for 12 Lambs Gardens, as the next door neighbour. Cllr Rogers declared an interest on Playing Field matters, his wife being Secretary of the Playing Field Committee, and on the planning application for 2 Benningfield Road due to living nearby.

16.00 Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, 10 November 2015

3

It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 10 November were a true and accurate record.**
The Chairman signed the Minutes.

16.00 Police report: None

4

16.00 Chairman's announcements: None

5

16.00 Planning

6

1. New Applications

Having declared a DPI on the following matter, Cllr Buck left the room at 8.15pm

3/15/2535/PNHH 12 Lambs Gardens: Single storey rear extension. Depth 3.6m, maximum height 3.2m, eaves height 2.8m

. *NO OBJECTIONS – BUT COMMENTS MADE*

Clerk

Cllr Buck returned to the meeting at 8.20pm

3/15/1793/FUL Land West of Wilmoor: RECONSULTATION

OBJECTIONS: . Repeating those of September 2015, adding additional concerns

Clerk

3/15/2496/FUL 2 Benningfield Road: Single storey front and rear extensions and two storey side extension to facilitate subdivision of house into two dwellings

. *NO OBJECTIONS – BUT COMMENTS MADE*

Clerk

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2. Decision Notices

AP/15/0084/REFUSE 3/15/0854/HH 1 Poets Gate: Two storey side extension. **Planning Appeal** to The Planning Inspectorate
DECISION AWAITED

3/15/2104/FUL Youngs Little Acre, Medcalf Hill: Siting of 2 refrigerated units (Retrospective). **REFUSED** – *inappropriate in the rural area; GBC2, GBC3, ENV1*

3/15/2095/LBC Westbury, 46 Bell Lane: Removal and replacement of 4 windows to cure condensation and water penetration of existing metal frames.
GRANTED

3/15/2055/FUL Greenacres, Ware Road: Erection of 2 No 3 bedroomed dwellings with garages with access from Ware Road – Amended scheme
REFUSED *contrary to policies ENV1 and BH6*

3/15/2040/FUL Priory Farm: Erection of 1 detached dwelling with detached double bay garage and associated works
WITHDRAWN

3/15/1810/FUL Chestnut Tree Cottage, Nether Street: Demolition of existing garage, replace with proposed outbuilding to provide garage/store and annexe
WITHDRAWN

3/15/0507/LBC Adams Farm: Alterations to layout and fenestration from previous application 3/09/1344/LB to form 3 dwelling houses
DECISION AWAITED

The Clerk reported that EHC had confirmed the 'decision waiting' status was due to the Listed Building designation waiting to be lifted on what was in reality a re-build. It was noted that there are 4 front doors on what was approved as 3 dwellings. The Clerk to check with the Planning Officer

Clerk

3. Other planning matters: including matters received too late for the agenda:

1. Late applications: None

2. Draft SLAA Round 3 sites consultation: It was agreed to add a note of explanation and to put the documents on the website

Clerk/P
R

3. Pegs Lane update: Nothing to report. It was noted that some concern had been expressed about guard dogs.

16.00 Finance 7

1. The report of the Council's finances for 1 Oct to 31 Dec was received (Appendix A)

Finance Summary from 1 Oct to 31 December

£

Opening available balance 1 November: 10,354.88

Plus income to 31 December: 758.40

Minus expenditure to 31 December: 3,724.81

Minus previous months' cheques presented to 31 December 0.00

Balance available to Council 31 December 7,388.47

Plus unrepresented Oct/Dec cheques as at 31 December 226.52

Bank balance reconciled with statement #317, 31 Dec 2015 7,614.99

Clerk

It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Accounts Statement be**

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accepted.

The Clerk said an accounts summary is published in the Minutes on the website

2. Reconciliation of Accounts and bank statement

In accordance with new Financial Regulations and the Transparency Code, Cllr Parcell checked, verified and signed that the Accounts and bank statement reconciled. It was noted that the Parish Council has only one bank account and only uses only one cheque book at a time. It was unanimously

RESOLVED to accept the reconciliation of the Accounts and bank statement.

GP/Clerk

3. Current financial position against the budget

The Clerk presented a report based on actual income and expenditure to 12 January and the anticipated financial expenditure for the remainder of the fiscal year. The projected bank balance at year-end of £4,027 included £253 unanticipated expenditure since the last meeting. This is an over-spend of £300 against budget which, considering unanticipated essential safety work at the closed churchyard, represented a considerable achievement. The Clerk reminded the Council of the need to retain reasonable reserves. It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the current financial position be accepted.**

Clerk

4. Village Hall hire payment. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to pay an additional £12 for 3 hours use of the Hall over and above those booked.**

Clerk

5. List of payments. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to approve all the invoices presented for payment:**

Clerk

Date	Payee	Item	£	Chq	Power
17/1 1	Land Reg (Cllr P Riddle)	Title copy reimburse	23.94	946	LGA 1972 s111
17/1 1	D P Electrics	Churchyard light	180.0 0	947	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
19/1 1	Community Land Use	Consultation N/Plan	200.0 0	948	NP(G)R 2012
25/1 1	Herts Air Amb	Grant	50.00	949	LGA 1972 s137
26/1 1	D Jarrett	Clear blocked path	67.50	950	LGA 1972 s137
30/1 1	Clerk	Salary November	225.0 0	951	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A), & s151; LA 2011 s41
1/12	J English	Litter 7/11-28/11	105.7 6	952	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
8/12	D Jarrett	Churchyard tree	360.0 0	953	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
21/1 2	J English	Litter 28/11- 26/12	105.7 6	954	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
31/1 2	Clerk	Salary December	226.5 2	955	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A), & s151; LA 2011 s41
5/1	HMRC	PAYE (Month 9)	169.0 0	956	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A), & s151; LA 2011 s41
12/1	Clerk	Travel/phone exp Nov/Dec	28.65	957	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A), & s151; LA 2011 s41
12/1	Clerk Petty cash	Office expenses	25.09	958	LGA 1972 s111

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12/1	Village Hall	Hall Hire 2015	88.00	959	LGA 1972 s111
12/1	SLCC (Clerk)	Annual membership (1/3 rd) reimburse	49.66	960	LGA 1972 s111
12/1	HAPTC	Delegate fee	35.00	961	LGA 1972 s111
12/1	Cancelled	Cancelled		962	
12/1	Cancelled	Substituted chq 965		963	
18/1	Namesco (Cllr P Riddle)	Domain renewal reimburse	119.88	965	LGA 1972 s111

Cheques were signed at the end of the meeting.

6. Transparency Fund – additional grant application

The Clerk reported he had applied for an additional grant for Microsoft Word and Excel software and for a wireless keyboard and mouse, for ease of working. Should the application be rejected, the Clerk agreed to investigate alternative free software options.

**Clerk/P
R**

7. Sector Led Body Audit Procurement

It was unanimously **RESOLVED to opt IN to the SLB arrangement.**

Clerk

8. Dangerous lime tree in Closed Churchyard

Upon the advice of the tree surgeon, and subject to checking TPO status and contacting the PCC, it was unanimously **RESOLVED to accept D Jarrett's quote of £460 (excl VAT) to remove the dangerous lime tree from the Closed Churchyard.** The Chairman to contact and advise the PCC.

**Clerk/J
B**

9. CiLCA

It was unanimously **RESOLVED to support the Clerk completing his CiLCA portfolio by allowing time and defraying expenses (shared with two other councils).** The agreement form for HAPTC was signed by the Chairman.

Clerk

10. Budget and Precept for 2016/17

The Clerk presented a draft budget and precept for consideration by members. Including the recently recommended reserves levels, the figures gave a shortfall of approximately £225. The cost of a defibrillator case and installation was discussed, being estimated at approximately £750, which had not been specifically built into the budget. It was provisionally agreed to increase the precept by £750 to £9,250, but the Council agreed to meet informally as soon as possible to consider the impact of that and to explore what other budget options might be available. The Clerk reminded the Council that EHC have yet to confirm the 2016/17 New Homes Bonus award.

**Clerk/
ALL**

Clerk's note: If, following the informal discussion, the final budget and precept are different from the agreed figures above, an extra-ordinary Parish Council meeting will be called to publicly agree the Budget and Precept.

**JB/Cler
k**

16.00 Correspondence

8

The list of correspondence was noted as it appeared on the Agenda:

Gigaclear: Broadband provision for Widford area and East Herts (16.011)

EHC: Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) consultation open until 24 January

HAPTC: Sector Led Body for audit procurement (16.007.6)

EHC: Village Hall and Community Building Conference, 2 December, Hunsdon VH

EHC, Catherine Horsley: Electoral matters

EHC: Gulley cleaning and dig-out programme

Residents, Hertfordshire Police, HCC Highways: re Benningfield Green*

Various correspondence regarding planning applications

EHC: District Planning Bulletin No 20

EHC: Draft SLAA - Round 3 sites. Comments deadline 31 January (16.006.3.2)

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Herts Air Ambulance: Thank you for £50 donation
EHC: Consultation draft Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy (16.016)
HCC: School taxi passenger assists withdrawal consultation (16.016)
Cllr R Brunton: Dist Planning Panel 17 Dec Hunsdon re Village Hierarchy study
EHC: East Herts Network News, January 2016
HCC: Adoption of Waste Local Plan, Employment Land Areas of Search, Supp Planning
HCC: Traffic & Transport Data Report 2015 (based on 2014 data)

*It was agreed that the Chairman and the Clerk would draft a letter to residents re parking and driving over Benningfield Green

JB/Clerk

16.00 9 Village Reports

1. Village Hall:

Cllr Paul Riddle reported:

- ⌚ A signed copy of the AGM Minutes, 9th November, was handed to the Clerk.
- ⌚ Fit Steps cannot start until 7.15pm, therefore cannot finish until 8.15. Since the music interferes with the Council's meetings it was agreed for the matter to be raised at the next VH meeting.
- ⌚ It was noted that redecoration was underway.
- ⌚ It was noted that two music events are planned for the Spring – these have been very successful in the past.
- ⌚ The Calendar raised £200

PR

- ⌚ Concerning the boundary wall between the hall and the resident's property, the VH are happy for the resident to keep the land. However it needs to be established who is responsible in law to change or confirm the boundary. Clerk to look at the deeds or get advice.

Clerk

2. Allotments:

- ⌚ Cllr Babs Edwards provided a comprehensive report of the present state of the allotments and its tenants, and the options open to the Council for their future financing and management. A meeting was held that was attended by only two tenants. She said there will be one more attempt to agree a way forward with the allotment holders. Decisions to be confirmed at the next meeting.

BE/JB

There was a unanimous vote of thanks to Cllr Edwards for the considerable amount of work undertaken in preparing the report (attached as Appendix).

3. Playing Field:

- ⌚ Next PF Committee meeting was on the 13th January and therefore there was nothing to report.

NR

16.01 0 Highways, footpaths and byways

1. C Cllr R Beeching and D Cllr R Brunton. No report in their absence. It was agreed to make these reports a separate agenda item in future since their scope extends beyond highways and footpaths.

Clerk

2. Footways and kerbs: No progress to report

3. Footway and verge opposite Ash View: It was agreed to see how this is dealt with once the trimming programme gets underway.

JB

4. FP18 – dead trees: The Chairman confirmed these had been dealt with.

5. FP25 - Damaged bridge: The Chairman confirmed the repairs had been done.

Reporting on the Modification Order (FP18 etc), the Chairman said the

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Planning Inspector, in his interim report, had not upheld the proposal for the second half of the plan.

16.01 Website and Broadband

1

- ⌚ **Website:** Cllr Riddle reported that the Parish Council's website is up to date. He would welcome any suggestions for headlines or other content.
- ⌚ Usage is increasing dramatically – excellent news.
- ⌚ **Broadband:** BT will be laying super fast broadband fibre into Widford's "green boxes" by 2017.
- ⌚ Gigaclear are coming through the valley and will supply to every house if the requisite number of households (35%) sign up for it. Gigaclear's proposals will happen potentially sooner than BT and is predicting faster speeds. It is recognised that a fast broadband connection adds value to a property.

16.01 Neighbourhood Plan

2

It is uncertain what the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan will be at this stage, or whether all the costs could be covered. Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED to convene a public meeting to gauge whether the community wanted to produce a Plan.**

PR/Clerk

16.01 Defibrillator

3

The financial aspects were debated in the budget under Finance (16.007.10). Ongoing maintenance costs and training are to be considered. A location has to be agreed and whether a battery or mains powered device is more appropriate. Mrs Jenny Miller will continue to follow up, keeping the Council informed by liaising with the Chairman.

JM/JB

16.01 Stop Harlow North: Nothing to report

4

16.01 Chapel House/Common Land 238

5

An amicable agreement has been reached with the owner of Chapel House regarding the location of the boundary between the property and CL238

16.01 HCC Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy consultation and School taxi passenger assists withdrawal consultation:

6

The consultation documents are being passed round for councillors to consider responses - deadlines 24 January and 31 January respectively.

ALL

16.01 Governance documents

7

As part of the Parish Council's ongoing governance review, it was unanimously **RESOLVED to adopt the following five policies/procedure:**

Clerk

1. **Staffing Committee Terms of Reference**
2. **Grievance Procedure**
3. **Disciplinary Procedure**
4. **Grants policy**
5. **Equality & Diversity policy**

All these documents will be published on the Parish Council website.

PR

16.01 Urgent matters received too late for inclusion on this agenda:


8

- ⌚ The junction of Bell Lane and Ware Road junction is permanently dangerous due to lack of maintenance. It was agreed to report this to Cllr Roger Beeching. The Chairman agreed to produce a sketch to avoid any misunderstanding as to location.

JB

16.01 Items for future agendas:

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- 9  Future County Cllr and District Cllr reports – agreed under Correspondence above

The Chairman said she would suspend the meeting if parishioners had any further comments to make

There were none

16.02 Calendar of meetings and Date of next Parish Council Meeting

- 0 1. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to accept the Calendar of Meetings for 2017**

2. The Annual meeting of the Parish will be Tuesday 1st March 2016 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

3. The next Parish Council Meeting will follow the Annual Meeting of the Parish

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 10.35pm.

Signed.....Dated.....

APPENDIX

Widford Allotments

Report to the Parish Council, 12th January 2016

Synopsis.

1) It is incumbent upon the PC to provide allotments if 6 parishioners or more wish to rent them and make known their wishes but it is the duty of the Allotment Committee to maintain and manage them.

2) The allotments were inaugurated in 1980 with 24 plots.

3) A set of rules governs the Tenancy of the allotments and according to these there should be 3 members of the PC on the Allotment Committee one of whom should be the Chairman (not the case at present) and 2 representatives from the allotment gardeners.

4) It must be said that the allotments are not easily accessed. Also, the land is difficult to work, sloping away to the west and therefore given to waterlogging.

6) The Allotment Committee has consistently found it difficult to let all of the plots and to manage negligent plot holders. Sanctions have rarely been imposed on offenders. Since there has never been a waiting list for plots the threat of withdrawing one and giving it to a more conscientious gardener is valueless.

7) For a number of years plots were rented out for grazing at a peppercorn rent but this is no longer the case.

8) The heyday of the allotments appears to have been in 2009 when only 4 plots were vacant, grazing rites were still in place, trees were planted and a feeling of optimism seems to have prevailed.

9) The state of affairs in 2015 is -

8 plots vacant
18 plots let

However, only a handful (5 or 6) plots are being worked proactively and the others are either poorly maintained or completely abandoned. Divisions between some of the plots are undefined and there is a general air of neglect.

10) Water is provided from April to Oct and at the end of March 2015 the Committee reported a balance of £815 on its books.

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11) At the AGM the allotment holders were reported to be unhappy with the considerable amount of money being spent by the PC on clearing and tidying the site, thinking it wasteful. They had in fact employed someone to maintain general areas themselves.

12) With the allotments in dire need of attention and an inability to attract new holders the PC personally invited plot holders to meet with councillors to discuss matters. 2 plot holders attended and 2 sent apologies.

13) The PC feels that the time has now come to decide how to move forward regarding the allotments.

14) Part of the village precept currently goes towards maintaining the allotments and more would be needed to return them to viability. It could be said that we are asking villagers to subsidise an amenity of diminishing value which benefits only a small number of villagers.

The net cost (ie expenditure minus rental income) to the village for 2014-2015 was £504.

In 2015 - 2016 it is projected to be £70. The cost in the draft budget for 2016-2017 is expected to be £480.

But what to do ?

15) As the Clerk would emphasise, we do not need to do anything. We could just let the Allotment Committee carry on with fewer and fewer plots being taken up and worked productively - we have no commitment to do anything else. Or the PC could step in and proactively offer the Committee more support in a last ditch effort to make the site viable.

16) Jill and I thought it was ,at least worthwhile canvassing the views of the plot holders as to their future needs expectations and intentions. We could then encourage the Committee to take appropriate and robust action when opinions are offered - or not as the case may be.

17) One obvious course of action would be to reduce the number of plots by putting those of poorest quality on the northern edge down to grass, tidy the site one last time and re advertise for new plot holders. Hoping that a more attractive appearance would elicit some response.

18) Another suggestion has been that we let each plot at £1 pa and then require the holders to maintain the allotments at their own expense, thus absolving the PC from further cost. The danger here being that very few would take their commitment seriously leaving the conscientious few to do all the work.

19) Conversely, we could greatly inflate rental fees but reduce them considerably to those who work their plots properly. This, admittedly could be very contentious and would require a strong line from the com.

20) In the event of insufficient (6) people wanting to retain their plots if we increase the rent,we could consider decommissioning the allotments letting nature take over the vacant land, thus requiring little maintenance.

21) Above all we should insist that the rules of tenancy be adhered to and sanctions strictly enforced when they are not.

Plan of allotments and rules of tenancy to follow.

CLlr Babs Edwards
12 January 2016