



COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Alban Park Office
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MINUTES OF THE 2018 ANNUAL COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL ELECTORATE MEETING HELD AT CHARLES MORRIS HALL, TYTTENHANGER ON THURSDAY 26 APRIL 2018 AT 7.30pm

PRESENT: Cllr P Cook (Chair), Cllr D Crump, Cllr M Nash, Cllr C Hathaway, Cllr M Ouzman, Cllr S Devi.

OFFICERS: L Chaplin (Clerk), M Gilbert (Finance Assistant).

PUBLIC: County Councillor Gordon, District Councillor Hale, District Councillor Brazier and 14 members of the public.

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECLARATIONS

None received.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies received Cllr K Barnes and Cllr R Solts.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2017

The minutes were noted with no changes and were proposed by Cllr C Hathaway and Cllr M Nash and accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM 2017 MINUTES

There were no matter arising raised from the agreed minutes.

5. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this meeting covering the year of 2017/18 and looking forward to 2018/19. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, who as you will know are all volunteers with commitments other than the Parish Council. I would like to thank Cllr Margaret Nash in particular, for the time she has put in. Following the traffic light trial report publication for the A414 Longabout she has organised the petition that has reached the level for a debate at County Hall, hopefully in July. Margaret also oversees our comments on planning applications, where we are a Consultee only. Thanks go to Cllr Derrick Crump who ensures our representations are written to emphasise the key issues.

Derrick also chairs our Environment Working Party, outside of monthly Council meetings, to give sufficient attention providing the overall strategy for our Green spaces. This year they will start to work much more closely on what the Council needs our staff to deliver. Colney Heath Common work to restore heathland species involved a visit of bullocks from Willows Activity Farm as part of our English Nature Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. Whilst talking about the Common the recent visit and its associated costs will mean we will be looking closely at our overall budget for this area in the new financial year and the coming ones so we make the most effective use of our spend. As Councillors we need to be satisfied the Council meets the necessary legal and compliance requirements.

Our parish Neighbourhood Plan is progressing steadily and thanks to Mike Rawlins, our volunteer project officer organising it and managing the steering group. It links with



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the District Council's Strategic Local Plan where nearly 1,000 houses are proposed at Oaklands, just over the Parish Boundary in Sandridge Parish.

As mentioned last year we appointed a human resources advisor to give support on deciding what staffing we need going forward. This has resulted in appointing a new part time Clerk, Lisa Chaplin, from August last year and a Finance Assistant, Michele Gilbert. We also have a temporary admin assistant, Matthew Maddock, who is assisting in clearing the wealth of paperwork and matters that need to be addressed around the Parish. The review also indicated that the Village Hall office working environment was not generally suitable for the quality of candidates we were seeking. Following a comprehensive search terms were agreed to relocate to the D1 Courtyard Office at Alban Park on a short term lease whilst other long term options are being evaluated. One key HR activity this year is for all staff to complete the standard supporting forms and documentation to ensure we start being legally compliant in employment matters.

On a difficult note the challenges we have faced over the last two years have been considerable. The issues were brought to our attention by the Locum Clerk from September 2015 and we worked steadily through them. Due to our work and the progress made the external auditors, BDO, were satisfied with our action plans to resolve the many issues. None have been easy to deal with as they have arisen from a decade of process and financial irregularities that had been allowed to occur. Many were so serious we reported the key issues to Herts Constabulary in January 2016. Their investigation concluded in September that they would not be making criminal charges.

Parish Council Finances are subject to accounts and audit compliance stipulated within Local Audit and Accountability 2014 and statutory instruments. The Council employs the Parish Clerk and its Responsible Financial Officer (Local Government Act 1972 s151) to carry out the day-to-day administration and to prepare the annual accounts for audit. The Council undertakes internal controls and regularly reviews these and an independent internal auditor verifies the Council's financial procedures and processes. The annual accounts will be presented and approved at the Colney Heath Parish Council meeting to be held in June 2017. A new internal auditor has been appointed for this financial year and will be making an audit visit on 24th May 2017. The internal audit report will be completed on the annual return and recommendations will be considered by the Parish Council. The Annual Return for year ended 31st March 2016 will be placed on the website and examined by the External Auditor, BDO Stoy Hayward LLP Chartered Accountants. The 30 working day period for the Exercise of Public Rights commences 5th June 2017.

The year-end accounts were closed on 19th April 2017 so with a little under 10 days I am happy to be able to say that the bank account looks healthy however this has been due to a number of factors over the past 12 months including the input of £53k into the account from the Parish Council ceasing to be involved with Treasure Tots in Colney Heath Village as lawyers advised we were acting ultra vires. This money will be allocated to the youth of the Parish and projects are currently being considered.

The operational running costs of the Council show a reduction and this is due to the absence of permanent staff in posts. With all of this in mind the precept was set at the same level as last year at £173,250 a slight increase on last year of £750. There were



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significant underspends in the areas of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Open Spaces including Colney Heath Common. However, this is work that is being focused on at the moment.

The Council continues to support local organisations with grants and this year some of the allocated funds were requested to be rolled forward as plans were not yet in place to spend the money. This money has been ringfenced for 2017/18 and 2018/19. Our thanks go to County Councillor Dreda Gordon for her matched funding to enable us to continue to fund the Community Bus. So, at the year-end whilst the bank balance looks healthy there will be prudent use of the reserves going forward.

Finally, I would like to conclude this report by paying tribute to the time and effort put in by all our Parish Councillors, our Clerk and staff as well as many members of the community. I look forward to making the improvements that are needed around the Parish and for another constructive year.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions on his report.

- Cllr Nash raised that the event was organised mainly by Cllr Crump and helped out by the other ward members.
- CC Gordon raised the strategic local plan and how the Chair made mention of this. CC Gordon asked 'Do you think there is any mileage in LCPC and CHPC and St Stephens PC holding a joint meeting'. The Chair confirmed that this has been planned and was raised by the notes from the NP steering group meetings. Meeting early May potentially LCPC and CHPC. Chair mentioned his declaration of interest in this matter with HBC. Waiting on call for sites information to come from Hertsmeire. CC Gordon very keen to incorporate Hertsmeire and St Albans call for site location.

6. PARISH FINANCE 2017/18 & BUDGETS 2018/19

It was noted that the accounts were closed late this afternoon and all attendees were asked to note the audit page of the issued Annual Report where the schedule for production of Parish Council accounts would be adhered to and published on the website or available from the Parish Office on 23 June 2018. PKF Littlejohn are the new auditors.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PARISHIONERS/ELECTORATE

None raised

Meeting ended at 8pm