

Wheathampstead Annual Parish Meeting

22 April 2009, 19.30h

Present Councillors:	K Stammers	(Chairman)
	I Begg	
	A Brewster	
	J Burgess	
	G Clark	
	N Clements	
	D Hills	
	N Page	
	T Reason	
	S Walford	
	A Waterfield	
	J Merritt	PCSO
	Julia Warren	Clerk to Council
	Press	0
	Public	45

2009-1 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced PCSO Jo Merritt and Julia Warren, Clerk to the Council

2009-2 PCSO ADDRESS

PCSO Jo Merritt spoke of her work as PCSO responsible for the Parish of Wheathampstead. She worked as part of the Safer Neighbourhood Team based in Harpenden and spent her time out and about in Wheathampstead meeting with the public and liaising with the Parish Council. As a PCSO almost all her time was spent outside the office.

2009-3 CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

The Chairman spoke of the changes within the year notably the retirement of Mrs Barbara Green in November 2008; she had been Clerk and assistant clerk serving the Parish for almost 30 years.

2009-4 MINUTES OF 2008 APM

The Minutes of the 2008 Annual Parish Meeting held on 21 May 2008 were approved

Resolved: To confirm the Minutes of the meetings held on 21 May 2008 to be a true and fair account and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

2009-5 ACCOUNTS

It was reported that the 2007-8 accounts had been audited and the 2008-9 accounts in the process of compilation for Council approval and subsequent audit on 3 July 2009.

2009-6 REPORT OF JAMES MARSHALL FOUNDATION AND WHEATHAMPSTEAD UNITED CHARITIES

Councillors Reason reported that the Foundation existed to make financial awards to young residents of Wheathampstead and Harpenden who were under the age of twenty five to help them to take advantage of educational, job and character building opportunities which would in turn enhance their career potential. During 2008-9 83 grants totalling £25,680 were awarded to residents of Wheathampstead Parish. This represented a significant decrease from the previous year 2007-2008 when 109 grants were awarded totalling £50,112. A detailed breakdown was provided as were contact details for applicants.

The Foundation had had exceptional expenditure over the last financial year which resulted in a restriction on the funds available to award as grants. Reapplications had been encouraged where the grant requested had not initially been awarded.

2009-7 COMMITTEE REPORTS & LAUNCH OF VILLAGE PLAN Village Plan Committee

Councillor Begg as Chairman of the Village Plan Committee spoke of its achievements. He thanked those involved in its data analysis and compilation. The survey results had revealed an overwhelming emphasis on prioritising the needs of local shops and businesses. The resultant 48 page living document would be available electronically on the website, or could be purchased as a hard copy from the office. The committee continued to monitor progress against the 122 actions/targets identified by the community. Over time the planning section would be expanded

Allotments Committee

Councillor Walford spoke of the ongoing maintenance of the allotments, of the ever growing demand for allotment plots used for cultivation of fruit, vegetables and livestock including chickens, turkeys and piglets. Most recently following training one allotment holder had been permitted a beehive. Allotments provided a leisure pursuit and community interest as well as health benefits

Pump Committee

Councillor Clark reported that the Pump newsletter was delivered to all households in the Village and that a recent edition had included consultation on content. There were now four editions per annum, a condition for application by the Parish Council for Quality Parish Council status. Residents were encouraged to contribute articles for the newsletter, also to advise the Clerk should they experience delivery problems.

Village Day Committee

Councillor Waterfield reported that the annual Village Day had been held on the second July Sunday for a number of years. The Village Plan survey had shown that Sunday was the preferred day. For 2009 a few changes including procession route, different fun fair attractions and a 'most like your dog' competition had been introduced.

Rights of Way & Commons Committee

Councillor Page spoke of the ongoing maintenance of the footways and commons. The Parish was large and rural with a large number of wooded areas and open spaces.

Youth and Playing Fields Committee

Councillor Brewster spoke of the opportunities offered to young people in the Village over the last 12 months, including Floats, Hip Hop dancing, Artskool and the Youth Connexions Body Bus at Village Day, partnership working with the County Council and youth club, the Ignition holiday scheme, the District Council and the play ranger and Watford Football Club's football coaching and art and craft sessions. The Parish Council subsidised regular Artskool and Hip Hop sessions and provided freely accessible play areas throughout the Parish. Grant funding had been secured from the landfill system to improve the Folly Fields play area. Future plans included building on facilities already provided as requested through the Village Plan survey, updating more play areas, supporting local sports clubs and improving village signage and the heritage trail.

Planning Committee

A number of changes of use of local buildings had occurred over the year including the change of the former Collins Antique shop to a restaurant and improvements to the listed St Helens Churchyard wall. Councillor Clerk confirmed that the Village Plan aimed to give conservation guidelines, but those present were reminded that the Parish Council was a consultee giving recommendations to St Albans District Council who was responsible for planning decisions

Highways & Public Transport Committee

Councillor Clements acknowledged that the Highways & Public Transport Committee considered all items relating to highways and public transport and was responsible for the hanging baskets, bus shelters and Christmas lighting in the parish. He worked closely with Herts Highways, the responsible authority.

Memorial Hall Management Committee

Councillor Turner had recently taken over chairmanship from Councillor Stammers and had sent her apologies because of a previous commitment. Over the preceding year the Memorial Hall had been well used by a variety of local groups and individuals. The roof had been refurbished and was expected to last for many years to come.

2009-8 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

After the refreshment break the public were invited to ask questions and make comments.

Mr Partington spoke about the PCSO funding. He congratulated the Parish Council on the production of the Village Plan. He made a few observations for consideration as the Plan grew and developed. These included suggestions for a councillor 'funding tsar' to assist in fulfilling aspirations, a tightening of deadlines for actions particularly in the traffic and transport section, provision of a meeting point for small businesses, greater awareness and subsequent involvement of parishioners in local events through better publicity, and improved use of village resources through sharing/partnership use.

Enforcement of speed restrictions including the 20mph in the High Street was raised.

The chairman was asked about the gratuity payment to the former Clerk. This had been part of her terms and conditions. Council had agreed that from January 2009, in line with recommendations from the National Association of Local Councils and many businesses, employees be offered the opportunity to join a workplace pension scheme. The Parish Council was now part of the Hertfordshire County Council Pension Scheme.

Mr Habib made reference to the allotments on the Marford Road and asked about the status of the large plastic greenhouse or polytunnel. This had been approved by the previous Clerk. The allotment rules had subsequently been revised including specification on size and number of structures permissible on allotment plots. St Albans District Council would be approached to confirm planning regulations.

Details of the length of the Parish Council's lease for the Rectory Meadows was requested.

Concerns were raised about extended licensing hours for the Social Club. It was believed that the additional hours were to permit diners to finish their meals rather than for late arrivals at the bar.

Mr Gatehouse observed that the Memorial Hall might benefit from installation of a hearing loop and offered to provide contacts through the Hertfordshire Hearing Advisory Service. He was thanked for his assistance, and, post meeting, the chairman of the Memorial Hall Management Committee, who was away and unable to attend the APM, advised that the installation of a hearing loop in the Hall was in progress and a number of volunteers were currently assisting.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 22.25.

Dated this day of 2010

Chairman