

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 18 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7.30 pm**

Present: Michael Freeman, (Chairman), Jadwiga Baillie, John Bell, Wendy Berriman, David Brannen, Ian Getley, Oonah Jones, Dorothy Kerry, Bill Pryce and Nicholas Tyndale.
In attendance: Six members of the public.
Officers in attendance: Mrs J Pienaar (Clerk)

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Freeman* *Seconded: Cllr Berriman* **Motion Carried**
That Standing Order 70 be suspended.
Votes in favour: unanimous

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Eileen Whittaker.

2. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS

Cllr Bell declared a personal interest in item 8.6 as one of the applicants was a family friend.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2014

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

4. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There were none.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were none.

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The Clerk gave Cllr Featherstone's apologies and read out the report. The District Council's challenge against the decision of the Secretary of State to grant outline planning permission for the Strategic Rail Freight terminal would be heard by the High Court on 3rd and 4th February 2015. The four bike racks for Oakwood Road had been purchased by the District Council and would soon be installed.

7. REPORTS: FINANCE, POLICY AND RESOURCES

7.1 To approve the payments schedules

Members referred to the schedule for July/August and August/September.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce* *Seconded: Cllr Getley* **Motion Carried**
That the payments schedule be approved.
Votes in favour: 8 *Votes against: 0* *Abstentions: 2*

Cllrs Bell and Pryce agreed to sign the cheques.

7.2 To amend Standing Order 70

Members referred to the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 which permitted filming, recording, photographing or reporting on the proceedings of a Council meeting. It was noted that a draft protocol would be presented at the next meeting and suggested that the Clerk prepare standard wording to be announced prior to each meeting. The Clerk was asked to enquire whether

(Continued on page 2)

the Chatham House Rule could be applied.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Freeman Seconded: Cllr Getley Motion Carried*
That, in principle, pending advice regarding Chatham House Rule, it be agreed that S/O 70 be replaced with:
'A person may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if he is present at the meeting of the Council or its Committees but otherwise may from the allocated area,
a) Film, photograph or make an audio recording of a meeting
b) Use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later
c) Report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting,
provided that the consent of a responsible adult is obtained for children and vulnerable adults.'
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.3 To receive a report on the allotment tenancy, review policy and consider 2014/15 charges

a) Review of Policy and Tenancy Conditions

Members considered the report which noted that there were 14 vacant plots and a number had been issued with non-cultivation or termination notices. There were no persons on the waiting list.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Freeman Seconded: Cllr Pryce Motion Carried*
That condition 21 be amended to include:
'Where there are vacant plots and no persons on the waiting list, a tenant shall be limited to one and half plots made up of one large and one small or three small plots. The charge will be the equivalent of one large plot and one small plot. Plots let under this condition will not be affected by subsequent vacancies'
That the waiting list will take priority.
Votes in favour: unanimous

Members considered whether plots should be let to non-residents of the parish.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Bell Seconded: Cllr Kerry Motion Carried*
That the policy be amended:
'Except where there is a waiting list, at the discretion of the Council, applications for an allotment may be considered from non-residents who reside no greater distance than one mile from the parish boundary, measured as the crow flies. Non residents will pay an increased rental as agreed by Council. Condition 21 will apply. Existing non-resident tenancies may also benefit from this change.'
Votes in favour: unanimous

b) 2014/15 Rental charges

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Getley Seconded: Cllr Bell Motion Carried*
That there be no increase in the allotment rental charges for 2014/15.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.4 To receive an update on the BPA above ground structure

Council had previously agreed to a £3k one-off payment, subject to advice. Advice suggested that £3k would seem reasonable for a 25 year period.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce Seconded: Cllr Brannen Motion Carried*
That the Council accepts a £3k payment for a 25 year period plus legal fees and licence fee.
Votes in favour: 9 Votes against: 1 Abstentions: 0

7.5 To consider funding toward reconfiguration of the barn/office storage areas

Members referred to a funding request from the Buildings Committee to provide better and more accessible storage for the hirers of the Parish Centre, a shower/drying room for the Grounds staff, a Grounds Maintenance office and a fully accessible ground floor reception room. The estimated project cost of £10k was based on the ability to complete the work in-house. Cllr Brannen, Chair of the Buildings Committee, explained that the proposed reception room utilised existing space and was substantially cheaper than an extension to the Parish Centre on Green Belt land which would require a loan and planning permission. Members felt that the reception room was in the wrong place and favoured a reception area at the front of the Parish Centre. However, it was conceded that use of the small exit area, previously the entrance to the Centre, might be a suitable interim solution.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Berriman Seconded: Cllr Getley **Motion Carried***
That the Buildings Committee investigate use of the old entrance/fire exit room as an interim solution.
Votes in favour: unanimous

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Berriman Seconded: Cllr Bell **Motion Carried***
That 'phase 2' (hirer's storage, shower/drying room) be deferred pending the Building Committee's review of 'phase 3' (Grounds Maintenance office/accessible reception room).
Votes in favour: 9 Votes against: 0 Abstentions: 1

7.6 To consider funding toward the replacement of the Greenwood park gable end cladding

Members referred to the recommendation of the Buildings Committee that this work be funded to allow immediate replacement. The funding request had been based on an initial quotation. In line with Financial Regulations two more quotations would be required prior to the work commencing.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Pryce Seconded: Cllr Bell **Motion Carried***
That £15,250k funding be drawn from the 'Funding of future priority work' reserve budget to progress this project.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.7 To consider replacement of the Astravan

Members referred to the reports. Various vans had been trialled, compared and considered. The Grounds team recommended the purchase of a VW Caddy Highline Maxi 1.6 manual for the reasons set out, one of which was a larger load area. Outline lease pricing had been obtained but Members preferred an outright purchase as a lease required that the vehicle be returned in a good state. It was noted that the existing Astravan required major repairs and that its value was marginally more than scrap. Members agreed that it be left with the Head Groundsman to obtain best value for it.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Berriman Seconded: Cllr Freeman **Motion Carried***
That the proposal from the Grounds team be accepted and a VW Caddy Highline Maxi 1.6 manual be purchased as per the quotation.
Votes in favour: 8 Votes against: 1 Abstentions: 1

7.8 To receive the Festival accounts

The draft accounts were available from the Clerk. The draft figures indicated that the event had been self-sustaining. Cllr Kerry would be going through the accounts in detail and making a report to the Festival Working Party. A charitable donation would be considered by Council pending a recommendation from the Working Party.

7.9 To consider applications for grants and discretionary discounts

a) Annual spring plants—grant toward purchase of bulbs/wildflowers

Members considered past custom. It was agreed that £50 would purchase a large amount of bulbs.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Berriman Seconded: Cllr Bell **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 within a budget of £150, two large sacks of spring bulbs be purchased and donated to each of the three Residents' Associations.
Votes in favour: unanimous

The offer from Cllrs Berriman and Baillie to purchase the bulbs on behalf of Council was accepted.

b) Remembrance wreath—grant toward wreath

The Annual Events Working Party proposed that an additional wreath be purchased in remembrance of the Unknown Soldier.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Freeman 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 a donation of £60 be made for two wreaths.
Votes in favour: unanimous

8. REPORTS: GENERAL

8.1 To receive an update on the Frogmore Lakes footpath

A position statement released from Lafarge was circulated to all Members. The four nominated representatives, namely Cllrs Bell and Getley, Tony Stevens representing the Park Street & Frogmore Society and Jon Breen representing the Park Street Residents' Association had visited the site and met with Lafarge to discuss the proposed removal of 57 dead or diseased Poplars alongside the footpath. Cllrs Getley and Bell reported that the trees had been planted over 60 years ago and with a life span of 30 to 40 years the Poplars required removal for safety reasons and would be replaced with natural regeneration. The work would require closure of the footpath. Phase 1 was due to commence mid-October. The Poplars in Phase 2 (the plantation) also required removal. Timber removed from site would be used as biomass fuel for Heathrow. Lafarge had arranged a meeting, to which a representative from each organisation affected would be invited to attend, on 24th September to explain their plans. It was agreed that the proposed work be given as much advance publicity as possible.

8.2 To receive a report on FP95 between Hamilton and Rowan Close, Bricket Wood

Members referred to the notes. The County Council would not maintain FP95 as it came into existence from long term use. The entrance to the path had become overgrown and there were a number of large trees along the path, one of which was affecting a neighbouring property. Bricket Wood Councillors were aware of the matter. Cllr Bell, the Council's footpath representative, reported that the trees were not hindering access along the path. On the understanding that it would not set a precedent for future maintenance liability the Parish had cut back the brambles but he suggested that local residents might consider forming a 'Friends' group to keep the path tidy. The Clerk reported that recent advice from the County Rights of Way Officer had highlighted that anyone considering the removal of the trees would be doing so at their own risk and would be well-advised to obtain an engineers report regarding subsidence linking the trees and neighbouring properties. It was agreed that Cllr Kerry would speak to the resident who raised the enquiry regarding the trees and that Cllr Berriman would speak to a local resident involved in the Parish in Bloom initiative regarding the 'Friends' proposal.

8.3 To receive an update on the Park Street mural

With reference to the notes Cllr Pryce reported that the mural was being designed by the people responsible for the mural on St Albans railway bridge. The project had been match funded by the District Council and the Clerk had advised the Council of recent progress. Local residents and the District Council would be consulted on the proposed design.

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

Cllr Bell, Chair of the Committee, reported that Charlotte Hawkins had been appointed the Countryside Ranger and would be spending a few hours a week on the common. The cattle were currently grazing on the common and would remain there until early October. The Countryside Management Service would be clearing rides to create a graded habitat between the woodland and

the paths. The common had recently been awarded the 2014 Green Flag. The land owner proposed to manage the common woodland in tandem with the Committee's Management Plan. His plans involved the removal of circa 60% of the trees over a number of years. No start date had been advised. The Committee pressed home the need for local consultation and communication with residents prior to any work commencing.

8.5 To receive a brief report from the Community Rail Partnership Steering Group

Mr Gurd, the Council's representative on the partnership, reported that the CRP had been pleased with the Parish Council's offer of financial support toward the CRP Officer. It was hoped that commuters would notice a difference in the carriage cleanliness as the train was now being cleaned overnight, although it was recognised that the interior required refurbishment. Passenger numbers had dropped by one third over August, likely due to seasonal holidays. From 29 November to 29 December, whilst work was being undertaken on the line, there would be a replacement bus service operating. A re-launch of the service had been suggested next Easter to regenerate passenger losses. The Abbey Gateway project was progressing with designs from Marlborough School. An enquiry had been made to Crossrail regarding a connection to St Albans. As the station signs were not visible at night the drivers were now announcing the stations. There was uncertainty regarding the future of the CRP. Members were asked to put forward their comments before 31st October to the Clerk, on where they envisaged the CRP would be in three years' time. Mr Gurd agreed to forward his thoughts to the Clerk for circulation to Members.

Members raised concern regarding the timing of the line closure over the Christmas period as lost passengers were difficult to regain.

8.6 To receive a progress report on the new website

Cllr Tyndale, leading this project, reported that he had been working with the Clerk and Administration Officer, although steady progression had been interrupted by August holidays. A brief and draft structure had gone out to seven agencies and a meeting had been held with two of those agencies during August. Tonic Fusion (a local business that had previously worked with Hatfield Town Council, St Albans District Council, Welwyn Borough Council and Steve Bell), had been unanimously selected as the preferred supplier and their quotation had been within budget. The first phase of the planning had been initiated to consider the detail and analyse use of the existing website. The contents were in the process of being assessed. It was feasible that the core sections of the new website would be in place by Christmas. Cllr Tyndale recommended that the website be viewed as an on-going project rather than re-visited every couple of years. There would be some recurrent costs for the website development on an annual basis.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Bell Seconded: Cllr Berriman **Motion Carried***
That the Council supports the progress of the website with the recommended preferred supplier.
Votes in favour: unanimous

At 10pm the Chairman drew Members' attention to the guillotine procedure.

RESOLVED: ***Motion Carried***
That the Council continue until the remaining business was concluded.
Votes in favour: unanimous

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

a) Parish in Bloom Working Party

Cllr Getley reported on the Working Party recommendation for the award of additional prizes and the purchase of a trophy for the Best Kept Back Garden.

RESOLVED: *Proposed: Cllr Getley Seconded: Cllr Freeman **Motion Carried***
That the recommendations of the Parish in Bloom Working Party are approved.
Votes in favour: unanimous

b) Annual Events Working Party

Cllr Berriman reported that the Carol Concert was being progressed and plans were in hand for a much larger and improved Armed Forces Day event in 2015.

