

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
THE COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL
HELD AT THE CHARLES MORRIS HALL TYTTENHANGAR
ON THURSDAY 6TH APRIL 2004 AT 7.30pm

Present;- Cllr's J Day-Chair-Cllr M Corley for Vital Villages
Council All council members attended but remained in the audience

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

Press Had promised but failed to attend

Public Attendance-30 members of the Parish attended the meeting

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.40 pm thanking everyone for attending and especially the presentation displays from the various local organisations in the hall. New Member Cllr Corley was introduced to the floor along with new staff who had joined since last meeting the new Clerk Mr John Dean and new Assistant Clerk who joined last July, and had kept the "fort" for a few months-Mrs Kim Parker-Mead. The Chairman also wished to thank Mr Peter Scott for his continued work with the Charles Morris Hall, and for allowing us to use the hall this evening instead of the High Street V/Hall which was out of use for two weeks having internal decoration.

APOLOGIES

No apologies were received by the Chairman

1.THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2003

Copies of the 2003 minutes were available to each person attending, the Chairman summarised these were then approved as correct;-

Proposed By Helen Falk

Seconded by Cllr D Clarke

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

It was suggested that the minutes as copied and past taken by then Assistant Clerk Mrs L Wenham now left, were "out of sync" on numbering. Helen Falk clarified having been Chair at the time in 2003 suggesting that this was a simple numbering mistake. The Clerk explained these had been directly copied from past records and stated there were two number two's and that everyone should re-number one number on for each category, e.g. second two becomes three and so on, ect. He apologised for this past error, it had been lifted off the computer records made before present Chairman's time or the Clerk's at CHPC but not a serious mistake.

3. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL.

The Chairman Cllr Jamie Day, began by thanking his fellow Councillors for their hard work during this Parish Year 2003/4. He especially thanked those many behind the scenes volunteers in the Village who had given their free time and helped the run various organisations.-*Here follows a copy of the text of this report;-*

PLEASE REFER TO CHAIRMANS REPORT ON THE ATTACHED COPY PAPERS

4. VITAL VILLAGES PRESENTED BY Cllr M CORLEY

The Vital Villages was an important matter for the Village of Colney Heath, along with hundreds of other small villages or hamlets in the UK. This was a national plan intended to develop an inward look at the individual needs, future and enhancement of rural villages culminating in the identification of the key aspects in our vital village. Cllr Corley It had received a total grant from the Countryside Agency of £4300 (50% so far) and increased by a grant from the Parish Council of a further £500.

Cllr Corley said this money would be used wisely and shortly every household will have a questionnaire delivered to voluntary complete. This would then be statistically assessed with the results providing a "village picture" hopefully by identifying the opinions and wishes of Colney Heath for the future. It has been run by a steering committee investing considerable amounts of time to the project. This was also a remit of Vital Villages in that the organisers were required to reach at least 350 hours within the rules to comply. Cllr Corley also thanked the team of loyal volunteers.

So far the assessment of the voluntary hours had exceeded requirements this by a long way, with the cost being put at an arbitrary figure of £6.57 per hour.

Indicating the village is benefiting from this additional time, or will do in the future.

The Parish Plan allows rural communities to take positive action in how we would like our area to be. These might include issues such as housing, bus services, distance of medical needs, village halls, support for local enterprise, building projects, local economy. Many villages up and down the country had benefited from participation. Grants up to 75% of the costs could be available if we identify specific needs.

Cllr Corley added that the original open day meeting last year had produced over 100 ideas many of which were extremely good and worthy of being carried forward.

5.FINANCES

The Clerk had provided each place with a brief overview of the parish finances; these were generally in good shape. Income and expenditure was explained and funding and wage costs for the period 2003-4. These were un-audited figures at this stage having not been passed to the accountants. It should be noted that a Parish of this size with a precept of over £100,000 is required to have a strict control of its financial transactions. Systems in place would have met these criteria. During the next parish year Council and administration expect to enhance this with new systems & software. The precept last year was £108,827.00 plus other income and reclaims making a total of £129,457.00 available to the Parrish. Expenditure accounted for £126,000. Confirming adequate budget control and sensible funding was in securely in place. The Clerk had presented the books and bank account statements to be available for inspection and public display during the evening for all to examine. This falls in line with the remit of this Council to be totally transparent open and fair in their dealings. The precept for the forthcoming parish year 2004/5 is kept at a moderate inflationary level, whilst keeping to the firm course of careful budgeting and expenditure.

6. OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO THE PARISH-OPEN TO QUESTIONS-->>

Commons Stewardship

Cllr Brazier answered a question from the floor, Mrs Skelt had raised about use of the Common Land and grazing suggestions, including the fencing which she was very much against this on common land and access. Cllr Brazier was keen to emphasise that nothing would be done without consultation to the Parish with a public meeting. It was planned to use the Furze Field and Park Corner were considered areas although no final decisions. Our objective was to have something that was workable. We had applied to DEFRA for a grant and our application had been accepted, but there was a long way to go, two significant dates were October 04 and final by October 05. Plans had to be drawn up, specialist grass management, would we have cattle or live stock, if we did would barrier fencing or a movable corral type idea is best. All was a debate matter for consideration and discussion on the wider issue.

Planning

Pressure on the Green Belt was becoming a major concern, housing at Highfield had somewhat moved from its strict control to allow additional building of conservatories at a high percentage of homes. A reversal of the original SADC planning and build conditional agreements with the developer. Cllr Brazier stated this made a mockery of the PPG remit on GB land. He also expected to see further pressure on the G/Belt.

Bridge

This had been postponed due to the need to re draw the plan in line with updated flooding maps and probable strengthening requirements. It would still go ahead but this is unlikely to be before 2005/6 Lafarge had agreed to part funding, we had a contingency reserve sum included for our part.

Fly Tipping and litter

This continues to be a problem to our area and open spaces, in spite of the risk of extremely high fines if offenders are caught. Many of course are not caught which angers many. If any situations are witnessed within the parish, then details or number plates should be passed to the authorities. The parish office is keeping a monthly record of all noted or reported fly tipping, to see if the trend is increasing and at which locations are especially vulnerable within the parish. Removal is mostly done by the local authority, waste contractors or Parish Warden, all has a cost that reflects back. Within the whole area litter continued to be a problem, but vandalism was not so prevalent or intrusive at the moment.

Parish Gardens and Flower beds

Continued to look very attractive and enhanced the locations, everyone was very pleased at the seasonal displays. Verge parking was noted as a damaging nuisance.

Boissy Park

The Clerk answered a question on the legal issues, stating that because of the lease renewal we had a past misunderstanding by the then council and administration with the landlord in the late 1990's. This had resulted in a rent review, and accumulated past rent totalling a large sum. The rent review value had also been considered high. Legal assistance had been instigated by the council culminating in the Parish making a bid to purchase the site to keep open for community use. So far no we have no further response to report, the matter is continuing. It should be noted that the whole might be designated as past contaminated land. It probably could only ever have recreational use, some items of parish property was on the site. Local people were continuing to use but council and staff were not entering the land as technically it is not ours. We were however maintaining the collection of dog waste but not cutting the grass or providing other maintenance as a community priority in past years.

Footpaths

In response to a question from Mr P Reeves, it was clarified that at present footpaths, and some bridleways, and public rights of way were controlled through Herts Rights of way officer with responsibilities to parish for up keep via P3 grant. New legislation and a 2002 Act for access over commons would be matters council will have to look at this coming year. There has been a great deal of news published in the media and a case has reached House of Lords. This is related to property values, access over common land, and possible future charges. This law will require all parish's to act.

The meeting closed at 8.15 with the Chairman thanking those local organisations who had set up excellent presentations in the hall, and suggested those present would find interesting. Everyone was invited to join the councillors for a glass of wine.