

FURNEUX PELHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the annual meeting held on Thursday, 16 May 2019, at 8:00 pm in the Furneux Pelham Village Hall.

Present: Cllr S Bratt, Cllr R Gale, Cllr J Sinclair, Cllr H Smart and Cllr P Watmough.

In attendance: F Forth, Parish Clerk and 2 members of the public.

Before the meeting started, Mike Young from The Hundred Parishes Society gave a presentation outlining what the Society was about. Further information is available on the Society's website: <http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk/> Membership is £10 and it was agreed that the Parish Council would become a member at the next meeting.

19/30) Report from the Parish Council

Cllr S Bratt, as Chair of the preceding year, read his report which reflected on some of the main events within the village and the issues considered by the Parish Council. (Full report at Appendix A)

19/31) Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr S Bratt be duly re-elected to the office of Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing civic year. Cllr S Bratt duly signed his declaration of office.

19/32) Vice Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr H Smart be duly re-elected as Vice Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing civic year.

19/33) Apologies

None.

19/34) Declarations of interest

None.

19/35) Adoption of previous minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 7th March 2019 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

19/36) Report on outstanding matters

- a. Whitebarns Lane - see item 19/37 below.
- b. Playground - see item 19/38 below
- c. Magazine - the Chair reminded those present that it was highlighted at the last meeting that Braughing have indicated that they are seeking to change the existing magazine format. Since the last meeting, the Chair had also attended a meeting to discuss the future of the magazine. The key point from this meeting being that the intention is that a revamped "wellness" magazine will go free to all Braughing residents with start-up funding from Braughing Parish Council and advertising. Options for the magazine were discussed: continue to get the magazine from Braughing; continuing the existing magazine for the Pelhams; join in with other neighbouring villages or develop a community magazine. It was noted that a further magazine meeting was being held the following week. The Parish Council's view was that a community magazine had value and supported that.
- d. Barleycroft End - no response as yet.
- e. Annual Parish Assembly - this had been held prior to this meeting.
- f. Binding minutes - the Clerk reported that business expected to use was no longer operating and alternatives were being investigated.

19/37) Whitebarns Lane

The Chair highlighted that he had sought an informal legal opinion on whether the wording of the conveyance between East Herts and Clarion Housing could be interpreted as placing an enforceable obligation on Clarion to keep Whitebarns Lane in a state of good repair. The informal feedback was that it could potentially be interpreted in that way. It was agreed that the Parish Council would support investigating this further in conjunction with a garage tenant.

Action: Chair/Cllr H Smart (Obligation to maintain access)

19/38) Playground

Cllr P Watmough stated that there had been further discussions with residents regarding whether there was a need to develop a playground in the car park, whether existing playgrounds were sufficient or whether the development of a playground by a commercial operation could be supported by the Parish Council. Informal discussions with the pub had indicated that village access to the pub playground could be achieved through the pub car park.

Following discussion, it was agreed to defer any further consideration of the Parish Council developing a playground at this time.

19/39) Councillor responsibilities

Following discussion, it was agreed that Councillor responsibilities would be as follows:

- Cllr S Bratt Business|Broadband|Waste directives
- Cllr B Gale Footpaths|Highways
- Cllr H Smart Planning applications|Common Land
- Cllr P Watmough Playground|Village Ambassador

Note - Village Ambassador role created to encompass developing the village as a community.

Responsibility would be allocated to Cllr J Sinclair in due course and it was important to note that a vacancy still remains.

In addition, it was agreed that the representation on outside bodies would be:

- Sarah Wright Allotments
- Cllr S Bratt & Cllr P Watmough Mary Wheatley Trust
- Ebe Bonner Village Hall

Note - representatives do not have to be Cllrs but appointed by the Parish Council.

19/40) Internal Controls

a. Internal Audit

The Clerk reported that the Annual Internal Audit review had been completed for the 2018/19 financial year, and that this is recorded on page 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The review concluded that the Parish Council had the expected controls in place and no recommendations were made. It was agreed to note the review.

b. Review of effectiveness

The Clerk reported that the effectiveness of the internal controls in place from April 2018 to March 2019 had been reviewed and no issues had been identified. This review underpins the Annual Governance

Statement for the last financial year which is part of the next agenda item.

RESOLVED to approve the review of effectiveness of internal controls for 2018/19.

19/41) Annual Governance & Accountability Return

Firstly, the Clerk reported that the unapproved Annual Governance and Accountability Return and detailed accounts were available on the Parish Council's website. [www.furneuxpelham.org.uk/accounts]

a. Annual Governance Statement 2018/19

The Clerk highlighted that the Annual Governance Statement, detailed on page 5 of the Return, reflects that the Parish Council has a system of internal control in place, as highlighted by the review of effectiveness considered under the last agenda item. Following consideration, RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2018/19.

b. Accounting Statements 2018/19

The Clerk highlighted that there are two versions of the accounting statements: very summarised version, detailed on page 6 of the Return, and the detailed accounts. Following consideration, RESOLVED to approve both formats of the Accounting Statements 2018/19.

c. Declare the Parish Council exempt 2018/19

The Clerk explained that the Parish Council now has the option of not being subjected to an external audit as its total income and total expenditure are below £25,000, although it can opt for an audit if it wanted to. On the basis that no audit will be undertaken, the Parish Council is required to formally declare itself exempt.

The certificate of exemption, detailed on page 3 of the Return, demonstrates that the Parish Council is below the required threshold. RESOLVED to declare the Parish Council exempt from a limited assurance review.

For completeness, the Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council had to comply with the requirements of the Transparency Code, covered below.

d. Period for exercise of public rights 2018/19

The Clerk explained that the inspection period, during which local electors can inspect the supporting accounting records and ask questions, is still required even though no external audit is being undertaken. In addition, an objection, relating to the accounts, can be raised with the external auditor.

Full details of the rights of a local elector are detailed on the website and the inspection period will be from the 3rd June to the 12th July. This was noted.

e. Compliance with the Transparency Code

The Clerk confirmed that the requirements of the Transparency Code had been complied with, as demonstrated by the documentation circulated with the agenda and available on the Parish Council website.

19/42) Finance

a. Update on current financial position

The Clerk explained that a financial statement had not been circulated as the only transactions to date are those detailed on the agenda and the receipt of the first half of the precept for the current year.

The Clerk also highlighted that a new Standing Order instruction for her salary was required as no acknowledgement had been received from the previous instruction sent to the bank and nor had she been paid.

b. Expenditure

RESOLVED to approve the following expenditure:

HAPTC, subscription	£314.59
HAPTC, training	£70.00

Cheques and supporting documentation duly signed.

In addition, the Clerk reported that the insurance renewal documentation had been received from Zurich which proposed a renewal cost of £344.66, an increase of £2.46. Whilst there are limited insurance companies now in this sector, the Clerk would seek some alternatives for comparison and compare to other similar sized parishes. RESOLVED to approve a £350 limit for paying the insurance after the meeting.

c. Bank mandate

Following discussion, RESOLVED to include all Cllrs on the bank mandate with Barclays.

In addition, following a discussion, it was agreed to not pursue online banking, as likely to incur a monthly fee of £5 and the level of payments made do not warrant this additional cost.

19/43) Allotments

The Clerk reported that it was highlighted at the September 2018 meeting that the allotment lease expires on 29th September this year. At that time, some pages were missing from the copy of the lease held. These pages have been received and these do not alter anything previously stated, namely:

- rent remains at £100 per year until the rent review in September 2020;
- the lease can be renewed for a further 7 years; and
- notice to renew needs to be given this month to the Barclays.

RESOLVED to approve the renewal of the lease with Major Barclays Farms for a further 7 years less one day.

19/44) Update from East Herts Council (EHC)

Cllr G Williamson (EHC) reported that the new administration was in place, with 23 out of 50 Cllrs being new. 40 seats are held by Conservatives, with the remainder being held by Liberal Democrats (6), Green Party (2) and Labour (2). He also stated that he is now the Deputy Leader for East Herts.

In addition, he made the following comments:

- Richard Cassidy, the new Chief executive, starts on 3rd June;
- East Herts intends to continue with the projects that have been put in place as opposed to undertaking any detailed review; and
- background and action taken in relation to the travellers at Little Hadham was explained.

Specifically in relation to Furneux Pelham, he stated:

- happy to help and facilitate in relation to Whitebarns Lane;
- accepted that the position in relation to the Pallet Yard was unfinished. However, whilst the Planning enforcement Officer that had been dealing with this had left and taken considerable knowledge with him, this matter would still be pursued; and
- suggestion made to speak to the Chair of Little Hadham Parish Council as they had implemented a drive safe scheme last year.

In terms of the Pallet Yard, further discussion highlighted that there is more machinery on this site now due to forestry approvals and the issue with buried plastic waste is not being pursued by the resident who raised it.

19/45) Correspondence

a. Planning applications

Since the last meeting, 1 application considered, 2 permissions granted, 1 application refused permission and 2 applications withdrawn.

Details of all applications are on the Parish Council's website and those since the last meeting are detailed in Appendix B.

b. Communications to Parish Clerk

The Clerk referred to the following matters:

- Clothing bin - an attempt was made to deliver this the other week but the wrong size truck was used despite knowing the layout etc of the site beforehand. As yet, no information on a revised date; and
- Parish Paths Partnership - applications for up to £1,000 can now be made for 2019. Deadline is 14th June and Cllr B Gale will consider if there are any projects. None known of currently.

c. Communications to or from Councillors

Cllr J Sinclair highlighted that the Football Club were seeking a donation to cover the annual fee charged by Greene King for using the field. Agreed to put this on the agenda for the next meeting, and further information to support the request will be needed.

The Chair highlighted that there had been 2 complaints in respect of the green War Graves Commission sign on the wall at the church. He had spoken to Conservation Officer at East Herts and was informed that whilst should avoid unnecessary clutter, there is nothing to prevent the sign being put up.

19/46) Residents comments

None.

19/47) Next meeting

Confirmed that the next meeting of the Parish Council is on the 4th July 2019 in the Village Hall at 8pm.

The meeting ended at 9:56 pm.

Chairman's Annual Report May 2019

I am pleased to report on some of the main events within the village, and the issues considered by the Parish Council, in the previous year.

At this meeting last year, I noted with regret the decision of Chris Cantes to stand down from the Council on grounds of ill health, but nevertheless it was a great shock when he passed away in July, having been chair for fourteen years, and I am grateful for this opportunity to remind all of Chris's unwavering service to the village.

Debbie White stood down from the Council in March on account of her family's move to Devon, and I hope all present will join me in wishing Debbie well. In particular, Debbie served as the Council's nominee on the Village Hall Committee and was chair of the Allotments Association, and will be sorely missed.

Before turning to the challenges facing the village, I would like to say a few words on a handful of notable local successes in the past year.

The village received what I believe to be its very first Royal Visit in history, when HRH Princess Anne opened Brook Farm stables, and we should congratulate Louise Seddon and her team on their success, particularly with Riding for the Disabled.

Secondly, the village celebrated the re-opening of The Brewery Tap in December and I would particularly like to thank the 29 anonymous residents who petitioned for, and received an Asset of Community Value to help protect it as an ongoing business and reduce the risk of its closure and redevelopment. The new owners have shown its great potential and I wish them well.

Two years ago, the Council provided a very small start-up grant to establish the Community Morning, intended to provide a regular meeting place for residents to meet up and keep in touch, and this continues to run monthly, thanks to the support of the Village Hall Committee.

Earlier this year, the Council agreed to support the re-launched mother and baby group 'Cottontails' which now appears to have got off to a flying start. Our thanks are due to Emma for the energy and commitment that she, her friends and her husband have invested in it.

We should also not forget the long-established Pelhams Pre-School, based in Stocking Pelham Village Hall, but serving all the local area, which is managed by several voluntary trustees from this village, and which I am pleased we have been able to support with a small grant towards new equipment during the year.

The Mary Wheatley Trust, a charity managed jointly by nominees from the Council and the Church, has this year given financial support to projects improving the boundaries of the school, and supporting a school trip.

Finally, I would like to thank Mark Noble, who has voluntarily engaged with broadband providers throughout the year to help solve many broadband issues across the village, raised through the 'Better Broadband' Facebook Group. Many village residents enjoy faster and more reliable broadband than they did a year ago.

Turning now to the concerns which the Council has attempted to address over the last year, I think we must start with the condition of Whitebarns Lane. This will once again feature on the agenda of the meeting to follow, but to summarise, it would appear that the lane is in unregistered, private ownership. Ownership was not clear when the first houses were built, over seventy years ago, and is no clearer now. Regardless, however, of ownership, which carries no maintenance responsibility, the Council is actively investigating the legal position regarding maintenance and whether sufficient grounds exist to support residents in a legal challenge.

During the year, there have been a small number of burglaries and petty thefts, a number of fly tips, and several reports of suspicious vehicles and aggressive door-to-door salespeople. Please take all reasonable steps to protect yourselves and your property, continue to report these to the relevant authorities, and make use of the village community page on Facebook to alert other residents.

The Parish Council raised the annual precept, collected through Council Tax, from £3,500 to £4,000. Again, this decision was not taken lightly, and took account of explicit advice that our forward financial planning should not consider the ongoing payment of the New Homes Bonus. While cost increases are never welcomed, the precept collected in Furneux Pelham is half of that in neighbouring Albury.

I should finally like to record my personal thanks to the Vice Chair, other councillors, and of course to Fiona as the Parish Clerk for their hard work and support throughout the year, and to welcome John Sinclair as a newly-elected councillor. The Council still has one vacancy, to be filled by co-option, and if anyone is interested please do come forward.

Finally, I would like to thank those residents who have supported the Council and engaged with us to create a better and more sustainable community within the village, which I hope will continue in the year to come.

Thank you.

Stephen Bratt May 2019

Planning activity since the previous meeting:

Application number	Proposal	Action
<u>3/19/0896/HH</u>	Demolition of conservatory and erection of single storey side extension at Clay Chimneys House, Furneux Pelham.	Application considered
<u>3/19/0379/FUL</u>	Two 5 bed detached dwellings with detached double garage for each dwelling at Land At Ashbrook (Adj To Perrymill), The Causeway.	Permission refused
<u>3/19/0362/HH</u> & <u>3/19/0363/LBC</u>	Single storey side and rear extension at Gables Cottage, Patient End.	Applications withdrawn
<u>3/19/0347/FUL</u>	Construction of a 5 bedroom detached house and single detached garage with creation of 4 parking spaces at Land Adj The Spinney, Whitebarns.	Permission granted
<u>3/19/0312/FUL</u>	Retention of outbuilding to be used as a workshop/storeroom at The Chantry House, The Street.	Permission granted