

## **PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL**

The monthly meeting of Pirton Parish Council was held on  
**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2006**  
at Pirton Village Hall.

### **Present:**

Mr Jonathan Bhowmick (arrived late)  
Mr Michael Goddard  
Mrs Margaret Johnson  
Mr Steven Kitchiner  
Mr Owain Lister (Chairman)  
Mr David Saunders (Vice-Chairman)  
Mrs Jennifer Smart (Clerk)  
Mr James Vaughan  
Mrs Pamela Waters

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Mrs Rosemary Hamilton McLeod (prior commitment)

### **130.06 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr R Smith, a resident of Hambridge Way attended the meeting to discuss with the Parish Council plans for landscaping the Elm Tree Farm development submitted by the developer. Mr Smith feels that the entrance to the development has become very urban in appearance. He and other Hambridge Way residents are also concerned that people moving in to the new houses might wish to remove the old trees on the edge of the development because they will shade their south-facing gardens. If this were to happen, there would be nothing to break up the view of the walls and roofs of the new houses, which would dramatically change the whole ambience of the area. It is thought that the retention of the trees formed part of the planning permission for the development, and that they should have some protection as it was thought this development is within the Conservation area. There is also concern that the plans include the removal of existing and planting of new hedging, but residents might prefer the existing hedging and any proposed new hedge might not be of native species. The Chairman mentioned that the developer has to comply with the plans as shown on the drawing and has until the end of the planting season after completion of the development to carry out the landscaping. Mr Smith was asked if he had spoken to the developers about the landscaping and replied that he had, and would like to have Parish Council support the next time he does so. It was suggested that the Developer might not be aware that residents would prefer to see a hedge of indigenous species. Mr Smith had been told by the Site Manager that the Highways Authority would cut down anything they felt it necessary to remove to improve visibility. It was suggested that the residents organise a meeting with everyone concerned and, if possible, an Arboriculturist as well, and that the Parish Council would provide a letter of support for the residents' endeavours.

There was discussion about applying for Tree Preservation Orders to protect the old trees in Hambridge Way. Mrs Strong thought it possible that the Walnut tree could be made subject to a TPO, but unlikely the other trees could. It was mentioned that to be made subject to a TPO, a tree needs to be 'of significance', although orders can be made on anything that will add to or keep the ambience of an area. It was also mentioned that the road leading to the new houses will be private and a

management company, paid for by residents, will be responsible for maintenance. Mr Brook suggested that the residents speak to the Highways Authority.

Mr Smith agreed that he and other residents are trying to influence the developers and landscapers before it is too late.

**131.06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

**132.06 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2006 were confirmed and signed.

**133.06 OUTSTANDING ITEMS**

**Coleman's Close – Section 106**

No further progress on the adoption or handover.

**Grants**

Biffaward

Mr Bhowmick reported that the work to replace the slide and safety surfacing had now begun.

Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund

Nothing new to report

Southern Rural Area Discretionary Award

The clerk had received a letter from NHDC stating that the Committee still has funds available for grants up to £1,250, the closing date for applications being the 15<sup>th</sup> December. After discussion, it was suggested and agreed that an application for funding towards clearing out the pond should be made, as well as towards the cost of a bench to be placed on Middle Green after completion of the handover. The clerk was asked to find out who supplied the new bench that had recently been installed on Little Green by the WI as Councillors would like to buy a similar one for Middle Green.

HAPTC Computer Grant Fund

The clerk had now submitted an application under this fund for a laptop computer.

Parish Enhancement and Cleansing Fund

The clerk had submitted an application under this fund for £1,250 to help with the cost of paying the wages of the street cleaner.

**Recreation Ground play area**

The new posts to separate the grass and the car park have still not been installed. This should be carried out by Lea Sports.

The clerk was still awaiting a second quote for Weldmesh Fencing around the MUGA.

There was brief discussion of the possible new Youth Facility in the Recreation Ground, but agreed that further discussion of the matter would be postponed until more was known about how much money might be donated by the mystery benefactor and how much the whole project might cost.

## **Recreation Ground Access Road**

Nothing new to report.

134.06 **MR BROOK** reported that he suspects there may be problems with the production of a Luton Airport Master Plan and that an interim plan could be published which might not include plans for a second runway, as the airport lease is short. Mr Brook was asked whether the new Luton North by-pass was connected with the possible expansion of the airport, but replied that it is not. Mr Brook also reported that the deadline for development West of Stevenage has been extended yet again.

135.06 **MRS STRONG** mentioned that there will be all out elections next May. Councillors were very interested to hear from Mrs Strong that a government White Paper states that where three member wards wish to be single member wards again, they should be allowed to be. The subject of re-cycling was discussed with Mrs Strong and it was mentioned by Councillors that there is interest in reducing Pirton's ecological footprint, and that several residents have asked why there is no kerbside collection of plastics and cans as there is in Bedfordshire. Mrs Strong reported that Bedfordshire have set up a recycling plant with grant aid from Biffa, but that problems arise because not all plastic is suitable for recycling, and it may be that consideration may have to be given to incineration as there is a serious problem with disposal of waste in the area. Mrs Strong feels that it would be far better if people use less plastic in the first place rather than increasing the recycling of plastics. Mrs Strong offered to investigate the possibility of a can bank in the village.

## 136.06 **FINANCE**

### **Bank accounts as at 6<sup>th</sup> November 2006:**

Business Premium Account	£16,165.60
Community Account	<u>£15,793.19</u>
	£31,958.79

Contingency Account	<u>£9,942.34</u>
	<b>£41,901.13</b>

### **Monies received since last meeting – included in above:**

Southern Rural Grant towards slide	£750.00
Parish Challenge Grant towards surfacing	£2,388.00

It was proposed by Mr Saunders and seconded by Mrs Johnson that cheques totalling **£1,228.16** as detailed on the monthly Finance Statement be paid in full.

137.06 It was proposed by Mr Goddard, seconded by Mr Bhowmick and unanimously agreed that the 2007 to 2008 budget and an increase of 3% in the precept to £23,500 be approved. The clerk omitted to ask the Chairman to sign the Budget Meeting Minutes: these will be signed at the December meeting.

## 138.06 **REQUESTS FOR FUNDING**

PCSO Nikki Williams had requested only £9 from the Parish Council towards the cost of a mobile 'phone as several other Parishes had also contributed and the

'phone had not cost as much as she had anticipated. A cheque for this amount has been sent to her.

#### 139.06 **PLANNING**

##### **Applications**

**None**

##### **Decisions**

###### **Walnut Tree Farm, Walnut Tree Road – 06/01859**

Listed Building Consent : Removal of chimney on north east elevation and reinstatement of roof - withdrawn

#### 140.06 **HIGHWAYS**

Land leading to St Mary's Church – nothing new to report

There was further discussion about the possibility of introducing a 20mph speed limit within Pirton, which it was agreed would be of particular benefit outside the school on High Street. It was suggested and agreed that a map be sent to Highways showing the areas the Parish Council would initially like to be included in the area covered by a reduced speed limit, and that a site meeting with a representative of the Highways department could be of benefit. It was agreed that although there are many instances of speeding on Priors Hill, it had been difficult to persuade the authorities to condone a 30mph limit there as there are no street lights, and to concentrate on the 'triangle' within the village to start with.

The clerk is still awaiting a reply to the letter suggesting parking bays on Crabtree Lane.

There was still no progress to report on the raising of the Give Way sign at junction of Royal Oak Lane and West Lane and the clerk was asked to chase Highways again.

The clerk reported that Highways will order and pay for a replacement for the broken cast iron pointer and then request a contribution from the Parish Council.

#### 141.06 **INSURANCE**

This had been discussed briefly at the Budget Meeting, and the Chairman now explained that there had been problems with Insurance for the Bonfire Night and Firework display, which were only resolved two days before the event. The Allianz Cornhill had stated that the Parish Council's insurance would only cover the event if certain conditions were complied with, conditions that had not been necessary the year before. The organisers of the Bonfire Night had considered organising their own insurance, but found that this would be prohibitively expensive. However, as one of the Allianz Cornhill's requirements was that the finances of the event must be put through the Parish Council's accounts, there still remains some difficulty as transactions for the Bonfire Night are all in cash. The clerk was asked to write to the Insurers prior to renewal next year to inform them that the Summer Fair and Bonfire Night are likely to continue to be held every year on the Recreation Ground, and to ask for confirmation that the Parish Council's insurance will cover both events providing all the requirements listed in their recent letter are met. It was asked

whether this would result in an increase in the insurance premium, but the clerk replied that no increase had been required up to now to cover such events.

#### 142.06 **GENERAL PARISH MATTERS**

**Possible new Bus Shelter** – a member of the Pumpkin Club had informed the clerk that it might not be possible to site this on the area originally planned at the top of Coleman's Close as he had found out that the piece of land in question had been registered by the owners of the house adjoining it. Councillors discussed other possible sites for the bus shelter and an approach to the owners was considered before the clerk was asked to write to Highways to ask if they had any suggestions.

**Village of the Year Competition Award** - nothing new to report on the quote for the gravestone repair or the donation to PHSG.

**Blacksmith's Pond** - nothing new to report as Mrs Hamilton McLeod was not at the meeting.

**Postcards** – the clerk reported that she has now asked Mr Wild if he has any objection to her approaching the museum directly, and as he has not, it is hoped there may finally be some progress in this long outstanding matter.

**Dog waste bin** – the clerk had been informed that a dog waste bin could be attached to a fence. After consultation with the Bury Trust and the resident in whose garden it had erroneously been sited, the dog waste bin has now been attached to the Bury fence on the inside of the kissing gate.

It was reported that the **dog waste bin** in the Recreation Ground had been broken on Bonfire Night and the clerk was asked to arrange for it to be repaired.

The new **W.I. bench** had been installed on **Little Green**,

There was further discussion about **Recycling**, and it was mentioned that the possibility of glass banks in the village that was investigated some years ago had not been pursued as NHDC had announced the introduction of kerbside collections of glass. Various possible sites for a can bank were considered, and it was suggested that a clothes bank could also be sited in the Village. Mrs Johnson said that she would speak to the Village Hall committee about siting the banks there.

The possibility of a new **Village Appraisal** was discussed again, and it was agreed that it would be logical to leave it to a new Parish Council to conduct this after elections next May. A letter had been received from Mrs Hofton suggesting a meeting with groups in the village to discuss community spaces generally and how best use might be made of the Methodist Church, and suggested that questions on this topic could be included in the appraisal.

The subject of **Councillors' attendance** at meetings was brought up by a Councillor who had felt embarrassed at the poor turn out for a recent visit to the Police HQ in Welwyn, organised by PCSO Nikki Williams. However, Councillors believe that they do their best to attend every meeting, and usually have very good reasons for being absent, one being that many of them take an active part in various organisations within the village.

**Crime** -it was reported that a window in the Church had been broken, presumably by vandals, and that there had been a burglary at Elm Tree Farm.

It was mentioned that the Church would like the old **tables and chairs** that are owned by the Village Hall committee moved from a shed in the Churchyard as it is needed for other storage. It was agreed that these should be retained if possible as they are hired out to various groups in the Village from time to time, and Mr Saunders agreed that they could probably be stored by the PSSC at the Recreation Ground.

Councillors were asked to consider before the next meeting whether or not they would stand for **re-election to the next Council** and it was suggested that after Christmas Councillors should try to actively recruit to ensure an election is needed, as this is one of the main requirements of Quality Parish Council status. The Chairman mentioned that he would not stand again as he would like to be able to concentrate all his efforts into the New Clubhouse committee. The clerk was asked to add an item to the next agenda for discussion of the formation of this committee. The clerk was also asked to ascertain whether a Parish Councillor has to sit on any official Parish Council sub-committee, although it was agreed that this would probably be helpful anyway. The clerk was also asked to ascertain how many people need to stand to guarantee an election and also to prepare a list of the Committees which require Parish Council representation.

#### **143.06 REPORTS**

##### **Recreation Ground and Sports & Social Club**

It was reported that two wheelie bins had been added to the bonfire after the Firework Display, presumably by young people, and that these had now been replaced. However, the PSSC would in future have to pay £290 per annum to have them emptied, which they had not had to do up until now. It was suggested that Biffa be approached to see if their commercial rates for bin emptying are any cheaper.

Mr Bhowmick mentioned that the new slide currently being installed in the Recreation Ground is not facing the same way as the old one did because the old one faced the wrong way.

It was reported that the refurbishment of the old Clubhouse is progressing, and that the replacement of the kitchen would be starting within the next week. After that, it is hoped that the Clubhouse will be open more regularly.

It was reported that the New Clubhouse Committee is enthusiastic and committed. There have been several meetings, new members have joined and the committee has been to see new facilities elsewhere in the area. It is hoped that by the middle of next year a firm set of proposals will enable costings to be obtained, which in turn will enable the committee to seek funding. It is anticipated that the project will take four to six years to complete. It was asked whether there was likely to be a question in the next Village Appraisal covering the new Clubhouse, and mentioned that a questionnaire about the new Clubhouse that will be delivered to every home in the village is currently being prepared.

##### **Access road**

Nothing new to report

##### **Bury Trust**

Mr Bhowmick is now the Chairman of the Bury Trust and he and Mrs Hamilton McLeod are trying to organise a meeting and a walk round the Bury to consider whether more fencing is needed.

#### 144.06 **VILLAGE UPDATES**

##### **Environment - North Herts Landfill**

There will be a meeting of North Herts Landfill Site on the 20<sup>th</sup>, which Mr Kitchener will attend with Mr Bhowmick.

##### **Pirton School**

Nothing new to report.

##### **Village Hall**

Nothing new to report.

##### **Youth Matters**

Nothing new to report.

##### **Parish Paths Partnership**

Nothing new to report.

##### **Tree Warden and PEAP**

Nothing new to report.

##### **Neighbourhood Watch**

No report

##### **Rands Trust**

Nothing new to report.

#### 145.06 **ITEMS FOR CIRCULATION**

Countryside Voice - autumn

CDA for Herts - October

EEAPTC News

Chiltern Views - autumn

LCR - November

NALC briefings on key points of the White Paper

PSSC Minutes - September

North Herts Neighbourhood Watch News – October

Hertfordshire Highways Information Bulletins - October and November

HAPTC Newsletter - October

Letter, agenda and minutes from Biffa – 2 November

Clerks & Councils Direct - November

NHDC Members' Information – weeks ending 13, 20 and 27 October

**146.06 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Council Meeting will be on **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.