

MINUTES OF ARDELEY PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN ARDELEY VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 8TH MAY 2018 AT 7.20 PM

Councillors present: Cllr David Young, Chairman
Cllr Adrian Waygood, Vice-Chairman
Cllr Andrew Cannon
Cllr Jim Egginton
Cllr Stuart Norman
Cllr Tim Noble

Cllr Ken Crofton – District & County Councillor

Officer attending: Laura Brooks-Payne, clerk
Others present: 5 members of the public

18.001 Apologies for absence

None

18.002 Election of Chairman 2018-2019

Cllr Noble was proposed by Cllr Young, seconded by Cllr Egginton and elected unanimously

Resolved : Tim Noble be elected Chairman for 2018/2019.

18.003 To receive the Chairman's Declaration of Office

Cllr Noble signed the Chairman's Declaration & Acceptance of Office

18.004 Election of Vice-Chairman 2018-2019

Cllr Waygood was proposed by Cllr Noble, seconded by Cllr Norman and elected unanimously.

Resolved : Adrian Waygood be elected Vice Chairman for 2018/2019

18.005 To receive the Vice-Chairman's Declaration of Office

Cllr Waygood signed the Vice-Chairman's Declaration & Acceptance of Office

18.006 To review registers of Interests

Cllr Noble declared an interest for Church Farm having a son who works there on occasion and Adrian Waygood as he is related to the owner of the community interest company at Church Farm.

18.007 To appoint councillors to the following specific responsibilities; Highways, Neighbourhood Plan, Planning, Finance, Environment, Transport

Cllrs decided that as the parish is spread out over a large rural area encompassing 3 smaller villages, that specific responsibilities would not be given. It was discussed however, that when a specific Cllr is dealing with an issue that needed a quorum of three to support his/her action, that Cllrs should improve their communication via email and be more pro-active in replying and to respond in a timely manner and not in excess of 7 days from receiving the email.

Cllr Norman also asked if we should be looking at having a Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Cllr Crofton explained the significance of having one. A NP can go some way in determining the way that the district plan will run because the district council have to take note of an NP. The NP therefore becomes a statutory tool helping to give villages protection where there is a presumption for new development. It was explained though that it is a 2-3 year project, run not entirely by Cllrs but by parishioners too and needed a working party to complete. It costs an average of £10-20,000 to complete, needs a large team and is time consuming. In addition, since all the villages within Ardeley parish are category 3, there is presumption against any development and therefore a NP would not be of significant benefit.

18.008 To approve the internal Auditor for 2018/19

Mr Alan Herbert was approved as the auditor for this year and agreed to complete the internal audit for the next year.

18.009 To receive & approve minutes of the meeting held on Monday 5th March 2018

Approved unanimously and signed by Cllr Noble. Typo error in the footer that needs to be amended to March 2018.

18.010 Chairman's Report

Cllr Young reported in the Annual Parish Meeting held previous to this meeting. Cllr Noble thanked Cllr Young for his time as Chairman.

18.011 Finance

18.011.1 Financial report and payments for approval

Cllr Noble approved the 2017-18 accounts.

18.011.2 To discuss using the services of a company to act as the PC Data Protection Officer

Cllr Noble & clerk explained that with the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) being introduced on 25th May 2018, there may be a need for a Data Protection Officer (DPO). The government however have just issued guidelines to say that smaller councils 'should' employ a DPO as 'best practice' but do not HAVE to employ one by law. The DPO cannot be a clerk or a councillor. It was discussed that there was some ambiguity with the new guidelines as to what organisations have to put in place to protect personal information, which most, if not all, organisations, companies and charities hold in some form or another. It was agreed by the Clerk and Cllrs that the PC need to have actions in place to protect privacy going forward including a privacy policy, dedicated PC email addresses for all Cllrs, some way of encrypting the information held on the laptop and while sending documents by email some protection with by a 'drop box' system or password protection. It was unanimously agreed that at this stage these issues were first on the list to be dealt with rather than employing a DPO at considerable expense.

ACTION: Clerk to have a look into the website, pc email addresses and protecting documents and speak with web providers who work with other local organisations, to contain costs.

18.011.3 To approve the internal audit

The Clerk presented the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2017/18 Part 2 which had been completed following a joint review by the Internal Auditor and the Clerk. As these figures had not been seen previously by the Chairman who was asked to sign the Return, it was agreed that the Chairman would meet with the internal auditor following the meeting to confirm and approve this Return whereupon he would sign the Return and arrange for it to be submitted.

18.011.4 To approve exemption from an external audit and sign the official audit exemption papers and annual governance statement

The Clerk explained that we have a new external auditor this year, PKF Littlejohn. She explained that, like last year, the process is the same with figures needed on the audit sheet and added to the website in due course. However, smaller councils with expenditure and receipts amounting to less than £25,000 now need to declare themselves 'exempt' from an external audit providing PKF Littlejohn with an exemption certificate by June 11th 2018 and displaying the correct information on the PC website by 2nd July 2018. Cllrs approved the exemption and Cllr Noble signed the certificate.

18.012 Annual reviews

18.012.1 Standing orders 2016 – to approve and readopt

Cllrs unanimously agreed to readopt the standing orders and update them to 2018.

18.012.2 Financial Regulations 2017 – to approve and readopt

Cllrs unanimously agreed to readopt the financial Regulations and update them to 2018.

18.013 Planning

18.013.1 To report on latest planning applications

The clerk had prepared the latest planning spreadsheet. There were no new applications. Cllr Noble noted that there was no new information and no decision made on the Spring Grange Wood End applications for more than 2 months.

ACTION: Cllr Noble will write to EHDC and request an update on the Spring Grange Application.

18.014 Highways

18.014.1 To receive update on the A507 Campaign

Cllr Crofton reported that this road will not be re-classified, however in due course may have a weight limit change. He advised that this was a long process and could take many months. It was agreed to remove this from subsequent agendas.

18.014.2 To receive update on B1037 issues

Cllr Cannon will continue with drive safe sessions throughout the forthcoming year and will be looking for volunteers.

ACTION – Cllr Cannon will put a short piece in The Forum Magazine on the Drivesafe campaign.

18.014.3 To discuss progress on Ardeley Brook clearance

Cllr Norman reported that following correspondence between Sir Oliver Heald and the environment agency an agreement was reached to assist and liaise with the riparian landowner for the removal of a concrete weir, cut back or removal bushes to alleviate flooding. They will ensure that the riparian landowner is clear with on going maintenance expectations

ACTION - Cllr Waygood agreed to speak with the riparian landowner to let him know what is happening and that he should expect contact from the environment agency.

18.014.4 To receive and update on the blocked drains in Cromer

Cllr Cannon reported that the drains in Cromer are not currently problematic with the fine weather. Cllr Noble explained that any member of the public can report blockages via the EHDC website. Cllr Norman reported that there is a problem with water leakage outside Cromer cottage. Having both visited the site, both Cllr Crofton & Norman agreed that there is some discrepancy as to who's responsibility this is.

ACTION: Cllr Norman to Contact James Vine from Ringway to discuss the matter.

18.015 Recreation Ground

18.015.1 Resolution to approve quotation for maintenance work on play equipment

Cllr Egginton asked for approval for the quotation from Broadmead Leisure for £780.00 for maintenance and painting of the play equipment in the playground – this was unanimously agreed.

Resolved : That the quotation of £780 from Broadmead Leisure be accepted and the maintenance order be placed

18.016. Open Spaces

18.016.1 To receive an update on grants, funding & volunteers to work on Moor Green Ponds

Cllr Egginton reported that he had not yet contacted any of the funding or volunteer forces discussed at the last meeting. It was discussed that the PC needed a volunteer team to help with the work and only 2 residents had come forward as a result of the message put in the last Forum Magazine. Cllr Crofton suggested contacting Mr Benson, pond specialist. Cllr Noble suggested that the pond itself does not need specialist work, it is the overgrown scrub around it that needs cutting back to expose the pond. Furthermore, Cllr's Noble and Waygood commented that this area had not be recognised as an area of interest in the previous report submitted by Cllr Egginton from the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife trust. There was also comment that the local residents, who have safety concerns, would prefer it left uncut as it delivers a degree of privacy to their residences.

Cllr Noble has been approached by another Moor Green resident who has requested permission to clear a portion of the encroaching blackthorn / scrub adjacent to their property. The PC agreed that this would be welcomed on the onus that cuttings and detritus are removed

ACTION - Cllr Egginton to contact Herts & Middlesex Wildlife trust for advice on pond clearance.

18.017 Church Farm

18.017.1 To consider response from EHDC from complaint letter – Cllr Noble

Cllr Noble reported that following the last PC meeting, the PC wrote to Cllr Linda Haysey, Leader of the Council asking for her support in following up the substantial delays of the EHDC planning and enforcement team in determining the need for retrospective planning applications for various activities at Church Farm. The PC received a prompt reply from Cllr Haysey, but it gave no further explanation of why there was no action on the outstanding Church Farm applications and repeated promises made to the PC by EHDC at their offices over a year ago. The PC have therefore replied to her email on 18th April and are awaiting a further response.

The owner of Church Farm, who was present at the meeting was asked by Cllr Noble to comment on progress made from Church Farm on negotiations with EHDC over planning matters and raised the issue of the recent Church Farm open day which brought an unprecedented number of visitors to Ardeley and brought the traffic within the village to a standstill at times throughout the day. The owner explained that the free open day held at the farm recently had attracted far more visitors than anticipated which had a negative impact on both the farm and the village and that he would not be running it again. He also explained that he had apologised both verbally and by letter to some residents. He further reported that he is also awaiting replies and advice from East Herts DC in relation to ongoing planning applications and receives very little, if any response and said that whilst he responds to EHDC promptly, he often waits 4-5 months for their response.

18.018. Waste Local Plan Initial Consultation Update

Cllr Norman asked for this item to be deferred to the next meeting.

18.019. Proposal to approve payment for large scale maps for the Defibrillator Volunteers

The Clerk reported that she had not had a figure from the volunteers to approve as yet. The proposal was withdrawn.

18.020. Correspondence received by the clerk

One Letter received by the clerk from HMRC explaining that we have a new Vat claim reference number.

18.021 Matters for future consideration:

WEBSITE

Cllr Waygood reported that he has forwarded correct contact details for the PC website host to the clerk to enable actions to move forward. Additionally he has provided information of alternative suppliers of this service should

the PC wish to change to a new supplier. Cllr Waygood noted that PC specific email addresses were available on the website, Cllr Egginton commented that he uses both his personal and PC email addresses but was unable to confirm it worked.

Cllr Cannon reported that he had spoken to Benington PC who have a sponsored website (though cllrs agreed this would be in-appropriate for Ardeley) and Aston PC who do not pay for their website. Cllr Cannon will forward details to the clerk.

The clerk expressed concern on editing the website because it is not her area of expertise. Cllr Waygood suggested that appropriate training could be researched and provided if it was not forthcoming from the website hosts rather than seeking to engage a page editor. It was suggested that this could also benefit other parishes engaging the clerk in a similar role.

ACTION – The clerk agreed she will engage with the webhost and report back on finding an expedient way forward which may include changing web host supplier.

Date of next meeting:

Monday 2nd July 2018 at 7.30pm

The meeting was closed at 9.10pm.

Signed _____

Date _____

PUBLIC PARTICIPTION:

A resident reported that Blind Lane becomes flooded very quickly when it rains resulting in the road being difficult for most vehicles to pass.

The same resident expressed concern and incredulity on the response times of EHDC Planning team with the owner of the Community Interest Company at Church Farm and requested that Cllr Croften help to address this.

The owner of Church Farm asked Cllrs if they supported employment in the village and the use of a pub, shop and café in Ardeley operated by Church Farm. Cllr Noble answered that he believed that local residents were supportive of employment opportunities in the village, but were not pleased when local roads become blocked with visitors to the various activities being held at Church Farm. Cllr Egginton advised that Cllrs were not there to give personal opinions but rather to give balanced and unbiased opinions on behalf of the residents.

Clerk – Laura Brooks-Payne, 9th May 2018