

# **WIDFORD**

## **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH ELECTORATE**

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Widford Parish Electorate**  
**Tuesday 5th April 2022 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall**

**PRESENT:** Parish councillors Mike Allen, Babs Edwards, Michael Ripsher, four other members of the public, PCSO Leon De Bruyn. CC Eric Buckmaster arrived at 8.37pm

Cllr Mike Allen, being present and the Parish Council Chairman, presided.

Minutes taken by Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council.

**1** The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.40pm.

**2 Apologies for absence**

Cllr Ian Collins; Cllr Eric Buckmaster for being late.

**3 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019 (AMPE)**

It was noted that the Parish Council had agreed at its Meeting on 7th May 2019 that the Minutes were an accurate record. It was then **agreed** by those present that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate held on 2nd April 2019 were a true and accurate record. It was noted that Coronavirus legislation prevented the AMPE being held in 2020 and the 2021 Zoom meeting did not attract any attendees. The Chairman signed the 2019 Minutes.

*PCSO Leon De Bruyn was present and on duty and it was therefore agreed to bring forward the police report to this point in the Meeting.*

**6 Rural Police report**

PCSO Leon De Bruyn submitted the following written report:

*PC Jack Culverhouse and I have managed to conduct some early morning speed monitoring patrols in Widford at the location specified to the Parish Council by the community. This was the B1004 road between Daintrees and Lamb Gardens in Widford.*

*We were in the area between 6:15am – 7:15am and recorded over 100 passing vehicles.*

*Of those vehicles, 13 were recorded only slightly over the speed limit of 30mph with 4 drivers being given suitable words of advice at this time.*

*We noticed that the noise of the vehicles carried along this stretch of road which was quite deceiving and gave the impression that the vehicles were actually going faster than they were. This quiet location and high tree line at the location may be a contributing factor to this.*

*I will be requesting the PCC van to attend the location to monitor the speed of traffic on this area of road too.*

*We will endeavour to reattend and monitor the location whenever we are able to around current operational duties and workloads.*

PCSO De Bruyn also made the following comments to the meeting:

The Rural Police Team patch, of which he is a member, covers 11 parishes including Widford. Despite the patch Team membership being down from 13 to 11, he tries to attend parish council meetings when possible and he now sends a single monthly report that covers each of his parishes. In the last two months there have been two reported crimes in Widford, including criminal damage to a fence panel.

Team members attend community events when possible and they would appreciate being kept informed of community events which they could attend (Chairman Mike Allen to be the contact point).

The police are keen to sign up more people for OWL and ECHO.

The police strategy is to focus on poorly lit rural areas since they are most prone to crime sprees.

Locations for SIDs (Speed Indicator Devices) should be discussed with HCC Highways

Meetings to set priorities are being held every quarter. The three areas currently identified are 1) Flytipping; 2) Road safety around schools – “pop-in” sessions are being held at schools to support this concern; 3) Fuel oil theft (which is anticipated to increase as high fuel prices continue to go up).

In response to the report, the following comments were made by the meeting:

1. The Parish Council asked the police for support in setting up a DriveSafe scheme. It was noted that there

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is only one PCC speed van covering the County and therefore it has to be booked.

2. Evidence is being sought by the Parish Council to support the argument for SIDs. They are effective and are already in place in Hunsdon and Much Hadham. The problem is finding a location that's agreeable to HCC Highways

PCSO De Bruyn asked that he be made aware of where the most suitable locations for the speed van might be (ie, speeding hot-spots).

3. Further comments were made about cars parking dangerously and blocking sight lines, eg at the Benningfield Road/Ware Road junction and it was asked whether notices could be placed on such cars? PCSO De Bruyn replied that occasional notices could be given out.

PSCO De Bruyn left the meeting at 8.03pm; the Chairman thanked him for attending.

#### **4 Review of the year 2021/22 by Cllr Mike Allen, Chairman of the Parish Council**

The Chairman gave the following personal report:

Because the Annual Meetings of the Parish Electorate (AMPE) were adversely affected by Covid-19 restrictions, this personal review covers the last two years. Coronavirus legislation prevented the AMPE being held in 2020 and although the 2021 Meeting was conducted by Zoom. It did not attract any interest.

The Parish Council is very appreciative of the many efforts of help made by parishioners during the pandemic. The sudden change to virtual meetings did create issues but these were overcome and the Council was able to conduct all its business.

There have been some changes to the Council's membership since the 2019 AMPE with councillors Jill Buck (former Chair), Paul Riddle and Carol Blackett not standing for re-election. Their service to the community was greatly appreciated. The vacant places were taken by new councillors Mike Allen (Chair), Ian Collins and Mark Rome.

Issues over Benningfield Green continue to be monitored by the Council.

The new allotments water system has been a great success and continues to work very well with great input from some allotment tenants. A fallen tree at the allotments has been dealt with. Plans are in place to plant commemorative trees under the Platinum Jubilee Queen's Green Canopy initiative.

Concerns have been expressed about East Herts Planning decision delays and the inconsistent approval or delay of some applications. The Parish Council is pursuing these concerns with EHC.

The coming year is viewed with some trepidation due to developing world events.

Thanks are due to Cllr Eric Buckmaster, all members of the Parish Council and to the Parish Clerk for their hard work and invaluable input over the past couple of years.

**Chairman Cllr Mike Allen**

#### **5 Parish group reports**

- **Village Hall** (Cllr Michael Ripsher)

Jubilee parties: Discussed, but no firm plans as yet. It was suggested that a Jubilee themed pub night could coincide with the Jubilee on Friday 2nd June.

£500 grant received from County Council; finances in good shape.

Bookings are steady with pilates, childrens, parties etc. but Covid continues to be a problem.

Quiz night April 30<sup>th</sup>: Usually a good fundraising night. Only two tables covered so far so need to raise awareness and generate more interest. It would be good if all those present at this meeting could attend if possible. It's a very good evening.

There was talk of applying for a £350 grant from EHC and the VH Chairman was under the impression the PC are doing this.

The VH Chairman is very keen to know if parishioners have an appetite for his proposal to merge the Village Hall and Playing Field into one site, subject to the agreement of both management trustees and approval by a 2/3rds majority of the electorate.

- **Allotments**

The Chairman covered the allotments in his personal review.

#### **7 County and District Councillors' reports for the Annual Meeting of the Parish**

Cllr Eric Buckmaster's extensive annual report covered all his parishes and it was therefore agreed to edit and reproduce below only those items that have some relevance to the Widford area.

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## **Some Highlights April 2021 to March 2022**

**Decarbonisation funding.** £23.5m for Hertfordshire County Council to upgrade 182 council buildings, including 74 schools and 23 emergency service buildings. This will include the installation of heat pumps, battery storage and solar panels and improving the energy efficiency of the buildings through installing double glazing and cavity wall insulation.

**Progress Update Feb 2022** Most of the programme has been completed, with the remaining sites currently on track to be delivered before the agreed deadlines with issuers of the grant fund. As of the 7th February 2022, £14,312,898.49 of grant funding has been committed to the installation programme.

**Low Carbon Skills Fund** Hertfordshire County Council has been successful in receiving £254,270.41 in grant funding from the Low Carbon Skills Fund – Phase 2, managed by Salix Finance. This funding will be used to develop heat decarbonisation plans across the Council's school's portfolio.

**Contracts complete for £171m investment in Harlow Gilston Garden Town.** Contracts have now been signed and completed to release £171m of government funding for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) project. The original bid was led by Hertfordshire County Council on behalf of local authority partners Essex County Council, East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow District Councils, the Harlow Gilston Garden Town under the Harlow Gilston Garden Town Partnership, supported by leading affordable homes-led placemaker, Places for People.

### **Recycling Centres**

Three of Hertfordshire's largest recycling centres now open seven days a week

### **Gilston Neighbourhood Plan wins two Awards**

The HEGNP Group have won a Plan Making Award and in addition to that the Editors Award of the best overall entry. The Editor commented that Planners have 'got to work with the community to deliver development'.

The Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Group said "We are clearly delighted as this recognises the vast amount of time our community put into this as well as the professionalism of our advisors, Urban Silence, who helped us so much on the way".

The task is now to use the Plan to help shape the development to be what was promised as a being development of exceptional quality.

### **Hertfordshire hits record high number of officers**

Hertfordshire Constabulary now has more officers than at any time in its history. The latest intake of 18 new recruits means there are now 2,212 officers in the county, the previous high was 2,202 in 2007. The final target at the end of the uplift is planned to be even higher with 2,314 officers in post by April 2023.

**Hertfordshire County Council is unveiling plans for a new waste and recycling transfer Station, near Ware,** which will reduce lorry miles and meet the urgent need to manage waste collected from residents and business in the east of Hertfordshire. The plans, for an enclosed facility with sound and odour controls, where collection vehicles can take kerbside waste to be stored before being sent on to recovery and disposal facilities, was unveiled at a consultation event on 9 and 10 August. The transfer station will primarily accept household and business waste but will also be able to accept recyclable materials.

**New on-demand bus service launched in Hertfordshire** A new on-demand bus service, HertsLynx, is launching in Hertfordshire from 19 September 2021, as part of Hertfordshire County Council's plans to improve transport in the county. Residents in the east and north of Hertfordshire are able to use a new app to order a bus pick up and drop off from virtual bus stops along routes where normal bus services are infrequent. The HertsLynx service is designed to improve connections between rural villages and larger town centres, making it easier for people to get to work or school, go shopping, or travel to appointments, without needing to use a car or taxi.

### **Hertfordshire unveils Blueprint to 'Build Back Better' after COVID-19**

Highlights under each of the priorities include:

- Health and wellbeing: Adult Care Services.
- Carer projects, as part of Adult Care Services, will be receiving £258,000 to counter the loneliness, digital exclusion and mental health effects heightened through the pandemic.
- Supporting families in or at risk of falling into poverty with joint programmes between Children Services, Public Health and Adult Care Services.

**Hertfordshire County Council has set out an ambitious vision to improve bus services across the county.** In

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response to the National Bus strategy, the county council has published its own Bus Service Improvement Plan. The plan outlines the county council's vision and what needs to happen to achieve this and forms a key element of the authority's bid for a huge £84 million of additional funding. A county-wide review and passenger survey conducted over the summer of 2021 identified a number of key areas for improvement, such as greater bus frequencies, simpler fares and ticketing, more real time information, and transport that gets you to places you need to go. Further work will be conducted over the coming months to develop ideas in key areas, such as rail/bus integration, decarbonising the bus fleet and improving accessibility across the bus network.

### **Hertfordshire's Queen's Green Canopy takes root with 36,000 trees to be planted in the next year**

The first of over 36,000 trees have been planted as part of Hertfordshire County Council's efforts in the Queen's Green Canopy, a project which encourages people to 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee'. Currently just over 850 trees have been planted, including 100 trees at 43 Hertfordshire schools, as well as on highways verges across the county. The remaining 36,000 trees will be planted across a number of sites in Hertfordshire over the next 18 months.

### **County Budget 2022/23 Environment Portfolio**

Waste and recycling: there is significant investment.

- Making seven day opening at our larger recycling centres permanent
- We are working hard to ensure as little as possible of the waste we manage goes to landfill. It's why we are investing £440,000 per year to ensure residents are able to help us recycle as much waste as possible.
- A £34.6 million new Capital investment in waste management infrastructure will allow us to manage our waste efficiently and effectively.
- We are investing in our waste services to ensure we can meet the needs of our growing communities.

### **East Herts Projects in my Portfolio**

**Wareside School** In March 2022 Cabinet at HCC made the final decision regarding Wareside school which was to formally close at the end of August. It is a sad conclusion for the parents and children at the school who this year numbered 18. Children have been offered places at Widford school and we wish them all the success possible in the new situation. Children who live within the settlement of Wareside attending the school have been offered transport.

**The emerging and tragic situation in Ukraine.** Strategic migration steering group is managing Hertfordshire's response. Been in existence for some years, born out of Syrian Crisis, then Hong Kong, Afghan, and now Ukraine. County, Districts, health, LGA, and voluntary organisations involved. We have over 600 Afghans in Hertfordshire, Also the factor of small boat arrivals, 4 hotels already established but 4 more coming on track. Highest population of Ukrainians in St Albans area. That may put pressure on schools and health etc. Ukrainian embassy can provide translators. Family scheme launched on 4th March, some already received but not directly known to HCC. Homes for Ukraine scheme launched on 18th March.

Councillor Eric Buckmaster  
March/April 2022

## **8 Open Forum**

A parishioner raised concerns about dangerous and illegally parked vehicles near the former The Green Man pub as a consequence of ongoing development there. A request was made to ask PCSO Leon De Bruyn to deal with those vehicles at this location and elsewhere in the village. The point was made that the number of cars parked on the roads continues to increase in this rural location that has minimal public transport and where children growing up are becoming increasingly independently mobile. This rural trend is inevitable and must be recognised as being the opposite to metropolitan areas where young people are turning away from cars.

It was commented that the pressure is on everyone to continuously monitor these situations and report all issues to the police where there is dangerous parking on both roads and on footways.

It was also commented that the village is beginning to look shabby with no real response to complaints that are made regarding unkempt verges and debris clogging up roadside gutters etc. The Chairman said he would make enquiries regarding parishioners undertaking some remedial action and also who is the current HCC contractor responsible for these areas. It was noted that two parishioners from the allotment are doing a tidy-up outside Ash View and are looking to do more work in the village. It was noted that Mr Turner has again been contracted to cut the Benningfield Green grass for 2022.

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A complaint was raised about East Herts Planning’s preferential treatment of the Doe Shed application and the complete ignoring of objections raised by parishioners and the Parish Council.

*Cllr Eric Buckmaster arrived at 8.37pm and apologised for being late.*

Cllr Buckmaster heard and acknowledged the concerns expressed. He then gave an overview of his annual report, an extract of which is reproduced at agenda point 7 above.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.50pm.

**Signed**.....**Dated**.....

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