

Minutes of a Little Chalfont Parish Council meeting

Held in the Village Hall, Cokes Lane, Little Chalfont

Wednesday 8 June 2016 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr B Drew (Chairman); Cllr C Ingham; Cllr M Parker; Cllr V Patel; Cllr D Rafferty; Cllr J Walford OBE.

Members of the public: Mr David Edwards

In attendance: Mrs N Meldrum (Parish Clerk); Miss S Matthews (Assistant Clerk)

The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman were not in attendance at the meeting. The Clerk asked for the councillors present to nominate a councillor to chair the meeting. Cllr Walford proposed that Cllr Drew chair the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Ingham. Cllr Drew confirmed he would chair the meeting.

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Cllr M Davis; Cllr I Griffiths; Cllr G Roberts.
- 2. To accept a resolution that standing orders be suspended to allow any members of the public to speak (10 mins):** Not applicable.
- 3. To receive and approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting and the minutes of the confidential meeting held on 11 May 2016 and the confidential minutes of 10 February 2016:** Both sets of minutes of 11 May 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting. There was a discussion about the minutes of 10 February with regard to Cllr Parker's concerns that legal advice should be sought about lack of hard paths in the Nature Park and the compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Cllr Parker agreed to write a proposed addition to the minutes regarding legal advice and this would be discussed at the next meeting.
- 4. Declarations of Interest:** None.
- 5. Approval by Chairman of items for any other business:** (i) Bylaws; (ii) Slide in the Nature Park; (iii) Open Spaces consultation.
- 6. Chairman's Report:** Cllr Roberts' report had been previously circulated. Cllr Rafferty commented the Parish AGM should be called the annual Parish Meeting. Councillors discussed the low attendance at the Parish Meeting. Cllr Parker suggested that it was due to meeting fatigue following the highly attended Local Plan meetings and the LCCA AGM.
- 7. Clerk's Report:** The Clerk's report had also been previously circulated. All of the issues in the report related to items on the agenda.
- 8. To receive reports, as appropriate, from members of outside bodies and working parties:** (i) Chiltern and South Bucks Community Partnership meeting. Cllr Patel reported that he had attended a useful and informative meeting which included a workshop on the Community Wellbeing Plan. (ii) LCCA meeting. Cllr Parker reported that most issues raised at the meeting would be discussed on the parish council agenda, including the request for a donation towards the costs of the Nature Park opening day.
- 9. Report on the Accounts 2015/16:** The Clerk reported that there were two main variances in the accounts. The first related to an increase in expenditure as the Parish Council had taken on responsibility for devolved services with regard to grass cutting and associated tasks and had therefore received income from Bucks County Council to undertake these tasks. The second

variance related to the staff costs which were lower than the initial budget. This was mostly due to the fact there had been two periods without an assistant clerk within the year.

- 10. Internal Audit Report 2015/16:** (i) To note the outcome of the audit and receipt of the report and to discuss the draft response. The review by the internal auditor had taken place on 31 May 2016 and the report had been received and circulated to councillors. Mr Newhouse, the internal auditor, was generally content with the accounts and the systems of the parish council. There were several points to consider within his report. The first related to the system of payments to suppliers which he suggested should be paid following approval at council meetings, instead of the current system whereby two councillors approve and sign the cheques and a list of payments paid in the previous month is circulated prior to council meetings. This issue had been raised by Mr Newhouse and discussed following the previous internal audit report. Cllr Drew expressed concerns that suppliers would have to wait a considerable time for their payment, which he would prefer to avoid, particularly for small companies. There were several suggestions about how this situation could be resolved. It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate with other parish councils to see how their payments systems were managed. Mr Newhouse had also raised the method that changes in salaries were confirmed to Cansdales and suggested that there should be a signature on the minutes or payment schedule to confirm the change. Currently the minutes are forwarded to Cansdales and copied to two councillors. The auditor had also flagged that the council's reserves were high. This was due to the fact the council had funds aside for the proposed new community centre. The Clerk will contact Mr Newhouse to inform him that the issues had been discussed and would be reviewed further at the next parish council meeting. (ii) Internal review of internal control to be conducted. It was reported that usually a review of the internal control was undertaken. Cllr Parker confirmed he was content to undertake this. It would take place after the response to Mr Newhouse had been agreed.
- 11. External audit report 2015/16:** (i) Annual Return 2015/16. The Annual Return had been previously circulated to councillors. There were no further questions on the return and the papers were signed by the Chairman of the meeting and the Clerk. (ii) Notice of appointment of date of the exercise of elector's rights. It was noted that the announcement of the date of the exercise of elector's rights will be made on 16 June 2016 and the period during which interested parties may inspect the accounts runs from 1 July – 11 August 2016.
- 12. Financial matters (i) List of payments and cheques to be signed:** The list of payments had been previously circulated. Cllr Parker asked the full cost of the Trim Trail equipment. **(ii) Section 137 payments:** These payments had been previously circulated. Cllr Drew explained the distinction between section 137 payments and regular payments. **(iii) Earmarking of reserves:** The current position regarding the reserves had been previously circulated and noted earlier in the meeting when discussing the internal auditor's report. The majority of the reserve was contained in the Building Fund. The general reserve should equate to approximately six months expenditure. It was agreed that some of the general and contingency fund should be transferred to the building fund. Cllr Drew proposed that the Contingency Fund should be cut to £30,000 and the General reserve should be reduced to £80,000. The balance of these would be transferred to the building fund. The Clerk will action these transfers. **(iv) Payment systems for the parish council:** The Clerk raised the issues that an increasing number of people and organisations were no longer using cheques for payments. She had discussed with the internal auditor other methods of payments. A current issue with online payments to the council was that the clerk did not have day to day access to view the council's bank account, as she was not a signatory. Cllr Parker

suggested that different options are investigated for the Clerk to receive read-only access to the current account. Cllr Rafferty raised the issue of security with regard to online banking. Cllr Parker pointed out the level of funds in the current account which had been raised in Cllr Walford's recent paper on investments. It was agreed that the levels of funding between the bank accounts would be examined and moved as agreed in the investment paper.

- 13. Devolution of services:** Cllr Drew reported that Amersham Town Council had taken over the contract on devolved services for grass cutting in April 2016. The two initial cuts had not been short enough and the parish office had received a number of complaints about the quality of the verge cutting. However, the third cut was taking place this week, and so far the situation had improved. Cllr Ingham highlighted that the area around Amersham Way was suffering with a high quantity of weeds. The Clerk reported that a weed killing session would be taking place in the village shortly. Cllr Walford highlighted several issues which blocked gullies. She would notify the Clerk of the problems and this would be reported to Bucks County Council. A review of overhanging vegetation also needed to take place. This had occurred last year with councillors visiting roads in pairs and distributing letters to residents with vegetation overhanging the footpath. The Clerk will produce a new list which would be circulated to councillors. If councillors are unable to undertake the review in their area they will need to notify the Clerk so that she can reallocate the road. The issue of potholes was also raised. If there were individual potholes which were an issue, councillors could contact BCC directly using the TfB or fixmystreet website. For more problematic roads with high levels of potholes, the Clerk should be contacted.
- 14. Nature Park:** The management arrangements of the Nature Park would be discussed at the next parish council meeting. It was noted that the first meeting of the Nature Park Management Group would take place on 11 July. The soft opening of the Nature Park was underway. The donor day on 28 May had been successful and the official opening would take place on 11 June. If any councillors had not yet confirmed their attendance they should let Roger Funk know. It was also suggested that a letter of thanks should be sent to Roger for the tremendous amount of work he had undertaken with regard to the Nature Park. Cllr Parker noted that at the LCCA meeting a request for a donation towards the costs of the opening day was made. Cllr Parker proposed a donation of £100 should be made. This was agreed by all councillors. The Clerk reported that she had received information about the slide that the Nature Park Action Group were proposing to install. It was agreed that the Clerk should ensure she is satisfied about the safety and the guarantees related to the slide and if there were any concerns this should be reported at the next parish council meeting.
- 15. Review of Parish Meeting – 25 May 2016:** As reported previously, the attendance at the Parish Meeting was not as high as was hoped for. It was acknowledged that those who attended commented on the quality of the speakers present. Cllr Drew reported that there was interest from a number of attendees about the first responder system. It was recognised that funding would be required for the kit for the first responders. Cllr Parker asked about progress with the purchase of the defibrillator. The Clerk reported that she had been planning to apply for the grant with the British Heart Foundation, however the grant was only available if the defibrillator was in an unlocked cupboard to enable easy access. There were safety and security concerns on this. Further advice was being sought from our ambulance service contacts.
- 16. Parking Survey:** Cllr Parker reported that the letters for the formal consultation had been delivered to residents. Concerns had been fed back to Bucks County Council with regard to the

parking changes on Chenies Parade. An issue was also highlighted regarding Beechwood Avenue and Chandos Close whereby the plans had been amended to incorporate further restrictions between 11am-12noon. It was reported that the implementation of the parking restrictions was still on schedule for November 2016. Cllr Ingham asked about the costs of the Snells Wood car parking and the one hour free car parking was continuing. Cllr Parker confirmed that the one hour car parking concession was continuing at a reduced rate in this financial year.

- 17. LAF applications:** It was reported that the next application for LAF transportation funding was due on 31 August 2016. One suggestion for LAF funding was for new bollards on Chenies Parade to match the work which had recently taken place on Nightingales Corner. Cllr Parker raised that the pavement outside Harvard Grange was still causing problems and the gully still needed repeated clearance. This was an option for further work. The Clerk had also received a request for a seat at the bus stop on Amersham Road. Cllr Drew suggested that a bus shelter may be appropriate for funding. This would need to be investigated if this would be eligible for funding.
- 18. Update on the Local Plan:** Cllr Parker reported that a Freedom of Information request had been submitted by a resident from Chessfield Park asking for information about why the methodology changed on identification of the land parcels.
- 19. Workplace pension scheme:** Cllr Walford reported that the parish council required Cansdales to advise which would be the most appropriate default fund. It would then be up to the council employees to decide if they wanted something different. It was noted that the process was almost completed.
- 20. Village hall assistant:** The Clerk reported that four people were still interested in the position of village hall assistant. A process had been highlighted in the Clerk's Report. Cllr Drew suggested that all applicants should be invited to the village hall to find out more about the role. References could then be requested following these meetings.
- 21. Reports and Notifications: (i) Various roads in various parishes in the Chiltern area (temporary prohibition of through traffic) Celebratory events for the Queen's 90th birthday (special event) order 2016. Circulated 23 May 2016.** Noted.
- 22. Any Other Business: (i) Bylaws:** Cllr Patel asked if the bylaws were still valid with regard to parking on the pavement. Cllr Drew reported that there were no bylaws in Little Chalfont. It was noted that traffic wardens would issue a ticket if a vehicle was parked on a yellow line and the police would act if there was an obstruction. **(ii) Slide:** The slide in the Nature Park was discussed under item 14. **(iii) Open Spaces consultation document.** The Clerk had circulated the Open Spaces document on receipt. It was explained that the short deadline was due to the dual nature of the consultation document serving both the leisure requirements of the local area and the deadline of the Local Plan. The deadline was felt to be too short to complete the document meaningfully. Cllr Ingham offered to look at the document to see if he was able to advise.
- 23. Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 13 July 2016 in the village hall at 7.30pm.

Signed..... Date.....