

Colney Heath Parish Council



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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF THE COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT THE CHARLES MORRIS HALL TYTTENHANGER ON THURSDAY 16TH APRIL 2009 AT 7.30pm

Present; - Cllr C Brazier Chair-Cllr P Reeves-Cllr J Rump-Cllr A Cloke-
Cllr J Lewis -Cllr J Day- Cllr D Crump-Cllr J Henschley-Cllr D Horner.

Herts Police Sgt Mark Andrews.

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

Public Attendance- 43 members of the Parish attended the meeting -as listed

Table Top Displays & information provided by the following organisations;-
Treasure Tots Pre School (Carolyn/Annette) Pre School education-2.5/3.5 yrs-
The Colney Heath and district WI Twinning Association.

APOLOGIES

Anne Main MP Sandy Walkington Prospective Candidate HOP-Anna Cohen Highfield
Park Trust -St Stephens PC- London Colney PC. CMS. HATPC.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair Cllr Chris Brazier welcomed councillors, speakers whilst apologising for the slight delay in starting and formally opened the meeting. He reminded everyone to take a moment after to view the information and displays from all the various local groups and other organisations set out in the hall. He also said all were welcome to join in the refreshments and informally meet councillors after at about 8.45-9pm.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2008

Copies of the 2008 minutes were available to everyone attending. The Chairman summarised and asked for approval-the minutes were then approved as correct;-
Proposed By Cllr Crump
Seconded by Cllr Horner

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. ANNUAL REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN Cllr Chris Brazier (Also District & County Cllr)

Chair Cllr Brazier said he was pleased to address the parish and give his report on the progress this year which he suggested had been a positive year. One of the most important is the successful purchase of Gloucester Park from Health Authority away from possible property developers. Casualties of the recession but inability to fund the speculative acquisition at odds with residents but we have appeared to have won.

DM
15/4/2010

During this year we are replacing the old worn out, rotten wooden play equipment at Sleepshyde-our own expense without any grants or district support. The council managed to get a good deal from a leading UK supplier and with accepting some flexibility on the installation. In February we had the worst floods for many years, our complaints to the agencies were made very clear and we as a parish remain critical of their performance of rushing to London Colney and forgetting Colney Heath. We have since registered a formal complaint with EA and hope to continue to press for more alerting equipment to be installed. The council supports residents for a better deal. As a result the EA ran a public exhibition in March to gauge public opinion, but it would be nice to get a flood warning or attention here first. On our legal issues we continue with our fight to alleviate flood risks with occupation of flood plain land, we are maintaining action in the courts to regain some sense in the hope of returning the land to pasture. It is more than likely if we win further actions some further costs will be awarded to us by the court. Your parish council regard this action as important for entire parish to alleviate potential flood risks to the area. This is for the benefit of all. Turning to safety issues we are hoping to convince Hertfordshire Highways Panel to approve a temporary gating order. Local residents have been campaigning via a safety forum to get some action in Barley Mow Lane but the consultation has to continue before we can get the order in place. Cllr Brazier fully supports the residents and achieving the gating order, but it is a difficult call there is still a long way to go. The risk to our Green Belt is one that we continue to fight against development; recently we had meetings with Welwyn & Hatfield Council opposing the plans for building on our boundary. I am against the development ideas they are trying to put through extending outlying districts across our borders. We will continue to fight the retention of Green Belt Land between Hatfield Smallford Sleepshyde and Colney Heath. Turning again to the Highfield and Hill End part of the parish- plans are through for Home Farm for Taylor Wimpey to build 30 new homes on the old site. It is a separate application to the Oaklands Campus development which will go to the Secretary of state to be determined by early summer. We continue to work closely with local residents associations who are always very welcome at our full council meetings; we manage to hold at least two or three meetings in the Highfield-Hill End-Tyttenhanger here at Charles Morris Hall each parish year.

The other very important news is the final completion of works to the Church adding a magnificent extension and replacing the pews and new internal seating has captured a fresh feeling to a wonderful building. Again this past winter the council has kept up the maintenance of the common with tree works using our Rural Payments grants to keep ahead of the important care needed in the SSI area of the common. We have continued with our Treasure Tots Pre School now in its fourth year which provides much needed child care for the rising threes in the parish. This is run by the council and has proved very successful, OFSTED registered, operating each weekday for up to 34 children, 20 sessions per week. We thank all the staff for their dedication and hard work. They have a table top display here this evening. You may also wish to look at the other table top displays here tonight as well. He went on to say how he enjoyed the St Marks rededication service on 4th April and how good the new extension fits in with the classic building. He congratulated the congregation in finishing a fine and pleasing addition to the building, and for raising the funds. Finally let me thank everyone for coming to our APM and not forgetting all our back office and environment staff some who work out in all weathers, keeping our grass cut patrolling the common and the parish gardens looking good all year. Now I will hand over to the Clerk who will tell you all how we have managed your money this last year, and how we intend to spend in the forthcoming parish year.

Turning to other matters, the Chair said the Clerk John Dean will give an overview of the parish finances and other related matters.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2008-9 Clerk to the Council John Dean

I can give you a qualified confident overview of the financial position at Colney Heath. This parish year 2008-9 has just ended. We have discharged our precept carefully starting off the year by requesting £141,500 from District Council to run the Parish and having further income of £74,000 including use of some reserves concluding the year spending of £213,000 this will be a record year for Colney Heath after factoring in the £33,700 we paid out to purchase Gloucester Park from the Public Works Loan Board plus around £18,000 of past reclaimed VAT from purchases. This is a busy parish including Treasure Tots we now employ 15 staff on the combined payroll, in similar circumstances compares very much to a small company in the private sector. Each year in November we set out our budget this year we suggested £154,000 and in January it is moved to ratify the precept sum £141,500 to go forward to application. The remainder comes in via other incomes leases and various grants or fees. During the last year we gave the club a grant to fund a free lease to coincide with the 100th year, plus an insurance payment holiday to support them. We undertook other works on the public building as well such as electrical safety and alarms.

Lease of Pavilion-Expired March 31ST 2008

I can report a successful conclusion to the council renewal with CHFC for the use of the Pavilion Building and pitches to 2021. Much of the background work was done by creating a working relationship by Cllr Rump with club management to understand how they run and operate the club. We agreed a fair rent in accordance after legal advice in drawing up a new lease within the L&T Act. Whilst making an increased annual return to CHPC for general parish use. (Including Maintenance Clauses)

Other non budgeted expenditure

Further work was done on the common, the overall cost was £2000; a grant from Watling Chase funds via CMS towards the works. We will do more again next winter to trim off the trees near the river bank, but that needs a lot more work over several years. Some of which should in council opinion be paid by getting EA funds.

Treasure Tots Pre School

We have had a very good year again our 4th year since starting in 2004 with many new children taken on both at government funded rates and parent funded. Leader Karen Chittenden and Debbie McHale supported by an excellent team. You can see a table top display set out here to day. With OFSTED approval for 34 children we are continually improving the popular community school aimed at local families. This year we supported Treasure Tots with grants for toys and equipment and further support into the payroll commitment. We are also getting extra funds by starting a lunch club which has proven very successful. This is leader's new idea to bring in more revenue. This council is very committed to this community pre school benefit. Cllr Derek Crump is Chair and the Parish Council representative on the management committee, both his and my time as the Treasurer is given free of any charges. Last year T/T turned over £41,184, the majority of the expenditure is of course the payroll. This-year we expect to exceed and likely to be nearer £44,000-£46,000. As previously mentioned we employ 5 part time permanent and 4 bank staff. We also have Audited accounts available for public inspection, your council suggest this is a quite a unique successful business supporting children and all the young families in Conley Heath partially funded by government grants which bring in around £28,000.

Community Bus

This council is committed to run the regular Friday shopping Bus, Cllr Horner looks after with his band of volunteer drivers, a very popular facility. We have budgeted this year for running at cost of £1500. Fares set at £2 a passenger and about £14/16 per week is generated making a small contribution of about £750 to the council subsidy.

Grant Aid

Last year 2008-9 we funded Grant Aid to value of £7,200. For this year 2009/10 we are reducing to £7300 with maximum grants of £2000. For any grants to be justified there is a strict criteria to reach maximum, most request smaller sums say of £500. The sums are paid around the end of May/June to those applied in time. I have a list if anyone wishes to see after, -available to the public for information.

Gloucester Playing Fields

CHPC have paid £30,000 for the public open space, this will in future be looked at for at our future meetings to determine the best use as either gardens or allotments.

Future Commitments

Our reason for reducing grant aid is to allow more money to be available for much needed play equipment especially at Sleafshyde play area. We are in process of installing new equipment. Works on the commons will continue. Pressure is also on preserving council owned land from illegal or unwarranted occupation. We may have to install gates, barriers or fencing posts or use removal services to reduce the threat. Our area suffers far more from illegal traveller activities than other parishes. Council will not stand by or tolerate illegal trespass. We will legally evict illegal trespassers.

Legal Issues

We have found ourselves continuing the legal issues connected with Nukkie's Farm and building on the flood plain, our costs are detailed in the accounts and to date we have pursued costs claims amounting to £10,500 from the Secretary of State.

Investments

We always ask ourselves how after the precept is paid, how we can make our funds go further. All councils have to keep some reserves for a rainy day, most Clerks aim to keep about 50% of the precept. We have around £60,000 in the reserves which we use to give additional revenue support plus maintain cash flow. In more recent years the money markets have produced good rates plus the safer treasury reserves. This year I am pleased to say we have made more than last year. Unfortunately with the troubled and bleak government economy prospects and higher costs to us all the interest rates will certainly decline.

Precept 2009-10

This year the precept is £155,000 representing an increase of about 4.7% on last year, whilst not as much as we need it is seen as fair to the parish by your council. This represents reasonable value to a current Colney Heath D Band property.

Web Site

We have more plans to create links to other local organisations and progressively and generally improve the working of the site. The past investment has proven to be worthwhile, including management fees it has a reasonable cost into the budget.

Conclusions

With the parish finances are in good shape, we will publish our accounts after the audit, which since 2002 has to be done now in the same way as all public authorities reporting ultimately to the audit commission. So that's the issues on finances thank you for listening- My thanks also to Assistant Clerk -Kim Parker-Mead and all other staff and councillors- If you have questions I will be pleased to answer them, before I hand back to the Chair Cllr Brazier.

The Chair Cllr Brazier thanked the Clerk for the overview of the finances and said he would invite questions from the public. There were no questions from the audience

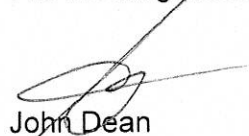
LARKS IN THE PARK: - Assistant Clerk -Kim Parker-Mead

This year the event that was so successful last year is going ahead again, the date is in June at Roestock Park. The general organisation is progressing with meetings with the St Albans Arts event committee. Cllr Brazier is helping Kim and attending the meetings this year we will see new acts and displays better than last year, and the parish council are keen to see an even better turnout than last. The event did not clash with JMI School Fete or Village Day being held later in July. Volunteers were needed and if anyone would like to help even if only for a few hours then this will be most welcome. Kim requested the contact via the parish office.

QUESTIONS & MATTERS RELATING TO THE PARISH & PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- Cllr J Henchley had two issues to put forward from the floor,
- The ditches and gully's in Smallford Lane, Station Road Cllr Henchley said he constantly requested be cleaned out by the Highways Authority which to date have not been done.
- The second was the condition of the roads at Tyttenhanger needing serious works to pot holes and verges.
- There was a discussion regarding the suggestion the parish accounts had not been made available the Clerk said they were not ready at this time from the internal auditor, figures the Clerk had produced to-day were subject to final audit by BDO Stoy Hayward and should only be published when completed.
- The Chair thanked him for giving his presentation, no more questions.
- The Chair said he hoped we had covered all the parish topics, the questions were answered. He thanked all those attending, and providing the displays, the parish staff for their hard work during the year. Adding that he was closing the meeting and all are welcome to stop & enjoy the food and a glass of wine.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm



John Dean
Clerk to the Council