

Minutes of a meeting of Little Chalfont Parish Council

On Wednesday 9th September 2015 at 7.30pm

In the Little Village Hall, Cokes Lane, Little Chalfont

Present: Cllr Brian Drew, Cllr C Ingham, Cllr G Roberts, Cllr D Rafferty, Cllr J Walford, Cllr M Parker

In attendance: Mrs S Owens (Assistant Parish Clerk)

Members of the public: Melanie Davis, Helen Gray, Paul Gray, Michael Joyce, Chris Matthews, Dermot Matthews, Cllr Martin Tett.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr I Griffiths and Cllr V Patel
2. **To accept a resolution that standing orders be suspended to allow any members of the public to speak:** A number of residents from The Retreat, Little Chalfont attended the meeting to talk about agenda item 23. Helen Gray confirmed that she had written a letter to the Council, pointing out that the apple tree was only annoying for a short period each year and that she would prefer an alternative solution to chopping it down. If a new tree were to be planted in its place, it would take a long time to grow. Although the tree did attract wasps, most houses in the road had an apple tree in their back garden so there would still be wasps around. She said that she heard owls roosting in the apple tree at night. Dermot Matthews accepted that the tree was a feature of The Retreat, but since BCC had lifted the crown, it had produced a huge amount of fruit that was frequently run over by vehicles and this attracted wasps. He said that the tree was getting near the telephone lines. Michael Joyce said that he would be happy to go with the consensus, but would want something to replace it if it was chopped down. He suggested that the fruit could be put in a green wheelie bin and BCC could be asked to empty it.
3. **To receive and approve the minutes of 8th July 2015:** The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2015 were approved and signed as a correct record of the meeting.
4. **To vote on the co-option of a member of the public to fill a vacancy for a councillor.** Cllr Drew proposed Melanie Davis as Parish Councillor for Little Chalfont South Ward and this was seconded by Cllr Roberts and unanimously agreed. Mrs Davis signed her declaration of acceptance of office and the Chairman welcomed her to the Parish Council.
5. **Declarations of Interest:** Cllr Drew informed the meeting that he knew Helen Gray.
6. **Any Other Business:** (i) Santander Bond
7. **Chairman's Report:** The Chairman's report had been previously circulated. There were no further comments or questions.
8. **Clerk's Report:** Cllr Drew highlighted the completion of the MUGA fencing and the start of the football season at Westwood Park.
9. **To receive reports, as appropriate, from members of outside bodies and Parish Council working parties.** (i) Cllr Parker had attended an LCCA meeting. A suggestion was made that the LCCA and the Parish Council should meet as there were new members on both bodies. It would be an opportunity to discuss roles and responsibilities and to have an informal chat. Cllr Drew agreed this would be a good idea but thought it might be difficult to arrange a date. Cllr Parker met the new Head of Dr Challoner's High School who was keen to be involved in local matters. (ii) Local Business Working Party. Cllr Roberts reported that a

meeting had taken place of the Local Business Working Party, but the only trader able to attend was Paul Gibson, a physiotherapist. His premises are above a shop and so he has problems advertising his business. There was a general consensus that A boards should not be allowed in the village, but there was sympathy for businesses who were competing with similar businesses on main roads and in Amersham. It was suggested that when work on the village green had taken place, a sign could be erected that complemented the new village sign, setting out which businesses and services were in the village and where they could be found, but without actually naming them. A further suggestion was to place signs on bollards. Cllr Roberts would go back to the working party to suggest a discreet sign be erected, paid for by the business owners, listing the village businesses. (ii) Nature Park Action Group. Cllr Roberts reported that tenders had been sent out for the paths in the Nature Park and the meadow had been cut.

10. Financial matters:

- (i) *List of payments and cheques to be signed.* All payments were approved.
- (ii) *Income and expenditure report.* The report was approved.
- (iii) *Annual Return 2014/15.* The report had been completed successfully. Cllr Drew congratulated and thanked the Clerk for its successful completion.
- (iv) Cllr Roberts, Cllr Parker and Cllr Walford were confirmed as signatories on the Santander account.

11. Parking issues: Cllr Parker reported that the consultation for the new parking restrictions on Burtons Lane had been circulated. The LCCA were concerned about the restrictions resulting in a speeding problem. Cllr Parker agreed this might be an issue, but suggested it needed to be tackled separately. Ian Dent had confirmed to Cllr Parker that BCC were nearly ready to start final discussions on parking restrictions in the rest of the village. Cllr Parker and Cllr Drew would meet with Ian Dent and others from BCC to finalise issues before going public.

12. Devolution of duties: In order to address the issue of hedges that impeded footways and overhung roads, Councillors had posted letters, asking the residents to cut back the vegetation. There had been a number of phone calls to the office about the letters. The exercise could be mentioned in the Parish newsletter, to thank people who had cut their hedges and to prompt those who hadn't. Cllr Rafferty suggested getting in touch with Amersham Town Council about the other end of White Lion Road, which has considerable overgrown hedging. It could cause a danger to pedestrians who have to go into the cycle land to avoid overhanging branches. Cllr Drew commented that the last verge cut had been more successful than the first and had been completed to a good standard. The Councillors would keep an eye on the verges and let the Clerk know if there were any issues.

13. Pothole survey: The Council had previously suggested that Councillors check for potholes in their allocated roads and report back to the Clerk. Alternatively they could email a photo to BCC. Cllr Roberts reported that Great Missenden Councillors had surveyed their whole village and this might be a useful exercise in Little Chalfont, so that any deterioration would be noticeable in the future. Councillors needed to use their discretion in deciding whether a pothole was dangerous. Cllr Tett said that resurfacing work was taking priority at present. Work is being undertaken on Chenies Avenue imminently.

14. Speedwatch: Cllr Roberts reported that she had the radar equipment for Speedwatch and had nine volunteers. She was trying to fix a date for the first operation, which would hopefully be in the following two weeks. They would possibly set up on Cokes Lane first.

- 15. MVAS:** The MVAS had been on the Amersham Road and was currently on Bell Lane. Useful data had been produced and further statistics would be collated to show where there are problems. Cllr Parker said that he felt turning the MVAS around on the Amersham Road was less effective than moving it to the other side of the road. Cllr Drew said that this would incur costs, but that the MVAS was on rotation and could be placed on the other side of the road when it returns there. Cllr Roberts reported that the police had done a speed trap on Cokes Lane and had recorded a top speed of 48mph. The police had requested the MVAS data.
- 16. Parish newsletter:** Cllr Walford said the ideal date for the October Parish newsletter would be the 24/25 October. Suggested items were the results from MVAS, a Nature Park update, new Councillors photos and information, Speedwatch update, MUGA fencing, hedging letters, Beel Close underpass, potholes and grass cutting and allotments. Any other suggestions should be sent to Cllr Walford.
- 17. Community Buildings Working Party:** Progress on the replacement of the village hall was going slowly and the pre-planning advice had not been favourable, on the grounds that it was too big and bulky and there were issues raised about ancient woodland in the area. There would be a meeting the following Monday with the architect who had sought advice from a Planning Consultant. It was still hoped an application would eventually go through and Cllr Drew would report back from the meeting.
- 18. Nature Park Lease Legal Advice:** This had been circulated for comment. Some initial comments had been discussed with the Charitable Trust. There was concern about the use of the word 'discretionary' in regard to a water supply. The Charitable Trust felt the list of discretionary items could only be put in place if funds allowed. The Parish Council would ask their contractors if they would be able to maintain the park without a water supply. There had been a concern about the fencing as it would not stop people from climbing in through Snells Wood. However, the insurers were happy with it so the Parish Council would accept it. Cllr Parker asked for clarification about the ancient hedge banks that needed protecting. He felt the wording should be changed to the need for the land to be built up over the hedge banks, rather than protecting them. Cllr Drew had researched whether more animal proof litter bins could be found, but could not find any available. Cllr Roberts did not think there was a problem with similar ones used on the village green. Cllr Ingham was unhappy with the bench design and the idea of sculptures, but Cllr Drew said that the Working Party had designed the park and it would not be helpful to step in at this point to criticise the design. Cllr Drew proposed that the Parish Council should agree with the lease in principle, with certain alterations. Cllr Parker sought confirmation that the Parish Council would have further opportunity to comment on the lease and Cllr Drew confirmed that the final lease would be circulated before signing and agreed with Cllr Parker that it was a big commitment. Cllr Parker was happy to second the proposal, with the proviso that the wording about the hedge banks was changed.
- 19. New benches in Little Chalfont:** There are two benches which are surplus to requirements outside the library. The Scouts have worked on the benches to improve them and the WI has kindly offered to fund installation of one of the benches. A petition was undertaken to decide the location of any new benches and the most popular location was outside the doctors' surgery. The Parish Council agreed that the first bench should be installed outside the doctors' surgery. There were various suggestions for the second bench. Cllr Drew proposed it should go opposite the doctors' surgery. Cllr Roberts suggested it could go opposite Chiltern Heights and a BCC local area technician and the Clerk could look at this proposal. The Clerk would be asked to write about the benches for the newsletter.

- 20. Remembrance Sunday parade and ceremony:** Cllr Drew had invited the Reverend David Allsop to give the service, but had yet to hear from him. The service will be at 10.45am.
- 21. LAF Transportation bid:** A bid had been submitted to apply for LAF funding to extend the pavement on Stony Lane. Two further suggested bids have not been submitted following advice from BCC, as they were unlikely to be granted.
- 22. Good Companions grant:** Cllr Drew proposed that a grant of £150 be given to the Good Companions Club, which is a club for elderly residents in the village. Cllr Roberts seconded the proposal. Cllr Parker suggested there should be a clearer policy about grant giving. Cllr Drew said that grants would be discussed as usual in November.
- 23. Apple Tree in the Retreat:** This item was discussed earlier in the meeting. The Parish Council had received a request from a resident to remove an apple tree in The Retreat, due to falling apples causing an inconvenience at this time of year. The eleven houses in The Retreat had been surveyed. A number of residents agreed to it being chopped down, but many wanted a consensus to be reached and alternative solutions were suggested. Some residents only wanted it chopped down if certain conditions were met. Cllr Drew suggested that expert advice should be sought to try to stop it producing so much fruit. The apple tree was on the edge of the green and a new tree could be planted in the centre of that green and allowed to establish itself before the apple tree was chopped down. Cllr Drew explained that although the tree belongs to the County Council, they had given permission to take it down at the residents' expense if the Parish Council agreed. It was agreed that the Council's contractors should be asked for advice and if they couldn't help, then expert advice would be sought. A new tree could be planted and allowed to grow for a few years before taking down the apple tree, but if the expert advice was that it was always going to be a problem, then it should be chopped down. In this event, residents would be notified and allowed to comment.
- 24. Assistant Clerk vacancy:** The vacancy was advertised in the Bucks Examiner on Thursday 3rd September. Interviews would take place on Monday 21st September.
- 25. Reports and Notifications:**
- (i) Capital Maintenance works – August and September 2015 (circulated 14 July 2015)
 - (ii) My Bucks newsletter – August 2015 (circulated 28 July 2015)
 - (iii) Microsurfacing works – June - August 2015 (circulated 17 August 2015).
 - (iv) Proposed temporary road closure – September 2015 (circulated 17 August 2015). Stony Lane had been blocked off.
 - (v) My Bucks newsletter – September 2015 (circulated 27 August 2015).
 - (vi) Capital Maintenance works – August and September 2015 (circulated 1 September 2015)
- 26. Any other business:** (i) Santander bond. This was about to mature. The options were to renew it or transfer the funds. There was a general principle of having money spread around a number of accounts, but it was agreed that the Clerk would ask Scottish Widows and RBS what they could offer and if this was at least 0.5% higher than Santander, then the funds would be transferred; otherwise, a new Santander bond would be opened.
- 27. Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 14 October 2015 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.