

## **PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL**

The monthly meeting of Pirton Parish Council was held on  
**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2007**  
at Pirton Village Hall.

### **Present:**

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

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Mr Owain Lister (Chairman) (work commitment)

### **Also present:**

Mr Nigel Brook (County Councillor)  
PC Matt Jenkins  
Mr John Lauder (Pirton Pumpkin Club)  
Mrs Claire Strong (District Councillor)

Mr Goddard chaired the first part of the meeting.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Lauder attended the meeting to inform Councillors that the Pumpkin Club's plan to erect a bus shelter on land at the top of Coleman's Close had been abandoned because the piece of land in question had been registered by the owner of the adjoining property, who objected to the plan. Mr Lauder stated that Highways had been willing to assist the Pumpkin Club with their plan but had been unable to do so as the land has been registered, and that the Pumpkin Club will not take the matter any further for now, although in time an alternative site for a new bus shelter may be considered. It was mentioned that although the Certificate of Satisfaction had been issued almost a year earlier, the formal adoption of Coleman's Close had still not taken place.

Mr Saunders arrived and chaired the rest of the meeting

Mr Lauder then spoke as a member of Pirton Environmental Action Plan and thanked the Parish Council for agreeing to fund the special cutting of the Heritage Road verges during 2007, and informed Councillors that PEAP would endeavour to find alternative sources of funding for future years. Mr Brook was asked whether there was a possibility of funding being restored, but replied that as this is a county wide problem, restoration of funding is highly unlikely. Several possible sources of funding were briefly discussed.

Mrs Johnson arrived

PC Jenkins then addressed the meeting, and explained that he now heads a Safer Neighbourhoods Team, which is tasked with highlighting the three particular problems that most concern residents of North Herts, currently speeding, nuisance youths and fly tipping. PC Jenkins and his colleagues will then concentrate on these areas and hold regular meetings to monitor progress and success. PC Jenkins feels that too often residents fail to report nuisance behaviour as they believe nothing can be done to stop it, and he stressed that the police can only act if crimes are reported. For example, the police can now seize motor bikes that are being ridden illegally, provided they have a registration number and statement of what the rider was doing. PC Jenkins was asked if there was any liaison with Neighbourhood Watch, and replied that there is, but that a lot of evidence is needed before action can be taken, and a log of problems should be kept. It was mentioned by Councillors that elderly people may be frightened of repercussions if they report nuisance behaviour, and some would be frightened of intimidation if they appeared as witnesses, but PC Jenkins repeated that he can only act if he is provided with evidence. PC Jenkins was asked if he would talk to groups of older people in the village, such as Joycare and the over-60s, to encourage reporting of crime and he replied that he would. However, Councillors were reminded that Pirton is a very safe village where reported crime is very low. Theft of Sat-Nav equipment continues to be a problem, although the police have had some success recently in tackling this, and tools and materials have been stolen from the Hambridge Way building site. Although each village may not consider the same three problems the most serious, other problems can be added if they crop up. PC Jenkins stressed that it is important that every crime is reported. PC Jenkins was thanked for attending the meeting.

Mrs Strong reminded Councillors that the ward boundaries have been changed, despite many objections, and that one combined Ward, known as Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo, will now be represented by three Councillors. There followed discussion of the Boundary changes, which are considered to have been a pointless exercise and waste of taxpayers money, especially since they will have to be changed again if the expected development West of Stevenage does go ahead, and since a forthcoming Government white paper will probably allow wards that have been combined to separate again if they wish to do so.

Mrs Strong then informed Councillors of plans by NHDC to increase recycling by introducing kerbside collections of cans and tins later this year. It had been hoped to collect plastics too, but 'bring backs' will be introduced instead as some plastic is unsuitable for recycling. It is also hoped that in the near future residents will be able to add kitchen waste to brown bins. Mr Brook mentioned that the County is running out of space for landfill and feels it is unlikely that the North Herts Landfill Site will last beyond 2009. Mr Brook was asked if collections of rubbish from black bins would be reduced to fortnightly, and replied that they almost certainly would, but as so much will be taken for recycling, people will be putting less in their black bins and fortnightly collections should be sufficient. Mrs Strong mentioned that one of the problems with collecting for recycling is contamination, and that it is important to ensure that people know what can be recycled and how.

Mr Brook stated that he doesn't expect the Luton Airport Master Plan to be produced this year and suspects that the airport owners are experiencing financial

and other problems. Mr Brook also mentioned plans for new housing in Milton Keynes and South Bedfordshire, which will adversely affect North Hertfordshire, and pointed out that plans for major development 'North of Harlow' in reality mean development in Hertfordshire, since Hertfordshire is north of Harlow. Mr Brook stated that these plans could mean an extra 750,000 cars on Hertfordshire's roads, which are already very overcrowded.

Mrs Strong was congratulated on her successful year as Chairman of NHDC.

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

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

**046.07 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2007 were confirmed and signed, although it should be noted that Mrs Strong is incorrectly shown on those minutes as County Councillor.

**047.07 OUTSTANDING ITEMS**

**Coleman's Close – Section 106**

The clerk was asked to write to Highways to ask if the formal handover could now take place, and if not, the reason for further delay.

**Grants**

Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund

Nothing to report

Southern Rural Area Discretionary Award

The clerk was asked to order the recycled materials bench for Middle Green.

Ward Members' Discretionary Grant

Following discussion at the March meeting, Mr Saunders had supplied a quote for the plinths to display the Village Map and Guide, and the clerk reported that £240 had been awarded from this fund towards that project.

**048.07 FINANCE**

**Bank accounts as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007:**

Business Premium Account	£16,260.99
Community Account	<u>£5,344.97</u>
	£21,605.96

Contingency Account	<u>£10,000.75</u>
	<b>£31,606.71</b>

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

SRAG Grant	£500.00
HAPTC Computer Grant	£675.00
Interest BPA Account	£52.64
Interest Reserve Account	£32.38

It was proposed by Mrs Waters and seconded by Mrs Johnson that payments totalling **£8,184.70** as detailed on the monthly Finance Statement be made in full. It should be noted that this is a larger amount than usual as the following grants were paid, as had been agreed at the Budget Meeting:

Pirton Youth Club	£250
Joycare	£500
St Mary's Church – grass-cutting	£850
St Mary's Church – Upper Room	£500
1 <sup>st</sup> Pirton Brownies	£150
1 <sup>st</sup> Pirton Rainbows	£100
Pirton Toddler Group	£150

#### **049.07 REQUESTS FOR FUNDING**

Mrs Waters, as the Parish Council representative on the Village Hall Management Committee, stated that she was in the process of obtaining quotes for the resurfacing of the drive up to the Village Hall, and asked whether the Parish Council would be able to help with the cost of this. It was agreed that the Parish Council would make a contribution as the Village Hall is an amenity for the use of the whole community. Mrs Waters said she would suggest that the Village Hall Management Committee put a formal request for financial assistance in writing to the Parish Council. The possibility of making an interest free loan was discussed briefly, but it was not known if this would be legal. Improved lighting outside the Village Hall was also discussed as it had been agreed at the March meeting that Mr Vaughan would deal with this, using the £250 Village Hall grant.

#### **050.00 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The terms of this document had been discussed and agreed via email, and it was proposed by Mrs Hamilton McLeod, seconded by Mrs Johnson and unanimously agreed that it be formally adopted and signed.

#### **051.00 REVISIONS TO CLERK'S CONTRACT**

NALC had made a number of recommendations for changes to the clerk's model contract, mostly of a minor nature concerning the addition of 'Responsible Financial Officer' to the clerk's job title and incorporating a number of statutory changes. Having dealt with the original contract for the clerk, Mrs Waters had read and agreed the revisions on behalf of the Parish Council, and it was unanimously agreed that the revisions be accepted.

#### **052.07 PLANNING**

##### **Applications**

##### **4b Royal Oak Lane – 06/02826/1HH**

Full Permission Householder : Second floor dormer window

##### **Walnut Tree Farm, Walnut Tree Road – 07/00526/1LB**

Listed Building Consent – Installation of satellite dish

##### **4 High Street – 07/00761/1TCA**

Remove one Plum tree

**19 West Lane – 07/00612/1HH**

Full Permission Householder : Formation of hard standing for two cars and new vehicle access.

**1 Great Green – 07/00706/1**

Full Planning Permission : Side pergola

The above planning applications were discussed and no objections recorded.

Mrs Strong mentioned that changes to the Central Planning systems were anticipated which would enable Councillors to give their views on applications and be more proactive, and that planning would in future be dealt with by trained people, leading to greater consistency.

**Decisions**

**1 Coleman's Close – 07/00046/ 1HH**

Full Permission Householder : Attached single garage to side of property. Front porch. Two front dormer windows to facilitate conversion of loft to provide additional bedroom – refused

**Tithe Barn House, Shillington Road – 07/00465/1TCA**

Remove one Hawthorn tree – no objection

**053.07 HIGHWAYS**

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

The clerk is still awaiting a reply to the letter concerning the possibility of parking bays in Crabtree Lane.

Nothing new to report on the raising of the Give Way sign and replacement of the broken pointer at the junction of Royal Oak Lane and West Lane, although one of the Councillors had seen the made-up sign at the cast iron works.

The problem of speeding in the village was again discussed. Mrs Strong mentioned that she thought PC Jenkins had a mobile speed trap and the clerk was asked to contact him to see if it could be used in the village.

Mrs Strong was asked if she thought there was anything the Parish Council could do about the very poor state of repair of some of the roads in the area, and mentioned that even when Highways do take action, it is only to effect what proves to be the temporary filling in of potholes. It was mentioned that a Pirton resident was forced by oncoming traffic into the large pothole on the bend by the Moat House in Holwell, which had caused considerable damage to her car, about which she was in communication with Highways to ask for a substantial contribution towards the cost of repairs. Mrs Strong replied that residents should keep reporting roads in poor condition to Hertfordshire Highways and ask Mr Brook for his help.

**054.07 INSURANCE**

It was mentioned that although the Summer Fair Committee would probably prefer to continue to run the Fair independently, they will have to be incorporated into a formal committee so that they can take advantage of the Parish Council's insurance. The clerk had obtained information from various sources about the formation of committees and sub-committees, which was discussed at some length. It was suggested that the Parish Council's Standing Orders should be amended so that the Chairman and vice-Chairman are not required to sit on every committee, and this would be formally agreed at the Annual Meeting. A committee could then be made up of the existing Summer Fair Committee and one or two Parish Councillors.

The clerk had still not received a response from the Bonfire Night organisers, but was asked to send them and the PSSC a copy of the information that will be given to the Summer Fair Committee.

#### **055.07 GENERAL PARISH MATTERS**

**Possible new Bus Shelter** – as the Pumpkin Club have had to abandon plans for this, it can be removed from future agendas.

**Postcards** – Councillors were shown the postcards that had been prepared by Mr Ryan and there was discussion of the wording that should be on the back of the cards. Mr Goddard would arrange to have the printing carried out.

**Tithe Barn** – nothing new to report

**Maypole** – the clerk reported that she had signed the Planning Application on behalf of the Parish Council and that it had been submitted to NHDC.

**Village of the Year Competition** – Mrs Hamilton McLeod reported that Mr Woodward would like to enter Pirton in this competition again, although she believes Pirton needs to have a special project or recent achievement to offer, and that the new Clubhouse project is not far enough developed for this. There was further discussion about the necessity for community engagement and plans to deal with problems in the village. Mrs Hamilton McLeod would discuss the matter with Mr Woodward again. It was mentioned that a new Village Appraisal should be undertaken by the new Council.

#### **056.07 CORRESPONDENCE**

The clerk had received an email from a resident concerned about the amount of litter near the village pond. It was also mentioned that the strings used by the Pirton Players to tie their balloons to the railings have not been removed, although they had been asked to make sure they cleared everything up after the run of the play which the balloons were advertising. There was discussion about the possibility of installing a litter bin near the bench by the pond, to replace one that used to be there, but as there are two litter bins nearby, it was decided that another is not needed. The clerk would ask the Street Cleaner to check the area around it as often as he can, and Mrs Johnson would ask Pirton Players to remove the strings.

#### **057.07 REPORTS**

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

The PSSC will be hold a Quiz Night with Fish and Chip supper on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April.

**Access road**

The clerk had finally received a reply to several letters sent to the solicitors acting for the new owners of the Old Vicarage, and to the new owners themselves. Their solicitor replied to the effect that the new owners are not interested in transferring ownership of the access road and that the poor state of the road is due to a trench excavated by a statutory utility company, with whom they are in correspondence. The solicitor suggested that if Councillors remain concerned about the state of the road, the Parish Council should carry out repairs themselves. The clerk was asked to write back to the solicitors stating that although Councillors are still extremely concerned about the state of the road, and believe that repairs should be carried out regardless of any ongoing negotiations, it is not the responsibility of the Parish Council to carry out repairs to property owned by others. Furthermore, as there has only ever existed an informal agreement concerning the division of responsibility for the road, the owner remains solely responsible for carrying out repairs, as well as being liable for any claims for damages.

The clerk mentioned that the gate to the play area does not stay closed and that Mr Simmons did not think he could repair it. Mr Vaughan and Mr Kitchener would see if they could improve the closing mechanism.

**Bury Trust**

The trustees are considering replacing the rest of the fencing around the Bury.

**058.07 VILLAGE UPDATES****Environment - North Herts Landfill**

Nothing new to report.

**Pirton School**

Nothing to report

**Village Hall**

Nothing to report other than as recorded in Public Participation.

**Youth Matters**

Nothing to report.

**Parish Paths Partnership**

Mr Saunders asked Councillors to think about where the plinths displaying the Village map should be sited. Possible sites include the main footpaths as they enter the village, the Greens and the bus shelter.

**Tree Warden and PEAP**

PEAP members are hoping to organise a trip to the Ace of Herts recycling centre at Cumberlow Green, and have now put a number of Bat Boxes up on trees in the Vicarage Nature Area.

**Neighbourhood Watch**

No report

**Rands Trust**

No report.

059.07 **ITEMS FOR CIRCULATION**

Chalk and Trees – Spring/Summer

Newsletter email from CPRE – 4<sup>th</sup> April

Email from HAPTC re Luton Airport – 3<sup>rd</sup> April

The Clerk – March

Hertfordshire Highways Information Bulletin - March

HAPTC Newsletter - March

Letter from Hertfordshire Constabulary re Locality Plan – 14<sup>th</sup> February

Letter from Peter Lilley re Barker Review – 20<sup>th</sup> March

Fieldwork Magazine - March

Letter from Smith of Derby re Church clock – 9<sup>th</sup> March

Letter from Bedford Group of Drainage Boards - March

Brochure from HMG re Smoking Ban

News of the Woods – spring

NHDC Members' Information – weeks ending 9, 16, 23 and 30 March, 6 April

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on **Thursday May 10<sup>th</sup> 2007 starting at 7.30pm**, which will be followed by the **Annual Meeting of the Parish Council**, starting at approximately 8.15pm