

DRAFT MINUTES UNTIL SIGNED BY THE CHAIRMAN

Wheathampstead Annual Parish Meeting

21st May 2008

Present: Cllrs. I. Begg, A. Brewster, J. Burgess, G. Clark, N. D. Clements, L. Hobden, D. Hills, N. Page, J. Turner, S. Walford, A. Waterfield and Cllr. K. Stammers (who chaired the meeting) Mrs. Gatehouse (Neighbourhood Watch) and approximately 40 residents.

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs. Spragge (Scouts) and Mr. Emery (St. Helens School) and Mrs. Bonner (Beech Hyde School).

The minutes of last year's meeting had been circulated. Mr. M. C. Day proposed they be adopted seconded Mrs. Casper. Agreed.

The Clerk had produced copies of the 2007/08 accounts which had been circulated and reported that the Parish Council has carried forward £167484.00 to this new financial year. There had been no problems with the 2007/08 accounts when audited. The audited accounts had been displayed on the Parish Council noticeboard at the Memorial Hall.

James Marshall Foundation – Report given by Cllr. Turner she reminded the audience that this Charity helps with the education and careers of young people in Wheathampstead and Harpenden under the age of 25. In the last financial year £50,000 in grants had been awarded.

Wheathampstead United Charities – Report given by Cllr. Turner. This charity only has a small amount of money but it was able to assist the Welfare Group in providing a Christmas Lunch for the Thursday Club.

Chairman's Report – The Parish Council meets monthly but has 10 committees which meet quarterly.

Over the past year the Council has paid for the repairs to the Church Clock and provided a new seat in the churchyard.

It has also agreed to aim to becoming a Quality Council. Over the years Wheathampstead has run its parish like no other parish but is now about to conform to what a national parish should be. He thanked the work of the Clerk and her assistant.

Cllr. Hobden – Chairman Village Plan Group.

Photographs of the launch were shown.

A decision was made to consult everyone in the Parish to hear their views about the village and this is what the Village Plan is all about. The plan will be based on the information received from the public. When the plan is completed it will give an idea of what the village wants. The response in a report will set out all the priorities and results we want to achieve. This will be on the web site.

Cllr. Clements – Chairman Highways and Public Transport

Information as to who was on this committee was shown on the screen as was details showing what the Parish Council can do and where it has to work with the St. Albans District Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

He thanked the Wheathampstead Preservation Society for supplying and planting daffodil bulbs in grass verges at the entrances to the village.

A speed restriction from the Cory-Wright roundabout to just above the Nelson PH where the 30mph speed limit comes into force. The double yellow lines painted at Necton Road/Marford Road will be reviewed at the end of next month. A public meeting will be called when the results are in. The 20mph zone has been a success. There is a suggestion

that this be increased to just passed the Fire Station in Marford Road and to just above the two entrances (The Hill and Brewhouse Hill) to St. Helen's School.

Cllr. Clements informed the meeting that he is a member of LLACC. This deals with such issues as air safety, road access, noise and rail access. Last year there were 1213 complaints about noise. The NATS routes will place planes higher over Wheathampstead. On safety grounds it is better to fly over areas like Brocket Hall and Nomansland than a housing estate.

Cllr. Walford – Chairman of the Allotments Committee

When she became the Chairman of this committee there was a long waiting list but this has now been greatly reduced by new plots being created and not re-letting allotments to people not working them. She thanked Michael Wing and Mary Cheale for their help and advice on the committee, other councillors on the committee and the Clerk and her assistant. Thanks also to Cllrs. Turner, Burgess and Hills for their recent hard work on an allotment at Folly Fields. This year the Annual Allotment prizes will be presented at Village Day.

Cllr. Clark – Editor / Chairman The Pump Committee

Three issues are published each year – Spring, Christmas and Summer. To obtain Quality Council status a fourth edition is needed. Last year we did a 'Pump on Line' in September time. She thanked the members of the committee – Cllrs. Walford, Brewster and Stammers, the Parish Council office, Mr. Brian Joyce (collating the advertisements) and the Explorers for delivering the magazine.

Cllr. Clark – Chairman Planning Committee

The whole council can comment on plans but on small applications the decisions are made by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The majority of plans are dealt with by District Council officers. Where there is particular concern over an application we can ask to have it "called in" and it is then dealt with at a District Council Planning Committee. She showed photographs of houses being built where businesses or other houses had previously been. Cllr. Clark also reported that a change of use for the Collins Antiques shop had been granted. This property can now apply to be a restaurant.

Cllr. Page – Chairman Rights of Way and Commons Committee

When he first took over this committee the budget was £50. The footpaths were very neglected. The Luton to the Lea Valley Way was incorporated into this committee as was a large area of Commons and Rights of Way.

Over the past 12 months trees have occupied this committee with many needing attention. Negotiations are continuing with EDF to have the overhead cables at The Meads laid under ground.

The Devils Dyke panel was reported damaged in 2004 to the District Council's Museums Department and they have now promised that a new sign will be installed on 1st June 2008! The boreholes from the Old Murphy Site (owned by Sainsburys) are being monitored. We are looking into re-establishing some parking by the old Westwood Forge.

The District Council has asked the Parish Council to take over managing the Nomansland Joint Committee. In the long term this can be a positive development in opposing cattle on land in our ownership. 12 dead elms have been removed by the District Council.

Cllr. Hills – Chairman Playing Fields Committee

Five of the Playing Fields in Wheathampstead, with play equipment are financed by the Parish Council. These are at Marford, Rectory Meadow, Maltings Drive, Folly Fields and Marshalls Heath.

The one in Saxon Road and those on the Hillydyke estate are financed by the District Council.

The swings at Folly Fields are very old and the bar across the top of the swings has started to wear. When the Butterfield Road Development Centre is developed this Parish Council will receive section 106 money for play equipment.

Cllr. Brewster – Chairman Youth Committee

Our first task is to care for the well being of our young people.

Last summer a weeks activities were organised in the hall which proved very successful, and will be repeated again in July.

A weekly Hip Hop dance class for teenagers is proving successful and a monthly Saturday morning art class for younger children (ArtsKool) is extremely popular.

The children / youth are all keen on sport and are keen to have an all weather sports facility to be able to play football / netball etc. The committee is looking at where such a unit could be installed. Cllr. Brewster thanked people who had filled out the section on youth in the green village plan questionnaire forms and said she was very excited about the future.

Cllr. Waterfield – Village Day Committee

Last year was a big success. There was a budget of £3000 and the event actually cost ?

This year the budget is again £3000. He thought there were rather a lot of tombola stalls last year and hoped this year other ways of making money could be found. Cllr. Waterfield explained there had been trouble with obtaining a licence for the beer tent. In 2010 it will be 450 years since Wheathampstead was given a charter and it is hoped that Village Day will be an extra special event.

Cllr. Stammers – Chairman Memorial Hall Management Committee

He stated he was not showing any pictures as everyone was sitting in it!

The old wooden cupboards have been replaced with stainless steel units and over the year the old urn has been replaced with 2 new water boilers and a new fridge / freezer has been purchased. A new water tank is now needed for the central heating. The hall roof is now coming to the end of its life and needs replacing. The cost to do this and various building works will be in the region of £70,000. He stated that this building is a very important asset to the village.

Intermission

After the intermission Mrs. Jean Gatehouse – Neighbourhood Watch – spoke about OWL. She announced that Neighbourhood Watch is growing and the village is divided into nine areas. Mrs. Gatehouse thanked the Parish Council for agreeing to contribute towards the retention of the PCSO. Thanks were also given to Ken Lane who had provided her with so much help, and who has now retired.

The audience was reminded about the online watch link where members can receive e-mails or 'phone calls informing them of crimes which have occurred in the area.

Question and Comments Time

Q. What can be done about the Necton Road junction with Marford Road. This is an accident area. People are now very worried about existing from Necton Road. Cllr. Hills had received a letter regarding this.

A. Cllr. Hills will pass the letter on to Paul Waleckie HCC and ask him to come to Necton Road sometime next month.

Cllr. Clements – All possibilities are being reviewed. Some ideas are not possible.

As soon as something can be brought up as a possible help in the situation a meeting will be held for Necton Road residents.

Q. Regarding the Necton Road situation, there is a van parked opposite Conquerors Hill which is blocking the sight line.

A. Cllr. Clements – If it is parked on a double yellow line it is illegal, can this be passed to the District Council policing authority.

Q. David Watson – Bridge at the Meads – Are there any plans to improve the bridge?

A. Cllr. Page – There used to be a ramp but when the CMS carried out work on the Meads last year, soil and gravel was scooped up from the bank and dumped by the bridge. We are wanting to improve the gradient on the south side.

Q. Peter Partington – Funding of the PCSO.
Hoped that this funding would not be renewed each time.

A. This is an advantage to this village by having a PCSO. If we hadn't gone for it we would have lost our PCSO.
Cllr. Hills – We first had a PCSO in March 2003. We and Redbourn were very lucky. We have not paid any money towards these PCSO's.
The crime rate is low. A PCSO is valuable.

Q. Aircraft noise with the new planned routes. We must not be complacent. These aircraft are going over Wheathampstead – just watch the Bank Holiday movements. Do not be complacent.

Q/comment – Mr. Ray Adams – The NATS report is already out of date.
He thanked the Parish Council for agreeing to keep the PCSO but said since the police are going to devolve certain aspects on to the local authority, we will be able to call the shots!

Q. Nigel Oxley – The Village Sign, where will it go and what is it going to look like?

A. Cllr. Clark – There are two sites – the area of ground on the corner of Butterfield Road / The Hill and the other end of the village on the green embankment nearest to the High Street. The sign will be single sided and angled so as not to see the back. A double sided sign was too expensive. The sign will be in colour, made of enamel and feature St. Helens Church, a bull, a swan and the river and mill.

Chairman – a copy of the sign when the new design is produced will be sent to Mr. Oxley.

Q. Nomansland Common – Concern over trees and amazed at the way the wood has been desecrated of trees.

A. The decision was made by a committee made up with members of CMS. I have made a study of commons in East Hertfordshire and asked to be shown around. Would like to hear their side of the story and is keeping a close watch on the Common. A 'Friends of Nomansland' might be a good idea. There is a web site which people might find useful – selfhealland.org.uk

Cllr. Page will take this up with the Council. It is a good idea if we are going to fight it effectively. Think there should be a Public Inquiry.

Q. when is a pot hole not a pot hole?

A. Cllr. Clements replied that a pot hole near to his home is being repaired constantly.

Q. Ray Adams – Is it the view of the Parish Council to educate the use of IT for the office?

The Chairman thanked the audience for coming to the meeting which ended at 10.10pm.