

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 16 OCTOBER 2014 AT 7.30 pm

Present: Michael Freeman, (Chairman), Dorothy Kerry (Vice-Chair), John Bell, Wendy Berriman, David Brannen, Ian Getley, Karen Hurford, Oonah Jones, Bill Pryce and Nicholas Tyndale.
In attendance: One Member of the public.
Officers in attendance: Mrs J Pienaar (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were accepted from Cllrs Jadwiga Baillie and Eileen Whittaker.

2. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2014

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

4. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No items were accepted.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were none.

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

There were none.

7. REPORTS: FINANCE, POLICY AND RESOURCES

7.1 To approve the payments schedules

Members referred to the schedule for September/October.

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

Cllrs Kerry and Hurford agreed to sign the cheques.

7.2 To receive the quarterly accounts

The Clerk circulated a detailed summary of spend vs. budget for the first quarter with a brief explanation, together with a summary of funds held at the bank and earmarked reserves.

7.3 To receive the External Auditor's report

The External Auditor found that the Annual Return was in accordance with proper practices and reported that no matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirement had not been met. It was noted that a total of 57.5 hours had been spent dealing with the right to inspect the accounts and the objection raised. Members asked that the Clerk circulate notes on the objection.

PROPOSED: *Proposed: Cllr Getley* *Seconded: Cllr Tyndale*
That the External Auditor's report be received.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.4 To agree the Council's key priorities for 2015/16

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce* *Seconded: Cllr Brannen* **Motion Carried**
That the key priorities remain as they are.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.5 To receive an update on the BPA above ground structure

Members considered the counter-offer from the BPA of £4k for a 999 year lease and agreed that such a long term leasehold would be unacceptable. It was noted that in previous dealings with the BPA it had not dealt fairly with the Council.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Brannen* *Seconded: Cllr Jones* **Motion Carried**
That the BPA be given formal final notice that the maximum lease period would be 25 years, as previously resolved, and that the Council is not prepared, under any circumstances, to negotiate further.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.6 To consider designated BBQ areas in the parish parks

It was noted that no reports of damage had been received since the July meeting and concluded that recent fire damage had been a rare occurrence.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce* *Seconded: Cllr Getley* **Motion Carried**
That the proposal to designate BBQ areas within the parks is shelved.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.7 To set the 2015 gate licence fee

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Berriman* *Seconded: Cllr Bell* **Motion Carried**
That the licence fee remain at £5 p/a.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.8 To set the 2015 fairground hire fees

It was agreed that since this was a commercial venture it should be subject to an inflationary increase. The fee structure where the fair operator was charged for only one set-up day had come about to protect the land.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Kerry* *Seconded: Cllr Pryce* **Motion Carried**
That the 2015 fairground hire fee be £86 for one set-up day irrespective of the day the fair draws onto the grounds and £173 per operational day.
Votes in favour: 9 *Votes against: 0* *Abstentions: 1*

7.9 To receive the Festival accounts

Cllr Kerry reported that the accounts showed a small profit of £66.17 and that given the size and nature of the event the Working Party did well to deliver it. Cllr Kerry referred to a summary breakdown for both the fete and the festival and compared this to the 2012 fete event. The fete income had increased due to income from sales, advertising and a Locality grant from the County Councillor toward art activities for children. Gate takings were similar and were as expected given that attendance numbers were equivalent. All expenditure had been approved by the Working Party. Fencing and security had been a cost not previously required at Park Street. Money had been spent on attractions such as the bands, falconry, gladiator and bungee run. The event had been self-sufficient and it had not been necessary to draw down funds from earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Berriman* *Seconded: Cllr Tyndale* **Motion Carried**
That the festival accounts be accepted.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.10 To consider applications for grants and discretionary discounts

It was agreed to consider item 7.10 (b) first as it was linked to the Festival.

b) Watford Peace Hospice — grant

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Kerry* *Seconded: Cllr Pryce* **Motion Carried**

That the Council in accordance with its powers under section 137 & 139 of the Local Government Act 1972, should incur the following expenditure which, in the opinion of the Council, is in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure:

That £566.17 be drawn from the Festival reserves as a grant toward the Watford Peace Hospice.

That the £2k additional contingency funds earmarked for the Festival be returned to the Council's reserves.

Votes in favour: unanimous

a) ME Research appeal — grant

Members considered the application from an individual fund-raising on behalf of a charity. It was agreed that, however deserving the cause, it may create a precedent. No grant was awarded.

7.11 To receive a report on the Highways Together pilot project

The Clerk reported that she had represented St Stephen as part of the pilot project, which involved attendance and participation at pilot group meetings and presentation to the HCC's Town & Parish Conference. The Head Groundsman and Cllr Bell, as Volunteer Leader, had attended a bespoke safety briefing delivered by Ringway, tailored to the council's 'save the bulrushes' project. The Ringway District Service Agent provided advice on safety signage and promised the loan of cones and signs. It was understood that hi-vis jackets would also be provided by County. There had been no progress on the grant request toward the project from the County Councillor. Currently the project was waiting on HAPTC and HCC to agree a 'letter of enablement'. The next steps would be to obtain: (a) approval of the Council's insurers, (b) a permit to work on the highway (required as work involves 'breaking ground') and (c) confirmation of accreditation from the proposed contractor.

7.12 To receive a report on the Freedom of Information requests

Prompted by recent press coverage on the cost to St Albans District Council of dealing with FOI requests, it was reported that since July the approximate cost to the Parish Council was £694. It was agreed that the Clerk provide quarterly feedback on FOI requests. Members suggested that an approach be made to amend current government legislation to reduce the burden on parish councils. It was also suggested that where requests are made for commercial purposes, councils be permitted to levy a charge and publish the name of the business.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce* *Seconded: Cllr Berriman* **Motion Carried**

That Cllr Pryce ask HAPTC to put forward a motion to NALC to amend current FOI legislation.

Votes in favour: unanimous

7.13 To consider recording of council meetings

Members carefully considered whether council should record its public meetings. Members noted that the Council was well-served by the Clerk's notes; that there could be risks attached to recording which could result in challenges; that it may inhibit public participation or conversely result in playing-up to the recording with vexatious intention; that without video coverage persons speaking could not be readily identified; that there would be a cost implication in providing suitable and appropriate equipment to make meaningful audio recordings, as well as the provision of a hearing loop. Members concluded that there were sufficient numbers present to provide evidence to defend any reports taken out of context.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce* *Seconded: Cllr Freeman* **Motion Carried**

That, at the moment, the Council does not want to pursue recording of its meetings.

Votes in favour: unanimous

The Clerk reported that the Chatham House rule could not be applied to public meetings. Members considered the draft protocol which had been prepared based on government guidance for attending and reporting at local government meetings as well as policies adopted by borough councils.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce* *Seconded: Cllr Getley* **Motion Carried**
That the protocol on recording, filming, photographing of public council meetings be adopted.
Votes in favour: unanimous

8. REPORTS: GENERAL

8.1 To receive an update on the Frogmore Lakes footpath

Cllrs Bell and Getley reported that the Parish Council hosted a well-attended meeting with Lafarge. Work had commenced on 7 October. The 'hotline' contact number for Lafarge during the tree works had been advertised widely. Residents were asked to heed the warning signs to avoid danger. The Chairman thanked Cllrs Bell and Getley for their efforts.

8.2 To receive a brief report from the Bricket Wood Common Management Committee

Cllr Bell, Chair of the joint Committee, reported that there were plans to carry out a weed-wipe to remove what the cattle hadn't eaten. The Butterfly Conservation Society had conducted a survey and reported that butterfly species and numbers were increasing as a result of the management plan. The board walk was due to be repaired. The tree work proposed by the land owner still required permission from various agencies and it was hoped that a report would be given at a future meeting. There was concern expressed as to whether the work would have a detrimental affect on the Green Flag award. Members stressed the importance of keeping local residents informed.

8.3 To receive a brief report from the Hirers' Open Forum

The Chairman reported that the meeting had been attended by about seven hirers and had been very positive. One hirer said that the facilities provided were part of his rates that he didn't mind paying for.

8.4 To consider improving the recruitment of parish councillors

HAPTC requested that Council consider this item. However, with reference to their brief, Members were unclear as to what they were being asked to consider. It was agreed that this matter be deferred to the next meeting and that Cllr Pryce, Chair of HAPTC, seek clarification.

8.5 To receive a brief update and the recommendations of the:

a) Car Parking Working Party

The Chairman reported that the Working Party had met to consider solutions. A recent event organised by the school, without consultation with Council, had highlighted the problem. The Chairman had written to the Head Teacher of Killigrew to repeat the council's request that it be informed of proposed school events. It was noted that there will be occasions when the car park is closed for routine maintenance work. On those occasions the school will be informed and Councillors Pryce, Whittaker and Freeman volunteered to monitor the situation. It was suggested that the school be asked to avoid arranging events on a Tuesday and Thursday. The Working Party was tasked with investigating this proposal together with the cost of security. Cllr Hurford agreed to obtain a list of events from Killigrew School.

b) Annual Events Working Party

Cllr Berriman reported that plans were in hand for the Remembrance Service and Carol Concert. Planning will start for the Armed Forces Day event in the new year.

c) Neighbourhood Planning Working Party

Cllr Pryce reported that the Working Party was scheduled to meet again with representatives from the three Residents' Associations to agree the next step.

9. DOCUMENTS RECEIVED

9.1 To receive invitations, training opportunities, notifications and consultations

a) Consultations

No new consultations had been received.

b) Invitations, training opportunities and notifications

Cllrs Bell and Pryce attended the HCC Parish and Town Conference. The Strategic Local Plan documents were available to view. Cllr Pryce reminded Members of the excellent training courses offered by HAPTC.

9.2 To receive a verbal report on delegated consultations

a) Review of HCC funded bus services

Cllr Baillie attended the review briefing and summarised comments had been submitted.

b) Delivering HCC 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy

Cllr Pryce agreed to respond on behalf of the Council and would circulate comments shortly.

10. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

10.1 To receive & approve minutes of the following committees

The following minutes were received as approved:

Planning Committee (3)	4 Sept 2014
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10.2 To receive notes taken at the Council's Working Parties and Forums

The following notes were received:

Parish Environmental Liaison Group	2 Sept 2014
Annual Events Working Party	4 Sept 2014
Car Parking Working Party	2 Oct 2014

10.3 To note the minutes of the Joint Committees & Associations

There were none.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.35 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.