

## **PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL**

The monthly meeting of Pirton Parish Council was held on  
**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006**  
at Pirton Village Hall.

### **Present:**

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

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Mr Owain Lister (Chairman) (Family commitment)

### **147.06 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**Mr J Lauder**, a member of the Pumpkin Club committee, attended the meeting to report to the Parish Council on the progress he had made in the matter of the Coleman's Close adoption and possible bus shelter. Mr Lauder stated that it would be simplest if the two small areas of land which include the soakaways could be included in the formal adoption plan. It was mentioned that the two areas had not been included in the area hedged by the previous owner. Although the new owner would continue to own the land, the Highways Authority would have Highway rights over it, including access for drain and soakaway maintenance and the right to install road signs and bus shelters, which could result in the corner of Coleman's Close becoming an official bus stop with a timetable.

Hertfordshire County Council have offered to fund up to 30% of the cost of a bus shelter up to £2,000, but their offer is time limited and needs to be taken in the current financial year. HCC have recommended which type of bus shelter they consider most suitable, and Parish Councillors agreed that it would be preferable to install one of good quality, as on Great Green. Mr Lauder estimates that a suitable shelter will cost some £6,000 of which he thinks the Pumpkin Club will probably provide a further £1,000 and the Summer Fair committee may also make a contribution.

Mr Lauder asked if the Parish Council would like him to continue to pursue the matter, he was asked to do so and thanked by all Councillors for all the efforts he has already made.

### **148.06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

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

### **149.06 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2006 were confirmed and signed.

## 150.06 **OUTSTANDING ITEMS**

### **Coleman's Close – Section 106**

Nothing new to report apart from as in Public Participation above.

### **Grants**

#### **Biffaward**

The new slide and safety surfacing have now been installed in the Recreation Ground play area. The clerk was asked to write to Biffaward to thank them for funding towards the costs, although Councillors do not wish to have a 'Biffaward' plaque attached to the slide

#### **Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund**

Nothing new to report

#### **Southern Rural Area Discretionary Award**

The clerk had received a quote from Mr Simmons for the clearing out of the pond and general maintenance of the area around it, which was acceptable to Councillors. However, prior to making a grant application, the clerk had been told by NHDC that general maintenance of this sort does not comply with the criteria for this grant.

A new bench to be installed on Middle Green after the handover is 'criteria complaint' with this award. The clerk had found out that benches as purchased by the WI are no longer available, but that a very similar one is available from Glasdon. However, the clerk mentioned that Glasdon also supply sturdy benches made from recycled materials, and Councillors agreed that it would be preferable to buy such a bench as it would be more beneficial to the environment and also more likely to attract funding. The clerk was asked to apply for the full amount of the grant available under this award towards the cost of a bench.

#### **HAPTC Computer Grant Fund**

Nothing new to report.

#### **Parish Enhancement and Cleansing Fund**

Nothing new to report.

### **Recreation Ground play area**

The new posts to separate the grass and the car park were finally in the process of being installed.

However, on the 4<sup>th</sup> December it had been discovered that a car had been driven around on and caused considerable damage to the grass and pitches, which were very wet following recent heavy rain. Unfortunately, some of the new posts had been knocked over, apparently by the car skidding into them, which is very disappointing. The clerk stated that she had reported the damage to the police and been given a crime reference number.

The clerk reported that she had spoken to Biffaward about funding for the new MUGA fencing before making a grant application and been told that Biffa are unlikely to fund replacement fencing which, although necessary, isn't of obvious benefit to wildlife or the community. The clerk will endeavour to find an alternative source of funding.

## 151.06 **FINANCE**

### **Bank accounts as at 11th December 2006:**

Business Premium Account	£16,165.60
Community Account	<u>£14,812.53</u>
	£30,978.13

Contingency Account	<u>£9,942.34</u>
	<b>£41,920.47</b>

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

None

It was proposed by Mr Saunders and seconded by Mrs Johnson that cheques totalling **£1,547.92** as detailed on the monthly Finance Statement be paid in full. It was mentioned that being allowed only three signatories to the bank account can cause problems if more than one of the signatories cannot attend a meeting. The clerk believed that she had been informed by the bank in the past that three is the maximum number of signatories for this type of account, but was asked to investigate again in case the position had changed or a different type of account would be more suitable.

It was also mentioned that it is some time since the Groundsman invoiced the Parish Council for work carried out, and Mr Saunders said he would ask him to issue invoices more regularly.

**152.06** The Minutes of the Budget Meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> November were confirmed and signed.

### **153.06 Clerk's Gratuity**

As had been discussed at the Budget Meeting, the clerk had investigated the possibility of the Parish Council contributing to a Private Pension scheme on her behalf but been informed by HAPTC that this would not be allowed. However, the clerk had ascertained that it is permissible to establish a 'Retirement Gratuity' for any employee of the Parish Council for whom no pension contributions are made. Councillors agreed that such a fund should be established. Currently, there is £745 set aside from previous budgets which was earmarked for the clerk's pension, with a further £300 budgeted next year, which means that the position probably does not need to be reviewed again until the budget meeting of 2010. It was asked whether this fund would attract interest, and the clerk confirmed that it would be held in the Business Premium Account, on which interest is paid.

**154.06** Further to the discussion under Grants, it was agreed that Mr Simmons should be asked to carry out the maintenance work to Blacksmith's Pond as detailed on his quote, as the pond is such a significant feature of the village.

## 155.06 **REQUESTS FOR FUNDING**

None

## 156.06 **PLANNING**

### **Applications**

#### **2 Hambridge Way – 06/02437/1TCA**

Reduce crown of Willow by 25%

#### **19 Walnut Tree Road – 06/02507/ 1HH**

Full Permission Householder: Part single storey, part two storey side extension to include double garage, following demolition of existing garage and utility room. Rear conservatory. Single storey side extension and two storey front extension with oriel window.

The application for **19 Walnut Tree Road** was discussed, and there were no objections raised.

### **Decisions**

#### **6 Bunyan Close – 06/02053/1HH**

Full Permission Householder : First floor rear extension. Pitched roof to front porch – conditional permission

#### **13 Bury End – 06/02140/1LB**

Listed Building Consent : Stud partition to first floor – conditional listed building consent

#### **Cromwell Cottage, 67 High Street – 06/00662/1LB**

Listed Building Consent : Replace front door to match existing inner front door – conditional Listed Building Consent

#### **2 Hambridge Way – 06/02437/1TCA**

Reduce crown of Willow by 25% - no objections

## 157.06 **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, following receipt of a letter from Hertfordshire Highways which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Unfortunately, Councillors had found this letter confusing and not very helpful. It was agreed that while speed bumps and chicanes are undesirable, there is a groundswell of opinion in the village for the issue of speeding to be addressed. It was reported that the head teacher of the school is preparing a travel plan and questionnaire enquiring about travel to school by car. Although the number of cars parked outside the school twice a day does have the effect of slowing traffic, Councillors agreed that positive action does need to be taken and the installation of a flashing light such as the one in Ickleford was thought to be a possibility. It was mentioned, however, that traffic calming measures are often only considered where there have been serious or fatal accidents. Nevertheless, the clerk was asked to contact Highways Department to ask if there are any traffic calming methods available, other than those already mentioned, that might be more suitable in a rural area.

Mr Goddard arrived

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 the 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 request a contribution from the Parish Council after the work is completed.

Mr Goddard reported that he had had an informal meeting with Mr Hazley, the new Area Engineer at which various matters had been discussed, including the possible installation of a 30mph Vehicle Activated Sign at the Priors Hill/Hitchin Road junction. Such an installation would have to be approved by a Joint Member Panel and would cost an estimated total of £13,000, 50% of which would have to be funded by the Parish. Councillors again mentioned that they would not like to see the rural character of Pirton spoiled by too many traffic calming measures. Mr Hazley would make enquiries about the possibility of a Speed Survey in the village and also investigate costs for a footpath along Royal Oak Lane., and report back to Mr Goddard.

#### **158.06 INSURANCE**

The clerk was asked if she had received the minutes of meetings of those who had organised the Bonfire Night, and replied that she had not.

Following last month's discussion about insurance cover for village events, the clerk had asked HAPTC for general advice on sub-committees and also if it is necessary for at least one Councillor to sit on any sub-committee. HAPTC pointed out that the Parish Council (not being a Committee itself) can appoint both committees and sub-committees, and the Insurance Company have probably confused the two when they state that they will only cover activities run by a sub-committee of the Parish Council. HAPTC also advised that although in most cases it is not essential for a Councillor to sit on either a committee or sub-committee, it is advisable. Furthermore, HAPTC recommended that the Parish Council set up a 'Village Events' committee, which should include at least one Councillor, which would have delegated powers to run events which are within the powers of the Parish Council, and this was felt to be a good idea, provided that those organising village events were prepared to do so in the name of the Parish Council.

The clerk was asked to write to the Summer Fair and Bonfire Night organisers explaining that the Parish Council would like to continue to help them by allowing their insurance to cover events held on the Recreation Ground, but that in order to do so, the Parish Council would have to ensure that all the requirements of the Allianz Cornhill and recommendations of HAPTC were met.

#### **159.06 GENERAL PARISH MATTERS**

**Possible new Bus Shelter** – nothing to report other than as in Public Participation above.

**Village of the Year Award** - the clerk was asked to remove this item from agendas for the time being as the families of those buried in the graves concerned are still in Pirton.

**Blacksmith's Pond** – Mrs Hamilton McLeod reported that the Pumpkin Club does not wish to be involved with improvements to the pond at the moment and as was mentioned earlier, it had been agreed that Mr Simmons would be asked to carry out the work.

**Postcards** – the clerk had approached the museum directly and the Parish Council had been given permission to use the various images. The clerk is now waiting for Mr Wild to supply the scanned images.

**Parish Council ordered work in the village** – following some confusion caused by two different contractors in the village being asked to carry out the same repair, it was agreed that in future only the clerk would request that such work is carried out.

**Southern Rural Area Parishes Meeting** - the clerk reported that Ickleford Parish Council are holding a meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> January to which Parish Councils within the Southern Rural Area have been invited. Unlike earlier joint Parish meetings, this is not intended as a social event but as a forum for discussion of various topics, including the possible co-funding of a PCSO. Pirton Parish Councillors feel that funding a PCSO could be construed as an extra hidden tax on parishioners and that there are likely to be many pitfalls if a PCSO were to be shared by a number of villages. However, it was agreed that Pirton should be represented at this meeting and that it would be decided at the January meeting who will attend.

**Tithe Barn** – concern was expressed that the fabric of this Barn is being allowed to deteriorate, and Councillors feel that this barn is of very special significance to Pirton and its future preservation should be treated as a Village project. The clerk was asked to write to the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust to ask them for advice as to how it should be preserved, and for any sources of funding that might be available.

**Maypole** – Mrs Hamilton McLeod reported that it has now been established that the cost of erecting a Maypole would be in the region of £2,000, and confirmed that the Pumpkin Club would finance any necessary planning permissions and surveying, although planning applications would probably be made in the name of the Parish Council, and also that grant applications might be more likely to be successful if made in the name of the Parish Council. The preferred site for a Maypole is Great Green; householders in that area have been circulated and no negative responses received, although concern has been expressed by one resident about the possible height of the Maypole and whether Great Green is large enough. In answer to a question, it was mentioned that when this subject was first raised over six months ago, the Parish Council had given its support to the project in principle, depending on final costs. Councillors were asked if it would be acceptable for the project to go forward in the name of the Parish Council, but Councillors feel they would like more information and a specific location before they can give approval. Mrs Hamilton McLeod was asked to précis the paperwork she had received only that day so that the matter could be discussed further at the next meeting. It was mentioned that Middle Green might be a more suitable site, especially as there is more room for parking in that part of the village.

**Methodist Church** – Mrs Waters had attended the meeting to discuss the future use of the Church, and reported that those present feel that all the venues in the

village are trying to attract the same users but that in the future better co-ordination and communication between the various groups should ensure that village events do not clash, especially if a Village Events Calendar is used by all groups. It had also been suggested that there could be joint publicity for the various venues in the village.

## **160.06 REPORTS**

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

The formation of the New Clubhouse Committee was not discussed as the Chairman was not present. The PSSC representatives mentioned that a New Year's Eve Beach Party was planned.

There was some further discussion of the damage that had been caused in the Recreation Ground and it was mentioned that some dog owners are failing to clear up after their animals. A member of the PSSC reported that regular users of the Recreation Ground had been asked to be vigilant and to report anything suspicious; which will be recorded, while the registration numbers of vehicles seen in the Recreation Ground will also be logged. It was also mentioned that the old tables and chairs from the Church shed will in future be stored at the Recreation Ground.

It was reported that nails from the pallets burned at the Village Bonfire have been left in the car park, and the clerk was asked to write to the PSSC to ask them to ensure they are removed.

It was mentioned that as the outer plastic part of one of the litter bins had been dumped on the Bonfire Night fire, a new bin was needed. The clerk stated that she had ascertained some time ago that the outer and inner parts of the bins can be bought separately and was asked to order a new outer. It was also reported that the dog waste bin was still in need of repair, and the clerk said that she would now ask Mr Simmons if he could repair it.

### **Access road**

As there has been no progress in this matter, the clerk was asked to write to the new owner's solicitors to point out that the road is in a very poor state and likely to be made worse by extra vehicles necessitated by the forthcoming planned building work at the Old Vicarage and the owners of the road could be held liable for any accidents or damage caused by the dangerous state of the road.

### **Bury Trust**

A meeting has been held and a walkabout is planned to consider future work on the Bury.

## **161.06 VILLAGE UPDATES**

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

Mr Bhowmick reported that the generator had been switched on in late October and that there had been no complaints, and that a very small amount of contamination had been found in one borehole.

### **Pirton School**

Nothing new to report.

### **Village Hall**

Nothing new to report.

**Youth Matters**

Nothing new to report.

**Parish Paths Partnership**

Mr Saunders reported that he has arranged a meeting with Dieter Iwan of CMS to be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January.

**Tree Warden and PEAP**

Nothing new to report.

**Neighbourhood Watch**

No report

**Rands Trust**

Mr Goddard reminded Councillors that the deadline for applications is the 7<sup>th</sup> January.

**162.06 ITEMS FOR CIRCULATION**

Letter from Hertfordshire Police Authority – 30 November

North Herts Play Partnership report

Sue Ryder care newsletter

Peter Lilley Surgery dates

The Hertfordshire Society Newsletter - November

Chiltern Woodlands Project News - winter

The Clerk - November

CPRE Fieldwork - December

HAPTC Newsletter - November

Chiltern AONB Planning Conference report

Natural Collection catalogue from CPRE

NHDC News Release – November

Chiltern Conservation Board Annual Review

Chiltern News – December

LGR from NALC – November

Letter from Julie Writer 8 November

NHDC Members' Information – weeks ending 10, 17, 24 November and 1 and 8 December

**163.06 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Council Meeting will be on **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2007** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.