

Colney Heath Parish Council



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MINUTES OF THE 2014 ANNUAL GENERAL PARISH MEETING OF THE COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL-held at the VILLAGE HALL 83 HIGH STREET AL4 0NS-on THURSDAY 10th APRIL 2014 at 7.45pm

Present; -Chair-Cllr R Solts-Cllr K Barnes Vice Chair-Cllr D Crump -Cllr C Brazier-
Cllr D Horner-Cllr J Day-Cllr M Nash

Clerk & Deputy Clerk; - Mr J E Dean & Mrs Kim Parker-Mead

Public Attendance-35 members of the Parish attended the meeting including
PC Andrew Shepherd-Jeff Lewis Smallford Station Project & Neighbourhood Plan

Table Top Displays & information provided by the following organisations;-
Treasure Tots Pre School-Colney Heath- Twinning-Old Friends Club-CHPC display
Smallford Station Project. Colney Heath Parish Council.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and WELCOME-Cllr R Solts-Chair of CHPC

The Chair Cllr R Solts welcomed everyone suggesting take a moment after to view the information and displays from various local groups, adding all were welcome to join in the refreshments and informally meet councillors after. He also apologised for the last minute change of venue due to a booking error. However, at the last minute the committee of Charles Morris Hall had provided a venue and made us welcome.

APOLOGIES & DECLARATIONS

Apologies were accepted from-Anne Main MP- Sandy Walkington- St Stephens PC- London Colney PC.-Mr Mark Carter CMS. No declarations.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2013

Copies of the 2013 minutes were available to everyone attending. The Chairman summarised and asked for approval-the minutes were then agreed as correct;-

Proposed By Cllr D Crump

Seconded by Cllr D Horner

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. ANNUAL REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN Cllr R Solts

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here to the CHPC AGM 2014 for what is known as the Chairperson Meeting.. Firstly I would like to thank all my fellow Councillors old and new for their help and support that they have given to me as your Chair as well as all the help and support that the Clerk John and Deputy Clerk Kim have shown to me and the members as well as those members of the public that attended our meetings or contact the council for any reason. It has been quite an interesting year for me; hopefully I have left it a little more improved with ideas that we have developed as council and other contributions from members.

We have said goodbye to two past Councillors Chris Gowens and Eddie Martin, in this past parish year and we have said hello to councillor Margaret Nash who joined us in July last year. May I remind you Chris Gowens fought a hard campaign to get the crossing in Highfield Lane; she was very disappointed in the outcome of the missing Sect 106 monies. However in her absence we are still not letting that rest and pressing Highway Authorities and county to look back to see if it can still be delivered. In addition, we currently have two vacancies and if you would like to be considered for co-option onto this Council until the elections in 2015, then speak to the Clerk. Whilst on the matter of your parish council can I just expend the myth that we are all paid for being a parish councillor. It is only District and County that are paid, not us- we are all volunteers and give our time for free. Reason, as local citizens like all of you we are interested in what you are interested in and want to see sensible decisions and fair play without politics. That is what parish councils are best at doing- in fact at their very best -if they are independent, constructive, and get it right most of the time.

This last year we saw our local parish and district Cllr Chris Brazier lose the County seat to Cllr Dreda Gordon, who very quickly has moved in to help with some of the urgent issues we have faced especially on Highways. We secured a significant meeting at County Hall with highways in January helped by Cllr Gordon with a "big jobs list" and further regular meetings with highways are promised, I leave this to Cllr Nash who will tell you more about this later.

The last 12 months have been "full on" in respect of some difficult planning issues under the new Gov't National Planning Policy Framework delivered in 2012, and which include:

1. Green Belt, at the end of last year the District Council has reported with the two important documents a copy of which you can download from their web site. I do not think there will be anywhere in the parish that is not at some risk from development with the housing numbers forecast. There are some tough choices out there in future to preserve our Green Belt here. Equally, some like in Highfield want the Green Belt issue removed completely. Green, or Brown land sites, is it going to be a developers paradise? We must admit there are a few potential sites for a couple of dozen homes that could be built in various places all around the parish. Therefore, at some stage in the future we could face the pressure and challenges from many directions.

- 2 Chester Nurseries was a controversial application to some but secured the application in the end with a public inquiry. Many of our council were concerned that this is really Green Belt land.

3. On a county issue- New Barnfield- Energy from Waste-EFW Plant remains a big threat to this area with the Secretary of State to decide later this year. We will suffer in many ways if it goes ahead. Rail Freight at Radlett similar, I understand St Stephens PC is fighting this too.

4. Oaklands development, not exactly in our parish, but in Sandridge, 354 new homes plan currently with the district council. Sandridge Parish Council is opposed and we too have put in objections on grounds of lack of infrastructure, which seems to be the key factor with so many of the new developments. Jeff Lewis our Neighbourhood plan Project Manager has put together some startling facts about the housing numbers in the area around St Albans.

However, I hope as I hand over the Chair to Vice Chair Cllr Barnes the real openness and transparency of this Council remains as is. In addition, it is a good time to remind the public that this Council does not ratify planning applications but just makes comments and- or observations on behalf of the parishioners.

What we as a parish council can do is request the application is "called into committee" if the plans are controversial or we have other concerns. We try to use that power via our District Members with care and good reason. That way the district planning committee have the last word supported by the planning officers who advise

in a fair and even way of the statutory planning guidance rules and legal issues of the application and its merits.

The 2012 Localism Act devolved considerable responsibility for overseeing the future development of our towns and cities to the people who live in them.

The Colney Heath Localism Working Party and project is well underway and I will leave the representatives of the working groups here tonight to explain more. All I wish to do is thank Jeff and the local working parties for their hard work and determination to get this plan where it is thus far.

Our council is very pleased with the progress and we are on track to write the early part of the document starting late summer. We have secured some Government funding to help it progress.

Our first all parish survey will take place between May and July so please take part it is very important to our Neighbourhood Plan we get maximum responses from all in the parish. The junior survey went out to the JMI in Colney Heath this week, we are keen to see the results in after Easter

The Colney Heath common, which is a site of special interest for wildlife, is one of only 100 sites in the UK to be eligible for grants from the Higher Level Stewardship, which has gained approval of DEFRA and we will be embarking on a plan to graze cattle to rid the Furze Field part of the common of evasive scrub & hawthorn. The scrub clearance plan will begin soon.

As I have mentioned earlier about the Highfield Crossing It has been confirmed in writing by our Herts County Councillor that a pedestrian crossing has been surveyed and funds for a way of securing a safe passage to cross is being developed. In the meantime, the local police are continuing to prioritise speeding on this particular road. Our local PC, PC Shepherd is to add his brief to update you on the community police and crime prevention issues in the area and answer your questions. We are very grateful to Andrew for his diligent police work in and around the parish of Colney Heath in helping to make it a safer place for us all.

The not so new CHPC website at www.colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk is up and working well – navigation is a breeze and there is already a lot of information there. You can read about your Parish Councillors, minutes from Council meetings for the past 12 months and our audited accounts will be available in due course. We want you to be a regular visitor if you have any new ideas please tell us and we will see how. –The clerk asked me to say *“Legal and decent please”*.

Our community business Treasure Tots nursery continues to thrive – more news on this is to be found elsewhere in this edition of the Chronicle. Cllr Horner will add a few words later.

Parish Assets include the Buildings and leases, Village Hall this Charles Morris Hall, and the football club. I have asked the Clerk to review our assets and the management of them to ensure that we fully comply with the Charitable Trusts that they are set in and report to Council with any issues.

We are custodians of these valuable parish assets and as such need; to be sure, we are using them to the best advantage and remain viable in their upkeep for all to use in the parish. Being a small but lively parish, we need to ensure that all is in order and working well.

As you know from the change of venue for this meeting at the last moment after some anomalies were discovered in booking systems and its issues like this that we need to improve upon, as we do not like upsetting regular users.

Equally, your parish council need to have the options available if we ever need to meet the public for particular issues or other important matters to bring before you. It is an important aspect to us that we always have a place to meet at any time. We thank the Charles Morris Hall committee for making this hall available to us this time at short notice to hold our annual chair's meeting

Thank you for listening,-any questions

4 HIGHWAYS LOCALITY BUDGET HLB-Cllr M Nash

Cllr Nash gave an overview of the local highways issues with emphasis on the HLB with regard to priorities for the parish. Highest on the list was the longabout A414 in that something needs to be done and it has become urgent from accidents and the death of a motorcyclist. Other road schemes and some local flooding issues were also aired in particular Oaklands Lane. Cllr Gordon gave support to the issues raised by Cllr Nash adding that progress on two highways matters for Colney Heath were forefront that of the Toucan Crossing in Hill End Lane and the Longabout. The HLB list of priorities will be debated in council over next few months.

5. LOCALISM & NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN-Mike Rawlins & Graeme Porrett

Both speakers who spoke in turn gave good reasons for the parish to become involved with the plan, adding we are underway with the project and meetings are being arranged for the seven groups under the project manager Jeff Lewis.

Mike Rawlins emphasised the importance of the parish survey that will take place in June the team are currently working on the final plans where a short questionnaire to be delivered with each copy of the Chronicle to every household. It will also be made available to complete on line. Several examples were explained about why the plan can do something positive for the parish; it had the full support of the parish council. In January the District Council voted in Committee and agreed Colney Heath Parish Council were accepted as a suitable council to complete a Neighbourhood Plan.

6. ADMIN & FINANCIAL PROVISIONAL REPORT 2013-14 & BUDGETS 2014-15

By way of a PowerPoint presentation, the Clerk & RFO gave an overview of the parish finances for 2013-14 and forecast for budget requirements to cover 2014-15. The precept sum had been increased by just 1% and represented a household rise of just 74p per week on a band D property. The figures explained the past year income and expenditure showing an overspend as predicted but in line with expectations. Grants totalling £10,000 were to be paid to local organisations in June and again in line with the average donations for community grant aid this council gives. Buildings and Lease are to be focused more as we expect to have increased expenditure here. The commons have over 65 trees that need work and costs of £4/5k are likely here. The Neighbourhood Plan has a funding budget of £33k for its life of approximately two years that will continue. We have used the additional Government Grant to fund plus a grant of £6,300 from the Communities and Local Government special funding. This is money spent for the future. Other than that, we don't expecting any surprises. *Are there any questions.*

7. PARISH & COMMUNITY

ALLOTMENTS News and updates-Clerk John Dean

The latest news on the allotments with a plot currently available to a new holder if anyone has the desire to cultivate.

LARKS IN THE PARK: - Deputy Clerk -Kim Parker-Mead

The event that was so successful last year is going ahead again the date is 29th June at Roestock Park. The organisation is progressing we look forward to seeing you

POLICE & COMMUNITY-Pc Shepherd

The latest crime figures combined with a brief review of police crime prevention and Pc Andrew Shepherd (39) outlined community policing. New police base has been created at the Savacentre our new is PCSO Ben Richards.

TREASURE TOTS; - Chair Cllr D Horner

We have achieved some advances with the pre-school. Entering our 10th year since setting from scratch up in 2004, we have capacity up to 34 children taken on both at government-funded rates and individual parent funded. Cllr Horner suggested that all took a moment to see their tabletop display set out here this evening.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Whilst having the opportunity to speak Cllr Horner wanted to inform the meeting, that Jean Horner will be stepping down from the cook's role of organising the Christmas Lunch. However there was someone who is willing to step in to take over and so it should not affect the traditional and popular event.

SMALLFORD STATION-Jeff Lewis

A brief outlook on the project here to restore Smallford Station in the future which is on a site surrounded by heavy plant and needing to be saved being nearly 150 years old was given by Jeff Lewis who has taken on this project with enthusiasm. National Lottery Grants have since been obtained and the site is now noted in the Transport Heritage listings. This will ensure it has a positive future.

DEFIBRILLATOR

The Football Club had requested it be known to the meeting that they are to install a defibrillator at the club for all to access if needed. The device had been sponsored by voluntary contributions from the members. The Chair Cllr Solts said a vote of thanks should go to the club for having this emergency device available in the parish.

8. QUESTIONS FROM PARISH & ELECTORATE

With a variety of questions from the audience, ranging on Highways, local footpaths, parish owned land, commons, and parish web site all answered positively in various ways by the Chair, Members in the audience or Clerk. Finally, there is still a vacancy for a councillor to be- co-opted for parish seat here until the May 2015 elections if any person is interested. (Contact the Clerk)

The Chair Cllr Solts closed the meeting inviting all present to enjoy the reception.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm- Refreshments will be served for all attending until close at 10pm.


John Dean
Clerk to the Council

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