

Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
Tuesday 15th January 2019 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall



PRESENT: Cllr Jill Buck, Chairman (JB); Cllr Carol Blackett (CB); Cllr Babs Edwards (BE);
Cllr Paul Riddle (PR); Cllr Michael Ripsher

8 members of the public

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.30pm

ACTION

19.001 Apologies for absence

1. Councillors: None (all present)
2. Others: C Cllr Eric Buckmaster, D Cllr Bob Brunton, PCSO Leon de Bruyn

19.002 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

1. **Interests:** None declared
2. **Dispensation requests:** None received

19.003 Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 6th November 2018

It was **RESOLVED** *that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 6th November 2018 were a true and accurate record.* The Chairman signed the Minutes.

JB/Clerk

19.004 Police report

In the absence of the PCSO, the Chairman read the following report:

Crimes for the period 11th November 2018 to 14th January 2019:

- 2 x reports of common assault, and
 - 1 x report of criminal damage. All 3 relate to an incident at a private residential address.
- There are no other reports covering this period.

Review of the logs called in for the period 15th December 2018 to 14th January 2019:

- 1 x report of an off-road incident of dangerous driving.
 - 1 x report of an alarm activated at a business address - believed to be a false activation.
- All in all, very few reports, which is good.

19.005 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman wished everyone a Happy New Year and said her new year resolution was to make the meetings as short as possible!

19.006 Planning

1. New Applications:

NONE

2. Decision Notices. The following were noted:

3/18/2752/HH Ashbourne Manor: Erection of acoustic fencing. *DECISION AWAITED*

3/18/2630/REM Land adj to Bertrams Cottages, Levenage Lane: Application for reserved matters following outline planning permission on 3/17/1624/OUT. *DECISION AWAITED*

3/18/2540/HH 1 Priory Farm Yard: Two storey side extension. *GRANTED*

3/18/2518/FUL Widford Rise, Hunsdon Road: Erect 2 x 4-bed dwellings. *REFUSED*

3/18/2445/HH Little Cozens, Nether Street: Demolish rear & side extensions. Bay windows at rear. Rear and side extensions. RECONSULTATION *REFUSED*

3/18/2454/FUL Ash View Nursing Home: Build a 20-bedroom specialist care home. *GRANTED*

3/18/2412/VAR Corner of Levenage Lane and Hunsdon Road: Application to vary condition 2 of approved plan 3/18/0110/VAR and 3/17/182/FUL. *DECISION AWAITED*

3/18/2181/FUL Land north of Abbots Lane, The Old Orchard: Erect 1 no. 4 bedroomed dwelling with landscaping and parking *DECISION AWAITED*

3/18/1999/HH Yew Tree House: Demolish garage. Erect 2-storey rear extension. **GRANTED**

3/18/1957/FUL Land off Ware Road Abbots Lane Demolition of existing agricultural buildings and erection of 6 detached four-bedroom dwellings. **GRANTED**

3/18/1668/FUL The Green Man: Change of use to 2 x dwellings. First floor rear extension. Change of use of outbuilding to 1 x dwelling and parking. *DECISION AWAITED*

3/18/1027/FUL To appeal: Land north of Abbots Lane. Appeal notice 18/00137/REFUSE
APPEAL DECISION AWAITED

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

1. Late planning applications

3/19/0017/VAR Church Barns (formerly Widbury Farm): Variation of Condition 3 to planning ref 3/17/0002 It was **RESOLVED to make no objections**

Clerk

2. Tree Preservation Order - Hadham End ref P/TPO-620 (No.10): NOTED

3. Priory Farm: enforcement investigation into hedge reinstatement: NO UPDATE

4. Adams Farm & Priory Farm development: NO UPDATE

5. East Herts' Affordable Housing SPD Consultation (open 2 Jan to 13 Feb): It was **RESOLVED to comment that there is a need for more affordable housing.**

Clerk

19.007 Finance

1. Report of the Council's finances for 1 October to 31 December was received (Appendix A)

Finance Summary from 1 Oct to 31 Dec

	£
Opening bank balance 1 October	19,728.61
Plus: income to 31 December	1,603.15
Minus: expenditure to 31 December	<u>3,301.66</u>
	18,030.01
Minus September cheques presented in period	1,019.43
Minus unrepresented September cheque 1177	<u>14.24</u>
Balance available to Council 31 December (cashbook balance)	16,996.34
Plus: unrepresented September cheque 1177	14.24
Plus: unrepresented Nov/Dec cheques 1184, 1190 as at 31 December	<u>273.59</u>
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 31 December	<u>17,284.26</u>

Reconciliation of the Accounts to the bank statements was noted and it was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Accounts Statement for 1 October to 31 December be accepted.**

Clerk

2. Cllr Michael Ripsher, as a non-signatory member, signed the accounts sheet and bank statement to verify reconciliation.

3. Financial statement and forecast. The Clerk provided a detailed statement of the budget vs actual financial position as at 31st December, and a forecast for the year-end, 31st March 2019. Finances are within budget and against currently known income and expenditure, the projected bank balance for the year-end is potentially £13,312 against a budget projection of £6,818. The main factors influencing the variations were explained at the November Parish Council meeting and recorded in the Minutes. It was **RESOLVED to accept the financial statement and forecast.**

Clerk

4. Budget and Precept for 2019/20.

The Clerk submitted to the Council revised Budget and Precept guidance. He said he had received information and advice from the EHC Interim Democratic Services Manager, Philip Hardy, that had been sent to all East Herts parish and town clerks. Although the communication covered the spectrum of issues raised by the forthcoming May elections, the Clerk drew the Council's attention to the section that was concerned with the **recharge of contested election costs**. This advice may impact the Parish Council's budget and precept decision.

The Clerk emphasised that a **recharge** is only applied in the event of a **contested** election and he explained what a contested election is and under what circumstances one might occur: Parish Council elections are held every four years. If more candidates stand for election than the number of seats on the Council to be filled, a poll is triggered and the election cost is recharged to the Parish. If the same number of candidates, or fewer, stand for election, there is no poll, all

candidates are returned uncontested and therefore no election costs are incurred. The Clerk further explained that if a councillor resigns during their 4-year term of office, their seat becomes vacant and before the Parish Council is free to co-opt a replacement, the law requires that a poll is offered to the parish. Ten registered electors can then request an election to fill the vacancy and if more candidates stand than the number of seats vacant, a by-election would be called, the full cost of which would be recharged to the Parish Council. This process must be observed whenever a casual vacancy occurs, no matter how many times that might happen. Therefore, the Council should always hold in its budgeted reserves a contingency against the full cost of an election.

The Clerk quoted from the advice from EHC Electoral Services which said, "**You need to make sure that you include provision within your parish precept or from any reserves accordingly for any recharge. Costs are difficult to estimate, but an example of possible costs is a by-election held in 2017 with an electorate of 750 – standalone election cost £3,500. If this was a combined poll the recharge would be nearer half of this...**" The main factors are the size of the electorate and the number of polling stations. A combined poll is one shared with another local authority, such as for District Council elections where the polling station and staffing costs are shared, although the ballot paper costs are recharged 100%. The Clerk said he did not know when there had last been a contested election in Widford and that they were not common among parishes.

Widford's current electorate is 461 and on the basis of East Herts' example, a standalone election could cost £2,150 (or approximately £1,075 if combined).

In light of these facts, the Clerk advised that in his opinion: 1) The budget outline did not include adequate funding for a worst-case recharge scenario; that the Parish Council take that into consideration and it should therefore make provision within its budget for any recharge costs as set out by EHC. 2) The Clerk further advised that a realistic sum for election costs be held in reserve as an ongoing contingency should ever a by-election be called as the consequence of a casual vacancy occurring. Furthermore, the Clerk said that as the Parish Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), he would be failing in his duty if he did not recommend that the Council take the advice given by East Herts' Democratic Services Manager.

With regard to the impact of the precept on parish council tax costs, East Herts has set a Tax Base for 2019/20 that will see a Band D household paying £3.60 per £1,000 precepted. Therefore, a precept of £12,000 would be recovered through council tax at £43.25 for Band D, ie 83 pence per week. Band A will be recovered at 6/9ths of Band D, and Band H at 18/9ths (ie double) Band D.

Clerk

After taking full account of the implications of this information, it was unanimously **RESOLVED to accept the revised budget outline for 2019/20 and to increase the precept by £2,000, thereby setting it at £14,000 for the ensuing financial year.** The Chairman, the Clerk, and two councillors signed the precept levy form at the end of the meeting.

Two parishioners queried that the Parish Council had not discussed making a grant of £1,000 to the Playing Field Management Committee (PFMC) as set out in the agenda and voted in agreement by parishioners present at the Annual Meeting of the Parish in March 2018. Upon being pressed, the Chairman said there were two reasons why a decision was being held in abeyance. The first was that the PC was seeking a definitive understanding from East Herts as to whether the PFMC would be in receipt of Section 106 funding of several thousand pounds from the Martlets developer, as appeared to be the case from EHC documents. Secondly, the Parish Council was concerned that it should not become the PFMC's sole source of income in the absence of fundraising, as understood from the Trust's governing document. The accuracy of that understanding was discussed and contested; the legal advice obtained by the PC from Wellers Hedleys Solicitors in 2015 was quoted by the PC in support of the assertion, as was the Trust Deed. The Clerk said that as the Council's RFO, he could not advocate the expenditure of £1,000 of public money while there remained the prospect of a considerably larger sum being received from another source. The Chairman said the PFMC had sufficient funds to cover the next couple of years at least and therefore the Parish Council would continue to keep the matter on hold until the question of other financial sources is clarified and settled.

Clerk/
Parish
Council

5. It was RESOLVED to ratify the donation of £150 to the Citizens Advice Service, agreed at the November meeting (November agenda item 18.106)

Clerk

6. List of payments. It was unanimously RESOLVED to approve all the payments as listed:

Clerk

Date	Payee	Item	£	Chq	Power
22/11	J English	Litterpicking Nov	116.00	S/O	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
26/11	Citizens Advice	Grant	150.00	1185	LGA 1972 s137
26/11	Clerk reimburse	SLCC subs (1/4th)	57.00	1186	LGA 1972 s111
26/11	Clerk	Salary November	320.00	1187	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A) & s151; LA 2011 s41
18/12	Clerk reimburse	Affinity Water fee	180.00	1188	SHAA 1908 s26
18/12	Clerk	Salary December	426.16	1189	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A) & s151; LA 2011 s41
18/12	HMRC	PAYE Oct-Dec 3rd Quarter	266.60	1190	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A) & s151; LA 2011 s41
22/12	J English	Litterpicking Dec	116.00	S/O	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
15/1	Clerk	Expenses Nov/Dec	42.75	1191	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A)
15/1	Clerk	Petty Cash Nov/Dec	13.56	1192	LGA 1972 s111
15/1	Clerk reimburse	Printer ink	32.98	1193	LGA 1972 s111
15/1	Clerk reimburse	Filing drawers	8.00	1194	LGA 1972 s111
15/1	P Riddle reimburse	Domain purchase	121.17	1195	LGA 1972 s111
22/1	J English	Litterpicking Jan	116.00	S/O	OSA 1906 s9 & s10
28/1	Clerk (post dated cheque)	Salary January	350.00	1196	LGA 1972 s112(1), (2A) & s151; LA 2011 s41
Recoverable VAT included			£35.50		Under VAT Act 1994 (1), (3)

The cheques were signed at the end of the meeting.

Clerk

19.008 Correspondence

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

- Parishioners: Opposition to proposed Adams Farm development (19.006.3.4)
- PCC: Wiseman memorial plans (19.009.4.1)
- EHC: Affordable Housing Consultation 2019 (19.006.3.5)
- Parishioner: Enquiry re status of Playing Field Grant consideration (19.007.4)
- Parishioner: Post and boulders on Ashview verge (19.010.3.1)

19.009 Village Reports

1. Village Hall and archive

- Minutes of the VHMC AGM held on 12th November were submitted to the Council.
- The roof has a leak that needs to be fixed.
- Fundraising: Despite efforts, it has not been easy to get support. Only 43 tickets were sold for the most recent event. Cllr Ripsher suggested an advertising leaflet drop might help, possibly being inserted in the Parish Magazine. That seemed to work for the Boxing Day hockey match, which was quite well supported.

2. Playing Field

Matters relating to Playing Field funding were discussed under agenda item 19.007.4

3. Allotments

1. General: Nothing to report.

BE

2. (i) Affinity Water connection: The Clerk had made a preliminary agreement with Affinity Water for them to provide a quote for taking a water connection from Benningfield Road to the allotments. The assessment cost was £180 incl VAT. It was envisaged that this would be to a standpipe to be situated just inside the allotments gate. Affinity have been asked to undertake all the necessary work. Cllr Edwards asked that if possible, a councillor be present to talk to Affinity when they did the site visit for the assessment. Cost to be covered primarily by the 2018 New Homes Bonus.

BE/
Clerk

(ii) In order to expedite progress, the Clerk asked the Council to consider setting financial parameters to his delegated powers to act on the Council's behalf on this matter without further reference to the Council. It was **RESOLVED to grant delegated powers to the Clerk to negotiate with Affinity Water for work costing up to £3,000 (net).**

Clerk

4. Closed Churchyard

1. **Wiseman family monument:** No progress reported by the PCC
2. **Open Churchyard maintenance grant:** It was **RESOLVED to grant the PCC £250 towards the cost of restoring the monument and/or towards the cost of churchyard maintenance, as they deem appropriate.**

JB/
Clerk

19.010 Highways, footpaths and byways

1. Footpaths, footways and kerbs.

1. **FP6:** Parishioners complained that FP6 still has not been reinstated, nor have the missing way markers been replaced. The Clerk agreed to pursue the reinstatement issue with the PRoW Officer. Re the way markers, there have been problems getting enough volunteers to work on the heavy backlog of work to be done.

Clerk

There was also a complaint relating to FP7, possibly the permissive route section. A bird scarer has been placed next to the path and it discharged as someone was next to it, which was very unpleasant and quite disorientating. The Clerk said he would ask the PRoW Officer if there is any legislation covering the use of bird scarers next to a PRoW or permissive FP.

2. **Bridleway 16:** This is now the subject of a pre-application Rights of Way consultation for there to be a slight diversion round a barn at Widfordbury (Church Barns development). The owner of the estate has invited the Parish Council to visit the site to see the proposed redevelopment.

JB

2. Highways

1. **Parish SID and Speed & Volume studies:** No update report received from HCC.

2. **Levenage Lane junction/B180:** HCC is drafting a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to extend the 40mph speed limit from Levenage Lane to Rise Cottages.

3. **Bus shelter repair:** The Clerk reported that the contractor is still awaiting the requisite permit from HCC to work on the footway. Delay is due to workload; the permit is expected in the near future.

Clerk

4. **Nether Street railings:** The Clerk reported that the East Herts Conservation Officer had contacted him that very day to say the railings have been inspected and approved, and that rather than sending the 25% grant to the Parish Council for forwarding to East Herts, he is proposing to send the grant direct to East Herts to pay their contractor and to copy in the PC to complete the paper trail. The Clerk said he considered that a very sensible suggestion.

Clerk

5. **DriveSafe Scheme update:** No further news.

6. **Accident 27th November at B1004/B180 junction:** No further information received.

3. Other parish concerns

1. **Damage to verge/green outside Ashview and erection of posts and boulders:** Highways confirmed the posts and boulders are not theirs (the posts are not to their specification and they do not use boulders to stop parking). A request was made to Minute thanks to whoever had placed them in an attempt to stop the destruction of the verge.

2. **Twitchell ditch: flooding danger to Benningfield Road properties.** The Clerk reported that within the next month, Highways will be inspecting the pipe under the road by camera and will undertake any necessary jetting or other action to ensure there is nothing impairing the water flow.

Clerk

3. **Other matters raised:** The state of footways around the village is awful and dangerous. It was agreed to raise another complaint to Highways.

Clerk

19.011 Reports by County and District Councillors

Neither councillor was present. The Chairman therefore read extracts from the reports submitted. County Councillor Eric Buckmaster's January topics covered:

- The A414 consultation objectives - open until 25 February 2019.
- HCC will be publishing the Proposed Submission Minerals Local Plan between 14 January and 22 March 2019.
- Plans for the future of Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have been published by the County Council ahead of a public consultation.
- The NHS 10 Year Plan: This will see more people have their health and care needs met at home and fewer people staying in hospital.

- Gully Emptying and Cleaning Frequencies: cycles of 6, 12, 18 and 24 months to be determined as necessary.
- A report on County and District agencies involved in breaking the cycle of addiction.
- Foster a child in 2019: Hertfordshire Fostering Service urgently needs foster carers who are able to give their support & guidance to make a difference to the life of a child.

District Cllr Bob Brunton: *Report not available.*

19.012 Urgent matters received too late for inclusion on this agenda: None raised

At 9.30pm the Meeting was suspended for parishioners' comments

- A parishioner said he was appalled at the East Herts' decision to grant planning permission for the development of Ash View Nursing Home. He said it was in breach of the District Plan by being totally inappropriate in its size and design, which was out of keeping with the area. Also, the proposed car parking was completely inadequate to cope with the number of staff and visitors who could be on site at any given time. This would inevitably lead to more parking on the busy Ware Road, which would be dangerous. The single-track Abbotts Lane is also unsuitable as the main access for visitors and staff, and particularly for emergency vehicles. When comparing the planning approval for this site to very modest planning applications that were being refused, he said he had lost all confidence in the East Herts' planning process. The parishioner urged the Parish Council to write EHC a letter of complaint.

The meeting was restored to order at 9.35pm

19.013 Items for future agendas

- No issues raised
- It was noted that Parish Council elections will take place on Thursday 2nd May 2019

19.014 Date of next meetings: Tuesday 5th March, to be held in the Village Hall – **but see note below:**

1. Annual Meeting of the Parish, 7pm, followed by the
2. March Ordinary Parish Council Meeting at approximately 8pm

Clerk's note: Subsequent to the meeting it was decided to defer the date of the March Ordinary Council Meeting to Tuesday 12th March, and the Annual Meeting of the Parish to a date TBC in April.

Clerk
Clerk
JB/
Clerk

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.40pm.

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