

ST STEPHEN PARISH COUNCIL

In the District of St. Albans, County of Hertfordshire



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT THE PARISH CENTRE, STATION ROAD BRICKET WOOD, ST ALBANS, HERTS ON 5 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 7.30 pm

Present: Mick Freeman (Chairman), Dorothy Kerry (Vice Chairman)
Jadwiga Baillie, John Bell, Wendy Berriman, David Brannen,
Ian Getley, Oonah Jones, Nicholas Tyndale and Eileen Whittaker
In attendance: Two Members of public, District Cllrs Lee and Yates
Officers in attendance: Mrs J Pienaar (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were accepted from Cllrs Karen Hurford and Bill Pryce.

2. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS

Cllr Bell declared an interest in item 7.4 as a member of the Park Street Camera Club.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 FEBRUARY 2015

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Getley* *Seconded: Cllr Berriman* **Motion Carried**
That the minutes be approved as a true record.
Votes in favour: unanimous

4. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr Brannen said that he had some items to raise on behalf of the Bricket Wood Residents' Association and it was agreed he would discuss these after the meeting with the Clerk.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests were received.

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The Clerk read out Cllr Featherstone's report in her absence. Cllr Featherstone had attended the final day of the SRFI hearing at the High Court, London. The judge had reserved his decision on whether the decision of the Secretary of State to approve the Rail Freight Interchange should be overturned. The proposed closure of the Post Office within the Co-Op at How Wood would be scrutinised by the Local Services Committee on 5 March and residents were welcome to attend or watch the webcast.

Cllr Lee reported that following notice from the Co-Op of the post office closure she had arranged an informal and private meeting with representatives of the Co-Op in her home where space was limited. Invitations had been extended directly to the Chair of the Park Street Residents' Association and Cllrs Whittaker and Baillie. The Co-Op had already given notice to the Post Office. Discussions were taking place with the aim of retaining a post office in this location.

Cllr Yates reported on the post office petition and the results of the survey. Responses were mostly from people within walking distance and showed that the facility was mainly used by the over 65's for postal services and drawing cash.

The Chairman brought forward item 8.1.

8.1 To consider the proposed closure of the How Wood Post Office

A Member expressed his disappointment that both he and the Chairman, both Park Street Parish Councillors, could not be accommodated at the meeting with the Co Op. He suggested that had an approach been made through the Clerk it might have been possible to hold the meeting in one of the parish rooms which would have allowed for more involvement from the Parish Council.

It was noted that in order to provide a Post Office facility, the host had to meet costly structural criteria, such as a reinforced ceiling. A Member pointed out that the nearest alternative Post Office in Chiswell Green was not practical as it was too far to walk, even for an active pensioner. A Member

said that the Co-Op was looking into whether it could offer some of the post office services over the tills and investigations were being made into an interim minibuss service.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Berriman* *Seconded: Cllr Getley* **Motion Carried**
That the Post Office be invited to send a representative to meet with the Parish Council.
Votes in favour: Unanimous

7. REPORTS: FINANCE, POLICY AND RESOURCES

7.1 To approve the payments schedules

Members referred to the schedules for November/December and December/January.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Freeman* *Seconded: Cllr Kerry* **Motion Carried**
That the payments schedules be approved.
Votes in favour: unanimous

Cllrs Bell and Jones agreed to sign the cheques.

7.2 To receive the Special Expenses for 2015/16

Members referred to the information circulated. Special Expenses, set by the District Council to avoid double taxation, allocated costs associated with concurrent functions to residents of the parish. 2014/15 charges were compared against that for 2015/16. The sum of almost £53k, comprising charges for the Bricket Wood Common, Park Street public conveniences and open spaces at Broadacre and How Wood woodlands resulted in an 11.2% increase to parish residents and increased the charge for Band D households to £8.54. The increase was offset by a reduction in the District Council's general expense charge. It was agreed that this item be reviewed when the 2013/14 figures were available.

7.3 To receive a report on the Highways Together pilot project

Members referred to the draft pilot project and the emerging documents which included the 'how to' process guide, letter of enablement and s278 agreement. St Stephen had been one of a few Hertfordshire Parish/Town Councils involved in the pilot project. The council's insurers had confirmed that work undertaken on the highway, in accordance with the guidelines and under the direction of the parish council, would be covered. The agreement enabled small tasks on highway land alongside roads with a speed limit of 30mph, such as weed clearance, road sign cleaning, re-painting of signs/ bollards and cutting of overhanging branches. It was hoped that in future a volunteer working party could be initiated by the Parish Council to carry out some of the approved tasks on the highway under the guidance of trained Volunteer Leaders. The 'save the bulrush' project was on hold pending the contractors obtaining the NRSWA accreditation and registration on both the Street Works Qualifications Register and the County Council's approved contractors list.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Bell* *Seconded: Cllr Tyndale* **Motion Carried**
That the letter of enablement and s278 agreements be approved.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.4 To consider a request from the Park Street Camera Club

Members were pleased to accept the offer from the Camera Club to showcase a selection of their members' 'wall art images' in the Parish Centre. Details of how to purchase the image would be included and profits would go toward the PSCC funds with a small donation to the Emmaus St Albans charity.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Tyndale* *Seconded: Cllr Baillie* **Motion Carried**
That the proposal be agreed in principle and a meeting be arranged with the PSCC to progress arrangements.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.5 To consider the recommendations of the PSRG Cricket Working Party

Members referred to the report from the Working Party. It had been tasked by the Leisure Committee to consider a viable solution to the cricket balls straying over the boundary fence into Park Street Lane, taking into account the risk assessment and advice from the English Cricket Board's Regional

Advisor. Cllr Freeman, a member of the Working Party, reported that whilst all options had been considered, including realigning the cricket square, the only viable solution was 'ball netting' which would cost in the region of £9k excl. vat. Investigations were still in hand regarding funding opportunities. Although not desirable, consideration had also been given to relocating the Frogmore Cricket Club to Greenwood Park but it was noted that this was not possible as there were already two home teams playing on the grounds there. It was explained that the 'ball netting' posts would be permanent and the nets raised before play. A Member was concerned that, with the new season starting soon, the Council may find itself vicariously liable should an accident occur. Concern was also raised regarding the visual impact of permanent ball netting posts, the cost and funding thereof.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Freeman* *Seconded: Cllr Tyndale* **Motion Carried**
That the matter be deferred to the March meeting pending more information.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.6 To consider adopting the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) for St Stephen Parish

Members referred to the ROWIP presented by Mr Phil Escrit on behalf of the County Council's rights of Way Service and St Albans Access Forum on 11 December. The ROWIP included new Rights of Way and would benefit parishioners.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Bell* *Seconded: Cllr Kerry* **Motion Carried**
That the ROWIP for St Stephen be adopted.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.7 To receive a brief report on the parish Woodland Management Plans (WMP)

Cllr Bell, Chairman Trees & Woodlands Committee, reported that the five year WMP for both parish woodlands had been developed with assistance from the Countryside Management Service and the Forestry Commission. A grant was available 2014/15 toward holly clearance in Blackgreen Wood and work would continue under the WMP in future years to remove holly and thin the oak trees. The WMP for St Julian's Wood included a grant of around £1k toward coppicing and thinning 0.5ha in 2014/15. Whilst the Trees & Woodlands Committee had agreed the WMP, it had been difficult to envisage the impact of the proposed work until the trees had been marked. Cllr Bell was concerned that thinning 0.5ha in a 2.5ha woodland would have devastating visual impact. He added that whilst a contractor would be willing to carry out the work at no cost to the Council (in return for the timber as firewood), it would involve the use of heavy machinery to fell and extract. He proposed that the grant be waived and that the coppicing/thinning be managed in small sections each year in-house. It was noted that in 2015/16 priority would be given to tree safety work as identified by the tree survey.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Bell* *Seconded: Cllr Freeman* **Motion Carried**
That the grant for coppicing/thinning 0.5ha in 2014/15 be relinquished.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.8 To ratify the decisions of the HR Committee

a) Annual staff salary award

The HR Committee recommended that staff pay be revised in accordance with the agreement of the National Joint Council for Local Government for 2014-16 and reflect contractual movements within approved salary bands.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce* *Seconded: Cllr Bell* **Motion Carried**
That the revised pay rates be approved.
Votes in favour: 9 *Votes against: 0* *Abstentions: 1*

b) Grounds Assistant (formerly known as Gardener) - short term contract

Members referred to the job description and the proposal that the job title be changed. A Member felt that the job title should remain as Gardener with responsibility to assist the Parish in Bloom Working Party. It was noted that gardening skills were an essential requirement of the post and that the post remained adaptable to assist with the workload.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Kerry* *Seconded: Cllr Getley* **Motion Carried**
That the post be renamed 'Gardener/Grounds Assistant' and that the job

description include 'The Gardener/Grounds Assistant will provide support to the Parish in Bloom Working Party at the direction of the Head Groundsman'.
Votes in favour: unanimous

c) Amendments to the Working Practices Policy and Absence Management Policy

RESOLVED: Proposed: Cllr Berriman Seconded: Cllr Baillie **Motion Carried**
That the amendments to both policies, as proposed, be adopted.
Votes in favour: unanimous

d) Amendment to contracts

RESOLVED: Proposed: Cllr Bell Seconded: Cllr Kerry **Motion Carried**
That the contract amendments, as proposed, be agreed.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.9 Electronic agendas

The Clerk reported that the Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 recently enabled email as an acceptable method by which to issue summons to meetings. A consent form was circulated at the meeting for Members to complete.

7.10 To note the changes to the Quality Council Scheme

Members referred to the letter thanking the Council for taking part in the Quality Council Scheme and for 'being an example of the very best that town and parish councils can be'. The letter advised that the Local Council Award Scheme would replace the Quality Parish scheme. The Clerk reported that as a Quality Parish Council the transition award had been applied for and the Foundation Level awarded.

7.11 To consider awards of grants and discretionary discounts

a) Abfly

The application from Abfly, as a pre-approved organisation for a 75% discounted rate, was noted.

b) How Wood School

It was noted that the accounts were too late for consideration having been received at 7.15pm on the eve of the meeting. It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

8. REPORTS: GENERAL

8.2 To receive a report on Community Assets of Value (CAV) —Scrubbs & Park Woods

Cllr Bell explained that registration as a CAV meant that should the asset come up for sale the Parish Council would be given six weeks within which to express an interest in purchasing at market value and if interested, a further six months in which to raise the money. Various grants were available to assist with purchase. He reported that whilst Hanstead Wood had been submitted and accepted, the applications for Scrubbs and Park woods had been challenged by the land owners. The appeal was to be heard at the District offices on 17 February and he was in the process of gathering evidence. He pointed out that the applications had been submitted to avoid loss of access which might come about in future should the assets be sold.

8.3 To receive an update on the Park Street Pavilion police room

It was reported that the Police could not justify future use of the room and had thanked the Council for its provision. Members felt that it was a shame that the parish had invested time and money on this project. Future use of the room would be referred to the Buildings Committee. In response to the Council's comment that police surgeries at Starbucks did not service Park Street, the Police were looking into possibly using a local café or coffee shop.

8.4 To receive an update on the Bricket Wood village sign

The location had been agreed and the sign was ready for installation. Members were pleased with the final design. It was agreed that a press release be published upon installation in conjunction with the Bricket Wood Residents' Association.

8.5 To receive an update on the parish website

Cllr Tyndale presented visuals of the new website. The vision had been to provide a site that was useful, engaged with the community, attractive, user friendly, accessible and easy to maintain. The process had involved developing a structure as well as preparing and organising content which would trigger high-ranking search results. Phase 1 was ready for launch, with emphasis on venue hire and the council but was without some content and components. The launch date was planned for 16 February. Members were pleased the new website and comments on the site and proposed parish logo were noted. Cllr Tyndale said that the website would be an on-going project.

The Chairman called attention to the guillotine procedure.
Members voted in favour of continuing until 10.15pm.

8.6 To receive brief updates and recommendations from the:

a) **Neighbourhood Plan working Party**

The letter inviting residents to get involved had been delivered to every household and business within the Parish with the aid of grant funding. To date 60 responses had been received. The District Council had advised that the eight week consultation on designation of the parish boundary would commence 2 March with final consideration by its Cabinet on 23 April.

b) **Annual Events Working Party**

Cllr Berriman put forward the Working Party's recommended events for 2015.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Berriman* *Seconded: Cllr Freeman* **Motion Carried**
That the following events and expenditure be agreed:
Funfair at Greenwood Park 15 to 17 May and 7 to 9 August.
Funfair at Park Street Recreation Ground 5 to 7 June (to coincide with the PSRA
Craft Fair/Boot sale on 7 June)
Armed Forces Day event 27 June
Love Parks event at Greenwood Park 27 to 29 June
Carol Concert 6 December with the brass band for £200
Books for Schools initiative - £50 per school
Votes in favour: unanimous

c) **Parish in Bloom Working Party**

Cllr Getley put forward the recommended events and expenditure for 2015. The Working Party proposed to replant the flower bed at the entrance to Greenwood Park with grasses to provide seasonal interest. A list of plants was circulated.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Getley* *Seconded: Cllr Berriman* **Motion Carried**
That events and expenditure be agreed:
Volunteer Planting Day 24 March at 10.30am, Greenwood Park
Parish in Bloom awards evening 10 September
£1000 toward replanting the flowerbed at the entrance to Greenwood Park.
Votes in favour: unanimous

d) **Income Generating Working Party**

Cllr Kerry reported that the Working Party had concentrated on understanding usage levels, capacity available and understanding who the existing hirers were. As 80% of hirers lived within a 10 minute drive from the Centres there was an opportunity to widen the net. Feedback showed that hirers felt that the functional facilities were adequate. Lead booking times had been identified to assist with tailored advertising. There was still a need to identify why prospective hirers didn't book and to look more closely at competitive equivalent facilities.

8.7 To receive a brief report on the St Albans District Association of Local Councils

Cllr Bell reported that Redbourn Parish Council was concerned that the leisure centre it leased was not covering costs and were investigating the use of a private enterprise which was likely increase the hire charges. Colney Heath Parish Council was progressing its Neighbourhood Plan by combining seven plans into one document and hoped to complete its parish survey by June 2016. Wheathampstead Parish Council had recently opened its artificial turf pitch which it had installed with £200k of grant funding. The Clerk reported that the District Council would be organising events in

2015, namely: Residents' First; 800th Anniversary of the Magna Carta on 13th June; Alban Weekend 20/21 June; Food & Drink Festival and Christmas Lights. The community calendar had been set up for arts and culture events but was not maintained by District Council.

8.8 To receive a brief update on the Community Rail Partnership and Abfly

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

9. DOCUMENTS RECEIVED

9.1 To receive invitations, training opportunities, notifications and consultations

a) Consultations

There were none.

b) Invitations, training opportunities and notifications

Noted. Cllr Baillie attended the inaugural meeting of the St Albans Bus Users Forum on 15 January.

9.2 To receive a verbal report on delegated consultations

a) How HCC funds bus service and the Bus Users Forum for St Albans

Members noted the report and agreed that Cllr Baillie represent the Council at the next St Albans Bus Users Forum on 10 March.

b) West Midlands Franchise—direct award (relating to Abbey Line)

Members noted the response prepared by Cllr Tyndale on behalf of the Parish Council.

10. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

10.1 To receive & approve minutes of the following committees

The following minutes were received as approved:

Planning Committee (5)	13 Nov 2014
Trees & Woodlands Committee (1)	27 Nov 2014
Planning Committee (6)	11 Dec 2014
HR Committee (1)	8 Jan 2015
Planning Committee (7)	15 Jan 2015

10.2 To receive notes taken at the Council's Working Parties and Forums

The following notes were received as approved:

Parish in Bloom Working Party	23 Oct 2014
Car Park Working Party	11 Nov 2014
Parish Environmental Liaison Group	13 Nov 2014
Annual Events Working Party	19 Nov 2014
Annual Events Working Party	4 Dec 2014
Park Street Cricket Working Party	6 Jan 2015

10.3 To note the minutes of the Joint Committees & Associations

The following minutes were received:

St Albans District Association of Local Councils	21 Oct 2014
Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership Steering Group	10 Sep 2014
Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership Steering Group	2 Dec 2014

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 10.07 pm.

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact the Parish Office to discuss your requirements.

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Note: These minutes are to be considered as 'draft' until the Council has resolved to approve them.