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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 15TH APRIL 2010 AT 7.30pm

Present; - Cllr J Day Chair-Cllr P Reeves-Cllr J Rump-Cllr A Cloke-Cllr Brazier
Cllr Gowens -Cllr J Day- Cllr D Crump-Cllr -Cllr D Horner-Vice Chair

Herts Police PC Andrew Shepherd PC39 PCSO

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

Public Attendance- 43 members of the Parish attended the meeting

Table Top Displays & information provided by the following organisations:-

Treasure Tots Pre School (Carolyn/Annette) Pre School education-2-5 yrs.
The Colney Heath and district WI Twinning Association.

APOLOGIES

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The meeting was preceded at 6.30 pm by a Police meeting with members present.
The Chair Cllr Jamie Day welcomed councillors, speakers. 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 2009

Copies of the 2009 minutes were available to everyone attending. The Chairman
summarised and asked for approval-the minutes were then approved as correct;-

Proposed By Cllr C Brazier

Seconded by Cllr P Reeves

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. OVERVIEW OF POLICING FOR COLNEY HEATH-PC39 Andrew Shepherd

Endorsing his confidence in the local team PC Shepherd was pleased to report
reduced figures on crime in "The Colneys" It was quite a large area to police with the
usual diverse issues of making sure about community safety his key objective.
He went on to mention about other general ward issues in the parish, fly tipping a
new operation to watch for rouge traders had been moderately successful.
Other matters of stolen cars where a number of individuals had been arrested as part
of a county wide operation. Some incidents of criminal damage to property and cars

in the Tyttenhamger Green and London Colney where an individual had been caught after wing mirrors, house glass, and car bodywork damage had been a result of his criminal activities, fortunately now stopped, having been sentenced. The Gating Order is still on for Barley Mow Lane once final agreements are in place. The owner of a quad bike which was uninsured and unlicensed stopped from riding on footpaths and roads after it was seized. Some issues of anti social behaviour have also been dealt with in Hill End Lane and surrounding area. Thefts of liquor from the SPAR shop have also been curtailed after a police targeted response. Loose horses on the common and A414 have been a problem stopping traffic, the nearby travellers have been warned of repercussions if police time is wasted rounding them up. A new person is in post as Gypsy Liaison Officer for HCC, Mr McCabe having retired this year. PC Shepherd finalised by offering copies of the crime report to those who want a copy. There was a question from the audience over a problem family in Springfield Road, and asking what additional policing could play a part in keeping the neighbourly issues under more control. Another question over the nuisance & safety issues of motorcycles riding at speed on the Alban Way is being focussed upon.

The Chair thanked PC Shepherd for the information and attending this evening

ANNUAL REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN Cllr Jamie Day (Also District Councillor)

Chair Cllr Day said he was pleased to address the parish and give his report on the progress this year. I don't want to detain you too long from the refreshments, and no doubt you are all eager to get home to watch the live election debate on TV later this evening. But I believe the Parish Council has had a good year, and I'd just like to report on some highlights.

Planning and Development occupies much of our time. With the high property prices in the St Albans area, there is constant pressure to develop our green spaces, but we remain vigilant. We opposed an extra house being built on a vacant plot in Wynches Farm Drive which would have spoiled the amenity space there used by children and families, and are monitoring the Beaumont School application to build a new access and housing on the Hatfield Road playing fields. We continue to oppose the illegal site in Coursers Road, although the legal process, which has gone all the way to the High Court in London, is lengthy and expensive.

The Home Farm redevelopment is under way – an improvement on the eyesore that the old farmstead had become through Oaklands College's neglect. There have been some problems with delivery vehicles in the mornings, but we have developed a good relationship with the site managers.

Speaking of Oaklands, the ambitious buildings redevelopment that it planned fell through after it was let down by the Learning and Skills Council, which had totally mismanaged its budget. However, we need to be aware that the College will now be looking to sweat its assets to raise additional capital, which will of course include its farmland in the Parish. Turning to the general parish finance - your Council agreed a 3.8% rise in the precept – more than the District Council's frozen rate, but certainly less than that levied by the Police Authority. It is a difficult balance to achieve, but your Council believes there is a danger that a frozen rate this year would mean that a greater percentage would need to be levied next year to maintain services. The state of the economy has also been disastrous for our investments – usually the careful management by our Clerk has yielded several thousand pounds in interest, but with such low interest rates, these deals are simply not available at the moment.

One highlight of the year was our purchase of the Gloucester Park green space between Hill End Lane and Drakes Drive. This came as somewhat of a surprise, as we had previously been outbid for this important space, but we didn't hesitate to secure this asset for the Parish when a second chance came up. We now have a working party under Councillor Chris Gowens investigating how we can make best use of the space for the surrounding community. One suggestion is allotments, and

we are also aware of demand for allotments in other areas such as Colney Heath Village. We are hopeful that the Highfield Trust will also be providing more allotment space once it has agreed to manage part of Oaklands land to the west of Hixberry Lane. Another highlight for me was the reopening of the extended St Marks in Colney Heath. The congregation, led by Rev James Spanner, are to be congratulated on their vision and determination in achieving the remarkable transformation of the church into a light and welcoming space in such a short time. I recommend that you pay it a visit if you haven't already seen the changes. We are aware that there are those in the Highfield area who feel excluded from the Colney Heath Ward. There are historical and cultural reasons for this – Highfield is still only a decade old, but whereas Colney Heath goes back much further, and of course, the A414 is a physical barrier. But I firmly believe that it is people who will help bridge this divide. I am pleased that Cllr Chris Gowens, a former chair of the Highfield Residents Association is now on the Parish Council, and I hope to see more representatives coming forward from the Highfield area. The Highfield residents will be fully and properly represented in our work. Perhaps others will come forward as well in time to articulate their views. These few words are insufficient to cover all the work that goes on in the Parish during the year, including the verge and grounds maintenance, our attractive Parish gardens, the recreation areas and graveyard, the Treasure Tots nursery, the football club and all the various associations, clubs and voluntary groups. Many of our community organisations are represented here tonight, so please take the opportunity to visit their stands. In conclusion, I should like to thank the Parish Councillors for their work and commitment during the year, and most especially our Parish office team - Clerk John Dean and Assistant Clerk Kim Parker-Mead, without whom our jobs would all be a lot more difficult. But most of all, we are only the facilitators – much of the hard work is done by all the community groups, mostly volunteers, in the Parish.-Thank you

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 2009-10 Clerk to the Council John Dean

The Clerk gave a qualified confident overview of the financial position at Colney Heath. This parish year 2009-10 has just ended. We have discharged our precept carefully starting off the year by requesting £150,000.00 from District Council to run the Parish and having further income of £23,000 including use of some reserves concluding the year spending an estimated £174,000 leaving a balance of around £53,000 to carry forward. The figures are provisional and subject to final audit. The exact statement and balance sheet I will publish later in the year when the Audit is finally signed off by BDO Stoy-Hayward the audit commission chosen accountants. This is a busy parish including Treasure Tots we now employ some 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 and January it is moved to ratify the precept sum going forward. The remaining income arrives via other contributions such as leases, various grants or fees, DEFRA Rural payments.

Other non budgeted expenditure

Legal fees have taken over £19,000 this year mainly defending our issues of building on the flood plain for the parking of static caravans. We have claimed back £10,000 from the Secretary of State getting paid for a wrongful decision on the issue.

Treasure Tots Pre School

We have had a very good year again entering our 6th year since starting in 2004 with many children taken on both at government funded rates and parent funded. Leader Debbie McHale is supported by an excellent team. You can see a table top display set out here to day. With OFSTED approvals for 34 children we strive to continually improve the popular community school aimed at all local families and further a field.

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 with the lunch club which has proven very successful and helpful to parents leaving the children in our care whilst they return to work. This is the new Leaders idea to help 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 Pre School Treasurer given free of any charges. Last year T/T turned over £59,000, again subject to final audit in August. The majority of the expenditure is of course the payroll. This-year we expect to exceed last year and likely to be nearer the £44,000-£46,000 mark. Our charges are affordable in the comparison locally with commercial schools. Any profit is reinvested or held over. 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 we funded Grant Aid to value of £7,200. For this year 2009-10 in this year we will be giving £8500 and setting a maximum grant of £2000. For any grants to be justified there is a strict criteria to reach maximum, most request smaller sums say of £100 to £ 500 are regularly requested and paid out. Grant applications for following years are available after each October/November in conjunction with the budget held at the December meeting. This essentially is so we can regulate the applications to the affordable allocations. The sums are paid around the end of May/June to those applied in time. I have a list if anyone to see, -available to the public for information.

Gloucester Playing Fields

This is due to be converted in part to about 20 allotments, provision of water and ploughing the land is a non budgeted item. Council have to decide where the funds are to come from. Further council debates will look at plans in the new parish year

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. With around £60,000 in the reserves we use to give additional revenue support plus maintain cash flow. Investment rates are down.

Precept 2010-11

This year the precept is £155,580 representing slight increase of about on last year, whilst not as much as we need it is seen as fair to the parish by your council and reasonable value to a current Colney Heath D Band property. Split by the required calculation of SCADC into two categories with leisure, recreation and public facilities expected to spend £48,540 and administration, buildings and other headings the sum suggested is £107,310. In total £155,580.

Web Site

More plans to create links to other local organisations and generally improve the working of the site. Your council Clerk meets regularly with the editor.

Conclusions

With the parish finances are in good shape, we will publish our full accounts after the audit, concluding the issues on finances thank you for listening- My thanks go also to Assistant Clerk -Kim Parker-Mead plus all the other hardworking staff who look after the gardens, commons and recreation areas. Not forgetting the staff at Treasure Tots who do a wonderful job to educate the early year's children. Finally our hard working

parish councillors who discharge their public duties diligently- If you have questions I will be pleased to answer them, before I hand back to the Chair Cllr Day.

The Chair Cllr Day thanked the Clerk for the overview of the finances and said he would invite questions from the public. There were various questions from the floor and the audience answered by the Clerk. A question of separating the legal costs from general administration was an idea put forward. The Clerk agreed to consider as an extra cost centre. One final question to the Clerk, was resolved by inviting a parishioner to look at the account software programme with him outside of meeting.

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

The event that was so successful last year is going ahead again the date is 26th June at Roestock Park. The general organisation is progressing with meetings with the St Albans Arts event committee. Kim is attending the meetings this year we will see new acts and displays the parish council are keen to see an even better turnout.

QUESTIONS & MATTERS RELATING TO THE PARISH & PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- Allotments are very much in demand the Chair said CHPC were positive about providing them some where in the village and probably at Hill End.
- A question over the green belt was answered by Cllr Brazier, he said the position has not changes planning should not be given in GB land unless special circumstances. He expected if the government changed the demand for thousands of homes at high density would be scrapped.
- The boundary issue in Bullens Green Lane raised by a parishioner who is keen to see their property in Colney Heath Parish to gain school places.
- A question on improving the public transport in Colney Heath and the villages including Tyttenhanger where the rural bus service is poor.
- What is CHPC doing about the problems of the A414 Longabout, an accident waiting to happen according to a resident, you take your life in your hands in trying to exit the Colney Heath end off High Street. Speed is the issue.
- Mrs Falk wished to thank Andrew Shepherd for his police work on the recent neighbourhood issues in Springfield Close.
- James Spanner wanted the speeding motorcyclists stopped on the Alban Way as it was very dangerous.
- Boundary issues were raised regarding residents on the Franklin Close and Bullens Green Lane parts not in Colney Heath

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. He also mentioned annual beating of the bounds Ceremony taking place on Colney Heath Common in May all are welcome. 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 8.55 pm


John Dean
Clerk to the Council