

COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

 **Address:** Highfield Park Visitor Centre, Hill End Lane AL4 0RA
 **Telephone:** (01727) 825 314
 **Website:** <https://colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk>
 **E-mail:** clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk



MINUTES OF COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT COLNEY HEATH JMI SCHOOL ON THURSDAY 1 DECEMBER 2022, 7.30pm

Members in attendance

Cllr K Barnes (Highfield Ward)	Cllr J Mulroney (Highfield Ward)
Cllr H Brazier (Hill End Ward)	Cllr G Shaw (Colney Heath Ward)
Cllr T Burns (Colney Heath Ward)	Cllr K Slaughter (Colney Heath Ward)
Cllr P Cook (Chairman) (Highfield Ward)	Cllr R Solts (Highfield Ward)
Cllr J Llewellyn (Colney Heath Ward)	Clerk of the Council, Mrs L Peters

Other attendees

7 members of the public

22/23-70

APOLOGIES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

No apologies were required. It was confirmed that two councillors and three members of the public were audio recording the meeting.
The Chair announced the outcome of the St Albans District Council Policy Committee of 24th November and noted his attendance and questions.
It was noted that a District Councillor had confirmed that they had visited Highfield but had not engaged with the Parish Council or individual councillors.

22/23-71

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- None confirmed.
- All councillors in attendance confirmed by nodding that the published declarations were correct and up to date.
- None received or noted
- None requested

22/23-72

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

7.36pm *Standing Orders were suspended so members of the public could have the opportunity to ask questions/make statements to the Council.*

- There was a statement made regarding false news and information which may have been miscommunicated with reference to the Clerks remuneration.
- Thanks were offered to the Clerk regarding the intervention of removing a skip from next to the village hall.

7.37pm *Standing Orders were resumed.*

22/23-73

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 17th November 2022 were noted as circulated and taken as read. Chair confirmed that changes noted in advance by Councillor Shaw had all been included in the newly circulated draft which each councillor had been given a copy of. Chair asked for any further comments as to their accuracy.

There were no other comments regarding accuracy. The minutes were duly proposed, seconded, and **RESOLVED** by a majority vote to be a true and accurate record of the meeting. **Motion carried.**

The minutes were signed by meeting Chair Councillor Cook for the website.

22/23-74

CIVILITY & RESPECT PLEDGE

The report was noted as circulated. It was noted that this was not legislation but more of a commitment to change. The civility and respect pledge was duly proposed, seconded, and unanimously **RESOLVED** to be adopted by this Council. **Motion carried.**

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	FINANCE, AUDIT & GOVERNANCE
22/23-75	FINANCE a) Approval of payments Month 8 – November 2022 The signed payment sheet was noted as circulated. There were questions on the removal and installation of bus shelters regarding ones replaced and ones merely removed. There was a question on payment 111 and what it was for. Confirmation that this was the payment to the project manager working on the voluntary registration of Colney Heath Common and Interim Clerk. There were no further questions on the payment sheet. Therefore, retrospective approval for the Month 8 payments was duly proposed, seconded, and unanimously RESOLVED by a show of hands. Motion carried. b) Approval of payments Month 9 – December 2022 It was duly proposed, seconded, and unanimously RESOLVED by a show of hands that delegated authority be given to the Clerk/RFO to make payments at the end of Month 9 and the signed payment sheet would be circulated for review with a view to being retrospectively approved at the next Council meeting in January 2023. Delegated authority to the Clerk to make payments for December 2022 was duly proposed, seconded, and unanimously RESOLVED by a show of hands. Motion carried
22/23-76	COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW (CGR) a) URBAN PARISH COUNCIL MOTION There were questions on the boundaries of the proposed Highfield Parish Council for the purposes of the petition. This was confirmed, there was clear legislation regarding petitions and wording which would be studied. There were questions on promotion of the petition and it was confirmed that the promotion would be by the Highfield ward councillors. The petition is live online. Leaflets would be prepared and doors would be knocked. There was a request for any leaflet to be shared with Council. The motion was repeated prior to the vote: <i>That a budget of £750 be allocated from ear marked reserves to promote the petition and formation of Highfield Parish Council.</i> The motion was offered in advance so was already duly proposed and seconded and the vote for this motion was RESOLVED unanimously. Motion carried. b) ASSETS MOTION Cllr Cook gave background on the reasons for the motion, highlighting several comments from the community survey. There was a request that perhaps the Parish Council should sell the land directly to residents, it was felt that residents, if interested, would be able to bid at auction. Offering the land at auction demonstrated best value for the asset under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972. Cllr Burns wanted to know how quickly the sale could be reasonably completed, it was confirmed that after the sale an exchange of contracts would happen within 28 days of the auction so this method had the benefit of certainty of completion. It was felt that if the land was not sold it would automatically go to the District Council and the value to the Parish Council would be lost. There was a comment regarding potential criticism if the land went to a developer as it was a public open space. Cllr Shaw noted the NOLAN principles and felt that too few residents would benefit from the sale of the land.

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	Cllr Burns proposed an amendment to the motion in which he wanted to remove the requirement to share 50% of the proceeds from the sale to the new Colney Heath Recreation Ground play area, this motion received no seconder and was not progressed to a vote. The motion was repeated prior to the vote: <i>To sell Gloucester Park by auction with the net proceeds, after the redemption of the Public Works Loan Board and auction fees, to be split 50% to be placed in earmarked reserves for Colney Heath Recreation Ground play area and 50% to be allocated to the Highfield Park Trust pathways project as both projects will benefit parishioners who have contributed to the purchase and maintenance of the land.</i> A recorded vote was requested and noted. The motion was offered in advance so was already duly proposed and seconded and the vote for this motion was RESOLVED by majority vote. Motion carried. The proposer was Cllr Cook, seconder was Cllr Mulroney. ➤ In favour – Cllrs Slaughter, Solts, Mulroney, Cook, Llewellyn, Barnes ➤ Against – Cllrs Brazier & Shaw ➤ Abstention – Cllrs Burns There was a challenge on a potential conflict of interest from Cllr Shaw to Cllr Barnes. Cllr Barnes was asked what he would like to do on this matter and responded that he wished his vote to count, this was noted.
22/23-77	INSURANCE EMPLOYMENT MOTION Cllr Solts gave background to the reasons for the motion and stated that it was only a matter of time before an issue would arise. Some clarity is required on personal and corporate action for councillors now and in the future. The motion was slightly amended prior to the vote and confirmed to be: <i>Due to the continual questioning of the Clerk's integrity and professionalism, Council to instruct the Clerk to place the CHPC insurance company on notice of potential employment claims against this Council. And subsequently to obtain confirmation from the insurance company that if any action is brought that personal indemnity for current councillors now or in the future claims will be covered and also that future councillors will be covered.</i> The motion was offered in advance so was already duly proposed and seconded and the vote for this motion was RESOLVED by majority vote. Motion carried. The proposer was Cllr Solts, seconder was Cllr Barnes. ➤ In favour – Cllrs Slaughter, Solts, Mulroney, Cook, Llewellyn, Barnes, Shaw, Brazier ➤ Abstention – Cllr Burns
22/23-78	BUDGET 2023/24 a) Highfield Park Trust Parish Office Cllr Barnes gave an update from the Highfield Park Trust perspective. The contract runs 30 September 2023. After a lengthy debate councillors felt until a final confirmed decision was made by St Albans District Council on the Community Governance Review it would be difficult to proceed to any decision on the future of the Parish Office outside the potential new boundary. b) Budget Proposal and Precept 2023/24 Councillors shared their thoughts and concerns over the budget impact of losing half of the Precept paying households in the current Parish Council. Cllr Cook wished to ensure that the Parish Council remained financially viable for the future parish councillors.

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Cllr Slaughter shared her concerns over the impact of the decisions made with regard the splitting of the parish and how it would affect services.

Cllr Cook wished to ensure fair debate of the earmarked reserves and to debate these either at the next item or at a later date. Cllr Cook went through the figures on the bank balances which were requested to be presented from the last Council meeting.

Cllr Burns pointed out that the increase in Precept was less than inflation and worked out on a monthly basis at £7 per month. Cllr Cook requested a full look at the ear marked reserves in depth at the January 2023 meeting.

Cllr Shaw asked about the assets when and if the split occurs, it was confirmed that the assets outside the boundary of the newly split Parish Council would revert to St Albans District Council. When asked if money would also be split either from the bank account or ear marked reserves it was noted that this was not clear as information from St Albans District Council on next steps was unknown at this stage. There were many questions that the Chair had been pushing the District Council to answer it was hoped these would be answered formally soon.

Cllr Cook proposed to pause the budget discussion and opened debate on ear marked reserves making suggestions line by line and changes were as follows:

- 318, 319, 320, 321, 323 ringfenced EMRs
- 322 – cut by £7,500 potentially
- 324 – to be removed
- 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 335, 336 retain
- 337 – to be removed
- 339 – reduce to £5,000
- 321 – New Office – ringfence
- 351 – to be removed

Use the money removed, £17,000 from ear marked reserves, to lessen the impact to residents, items from the budget would need to be placed as projects and this should be done line by line. A decision on the budget prior to this was required. Cllr Burns proposed to accept the third budget as drafted and presented to Council, the budget was therefore proposed to be adopted unchanged. Cllr Solts asked for the current Colney Heath ward councillors to lead the debate on the budget decisions and to propose any changes to the running costs of the Council. It was noted that the biggest risk to the Council was the loss of the office outside of the potential new Parish. Debate continued. Cllr Shaw asked about budgeting for 2023/24 and 2024/25. There was debate on making a decision at this meeting or in January.

It was duly proposed and seconded that the budget was accepted as drafted and that the initial Precept for 2023/24 would be increased by 81.4%. The motion was **RESOLVED** by majority vote. **Motion carried** A recorded vote was requested and noted.

The proposer was Cllr Burns, seconder was Cllr Brazier.

- In favour – Cllrs Slaughter, Solts, Mulroney, Cook, Llewellyn, Barnes, Burns, Brazier
- Against – Cllr Shaw

On ear marked reserves the £17,000 noted should be reallocated to EMR 321 Future Office Building Fund. This motion was proposed and seconded and the vote for this motion was **RESOLVED** unanimously. **Motion carried.**

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	Council would review the earmarked reserves at the January meeting.
22/23-79	PARISH ADMINISTRATION & EVENTS
	a) Research on Colney Heath Common The Clerk reported on a request from a student regarding research on Church Lane bridge and the Common. Permission was agreed subject to no damage to be done to the area. b) Roestock Hut Building Inspection The Building inspection and condition pictures were noted. The suggestion to carry out a further building survey was duly proposed, seconded and RESOLVED unanimously. Motion carried. c) Clerk report - Environment Committee Chair asked for an FOI request to be sent to the Environment Agency regarding matters relating to Fredericks Wood. - Issues around signage regarding the closure of the A414, signage has been successfully placed at the entrances to Colney Heath Lane, Smallford Lane and the entrance to Colney Heath Village advising routes are not suitable for HGVs, with thanks to County Councillors Hale and Tallon for their assistance with these. - A successful meeting was held on The Warren this week and the reinstatement of the ghost ponds will go ahead in January 2023. The works are fully funded and is an exciting development for a very important ecological area of the County. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HWMt) have been in contact with a potential grazer who wishes to bring their cattle to the Warren and negotiations on this will begin shortly. At the meeting a member of the spider recorder for Hertfordshire attended our meeting this week and include one nationally scarce species (Centromerus incilium) (a rare money spider) and a few indicators of good quality heathland/grassland, as well as some under-recorded species for the county. Early next year we have invited the Hertfordshire Amphibian and Reptile Group to survey the area for species. - Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts which is open for consultation, this will be circulated to all councillors for their individual comment. - A reminder that the Parish Office will be closed from Thursday 22nd December 2022 reopening on Thursday 5th January 2023. The Clerk is available by email and text message or if urgent the parish mobile phone will be switched on and a message can be left. d) Questions to Clerk - Question on future meetings and dates. Clerk confirmed dates of meetings of Full Council would appear in the minutes: 26th January 2023 23rd February 2023 23rd March 2023 - Cllr Shaw asked about the attendance and the costs of the Remembrance Parade.
22/23-80	REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES a) Highfield Park Trust There was no update at this time. b) Twinning Association Cllr Burns reported that there was an event this weekend on Saturday evening.

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22/23-81	QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC <i>9.33pm Standing Orders were suspended so members of the public could have the opportunity to ask questions/make statements to the Council. No statements made or questions asked so Standing Orders were resumed at 9.33pm</i> The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.33pm
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Meeting closed at 9.33pm

L Peters LCGI PSLCC CPFA CiLCA

Clerk to the Council

Drafted 16/12/2022

Signed by

John AEGoh 26/01/2023

Councillor Peter Cook

Chair

Approved by Council 26th January 2023

