

# WIDFORD

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH

### Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Widford Parish Tuesday 6 March 2018 at 7pm in the Village Hall

**PRESENT:** Parish councillors Jill Buck, Carol Blackett, Babs Edwards, Paul Riddle.

PCSO Leon de Bruyn, Roger Beeching, Michael Young and 13 other members of the public.  
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 7pm.  
In her opening comments she said that Wheelie bin Speed Aware stickers were on the table at the back for anyone who wanted them, together with comment forms for the District Plan Modifications consultation.
- 2 Apologies for absence**  
Rev Mark Dunstan, Mr & Mrs Scott. *Apologies from District Cllr Robert Brunton were received after the meeting.*
- 3 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish, 7th March 2017**  
It was noted that the Parish Council had agreed at its Meeting on 2nd May 2017 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 7th March 2017 were a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes.
- 4 Review of the year 2017/18 by Cllr Jill Buck, Chairman of the Parish Council**  
The Chairman gave the following report:  
It says in your programme that I will now give you an account of the Parish Council's activities for the last year. Can I respectfully suggest that if you want to know exactly the extent of what the Parish Council does for the village, that you stay on for the Council Meeting following this Annual Parish meeting or come to the Parish Council Meetings on the 1st of May. Tonight's meeting is for the residents of the village and an opportunity for them to raise concerns about the village or their own organization that the Parish Council may not have addressed, so I will be as brief as possible.  
  
I will say however, that for a very small Parish Council I believe we work tremendously hard. We are basically unpaid volunteers who have exactly the same responsibilities and civil obligations as a much larger Parish and Town Councils (Ware for example) but without the money and the manpower. I should like to thank my fellow Councillors for their unstinting support (Paul Riddle, Babs Edwards and Carol Blackett) and of course our hardworking Clerk, Colin Marks, who not only looks after Widford but two other Parishes. And we still have a vacancy, so please consider stepping forward!  
  
During the last year the Parish Council has worked hard at raising the profile of this small village. Making sure that the District and County Councils are aware of the difficulties that a small village experiences - need I say more than water, sewerage, electricity, roads, pavements, pot holes and, increasingly, flytipping. We have had representation on the discussion and given input to the Draft District Plan and the present new consultations (please do not forget the forms on the front of the table if you want to respond to the Inspector's recommendations). We are represented on the Gilston Steering Group, and active with Hunsdon, Gilston and Eastwick Neighbourhood Group in pointing out that providing the proposed new Garden City with all its new facilities could have a detrimental effect on the surrounding villages. We unashamedly enlist the services of our District Councillor Bob Brunton, our new County Councillor Eric Buckmaster, and our MP Mark Prisk when the District Council appears not to have listened to our concerns. And we are proud to say that with their help we were able to get the Post Office Services in Hunsdon reinstated when there was a serious possibility that our nearest shop was on the point of closure.
- 5 Parish group reports**
  - **Widford School:** Report by Headteacher, Mrs Diane Penn  
Thankfully, the school is recovering from the recent flooding. We have a breakfast Club from 8am, but more pupils are needed to make up the numbers and we have lowered the age of taking in nursery children. Parents can receive up to 30 hours free childcare from County if they meet the qualifying criteria. At present

there are 48 full-time plus 9 part-time pupils, and numbers are dropping. Approximately 25% are from the village with the balance coming from far and wide. Unfortunately, there was not a good response for Open Day, which may have been due in part to the prohibitive cost of advertising it in the local press.

To address the point about poor publicity, it was recommended that an article in the local paper, rather than an advertisement, might provide a means of promoting the school at no cost and it was suggested that Mr Brickwood write an article for submission to the paper.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Penn, who is retiring soon, for all her time and efforts at the school, which has been very much appreciated by everyone.

- **Playing Field:** Report by trustee Marion Brown

Grant funding for play area equipment is being sought and the trustees would be interested to hear what sort of things parishioners would like. We are also looking for new funding ideas, for example a car boot sale. Basic maintenance costs for the Field are £1,300 a year, including £900 for the hedges.

At this point, Ian Brett asked if the Playing Field discussion could be broadened. He acknowledged recent emailed answers he had received that clarified the Parish Council's responsibilities and relationship to the Playing Field. At present the PF has about £4,000 in the bank, which, with no regular or guaranteed income established, will only last 3 or 4 years. Following an open discussion about the value of the Playing Field as a community asset, it was proposed, seconded and a vote carried that the Parish Council should consider increasing the precept by £1,000 to support maintenance costs. The Clerk pointed out that, as stated on the agenda, the Parish Council is not legally bound to act upon the vote and that the precept for 2018/19 has already been set. However, the Chairman said the request would naturally be considered at a later Parish Council meeting.

## **6 Parish Council Financial Report for 2017/18**

Because the meeting was running late, the Chairman said the Parish Council's Financial Report would be given to the Parish Council Meeting later in the evening.

## **7 County and District Councillors' reports:**

County Councillor Eric Buckmaster's report was deferred to the Parish Council Meeting later in the evening.

No report was received from District Councillor Robert Brunton

## **8 East Herts Rural Police Report**

PCSO Leon de Bruyn introduced himself by saying he had been with the Police for 13 years and was assigned to this area eight weeks ago from Sawbridgeworth. He acknowledged that speeding is a major concern for the village, and he offered to provide information of the DriveSafe Scheme that would enable residents to create their own team to combat traffic speed. He had been made aware that parking is a big issue, especially in the Benningfield Road area. In answer to a question he said that parking on a footway is a grey area in law, but the main principle is that the footway must not be obstructed to the extent that pedestrians and parents with buggies etc are forced to walk on the road. If there is such a problem, then report it via 101. He said that emailing him is not the best idea because he will only pick up emails when on duty and that may result in delay. On a general note, he said that hare coursing is not a problem for this parish although it is a serious issue in other parts of East Herts. PCSO de Bruyn said he would attend Parish Council meetings as and when he was able to do so.

## **9 An introduction to Health Watch Herts, by Community Ambassador Roger Beeching MBE JP**

Roger Beeching made the following presentation:

Thank you for inviting me along. I am Roger Beeching, Community Ambassador for Health Watch Hertfordshire. I have been a Town Councillor, District Councillor and County Councillor, and a NHS dentist for 37 years. I have worked on NHS scrutiny and as a Board Member of Health Watch Hertfordshire, have recently taken up the role of Community Ambassador for HWH.

HWH is the independent voice for health and social care in Hertfordshire and it is one of the 152 local health watches that form the Health Watch England national network. As Community Ambassador, I am the link between HWH and members of the community using NHS and social services locally. To do this I visit patient participation groups, WI centres for the elderly, and childrens' centres etc. I act as local ears and eyes listening to you, the consumer, and learning about your lived experiences. Gathering your feedback is an essential part of the role so we can provide information and evidence to the decision makers to help bring about changes and improvements.

We are like the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in many ways, trying to improve, where necessary, the quality of service for everyone and our sole purpose is make care a better experience for everyone if it is seen to be

needed. For this to be effective it is important we collect quality information, record it accurately, and feedback effectively. We have charitable status, are commissioned and funded by HCC, and being independent of the NHS and social services, we can hold the system to account. We cannot work with privately funded services unless they also provide NHS and social services themselves.

We have been granted statutory powers by the Government, including enter and view whereby volunteers trained by HWH, can go into NHS and social services premises to look at the environment in which clinical care is provided (but *not* to assess the quality of clinical care itself). We can make recommendations to the unit and there is a statutory period in which these must be answered and, possible, acted upon. We also work outside the County at PAH, Luton & Dunstable, Addenbrookes, and London.

It is important we hear from the public, that we receive your feedback via the comment cards, by phone, or by email.

In summary, your local health watch is here to help people find out about local health and social care services – that’s called *signposting*. To listen to what people want from their care and to feedback that back to the services and to the Government in order to improve things. We have a membership of 4,629 and between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017 our volunteers worked more than 2,000 hours on activities that included: attending 99 Board and Committee meetings and groups; 14 children and young peoples’ events; and taking views for 349 Polish community members. We visited 46 services, completed 16 enter and view visits, spoke to 866 people about their experience when making a complaint against NHS or social care. The insight of individual members of the public is essential to learn what is important to them and why they use – or do not use – certain services. It is only by understanding things from a patient’s perspective that we can influence the right changes that are needed.

To get involved providing feedback: Telephone 01707 275978; email [info@healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk); visit the website, [www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk) . Use the comment cards – these have two uses: comments, whether compliments or complaints, provide ideas for improvements; requests for information or for further help regarding treatment or experiences also give pointers for improvement. For an expert from the office to respond and to explore how a problem might be resolved, you will need to give a contact number or email address. It is important that all the information requested on the card is completed so that the office to compile accurate records and to form an overall picture of the local services provided.

You can get involved by becoming a member - membership is free, and you will receive a membership pack and a digital or printed newsletter that will open up opportunities to help shape local services.

Thank you for listening.

**10 An introduction to The Hundred Parishes Society, by Michael Young**

Mr Young gave a brief but interesting and enthusiastic report. Launched in 2014, the HPS is a registered charity that is run by volunteers and which covers 104 parishes in an area embracing parts of Hertfordshire, Essex and Suffolk that contains the richest vestiges of the cultural heritage of England. This area contains 40% more listed buildings (6,700) than any other part of the country or National Park.

The HPS endeavours to raise awareness of this heritage and has a website with photographs and potted history of each parish. A guide book is currently in production. Membership stands at about 100, comprising 20 parishes and 80 individuals. The Society is just solvent, but more members would be most welcome.

**11 Open Forum**

In view of the number of exchanges that had taken place during the meeting and because it had considerably over-run its allotted time, the Chairman proposed that there be no further questions or discussion.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30pm. She announced there would be a short refreshment break before the commencement of the March Parish Council Meeting.

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