

WHEATHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 25th September 2008 at the Memorial Hall, Marford Road.

Present: Cllrs. K. Stammers (Chairman), I. Begg, A. Brewster, J. Burgess,
N. D. Clements, L. Hobden, N. Page, J. Turner, S. Walford, A. Waterfield

1) Apologies for Absence: Cllrs. G. Clark (holiday), D. Hills (illness)

In Attendance: Mrs. I Casper, Assistant Clerk

At 7pm before the start of the Parish Council meeting Mr. Robert Hill gave a presentation on 'Friends of Nomansland Common'.

Mr. Hill started by explaining the background to the forming of the 'Friends' group. Interest had started with tree work being carried out on the Common. Local people were not happy with this work and people gathered together to discuss matters regarding Harpenden Common and Nomansland Common.

The group was concerned with two items regarding Nomansland – tree felling and the proposal to fence the common to introduce long horned cattle to graze. There was a strong belief in the community that common land should not be enclosed, and that this should only go ahead with the unilateral support of the local people.

The group had investigated the South Hertfordshire Grazing proposals and visited other commons to collect information. People were in favour of the introduction of grazing to Epping Forest, but this is a large area (1000 acres), so was a totally different concept.

Since 1992 there has been a 'Friend of Chorley Wood Common'. This group work closely with the local Parish Council. Chorley Wood Common has changed over the years (no horse riding etc.) and there is a groundswell of support for grazing to be introduced there.

Nomansland is a vastly different Common well used with horse riding, model aeroplane flying, dog walking and family groups walking/picnicking.

There is a feeling that a 'Friends' of Nomansland Common group could be a powerful voice, a lobbyist, and useful tie breaker in the tri partite agreement at Nomansland.

The 'Friends' feel that Wheathampstead is the most dynamic Council involved with the Common and that was why Mr. Hill was speaking to members first about the starting up of the Group.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Hill for his presentation and members asked questions about the intentions of the group.

Mr. Hill was advised to speak to Lord Althrop as another part owner of the Common.

The Parish Council meeting started at 7.30pm.

2) Declarations of Interest – None were declared.

3) Adoption of minutes of previous Parish Council meetings:

a) Parish Council meeting 28th August 2008

The minutes had been circulated to all members. There was one correction Item 12 delete the line beginning 'small post office'. Resolved that the minutes be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

3) continued.....

b) Extra Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council -11th September 2008

Resolved that the minutes, which had been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

As the member of the public who had requested time to speak had not arrived the Chairman moved that item 19 be taken now. SO RESOLVED.

4) Trees Overhanging Mill Walk

Cllr. Burgess reported that he had been in communication with Cllr. Clements on this matter as he believes this topic lies with the Highways and Public Transport Committee. The overhanging trees are becoming a public nuisance, they make the area very dark and gloomy and falling leaves are a hazard for pedestrians.

Cllr. Burgess would like McIntyre Homes to be contacted as soon as possible and be asked to cut back the trees.

The Council own the Christmas lights that are situated in the trees and they will have to be removed before any cutting back can take place. The company that erect/check and dismantle the village Christmas Lights had been asked to provide a quotation to remove and install the lights = £512.

Cllr. Turner proposed that the Christmas lights are immediately removed from the trees and reinstalled when the trees have been cut back, seconded Cllr. Burgess. Vote in favour 8.

The Council RESOLVED the Assistant Clerk writes to the Lighting Company asking for the immediate removal of the lights.

The Chairman proposed – that the Clerk writes to the owners of the land, McIntyre Homes, to ask that the trees are substantially cut back so that they do not overhang the boundary of their property. Agreed.

SO RESOLVED action Assistant Clerk.

5) Meads Underground Cables – Ongoing.

6) York Stone Cleaning – The York Stone in the High Street has still not been cleaned. The Chairman proposed that a letter goes to the Chief Executive of St. Albans District Council re- stating our requirements and asking for an indication of when we will get action on this matter. Agreed unanimously.

SO RESOLVED action Assistant Clerk.

7) Clerk's Retirement

a) Clerks Gratuity – Cllr. Clements is dealing with this matter

b) Staff Recruitment – Cllr. Hobden, a member of the Recruitment Working Party, was extremely concerned that it appeared that one of the instructions regarding the publicising of the vacancy had not been carried out. The job advertisement should have been displayed locally on all Parish Council noticeboards and in the village Post Office. The Chairman stated that the Clerk could choose which of the Council's instructions should be carried out and Cllr. Turner stated that a Clerk has a Statutory obligation to carry out all instructions of the Council, as long as they are legal. Cllr. Stammers had contacted the Council's solicitor regarding re-advertising the position and had been informed that it was not illegal to do this.

Cllr. Brewster had contacted HAPTC (Hertfordshire Association of Town and Parish councils) and had been informed that it was legal to re-advertise.

Members were concerned that the local population had not been given adequate notice of this job vacancy.

Members discussed the merits of putting a flyer in the Pump. Although the magazines are collected from the parish office in one evening by the Scout leader,

7b) continued.....

they are distributed amongst the scouts and are not all delivered on the same day. It can range over a week or two before all the areas of the village receive the magazine. Cllr. Turner proposed - that copies of the original advertisement, with a closing day 10 days hence (Sunday 5th October) will be put on all the parish noticeboards and displayed in the Post Office.

A recorded vote was taken. For Cllrs. Begg, Brewster, Burgess, Clements, Hobden, Stammers, Turner. Against 0, Abstained Cllrs. Page, Walford, Waterfield. CARRIED The Council RESOLVED that the Assistant Clerk would re word the advertisement for the job vacancy on Friday morning; Cllr. Turner would display them on all noticeboards and take one to the Post Office.

Cllr. Turner drew to member's attention the fact that the applicants who had expressed an interest in the position already do not appear to have received a letter of acknowledgement, she was also concerned that, in light of the re-advertising of the position local applicants would be disturbed by the matter. Cllr. Turner proposed that the Assistant Clerk writes a letter headed 'Dear Sir/Madam', acknowledging receipt of their application for the post and with an explanation of the re-advertising of the vacancy, the Council Chairman to collect the letters, sign and post to the candidates. seconded Cllr. Hobden agreed unanimously. SO RESOLVED.

Members then discussed the next steps to be taken.

Members will review new C.V.'s received on Monday 6th October, filling in their comment sheets as before. The C.V.'s to be acknowledged immediately.

Cllr. Burgess requested Cllr. Stammers opens the parish office on Sunday afternoon (5th) so working members could do their reviews then.

The Recruitment Working Party will meet on Thursday 9th to discuss all the applications and decide the next move.

- 8) Changes in the Standard Committee Procedures – Cllr. Clements informed members that the meeting of local councils, where he will bring this topic up, is to be held on 7th October. He will report back at the October meeting.
- 9) Village Sign – Cllr. Turner informed members that our signs are fifth in the queue to be manufactured so it will be some time before they are received. Cllr. Turner suggested that having seen the correspondence received from the W.D.P.S. (Wheathampstead and District Preservation Society) this Parish Council owes the society an apology. At the Annual Parish Meeting in May the Council made a commitment to involve the W.D.P.S. in the design process of the sign. This was not upheld. Cllr. Turner proposed that the Council Chairman should apologise to the W.D.P.S. and a formal apology be sent from the Parish Council regretting that this commitment was not delivered, seconded Cllr. Burgess. Vote 8 For. Agreed. The Council RESOLVED
 - i) The Chairman apologises to the W.D.P.S.
 - ii) The Assistant Clerk writes a letter of apology to the W.D.P.S. extending an invitation to attend the next meeting where village signage will be discussed.
- 10) Butterfield Road Playing Field Lease – report from solicitor – The Councils solicitor had replied to questions put regarding the Lease these had been circulated to all members – no comments received. Cllr. Begg informed members that he had spent time in the office researching this item. He had been trying to find out when the lease became non-renewable. He had seen a letter from the Councils' solicitor saying the signing of the Statutory Declaration was a formality. It seems that the right to renew the lease was never offered.

10) continued.....

Cllr. Clements reported that it is normal procedure to negotiate for renewal at the end of a lease. Cllr Begg is concerned that the Council has inadvertently signed away a right. Cllr. Clements stated that it is a standard clause.

Cllr. Begg spoke to the solicitor, who is now looking through the leases and will report back to the Council.

Cllr. Begg will carry on his research.

11) Glebe Field rent – The lease is due for renewal in March 2009. Rumble Segwick will contact the Council in the New Year.

12) The Council noted the letter received from Mr. Adams

13) CORRESPONDENCE

a) Request received from Mr. Adams to purchase the old office printer. Members discussed various ways to dispose of the printer. Cllr. Waterfield proposed putting the item for sale on EBay, seconded Cllr. Stammers. Vote 6 For 4 against. SO RESOLVED.

Actions - Cllr. Stammers to arrange selling of printer, Assistant Clerk to reply to Mr. Adams informing him of the decision.

b) Letter received from St. Albans District Council regarding Sheltered Housing Review, asking if the Council would like someone to address members on this matter. Vote 1 for 2 against. Cllr. Clark who is also a District Councillor will keep members informed on this item.

c) Letter received from St. Albans District Council regarding the Wheelie bin delivery schedule. Noted.

d) E-mail received from Cllr. Oxley regarding a request for a bus shelter at Gustard Wood. Action - Assistant Clerk to inform Cllr. Oxley this area is in Kimpton Parish.

e) Noted e-mail received from St. Albans District Council draft programme for 'A First Parish Conference for St. Albans, 17th October. Members had no comments.

f) E-mail received from St. Albans District Council regarding details of Play Ranger/skate Board programme for the autumn. Noted

g) E-mail received from HAPTC regarding 'Growth Position Paper'. Noted.

h) Paper received from Communities and Local Government on 'The making and enforcement of byelaws a Consultation'. Comments invited by Thursday 20th November. Cllr. Clements took the report to read and pass to Cllr. Begg.

14) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Rights of Way and Commons Committee – 9th September 2008

The minutes were presented by the Chairman.

Cllr. Page brought to the Council's attention a quotation received for taking dead wood from and oak and sycamore in Rectory Meadow from Ross Parker £520. Four contractors had been considered for this work.

Cllr. Turner proposed that this tree work goes ahead, and strongly recommends acceptance of the quotation from Ross Parker, seconded Cllr. Burgess. Vote 7 For SO RESOLVED.

Cllr. Begg supported the proposal but expressed concern that in future we always seek further quotations. Quotations would be assessed on the firm's ability to do the work not just the cost.

The minutes were then approved.

b) Playing Fields Committee – 17th September 2008

The Chairman presented the minutes.

Cllr. Turner updated members on the following items:

14b) continued.....

Brocket View Gate - A person had injured his back in an accident on the field and his friends broke the gate to allow an ambulance access to the field. The gate is now being repaired.

Tennis Club Memorandum – This has now been signed.

Cllr. Begg declared an interest in the next item, as his son is a member of the team, and signed the Interest Book.

Kimpton Rovers Under 11's Football Team – This football team are without a pitch to play on. Cllr. Turner had been contacted to see if there was a pitch in Wheathampstead where they could play. The majority of the children who play in this team live in Wheathampstead.

Cllr. Turner proposed that the Kimpton Rovers under 11's football team be allowed to use the pitch at The Folly for 10 times a year, Saturday mornings 10am – 12 noon, charge £100 per annum, subject to Cllr. Turner first contacting the manager of Skewbridge to inform him of this matter, seconded Cllr. Brewster. Vote 8 for. SO RESOLVED.

Action – Cllr. Turner to contact Mr. Gray, Clerk to write to Kimpton Rovers informing them of the decision and asking that the Clerk has sight of the Club's insurance policy.

Tennis Club – 5/08/1758 Application to extend floodlighting

The Committee recommend that the Parish Council look again at this planning application. It had been brought to the committee's attention that the extension of the floodlighting was not until 2200 hours a night, which was what the Council had based its decision on. The actual application was for the lighting to be extended from - 0800 – 2030 to 0800 2130 Monday to Friday – an extension of 1hr per weekday evening.

After full discussion on the matter there was a general feel that the first decision had been unreasonable when at other times of the year the sun shines brightly till late in the evening.

Cllr. Clements proposed that we approve the floodlighting to be extended to 2130, seconded Cllr. Brewster.

A recorded vote was taken – For Cllrs. Begg, Brewster, Burgess, Clements, Page, Turner, Waterfield.

Against – Cllrs. Hobden, Walford. . Abstain Cllr. Stammers

The Council RESOLVED to recommend approval to planning application 5/08/1758. Clerk to write to the District Council with the new decision.

The Chairman of the committee to contact the Tennis Club and inform them of the decision taken this evening.

The minutes were then approved.

Report on Meetings councillors. had attended during the month

Cllr. Clements informed members that he and Cllr. Hills had attended a meeting with Highways Engineers where a detailed discussion had taken place on issues that concern highway difficulties in Wheathampstead. A meeting is to be arranged with residents of Necton Road.

15) Council Structure

Cllr. Burgess was concerned that the Highways and Public Transport Committee did not deliver anything. He proposed – 'I do not see a future for the Highways and Public Transport Committee', there was no seconder for this proposal.

Members then had a discussion on the structure of the Council's committees and working parties. This matter to be looked at in depth when the new Clerk is in situ.

15) continued.....

Cllr. Turner reported that the Playing Fields and Youth committees were working well together and proposed that the Playing Fields and Youth committees become one committee under the Chairmanship of the Youth committee Chairman Cllr. Brewster. Seconded Cllr. Begg. Vote 8 For, 1 abstention. SO RESOLVED.

16) Village Day Committee

a) Membership - Cllrs. Waterfield, Brewster, Clements, Burgess.

Cllr. Brewster expressed concern that there were not enough members on this committee. Cllr. Stammers thought the Council should co-opt members of village groups onto the committee.

b) Date of first Meeting - Cllr. Waterfield to liaise with office.

17) Report on Youth Activities – Cllr. Brewster updated members on all the youth projects taking place in the village. The pilot scheme during the summer went extremely well and Wheathampstead is being credited with being at the forefront of youth activities. More projects are planned and the future is very exciting. Hillydyke Centre – There are now five trustees, and new projects are planned.

Cllr. Brewster proposed - that as already agreed in the budget the Parish Council contribute £1250 per annum to the Youth Club held on Thursday nights (2008/09 due now) payment to Lamer Fields Children's Centre, seconded Cllr. Turner. Vote 9 For. SO RESOLVED.

18) Abbott John Mews – Cllr. Page reported that residents have had problems with the name of the road on which the Abbott John Mews stands. At the moment the sign says Old Waddling Lane leading to Abbott John Mews. This causes confusion with Waddling Lane in the adjacent Murphy site estate. To stop confusion residents would like two 'Abbot John Mews' street signs erected at its junction with the Cory Wright Way. The historic Waddling Lane name would be retained with a named green bridleway sign at the north end of BR17.

Cllr. Page proposed that this Council write to the District Council supporting the name change, seconded Cllr. Turner. Vote For 9. Resolved, that the Clerk write to the District Council supporting the residents in the re-naming of the road signs.

19) Public Speaking Time – No members of the public had arrived to speak.

20) PLANNING

5/08/2055A – 19-21 High Street – display of two externally illuminated fascia signs and one externally illuminated projecting sign.

Cllr. Begg proposed Recommend Approval, seconded Cllr. Hobden, Vote unanimous
RECOMMEND APPROVAL

5/08/1598 7 Palmerston Drive – part conversion of existing garage into habitable room

Cllr. Waterfield proposed no objection, seconded Cllr. Stammers. Vote unanimous.
NO OBJECTION

5/08/2105 8 Castle Rise – single storey front & side ext.

Cllr. Stammers proposed no objection, seconded Cllr. Clements. Vote 7 For.
NO OBJECTION

- 21) Accounts for Payment – The accounts were presented for payment. (See separate sheet). The Chairman proposed acceptance of the accounts, agreed unanimously. SO RESOLVED.

- 22) Persimmon Homes – Planning Application
Persimmon Homes have requested a meeting with three councillors, at a mutually agreeable date. Resolved, Cllrs. Clark, Brewster and Clements will meet the company representatives.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.58pm