

WHEATHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on 22nd December 2008 in the Hewitt Room at the Memorial Hall.

Present: Cllrs. K. Stammers (Chairman), I. Begg, A. Brewster, G. Clark, N.D.Clements, L. Hobden, J. Turner and D. Hills with apologies for late arrival 8.25pm

In Attendance: Assistant Clerk, Mrs. I. Casper
The meeting started at 7.30pm.

The Chairman put an urgent planning application before members at the start of the evening.
5/08/2442 Land adj. 3 Garrard Way – Erection of one, three bedroom dwelling
Cllr. Stammers proposed no objection, seconded Cllr. Clark unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED NO OBJECTION

- 1) **To receive and accept apologies for absence**
Cllrs. S. Walford (work commitment), Waterfield and Page (family commitments).
The reasons for absence were accepted by the Council.
- 2) **To receive declaration of interest on items on the agenda**
Interest on the planning decision declared by Cllr. Clark. She is a member of the District Planning Authority. The way she votes at Parish Council will not necessarily be the way she votes at the District Council.
Cllr. Clements declared an interest on item 4. He is an I.F.A. (Independent Financial Advisor) and gives free advice to the Council as required.
- 3) **To consider Members Allowances**
Cllr. Begg informed members that Harpenden Town Council had voted to receive an allowance for members and he thought the Parish Council should give consideration to the matter.
Cllr. Clements reported on the findings of a survey he had prepared on Hertfordshire Members Allowances. One Town and one Parish Council received member's allowances, Harpenden is still under review. Chairman's Allowances are taken at all Town Councils.
Members debated all aspects of this subject; the main focus of the discussion was whether having an allowance of £300 per annum would encourage more members of the electorate to stand as parish councillors.
Cllr. Turner proposed – 'we pay ourselves nothing', seconded Cllr. Brewster.
Vote For 5 1 Against 1 abstention
RESOLVED that members of Wheathampstead Parish Council do not receive a Members Allowance, this item is to be reviewed every 3-4 years.
Action – Assistant Clerk to inform St. Albans District Council of this decision.

The Parish Remuneration Panel meets on 12th January 2009, 5.30pm at the District Council Offices Cllrs. Stammers and Clements will attend. Action – Clerk to inform St. Albans District Council.
- 4) **To consider a gratuity for the recently retired Parish Clerk**
Cllr. Clements informed members of the tax situation regarding the payment of a retirement gratuity. He had been in contact with HM Revenue and Customs for up to date information on the matter. Gratuity Schemes are now defined as Employer Funded Retirement Benefit Schemes (EFRBS).
The Parish Council had received £23,462 from the scheme it had been paying into to help fund retirement gratuity payments for the council staff.

4) continued.....

Cllr. Clements proposed – ‘the Council pay a retirement gratuity of £30,000 to the recently retired Clerk for 30 years work’, seconded Cllr. Stammers.

Vote FOR 4 3 Abstentions.

RESOLVED that the Council pays a retirement gratuity of £30,000 to the recently retired Clerk, payment to be made after 7th April 2009.

The new Clerk will be transferring into the Hertfordshire County Council pension scheme and the Council RESOLVED that the matter of the existing staff joining the pension scheme will be addressed at the Finance Meeting in January 2009.

5) **To adopt the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme for Wheathampstead Parish Council**

Cllr. Turner thanked the Assistant Clerk for all her hard work in producing the documents.

The documents had been circulated to all members.

Cllr. Turner proposed – ‘that Wheathampstead Parish Council adopt the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, seconded Cllr. Hobden. Unanimously agreed.

SO RESOLVED

Action – the Assistant Clerk will place copies of the F.O.I. publication scheme on Parish Council notice boards.

Cllr. Begg was pleased that the Council were not setting a precedent by charging an hourly rate for viewing.

6) **To consider objectives to be achieved by the new Clerk after 13 weeks and 26 weeks.**

Members had been considering objectives for the new Clerk and a paper giving details of all suggestions had been circulated for appraisal.

Cllr. Begg informed members that any objectives set were over and above the job description. He had collated the comments from members and had a compiled a list of six objectives that had been the most common received.

Cllr. Hills arrived 8.25pm

1. **Heath Robinson It systems in the office (the need to improve)**

Objective

To analyse the present office IT infrastructure and tools within the first 3 months. If improvements are deemed necessary, to assess the options (including hardware, software and service costs) and to make recommendations for short/medium/long term up grades.

2. **Meetings, Agendas and Minutes (templates and standards)**

Objective

To establish efficient standards, styles and templates for all forms of meeting agendas and minutes within the first 3 months.

3. **Grants and Outside Funding (seek out sources of funding, make applications, keep Precept down as a result)**

Objective

To identify Grant funding opportunities to support one or more of the W.P.C. leisure initiatives within the first three months and subsequently to submit the necessary paperwork, within the first 6 months.

6)continued.....

4. **Parish Council Web Site**

Objective

Arrange and set up (within 6 months) and ongoing maintenance of a Parish Council Website.

5. **Committee and Working Party Structure (Qn: is there a better way?)**

Objective

Understand the Existing Committees and Working Party structures of WPC and as experience is gained of current practices to consider ways in which they can be improved. If/when recommendations are identified, to propose these to full council, including a revised structure and rationale. It is expected that recommendations can be considered within the first 6 months however implementation will be dependent upon Full Council approval and may take some time.

6. **Change (can the council be more efficient and effective and what can we improve?)**

Objective

During the first 6 months of experiencing the way the council operates, to give due consideration to any improvements that could be achieved and to present these to the council for debate.

Members then considered all the items on the list; what was appropriate as a three month / or six month objective; the way to introduce the objectives to the Clerk.

Cllr. Turner proposed – ‘the six objectives listed by Cllr. Begg be adopted by tonight’s meeting and should be discussed with the Clerk in the first week of her appointment’, seconded Cllr. Hobden.

Vote FOR 7

RESOLVED that the six objectives are discussed with the new Clerk on 5th January, Cllrs. Begg, Brewster and Stammers will attend.

7) **To approve and accept the Annual Return Form for the year ended 31 March 2008**

The Chairman proposed the Council approve and accept the Annual Return Form for the year ended 31 March 2008, seconded Cllr. Clements. Unanimously agreed. SO RESOLVED.

8) **To consider membership of committees**

Cllr. Hobden stood down as the Chairman of the Village Plan Committee.

Cllr. Hobden proposed Cllr. Begg be Chairman of the Village Plan Committee, seconded Cllr. Turner. Vote FOR 5 abstentions 2

RESOLVED that Cllr. Begg be Chairman of the Village Plan Committee.

Cllr. Begg proposed that Cllr. Turner rejoin the Playing Fields /Youth Committee seconded Cllr.Hobden. Vote For 4 abstentions 3

RESOLVED that Cllr. Turner is a member of the Playing Fields/Youth Committee.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50pm.