



COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Highfield Park Office
Hill End Lane
St Albans
Hertfordshire AL4 0RA
Tel: 01727 825314
Email: clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk

Colney Heath Village Office
83 High Street
Colney Heath
Hertfordshire AL4 0NS

24th September 2020

Request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Colney Heath Parish Council information regarding the acquisition of land known locally as Horseshoe Field/Oaklands Field

I am replying to you in response to your email received 24th July 2020 my apologies for the length of time taken but there was a significant amount of information to search dating back to 2011. You asked several questions these are addressed below, and some are answered through noted and enclosed appendices:

Your request:

Details of the acquisition of the land

Our response:

The land on south side of 12 Oaklands Lane (known locally as Horseshoe Field or Three Horseshoes Field) title reference HD519567 was first registered by Lands Registry to Punch Taverns on 30th August 2012. The title was transferred to Colney Heath Parish Council, 83 High Street AL4 0NS noted by Council on 14th October 2014.

Your request:

Costs incurred in the acquisition of the land

Our response:

A full search of all the costs has been undertaken and it is confirmed that the costs for this matter were incurred between 11th August 2011 with the final invoice having been paid 14th December 2015.

The costs are broken down for your information as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| • Legal costs to solicitors | £14,288.73 |
| • Purchase of land from Punch Taverns | £ 5,000.00 |
| • Payment of costs for Punch Taverns | £ 3,334.90 |
| • Payment to occupier | £ 3,000.00 |
| • Surveys | £ 520.05 |



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The total of legal invoices and all costs in this matter were £29,056.28 with VAT deducted of £2,912.60 makes the total spent by Colney Heath Parish Council in the acquisition and registration of the title for HD519567 as **£26,143.68**.

Your request:

Councillors who served at the time and voting in respect of acquisition

Our response:

Appendix 1 shows the serving councillors and Officers of the Council for the years 2009 – 2020. Appendix 2 shows the minute extracts for all discussions and votes registered in this matter.

Your request:

Council decisions with regard acquisition and minutes of meetings.

Our response:

Appendix 2 shows all minute references for this item since 14th May 2009 when the matter was first mentioned. The minutes have not been transcribed but the relevant section has been taken directly from the official minutes and placed in the appendix for ease, along with references and the date of the meeting. All minutes listed can be located on the Parish Council website at the following link:

<https://www.colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk/minutes-2010-2015/>

Your request:

Comments made by auditors in respect of acquisition

Our response:

The Internal Audit reports for 2008-2015 have been checked and the areas looked at by this particular auditor covered reviews of Accounting Practices and Bank reconciliations, Corporate Governance to include Standing Orders and Financial Regulations only, Assessment of Management of Risk, Budgetary Control and Reserve levels, Petty Cash, Salaries and Wages

From 2016 the new auditor was much more in depth and covered a wide range of topics including payments of all leases, contracts, and agreements to pay. Whilst there were comments on the registration of land and assets, there were no formal comments made to Council by an external or internal auditor directly relating to the acquisition HD519567.



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Your request:

Details on costs and budget in respect of acquisition and explanation of overbudget.

Our response:

There is no confirmed budget in respect of this matter, although it is noted from records that solicitors referred to an estimated budget of £5,250 for dealing with the land purchase and £750 for registration of the land on a legal costs basis.

There is no record within the official minutes of a budget being assigned to this land acquisition. References are noted within the minutes but there is no more than £1,500 which was specifically approved with figures in full.

There is no explanation or report from either the Parish Clerk or the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) as to the overspend in this matter.

Your request:

Audit trail of acquisition with key decisions and who made them

Our response:

The minuted decisions of Council in the acquisition of this land and approved expenditure are shown in Appendix 2. There are no noted votes in the records.

I hope this information is helpful and successfully answers your questions. If you have any further queries, then please send them to me at clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Chaplin LCGI PSLCC CPFA CiLCA
Clerk to the Council
For and on behalf of
Colney Heath Parish Council