

WIDFORD

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Widford Parish
Tuesday 2 April 2019 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall**

PRESENT: Parish councillors Jill Buck, Babs Edwards and Michael Ripsher
11 members of the public, CC Eric Buckmaster and EHC representative, James Gardner

Cllr Jill Buck, being present and the Parish Council Chairman, chaired the meeting.

Minutes taken by Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council.

1 The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.30pm.

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr Paul Riddle, Cllr Carol Blackett, Sgt Duncan Wallace, PCSO Leon DeBruyn

3 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish, 6th March 2018

It was noted that the Parish Council had agreed at its Meeting on 1st May 2018 that the Minutes were an accurate record. It was then agreed by those present that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish held on 6th March 2018 were a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes.

4 Review of the year 2018/19 by Cllr Jill Buck, Chairman of the Parish Council

The Chairman gave the following report:

I believe that this last year has been like the famous Punch cartoon of the Curate's egg, good in parts. As a small Parish Council, the five members on the Committee, work well together exchanging ideas and discussing village issues to come to a common decision, while each has a specific responsibility for one aspect of our work. It is also good to report that the Parish Council is now at full strength. Sadly, some areas have seen little change, despite constantly contacting the Highways Department (Ringways) we have achieved few improvements to the poor upkeep of the roads, the pavements, and the hedgerows throughout the village. Although at this point, I would like to thank our County councillor Eric Buckmaster for his support, both emotionally and financially in our efforts to maintain our environment. We have also lost again, our newly re-acquired Community Public House; which is missed not only by long term residents but also newcomers who elected to move to the village partly because of what seemed to be a vibrant community. Thanks to a traffic survey immediately after Christmas the whole of the village has new thirty-mile signs but the long-discussed Speed Indicator Sign at the bottom of the hill into the village is still in discussion after some 18 months. However one issue beginning to cause increasing concern is traffic trying to avoid the A10 and cutting through from the A120 to the A414, eventually the Highways will have to accept that village roads will need improvements, it may be a vital link road for motorists but our narrow and single track lanes are not built for such use.

On the plus side the village has acquired an almost completed new bus shelter and is actively looking at ways of connecting the Allotments to a regular metered source of water. During the year we have adopted our official communication system to conform to the recent Data Protection Act, we have continued to notify the village residents of all the actions we are taking on their behalf via the village website, the parish magazine and notices around the village and we have responded to every concern or problem presented by village residents. We have hosted three open meetings in the village hall, so that residents can express their views on topics which most closely affected them; as well as working with two groups of villagers (the Village Hall and the Playing Field) to try to solve a long running conundrum. I cannot claim that everything we have done or attempted to do has been successful, but that on all occasions we have been open and transparent.

The village has enlarged with new neighbours and more expected as people move into Meadow Gardens and Primrose View, although with the final ratification of the 2018 District Plan, we are hoping for more protection from developers. During the coming year we anticipate many changes as the plans for Gilston Garden Town progress. Thanks to the generosity of both Hunsdon and Gilston Parish councils, Widford has been able to participate in all the discussions about the effect the 10,000 houses will have on this area and the changes proposed to Harlow and the A414. We have also registered our concerns on the possible plans for a quarry in Stansted Abbots. Next year seems to promise to be as equally busy and so I conclude by thanking our Councillors and our Parish clerk for all their hard work and dedication and support for myself.

Cllr Jill Buck

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5 Parish group reports

• Village Hall

Despite considerable efforts by the Committee, support at events is disappointingly low. Events planned are a Beatniks concert in April, a bingo evening, and a classic car weekend in September.

The roof needs repairing, and quotes are being sought for patching it, cost anticipated to be about £400.

• Allotments

The allotments are thriving, and all plots are taken – the most positive position for a long time, thanks to tremendous work by Cllr Babs Edwards. The allotments provide an excellent opportunity for parishioners across the age spectrum to be involved in healthy and worthwhile activities. However, the loss of the water supply is a big concern and how to resolve this is being investigated by the Parish Council. The soil is heavy clay and without water in the summer months it becomes unworkable. The only viable prospect for a permanent solution would be the connecting of a mains water supply by Affinity Water, the cost of which would be in the region of £10,000. A loan from the Public Works Loan Board is being looked at to cover this.

A parishioner suggested the allotments could be moved to the Playing Field site where there is already a water connection. He suggested there is enough land there and the soil is better quality and might be a better use of the land for recreational purposes. The present allotment site could be sold for development, which would remove the need for a loan. It was also suggested that there are alternative means of obtaining a water supply from existing sources.

There followed a lengthy debate about the possible advantages and disadvantages of this suggestion. The Chairman reminded everyone that the Parish Council is only the Custodian Trustee of the Playing Field and as such, has no jurisdiction or control over how it is managed. Therefore, the Playing Field Management Committee (ie, the trustees) would have to be willing to explore this suggestion, and the Charity Commission would also have to give its consent. There would almost certainly have to be the involvement of a knowledgeable solicitor to look at the deeds.

Since the Parish Council was not in session the Clerk said councillors could not make any commitment at this meeting. The Chairman said the Council would consider the matter at its next meeting in May.

6 Public Works Loan Board Loan

Following the discussion on agenda item 5, it was agreed to defer the proposed presentation for a PWLB loan to the May Parish Council meeting.

7 Parish Council Financial Report for 2018/19

Because the meeting was running late, the Chairman said the Parish Council's Financial Report would be deferred to the May Parish Council Meeting.

8 County and District Councillors' reports

County Councillor Annual report April 2019

We have had a number of consultations. Most recent and significant was **Minerals Local Plan Review** Which closed on 22 March. East Herts District Council objected to this and I voted against its inclusion in the draft plan. We haven't yet had any feedback on the responses, but Tarmac have issued a note to say they are reviewing the scale of operation. The scheme submitted as part of their representations to the Council has changes to the proposed boundaries of the site:

1. To remove the field to the west of Olives Farm from the Preferred Site to safeguard potential archaeological remains and maintain the historic setting; and
2. To change the boundary to the north east of the site, south of Olives Farm, to increase the standoffs to nearby heritage assets.

In addition to this, we have amended the boundary around Coldharbour Farm to the south west of the site, removing the farm from the proposed site.

Feedback I have seen so far from residents show concern that it will move the operation closer to the village of Stansted Abbots.

Minerals Local Plan Timetable

Season	Year	Key stages
Winter/spring	2017/18	Draft Plan Consultation
Winter/spring	2019	Proposed Submission
Summer	2019	Submission to Secretary of State
Autumn	2019	Examination
Summer	2020	Adoption of Minerals Local Plan

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Another earlier in the year was the A414 Consultation

This was broken into segments. The clear message is that it is not just about highways infrastructure but very much about modal shift, technology change and possible East to West rapid transit eg to make bus transportation quicker and easier. Any major Highways expenditure would have to be funded by further highways growth. In response to the consultation the Gilston Neighbourhood Plan Group requested a meeting to query the process by which the second river crossing of the Stort was selected. I attended as did your chairman along with Hunsdon and Gilston Chairmen, along with a Highways officer and Cabinet member for Growth and Infrastructure. Concerns remain that it will have the effect of cutting off Terlings Park from the rest of Gilston Village and will re-route the A414. East Herts officers have written to the site promoters to see if the scale of the junction at Terlings could be reconsidered through changing local priorities and for more detailed drawings to be provided for residents to aid understanding.

Housing Infrastructure Funding

The county council has applied for up to £171m of funding to deliver the sustainable travel infrastructure needed for the Harlow Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) project.

The government's Garden Towns programme, which has a vision that 60% of all journeys within, and to and from the development will be by sustainable transport –

The funding bid for Gilston includes proposals for:

- A walking, cycling and public transport link from Eastwick junction to Harlow town centre via the railway station.
- An additional road crossing over the River Stort, linking the A414 at Eastwick with a new roundabout north of the river then onwards to Edinburgh Way via River Way.

Princess Alexandra Hospital

On 7th March Princess Alexandra Hospital announced its preferred option to have a new build facility located to the East of Harlow near the proposed Junction 7A. They still have a lot of work to do in order to secure funding. They would hope for an announcement of support from the Government in the Autumn Statement this year. There would then need to be public consultations and if eventually approved there would be an anticipated construction period of around 3.5 years. This would compare favourably with a regeneration of the existing site which could take up to 7 years.

County Council and Social Care

As everyone is aware all councils will face considerable pressures in the next few years owing to the ageing population. The council will continue to look for efficiency savings and savings through contract tenders and commercial activities.

Old River Lane Proposals

The Planning application for a multi storey car park at Northgate End was approved in February. This is for around 540 spaces and is intended to free up the surface car park in the causeway for a regeneration of Bishop's Stortford Town Centre. This was also approved at Full Council on 5th March and now will pave the way for a multi-use Arts Centre, Residential premises of around 135, retail and restaurants, and new public realm. The Arts Centre will contain a 500 seat Theatre, 4 cinemas, food and beverage, studio, and Library.

Other Infrastructure included in East Herts in 2018 included the expansion of Herford Theatre to a 500-seat auditorium plus 3 cinema screens and new café and studio, to be completed in 2022. There will also be a refurbishment of Hartham Leisure Centre in Hertford, and in Bishops Stortford the existing Grange Paddocks will be replaced by a new leisure centre. All are going through either procurement processes or early stages of design and planning. Planning applications for the leisure centres are expected later this year.

At East Herts Full Council, councillors supported the appointment of Richard Cassidy who will take the helm as the new Chief Executive later this year (exact date TBC), following the departure of Liz Watts. Richard joins the team from Fenland District Council where he served for 15 years as their Corporate Director with responsibility for Community, Environment and Leisure. Richard brings with him a wealth of experience, having worked in local government for over 30 years at councils in London, Essex, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

Cllr Eric Buckmaster April 2019

9 East Herts Rural Police report for Widford Annual Meeting of the Parish, 2 April 2019

Stats from April 2018 – March 2019 below:

- Burglary – 5
- Criminal Damage – 4
- Threats to Damage – 1
- Non-Crime DV – 1
- Common Assault – 1

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ABH - 1
D.A. ABH – 1
Sexual Assault – 1
Public Order – 1
S4 Public Order – 1
Action Fraud – 1

Total crimes = 18

Increase in burglary's in last month with building sites being targeted (3 x Burglaries in March alone)

Sgt Duncan Wallace, 2 April 2019

10 Section 106

James Gardner of East Herts Council gave a presentation and explanation of how agreements for Section 106 funding work.

A development has to be of approximately 10 houses or more before the developer is required to enter into planning obligations (a S106 agreement) with the County and District Councils. Those with County will cover highways, schools, infrastructure etc, with the District covering sports, leisure, etc which will be driven by community needs where the intention is to mitigate any negative impact of development.

The historic external process for S106 funding was explained and compared to the new S106 Inclusion Process. The change of legislation means that projects attracting S106 funding now have to be specific and "oven ready". Ward and portfolio members now have input into applications to assess need and whether they will be sustainable in perpetuity.

From April/May, Jackie Bruce will be the East Herts Officer co-ordinating the process, which will include input from the developer, the S106 Steering Group, Community organisations, and the S106 Programme Manager, before being signed off by the EHC Deputy CEO upon completion of negotiations.

Mr Gardener left copies of the Section 106 Funding Application forms, as well as a 14-point list of the S106 Project Prioritised Criteria.

Questions were raised about the discrepancy between the minuted recommendations of the Planning Officer in September 2016 regarding S106 funds for various village groups, and the total absence of these (except for a small amount for the children's play area and hard standing) in the agreement that was signed a year later. Mr Gardner confirmed that the officers then in situ had now left and there is no paper trail that could confirm why changes were made to the final agreement. It is considered that the signatories to the 2017 agreement were correct and in order.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gardner for attending and he then left the meeting.

11 Open Forum

A parishioner raised three points:

1. Would the Parish Council consider negotiating with the land owner about the placement and timing of bird scarers, especially where placed next to footpaths and properties and timed to start at 6am.
2. About 10 years ago, the village voted not to have street lights on all night. However, one house leaves bright outside lights on all night. Since this is disturbing to neighbours, the legality of it was questioned.
3. Footpaths in the parish are being littered with discarded tissues. Can the perpetrator be traced and stopped?

Another parishioner raised concerns about dangerous parking on the slight bend on the B180 opposite Bell Lane. The Parish Council will make the police aware of the matter.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.30pm.

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