

# Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Meeting  
Tuesday 10th January 2017 at 7.45pm in the Village Hall



**PRESENT:** Cllr Jill Buck, Chairman (JB); Cllr Carol Blackett (CB); Cllr Barbara Edwards (BE);  
Cllr Glen Parcell (GP); Cllr Paul Riddle (PR)

C Cllr R Beeching and seven other members of the public

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.45pm

**ACTION**

**17.001 Apologies for absence:**

1. Councillors: Cllr Carol Blackett & Cllr Glen Parcell (*reasons given and accepted by the Council*)
2. Others: PCSO Steve Blanks, District Cllr R Brunton

**17.002 Declarations of Interest:**

1. Cllr B Edwards: non-pecuniary, her husband being Treasurer of the Playing Field Committee
2. a) and b) Written requests for dispensations: None

**17.003 Approval of Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 1st November 2016**

It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Minutes of the 1st November Parish Council Meeting were a true and accurate record.** The Chairman signed the Minutes.

**JB/Clerk**

**17.004 Police report:** PCSO Steve Blanks was unable to attend, but sent a report which was read out by the Clerk.

Crime Figures: between 12 October 2016 and 10 January 2017 there were two reported crimes in the Parish (compared to four in the same period last year). These comprised 1 x theft of motor vehicle and 1 x theft of straw bale.

The Parish remains a safe place to live and although we do not suffer a large volume of crime, we have still managed two fewer victims of crime against the same period a year ago

Other News: We are currently having issues with off road motor vehicles driving across fields within the East Herts rural area causing damage to drilled fields; this is mainly along the B1368 corridor from Braughing to Nuthampstead. Thankfully we have not experienced any further vehicle crime incidents and there are currently no emerging crime trends across the district and parish."

The Chairman commented that there have been an ongoing number of illegally and dangerously parked vehicles in and around the Benningfield Road/Benningfield Green area which have been reported to the police, both by the Parish Council and by residents. However, to everyone's annoyance and frustration, no police action has been apparent. The Chairman encouraged any parking violations to be reported immediately to the police in the hope that they will come by while the vehicles are still in situ, and also on the principle that the more complaints the police receive, the more likely they are to increase their drive-by visits to the parish.

**17.005 Chairman's announcements:** None

**17.006 Planning**

**1. New Applications: NONE**

**3/16/2693/FUL Greenacres:** Erection of 1no. 2-bedroomed dwelling with access from Ware Road. *NO OBJECTIONS, but comments made re the village boundary and site development*

**Clerk**

**3/16/2504/FUL Wilmoor:** Construction of 2no detached 3-bedroom houses and 4no 4-bedroom detached houses, plus garages etc. **GRANTED**

**2. Decision Notices**

**3/16/2416/HH & 2488/LBC Walnut Tree Lodge:** Single storey side/rear extension. **GRANTED**

**3/16/2200/HH Yew Tree House, Hunsdon Road: Amendment to 3/16/1399/HH** Two storey front extension, porch and gates. **AMENDMENT GRANTED**

**3/16/2131/VAR Wilmoor:** Variation of Condition 2 of LPA 3/14/0629/FP. Construct a terrace of 3 three bedroom houses and a pair of semi-detached two bedroom houses: **Alterations to approved fenestration, porches and materials.** **VARIATION CONDITION GRANTED**

**3/16/0325/FUL Priory Farm House:** Demolition of existing barn. Reconstruction of new barn, new gravel driveway and new post & rail fence.

**AP/16/0079/REFUSE:** Refusal decision **APPEALED to Secretary of State.** **APPEAL DISMISSED**

**E/16/0305/ENF Priory Farm:** Planning Enforcement investigation into possible unauthorised track and field work in breach of planning control. **NO BREACH IDENTIFIED. CASE CLOSED**

**3/16/1164/FUL Land South of Martlets:** Erection of 1no 5 bedroomed dwelling, 5no 4 bedroomed dwellings, 5no 3 bedroomed dwellings, 5no 2 bedroomed dwellings and 2no 1 bedroomed dwellings, and associated works. **GRANTED SUBJECT TO s106 AGREEMENT**

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

**1. Late notifications:**

**3/17/0002/FUL & 0003/LBC Widfordbury Farm, Ware Road:** Alterations to and change of use of 1) modern agricultural building to B1: light industrial 2) western range of agricultural buildings and granary to B1:office and 3) eastern range of agricultural buildings to dual use office/residential . Demolition of existing sheds and covered yard. Partial infilling and regrading of former slurry pit to provide balancing pond and associated landscaping.

*Since notification of this application had only been received on the day of the meeting, it was agreed to defer making comments until councillors had been able to look at it in more detail.*

**By 31 Jan  
ALL/  
Clerk**

**2. Other matters**

**Martlets:** No further news had been received regarding the s106 agreement.

**17.007 Report by County Cllr Roger Beeching.**

**1 Highways.** Over the Christmas and New Year period, HCC Transport Division made 6 gritting runs, putting down 1,800 tonnes of salt, covering over 14,000 km of roadway. Supplies now restocked with 12,200 tonnes in store and all 1,000 HCC salt bins filled, plus all 58 gritting lorries.

**2 Overview of Scrutiny Committee.** Topic Groups completed: Crime and Disorder; Herts Waste Partnership; Public Health Budgets; a report published by the Herts Safeguarding Children Board; the Monitoring & Recommendations Topics Group was signed off (ie, recommendations were carried out); Care Pathways; Children in Care Council; Herts Care Quality Standard; Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs); Public Health Integration.

**3 Comments from the Chief Social Worker for England.** Isabelle Trowler said: "... the Herculean effort Hertfordshire has made with the partnership in the last 18 months to implement this innovative project is impressive. The outcomes when evidenced by the evaluation study, will ricochet round the social care in England." "It is important we learn from what they have done, the impact on care framework in child protection on the national system will be profound. I think Hertfordshire might just be our national treasure."

Cllr Beeching noted that the CWS is not normally given to effusive praise. This refers to HCC's multi-disciplinary child protection service. Children's social workers have sat beside professionals in mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and misuse, and domestic abuse. The result is that fewer child protection plans are needed, fewer children coming into the care of the Council, and more children growing up in stable and safe homes. Over the year, family safeguarding teams working with families like this have reduced call-outs to police re domestic abuse to 67% of previous levels, and children's attendance at school is up by 36%. The number of children involved was previously about 1600, now reduced to about 900.

**4 Finance for 2017 to 2018 and beyond.** I will detail this more at the end of the month. But there is great difficulty balancing the books due to pressures on the budget of Social Services because of demographic changes and the distribution of NHS and CCG (Clinical Commissioning Groups) budgets. Budget finalisation due by mid-end of February.

**17.008 Neighbourhood Plan:** It was noted that a public meeting will be held on 12th January at 7.30pm in the Village Hall to consider whether to produce a Plan. Addressing the meeting will be the East Herts Senior Planning Officer and an independent Neighbourhood Plan consultant. There will be ample opportunity at the meeting for discussion in a Q&A session and hopefully all points will be addressed, including the comments made in the Pre-submission Consultation to the emerging District Plan where the Parish Council requested that the village boundary be redefined. It was emphasised that this will not be a Parish Council meeting, nor would a Neighbourhood Plan be a Council project, but rather a community project in which the Parish Council will necessarily participate.

**17.009 Finance**

1. The report of the Council’s finances for 1 Nov to – 31 Dec was received (Appendix A)  
 Finance Summary from 1 November to 31 December

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
|  | £                      |
| <b>Opening bank balance 1 November</b>                             | <b>10,147.22</b>       |
| Plus income to 31 December   | 415.94                 |
| Minus expenditure to 31 December                                   | <u>1,811.90</u>        |
|  | 8,751.26               |
| Minus previous months’ cheques cashed in period                    | <u>225.00</u>          |
| <b>Balance available to Council 31 December (cashbook balance)</b> | <b>8,526.26</b>        |
| Plus unpresented cheques as at 31 December                         | <u>230.40</u>          |
| <b>Bank balance reconciled with statement, 31 December 2016</b>    | <b><u>8,756.66</u></b> |

Reconciliation of the Accounts to the bank statement was noted and it was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Accounts Statement be accepted.**

The bank statement and accounts reconciliation was not signed as no non-signatory parish councillor was present.

**2. List of payments.** It was unanimously **RESOLVED to approve all the payments as listed**

Clerk

| Date  | Payee                  | Item                             | £             | Chq  | Power                                      |
|-------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|------|--|
| 26/11 | D Jarrett              | FP18 clearance                   | 48.00         | 1043 | OSA 1906 s9 & s10                          |
| 26/11 | J English              | Litterpick to 26/11              | 105.76        | 1044 | OSA 1906 s9 & s10                          |
| 29/11 | Clerk                  | SLCC subs 1/3rd                  | 46.50         | 1045 | LGA 1972 s111                              |
| 29/11 | Clerk                  | Salary November                  | 225.00        | 1046 | LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A) & s151; LA 2011 s41 |
| 21/12 | J English              | Litterpick to 24/12              | 105.76        | 1047 | OSA 1906 s9 & s10                          |
| 21/12 | Clerk                  | Salary December                  | 471.69        | 1048 | LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A) & s151; LA 2011 s41 |
| 21/12 | HMRC                   | PAYE 3rd quarter                 | 230.40        | 1049 | LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A) & s151; LA 2011 s41 |
| 2/1   | LCPAS                  | Annual subscription              | 100.00        | 1050 | LGA 1972 s111                              |
| 10/1  | P Riddle reimbursement | Annual website hosting (Namesco) | 119.88        | 1051 | LGA 1972 s111                              |
| 10/1  | Clerk                  | Travel/phone exp Nov/December    | 45.85         | 1052 | LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A) & s151; LA 2011 s41 |
| 10/1  | Clerk Petty Cash       | Petty cash Nov/Dec               | 17.28         | 1053 | LGA 1972 s111                              |
| 10/1  | D Jarrett              | Churchyard sycamore              | 780.00        | 1054 | OSA 1906 s9 & s10                          |
| 10/1  | Broxap Ltd             | Dog bin FP18                     | 180.00        | 1055 | OSA 1906 s9 & s10                          |
| 10/1  | J English              | Litterpick to 21/1               | 105.76        | 1056 | OSA 1906 s9 & s10                          |
| 10/1  | Comm Land Use          | N/Plan consultant                | 175.00        | 1057 | NP(G)R 2012                                |
| 10/1  | A Marks                | Fixing computer virus            | 30.00         | 1058 | LGA 1972 s111                              |
|       |                        | <b>VAT included</b>              | <b>187.98</b> |      |  |

Cheques for 10th January were signed at the end of the meeting.

**3. Budget and Precept: 2016/17** The Clerk presented the current financial position against budget, and the projected bank balance at year-end, 31 March 2017. This showed an anticipated year-end balance of £5,455, against a budgeted balance of £6,202 (including £500 ringfenced for the F Cooper churchyard seat). The deficit against budget is mainly attributable to unprecedented and unanticipated parish maintenance expenditure in the closed churchyard

during the current year. It was noted that a grant of £397.84 has been awarded through HAPTC to cover the extra administration cost of the Clerk complying with the Government's Transparency legislation during 2016/17. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to accept the 2016/17 budget report.**

ALL

**2017/18 Budget and Precept for 2017/18:** The Clerk presented possible options for a budget. Concerns were expressed that the projected balance at year-end 31 March 2018 presented inadequate reserves to deal with unforeseen further expenditure, particularly at the allotments and the closed churchyard. (The Clerk noted that the Closed Churchyard is entirely the Parish Council's responsibility and that had East Herts taken on that role, their policy would be to recover maintenance costs through the Parish's council tax). Also, if a Neighbourhood Plan is agreed, the budget may have to increase by as much as £3,000 a year for the next three years, which would have to be added to the precept. If precept increase capping (possibly at 2%) was to be introduced for parish councils, as reported at the November meeting, the PC would not be able to meet its financial obligations with its present levels of reserves. The Clerk advised that in any event, the Council's reserves should always represent at least 50% of its turnover and that present reserves do not meet this requirement.

**17.011.2.2** At this point it was agreed to bring forward **agenda item 17.011.2.2** for allotments fencing since its cost has a bearing on considerations for both the budget and precept : The PC has applied to EHC for a grant of £875 to cover the cost of additional fencing to deal with the problems of horses and dogs from the neighbouring property. EHC's decision is not expected for another two weeks. If the grant is refused, it was **RESOLVED to apply to the PWLB for a loan to cover the cost of the fence.** The Clerk noted that loans cannot be applied for retrospectively and therefore no work could be started until a loan was approved.

Clerk

**The agenda returned to item 17.009.3.** It was then proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED that, unless the vote at the Neighbourhood Plan meeting on 12th January called for the production of a Plan that would necessitate the precept being increased to cover its cost, the precept for 2017/18 be set at £10,000.** The Clerk advised the Council that if the Neighbourhood Plan vote necessitated a higher/different precept being set, an Extra-ordinary Parish Council Meeting will have to be called to agree that no later than mid-February for the required precept advice to be sent to East Herts.

Clerk

Clerk

## **17.010 Correspondence**

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

- Planning Progress: Offer of services for neighbourhood plan
- SHN: Concerns about MHPC position and reported comments at its November meeting
- EHC: Priory Farm Enforcement report - no breach of building control identified (17.006.2)
- Herts Highways: Solar speed signs criteria, cost etc (17.012.2.3)
- Land Registry and solicitors re Village Hall Title wording and boundary line
- BT: new 1DSLAM cabinet proposal on Benningfield Green (17.013)
- HCC Rights of Way Map Officer: Interim decision on Restricted Byway at Sewage Works
- EHC: Council Tax base 2017/18 and provisional NHB notice
- HCC: Traffic & Transport Data Report 2016 (based on 2015 data) (17.012.2.4)
- NatWest Bank: Review of money laundering account information

## **17.011 Village Reports**

### **1. Village Hall:**

#### **1. Report:**

- The Finances are healthy with a total of £7.5k in the current and deposit accounts.
- The Comedy Night on 3rd December raised £600.
- A feasibility study is looking at moving the stage to one side of the Hall rather than at the end to create a more inclusive atmosphere for the audience.

Clerk

- #### **2.**
- The Land Registry error that incorrectly recorded the trustees on the title deed in 2002 is being pursued by the solicitor (although the legal firm that was involved no longer exists, having been taken over some years ago).

Clerk

**2. Allotments:**

**1. Report:**

- Carmel is planning to erect her new fencing next week
- A dog roaming the allotments was taken to the pound – owner is not known.
- Cllr Edwards raised the possibility of having to raise the rent next year. To be considered at the March Council meeting.
- See note under 17.012.1.1 below about the allotments hedge that borders FP18.

BE/JB/  
ALL/Clerk

**2. Fencing:** discussed under agenda item 17.009.3 above.

**3. Playing Field**

- 1. Report:** None received. The location of a possible phone mast is being discussed. It is noted that another company has offered to erect a mast at another site nearby.
- 2. Grant:** In view of the Playing Field Committee’s reasonably healthy bank balance and the PFC not having heavy financial commitments, it was agreed to not make a grant for 2017/18 (nor retrospectively for 2016/17). However, a grant would be considered for 2018/19 upon receipt of an application in accordance with the Council’s Grants Award Policy and at the appropriate time.
- 3. Dog Bin cleaning contract:** It was agreed to review the arrangement for the dog bin cleaning cost/contract for this at the March PC meeting.

Clerk/  
ALL

**4. Closed Churchyard**

- 1. Diseased sycamore tree:** In hand with tree surgeon David Jarrett
- 2. The Risk Assessment** was received. It was noted that there is a perceived risk regarding the large memorial for the Wiseman family, which is leaning and, being very tall would be dangerous if it were to topple over. The probability is unlikely, but the severity of an outcome is high. There are no known family connections left in the parish. It was noted that the ground around the monument has sunk considerably and may need to be stabilized. It was observed that a cement wedge was inserted at some point in the past, presumably to prevent the monument leaning further. It was agreed for a builder, and possibly a memorial mason, to quote for straighten up the monument.

Clerk/JB

*See the next item for FP16 through the churchyard.*

**17.012 Highways, footpaths and byways**

**1. Footways and kerbs:**

- 1. FP18** beside the allotments: The trees and hedgerow that were falling into the footpath have now been cleared by David Jarrett. He is also quoting for dealing with the dead trees in the hedgerow and cutting the hedge on the allotments side.
- 2. Dog Bin** for FP18. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to ratify the decision to install a dog bin by FP18 near the allotments gate at the location approved by the EHC dog bin cleaning contractor.** The bin will be delivered at the end of the month.
- 3. Modification Order 2011, sewage works:** update. Nothing to report.

JB/Clerk

Clerk/JB

**2. Highways:**

- 1. Caravan** parked in layby: Still missing; no further report.
- 2. Damage** to Nether Street railings: Will be repaired by HCC next financial year.
- 3. Solar Speed** signs: Nothing to report.
- 4. HCC Traffic & Transport Data Report 2016** (based on 2015 data) was received for members to read and then pass on.
- 5. Other matters:** Parking violations should be reported, with photos, to the police

ALL

**17.013 Website and Broadband:**

- **Broadband:** Cllrs Jill Buck, Paul Riddle and the Clerk met with BT Openreach just before Christmas to consider the best location for their new 1SLAMM cabinet on Benningfield Green. It was agreed for it to be cited beside the garage of Rose Cottage, at a suitable distance, and set towards the back of the Green. The occupier of Rose Cottage was also in attendance. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to sign the wayleave agreement accordingly.**

JB/PR/  
Clerk

- No further updates from Gigaclear.
- **Website:** All up to date.

**17.014 Urgent matters** received too late for inclusion on this agenda:  
 There had been a request for the PC to consider online banking. The Clerk said this was now permissible under new government legislation. He agreed to contact the bank to set up the necessary mandate changes. Since the Council must have a multi-signatory account, there will have to be an arrangement in place for two signatories to approve online or BACS payments. Alternatively, standing orders can be set up for regular payments.

**17.015 Items for future agendas.** AS raised in the meeting:

- Allotments rent
- Playing Field dog bin contract

At 9.32pm it was **RESOLVED to suspend the meeting for parishioners' comments**

- A parishioner was concerned that the cement grouting in the Priory Farm flint wall had not been properly or fully reinstated following the work there and requested that Planning Enforcement be asked to investigate.
- Carmel Holland said she would write with an item for the next agenda.

**Clerk**

**Clerk**

**The meeting was restored to order at 9.39pm**

**17.016 Date of next meetings:**

- Tuesday 7th March, 7.15pm: Annual Meeting of the Parish, followed by a refreshments interval and the March Parish Council Ordinary Meeting

**Clerk**

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.40pm.

**Signed.....Dated.....**