

WIDFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Meeting Tuesday 1 September 2015 at 8pm in the Village Hall

PRESENT: Cllr Jill Buck, Chairman (JB); Cllr Glen Parcell (GP); Cllr Paul Riddle (PR); Cllr Neil Rogers (NR)

County Cllr Roger Beeching (RB), and eight other members of the public

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 8pm

15.023 Apologies for absence

1. Councillors: Cllr Barbara Edwards - on holiday
2. Others: District Cllr Robert Brunton – on EHC business

ACTION

15.024 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Rogers declared two interests: first relating to Playing Field matters, his wife being Secretary of the Playing Field Committee, and secondly a DPI as the next door neighbour to the planning application for 2 Benningfield Road.

15.025 To approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, 7 July 2015

It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7 July were a true and accurate record.**

The Chairman signed the Minutes.

15.026 To receive police report

No police report had been received, but the Chairman said there had been a burglary in Nether Street and an attempted burglary in Lamb's Gardens. She asked that parishioners keep their eyes open and report anything suspicious to the police.

15.027 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman said it had been a very busy summer for the Council, which was reflected in the amount of business on the agenda.

15.028 Planning

1. New Applications

Having declared a DPI, Cllr Rogers left the room

3/15/1590/HH 2 Benningfield Road: Single storey front and rear extensions and two storey side extension
The Parish Council had NO OBJECTIONS
Cllr Rogers rejoined the meeting

Clerk

2. Decision Notices

3/15/1376/HH Swan Barn, Hunsdon Road: Insertion of window to front elevation and infill extension to front entrance with 2no glazed panels. Insertion of roof light to rear elevation and replacement of 2no rear roof lights. *DECISION AWAITED*

3/15/1475/LBC Swan Barn, Hunsdon Road: Insertion of window to front elevation and infill extension to front entrance with 2no glazed panels. Insertion of roof light to rear elevation and replacement of 2no rear roof lights. *DECISION AWAITED*

3/15/1271/LBC Abbotts Farm, Abbotts Lane: Removal of some Internal walls on two floors to create open plan and en-suite *GRANTED*

3/15/1270/LBC Abbotts Farm, Abbotts Lane: Secondary glazing and replacement windows to match existing. *WITHDRAWN*

3/15/1263/FUL Phoenix Farm, Howletts Road: Outdoor exercise for horses, with post & rail timber fencing *GRANTED*

3/15/1136/HH 2 Coombe Villas, Ware Road: Creation of 2no dormer windows to garage *GRANTED*

3/15/1098/FUL Greenacres, Ware Road: Erection of 1no 3 bed dwelling with garage, and 1no 4 bed dwelling with garage/carport with access from Ware Road. *REFUSED*
– *contrary to policies ENV1 and BH6*

3/15/0949/HH Ives Cottage, Ware Road: Raise roof and insert 4 no. flat roof dormers to create first floor accommodation and single storey side extension. *GRANTED*

3/15/0854/HH 1 Poets Gate: Two storey side extension *REFUSED – Contrary to policies ENV1, ENV5, ENV6 and BH5*

3/15/0507/LBC Adams Farm: Alterations to layout and fenestration from previous application 3/09/1344/LB to form 3 dwelling houses *DECISION AWAITED*

3/15/0386/VAR Priory Farm: Removal of Condition 2 of previous application
GRANTED – BUT PC HAVE REQUESTED CLARIFICATION
D Cllr Brunton previously said he would check for reason why the condition was removed.

Clerk/RB

3. Other planning matters: including matters received too late for the agenda:

1. Following concerns expressed about the safety of the wall and scaffolding at Priory Farm, EHC Building Control had visited the site and given assurances that the wall is safe. Building Compliance will also visit the site to ensure all work is compliant with the consent.

2. The Chairman noted that concerns had been expressed about possible development in Pegs Lane. Anything untoward would be reported.

3. Concerns were expressed that the new scaffolding erected along the wall at Priory Farm was severely encroaching upon the highway and was completely obscuring the Give Way sign of the traffic-calming island. This was very dangerous and it was asked whether temporary traffic lights could be instated. The Clerk said he would raise it as a matter of urgency with EHC and Highways

Clerk

15.029 Finance

1. The report of the Council's finances for 1 June to 31 July was received (Appendix A)

Finance Summary from 1 June to 31 July	£
Opening available balance 1 June:	6,825.21
Plus income to 31 July:	2,774.44
Minus expenditure to 31 July:	2,022.37
Plus cancelled cheque 883 (March) from creditor accruals:	50.00
Balance available to Council 31 July	<u>7,627.28</u>
Unpresented cheques as at 31 July	583.33
Bank balance reconciled with statement #312, 31 July 2015	<u>8,210.61</u>

It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Accounts Statement be accepted.**

Clerk

The Clerk said an accounts summary is published in the Minutes on the website

2. Current financial position against the budget

The Clerk presented a report based on actual income and expenditure to 31st August and the anticipated financial for the remainder of the fiscal year. The projected bank balance at year-end was £5,085. This did not include any expenditure for legal advice on the Playing Field or consultancy fees and other expenses for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Clerk reminded the Council of the need to retain reasonable reserves. It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the current financial position be accepted.**

Clerk

3. Reconciliation of Accounts and bank statement

In accordance with new Financial Regulations and the Transparency Code it is required that a Council member who is neither a signatory nor the Chairman verifies the reconciliation of the Accounts and original bank statements and signs to that effect. Cllr Parcell therefore checked, verified and signed the Accounts and bank statement as correct. It was noted that the Parish Council has only one bank account and only uses only one cheque book at a time. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to accept the reconciliation of the Accounts and bank statement.**

GP/Clerk

4. List of payments. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to approve all the invoices presented for payment:**

Clerk

Date	Payee	Item	£	Chq	Power
10/7	C Parrott	Closed churchyard grass cutting 2/4	224.00	915	LGA 1972 s215
20/7	N English	Allotments grass 3/5-3/7 8 cuts	170.00	916	SHAA 1908 s26(1)
31/7	Clerk	Salary July	225.00	917	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A), & s151; LA 2011 s41
31/7	J Turner	Benningfield Green cutting July 2/3	83.33	918	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
8/8	J English	Litter 18/7-8/8	105.76	919	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
1/9	Clerk	Salary August	225.00	920	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A), & s151; LA 2011 s41
1/9	Clerk	Travel/phone exp Jul/August	49.45	921	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A), & s151; LA 2011 s41
1/9	Clerk	Office exp Jul/Aug	34.40	922	LGA 1972 s111
1/9	J English	Litter 15/8-5/9	105.76	923	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
1/9	J Turner	Benningfield Green cutting Sept 3/3	83.33	924	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
1/9	C Parrott	Closed churchyard grass cutting 3/4, plus weedkiller	264.00	925	LGA 1972 s215
1/9	Stop Harlow Nth	Donation	50.00	926	LGA 1972 s137
1/9	Clerk reimburse	Laminator	39.36	927	LGA 1972 s111
1/9	N English	Allotments grass July/Aug 2 cuts	30.00	928	SHAA 1908 s26(1)

Cheques were signed at the end of the meeting.

5. Annual Return – External Audit by BDO

1. Having been presented with BDO's report, it was unanimously **RESOLVED to accept the external auditor's opinion**

Clerk

2. It was unanimously **RESOLVED to accept the auditor's note for future correction to the minor issue relating to boxes 2 and 3 in the accounting of grant monies.**

Clerk

3. It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Display of Notice of the audit and requisite information be displayed on the notice boards and website.**

Clerk/JB/
PR

6. The Parish Council's position as Custodian Trustee of the Playing Field

Cllr Riddle explained the differing and potentially contentious opinions as to the precise role and responsibilities of the Parish Council as the Custodian Trustee of the Playing Field and its relationship to the Playing Field Committee (Management Trustees). To clarify the position and to ensure that the right parties take responsibility and action on all Playing Field matters, it was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Parish Council obtain a clear legal ruling from a solicitor well-versed in local government and charity matters. The cost to be kept as low as possible.** Upon the advice of HAPTC, the Clerk had spoken to Hedleys Solicitors as an appropriate source of such legal advice.

Clerk

15.030 Correspondence

The list of correspondence was noted as it appeared on the Agenda:

- Various re MH High St closure and temporary bus service arrangements. *Thanks were expressed to C Cllr Roger Beeching for his help in resolving the concerns.*
- HCC: Changes to contracted bus services. *It was noted that the service is changing and would no longer be subsidised.*
- EHC Planning Enforcement: Re Building Control and Compliance at Priory Farm (see agenda item 15.028.3.1 above)
- EHC: Village Hierarchy Study: report and response (see agenda item 15.032.8 below)
- HCC: Annual Report 2014/15. *C Cllr Beeching commented that the Report gives an idea of how finances have shrunk and the consequent strain placed upon services.*
- Nicholas Maddex, RoW Officer: report and resolution of FP18 clearance (15.032.5)

- Nicholas Maddex, RoW Officer: report of danger from overhanging dead trees by allotments (15.032.5)
- EHC: Litter picking area and grant (15.032.9)
- CDA Newsletter July
- Nicholas Maddex, RoW Officer: Request for handrail and steps improvement at new FP7 gate (15.032.3)
- Additionally: The Chairman reported that a solicitor had contacted her about the boundary line between the Village Hall and Abbots View. This was considered to be a matter for resolution between the parties concerned and not for the involvement of the Parish Council.
- A request had been received from Herts Air Ambulance for a donation. It was agreed to put this as a matter for consideration on the next agenda.

Clerk

15.031 Village Reports

1. Village Hall: Nothing to report

2. Allotments: The Chairman said she was arranging a meeting with plot holders to discuss matters that have arisen. Cllr Parcell said he was interested in being involved.

JB/GP

3. Playing Field: The Hog Roast and Barn Dance was a great success and had made a profit of £700.

The Angel Football Club want to make improvements, for example by cutting the pitch more regularly and adding a suitable temporary toilet. Negotiations are taking place between the Club and the Playing Field Committee.

NR

15.032 Highways, footpaths and byways

1. Footways and kerbs: Report - lack of maintenance

County Cllr Roger Beeching wished to address the meeting and the meeting was suspended to allow him to do so.

He began by picking up on a couple of news items from the Village Magazine. First of all by congratulating Rev Mark Dunstan on his appointment as the Assistant Rural Dean, and then by adding his congratulations to Widford School on its good report. Cllr Beeching then drew attention to changes taking place to the Mobile Library Service, which is being withdrawn in October due to funding cuts. Alternative library services are being considered. The Clerk said he had not been sent a notification of the changes. There are ongoing issues with the Highways contractor, Ringway, and Cllr Beeching asked to be kept informed about any unresolved faults reported in the parish. Road works information signs have also been causing concern in that some do not appear to comply with the regulatory requirements and the consequent legal issues that could ensue. The new schedule enabling grass cutting on major roads to be done from 7am to 7pm will be helpful in avoiding rush hour traffic.

Clerk

The Parish Council meeting was resumed at 9.15pm

The Clerk reported that the Highway faults reported on 30th June concerning three footways that were impossible to use safely due being overgrown and covered with debris have still not been attended to.

2. Footway and verge opposite Ash View: Report - future maintenance

Formerly arranged by Lady Parker, the Clerk was asked to contact Highways to get this added to their cutting schedule. The Chairman to provide photographs.

Clerk/JB

3. FP7: New kissing gate. The Rights of Way Officer has been asked to install a rigid handrail (as was originally agreed) to replace the temporary chain fitted by a parishioner, and to improve the steps, both of which are safety concerns. Cllr Beeching said that if the RoW Officer had funding problems, he would be prepared to support the necessary works from his Locality Budget. He was thanked for this offer and the Clerk said he would pass the message on. The Clerk to report back any funding needs to Cllr Beeching before making any request through the EHC grants website.

Clerk

4. FP25: The Chairman said she has been informed that the landowner has repaired the bridge damaged by bullocks. (Clerk's note: the was subsequently found to be still damaged)

Clerk

5. FP18: The Rights of Way Officer reported that some dead trees were noticed when

	the hedge was being trimmed and that these should be attended to as they could present a hazard. A parishioner volunteered to see if he could deal with them.	JB
	6. Ditch outside Meadowsweet: The Green Man has cleared the ditch by the pub and will install a metal grille in front of the drainpipe to prevent the pipe getting blocked by debris. The Chairman said she was talking to a parishioner with a view to getting the ditch dug out.	JB
	7. Bell Lane: garage layout and bank: The Chairman said talks are in progress to resolve the problem.	JB
	8. EHC Village Hierarchy Study. Cllr Riddle gave an overview of the Study and EHC's report on comments it had received. The Study was heavily criticised for its inaccuracy and conclusions based on flawed methodology. EHC has made no individual responses to those who submitted comments, but the Parish Council's strong rebuttal of the Study's evaluation of Widford's profile, sustainability assessment criteria, scoring system and the draft methodology had resulted in a change to Widford's points assessment. The District Plan is still some way off and it remains to be seen how the Study will play out in the larger picture.	PR
	9. Litter picking. The Parish Council has received a very small increase in its annual litter picking grant from EHC and a slightly modified litter pick route has been submitted to East Herts. The Clerk reported that more bags had been ordered from EHC and these would be delivered directly to the litter picker.	Clerk
	10. Modification Order to FP 13, 18, 26 & Wareside 84: The public meeting at Wodson Park on 22 October was noted.	
	Late notifications: Busy Lizzy reported concerns about the safety of the yew trees in the closed churchyard. Lady Parker had tended these for many years and the Chairman said she was meeting her the next day to discuss the concerns.	JB
15.033	Website Cllr Riddle reported that there has been a lull during the summer and that no recent updates have been added to the site. It was acknowledged that some of the missing information is important and carries statutory publication obligations due to recent legislation changes. Unfortunately the input is currently outside the Parish Council's control. Cllr Riddle was discussing how to resolve the problem.	PR/NR
15.034	Neighbourhood Plan The previously mentioned Hierarchy Study (15.032.8) is a topic in the District Plan. A recent EHAPTC meeting with EHC emphasised the importance of every parish having a Neighbourhood Plan. The PC has contacted two NP consultants to ascertain the cost of engaging an expert to advise the Council and to present the case for a Plan at a public meeting. It was hoped to be able to organise this in the near future.	PR/JB/ Clerk
15.035	Stop Harlow North (SHN) Changes are happening with Ian Brett stepping down after a number of years as Widford's representative. A new rep for the village is being sought. The new SHN chairman is moving in a new direction. Hunsdon is relating closely to Gilston and Eastwick more than to Widford, which is understandable given their location. The latest HN plan has shrunk somewhat from the original, and latest proposals involve more encapsulated development rather than the earlier sprawl.	JB/All
15.036	Water and Grazing Licences: Allotment Gardens Copies of the new Licences had been prepared to include minor changes requested by the Parish Council. These had been signed by the new owner and were before the Council. It was RESOLVED to sign the new Water and Grazing Licences. The Licences were signed by the Chairman and the Clerk for returning to the solicitor.	Clerk
15.037	Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Draft Standing Orders and Financial Regulations had been prepared by the Clerk and submitted to the Council. It was unanimously RESOLVED to adopt the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as submitted.	Clerk

- 15.038 Urgent matters** received too late for inclusion on this agenda
- The Chairman had been asked if she had any objections to a bench being set up on Benningfield Green to sell geraniums. She had said she no objections.
 - Affinity Water is to be asked to follow its past practice of cutting back the bridleway hedge on BR12.

Clerk

- 15.039 Items for future agendas:**
- To consider a donation to Herts Air Ambulance
 - Pegs Lane update

The Chairman suspended the meeting at 9.38pm for public comments

- A parishioner said there were serious safety concerns regarding the hedge overhanging the Hunsdon Road on the left-hand side from Abbots Lane into the village. Large lorries were having to move on to the opposite side of the road, forcing oncoming vehicles to mount the footway. Wing mirrors had been knocked off lorries by the overhang. The hedge needs cutting back to double height to make it safe. The Clerk to report to Highways **Clerk**
- In response to a comment, Cllr Riddle reiterated the necessity for the Parish Council to resolve differences of opinion regarding its Custodian Trustee responsibilities by obtaining a definitive legal statement. **Clerk**
- In response to comments, the Council repeated that it would seek to resolve with Highways the safety issues arising from the latest Priory Farm scaffolding obscuring the Give Way sign at the traffic-calming island that it would raise the suggestion of temporary traffic lights. **Clerk**
- Comments were made regarding the Meadowsweet ditch that fence posts on the pub garden side give the boundary line, and it was repeated that the ditch needs clearing. **JB/Clerk**

The Parish Council Meeting was resumed at 9.55pm

- 15.040 Date of next Parish Council Meeting**
 Tuesday 10th November at 8pm in the Village Hall (*time tbc*).

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.57pm.

Signed.....Dated.....