

PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

The monthly meeting of Pirton Parish Council was held on
Thursday 11th October 2007
at Pirton Village Hall.

Present:

Mrs Diane Bailey
Mr Michael Goddard
Mr Rodney Marshall
Mr David Saunders (Chairman)
Mrs Jennifer Smart (Clerk)
Mrs Claire Strong (District Councillor)
Mr James Vaughan
Mrs Pamela Waters (vice-Chairman)

Apologies for Absence:

Mr Nigel Brook (County Councillor)
Mrs Margaret Johnson (on a course)
Mr Steven Kitchener (holiday)
Mrs Rosemary Hamilton McLeod

Also present:

Over 50 parishioners

144.07 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The parishioners all attended the meeting to express to the Parish Council their grave concerns over an announcement earlier in the week by NHDC that land in Pirton had been identified as a potential **Gypsy and Traveller Site**. This announcement had been heard by some residents on local radio, but most had heard by word of mouth – the Parish Council had been neither consulted nor informed, although a letter from NHDC had been received by the clerk on the day of the meeting. This letter explained that District Councils had been required by central government to carry out an assessment of Gypsy and Traveller needs in their area, and to make provision where need is identified. Consultants Scott Wilson had been appointed by local authorities in North and East Hertfordshire to undertake a study to identify potential areas to meet any perceived need. As had been mentioned on local radio, and as residents had confirmed by looking at the Scott Wilson report on the NHDC website, one of the nine areas in North Hertfordshire identified as a potential ‘area of search’ for sites is in Holwell Way, Pirton.

District Councillor Mrs Strong was able to provide much background information and also to answer residents’ questions, as well as explaining that the report is of an advisory nature, that it informs part of a very early stage in the process and that the formulation of a final decision will be long drawn out, as each identified area will have to be examined to decide whether or not it is sustainable and suitable. It might be possible to expand the existing site in Codicote, but NHDC do not yet know the exact number of extra pitches they will be required to provide.

The criteria and likely timescale of the various processes are not yet known, but it is thought important that residents are made aware of these so that they can respond to and comment on the proposals appropriately. Mrs Strong was asked to what extent government bodies are swayed by public opinion, and replied that it is always good for residents to express their views as the volume of objections would be taken into account. Mrs Strong explained that some sites, such as the one at Codicote, are tidy and well run and contain static caravans surrounded by fenced gardens. A resident then asked how it was that what are in effect small houses could be allowed on land where the building of social or affordable housing would not be permitted; Mrs Strong replied that this would be a decision for Planners. Mrs Strong was also asked how the site in Pirton was chosen, and explained that other areas were excluded for a variety of reasons, but that the chosen sites were those that were not excluded. It was also asked whether the school would be able to cope with an increase in numbers, but Mrs Strong explained that funding would be available to increase the size of the school if the development of a Gypsy Site in Pirton made it necessary.

Mrs Strong offered to arrange for an officer from the Planning Department of NHDC to attend an open meeting in the village to give residents an opportunity to find out more about the whole process and to answer residents' questions, and the Parish Council will advertise this meeting widely in the village. In the meantime, as many Parish Councillors as possible will attend a briefing session at NHDC on the 21st November.

It was also mentioned that the letter from NHDC stated that although the report was not yet out for formal consultation, comments on it could be sent to the Council.

Mr R Smith, a member of the PEAP sub-committee, then approached the Council to ask for funding of £72 to plant mixed native hedging shrubs and trees at the entrance to **Elm Tree Farm Close**. Although such planting had been a requirement of Condition 7 of the Planning Permission for this development, the developer had now ceased trading and it was thought extremely unlikely that the Local Planning Authority would be able to enforce the condition. Mr Smith hoped to obtain the support of the residents, PEAP and the Parish Council to complete the planting scheme at the entrance to the Close and thus greatly improve the appearance of that part of Hambridge Way. Mr Smith would look after the plants himself, and also hoped that the residents would contribute to the cost of the trees and shrubs, which might enable larger plants to be bought.

145.07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda.

146.07 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2007 were confirmed and signed, although it should be noted that it Mr Vaughan and not Mr Kitchiner who proposed that PEAP should become an official Parish Council sub-Committee.

147.07 OUTSTANDING ITEMS

Coleman's Close – Section 106

The Parish Council's solicitor is still preparing the necessary paperwork to complete the handover.

Grants

The clerk was asked to obtain confirmation that the 'Playful Ideas' funding stream could be applied to for funding towards not only the costs of re-marking the MUGA, but also providing storage for the equipment that would be needed to play the different sports. The original suppliers of the MUGA and two other companies would be asked for their suggestions as to how it could be re-marked for more sports to encourage greater use of it, as well as for quotes.

Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund

Nothing new to report

Grant Funding Awards – 2007/8

Nothing to report

Recreation Ground Access Road

The clerk had still not received a reply from the Property Officer at the Legal and Democratic Services Department of NHDC, despite sending him a reminder.

Tithe Barn

The clerk had contacted Mrs Strong to ask for her help, and she had said she would speak to the Conservation Officers.

148.07 FINANCE

Bank accounts as at 8th October 2007:

Business Premium Account	£15,895.76
Community Account	<u>£10,971.84</u>
	£26,867.76
Contingency Account	<u>£10,578.32</u>
	£37,445.92

Monies received since last meeting:

Interest – BPA	£72.83
Interest – Reserve	£42.14
Raised by PEAP sub-com at Summer Fair	£92.00
Half year precept	£11,750.00

It was proposed by Mr Saunders and seconded by Mrs Waters that payments totalling **£2,433.47** as detailed on the monthly Finance Statement be made in full.

After discussion, it was agreed to hold this year's **Budget Meeting** on the 1st November at Crabtree House.

149.07 REQUESTS FOR FUNDING

Councillors discussed the request for funding towards the purchase of shrubs and trees at the entrance to **Elm Tree Farm Close**. Councillors feel that the area does look very unattractive and unfinished and that as Hambridge Way is a significant part of Pirton, seen by many walkers who approach Pirton via Hambridge Way, they would like to help Mr Smith and PEAP to improve its appearance. It was proposed by Mr Marshall, seconded by Mr Saunders and **RESOLVED** to make a grant of £100 towards this project.

A letter had been received requesting a donation towards the cost of the Royal British Legion Remembrance Day Memorial Wreath, which would cost £16.50. It was **RESOLVED** to award £16.50 to the British Legion.

150.07 VILLAGE OF THE YEAR PRIZE

As Mr Kitchiner was not at the meeting, it was still not known whether any quotes had been received for improved lighting outside the Village Hall.

It was reported that in his capacity as Tree Warden, Mr Kitchiner had suggested that a Walnut Tree would be a suitable variety to select as Pirton's prize, with which Councillors agreed. It was also agreed that it should be planted on Middle Green. The tree-planting ceremony would take place at 12 noon on the 27th October. Mr Kitchener would dig the hole the evening before, and Mr Saunders, Mrs Waters and Mrs Bailey would attend the ceremony. The clerk was asked to publicise the ceremony and invite interested residents to attend.

151.07 BANKING

The clerk had now received the relevant forms from Barclays, which would be completed and signed as necessary to enable the addition of the two new signatories to the Community Account.

152.07 PLANNING

Applications

5 Royal Oak Lane – 07/01877/1HH

Full Permission Householder : Two storey side extension and single storey rear extension

After discussion, Councillors agreed that they had no objections to this application.

Docwra Manor, Hitchin Road – 07/02196/1LB

Listed Building Consent : Replacement windows; change glazing of garden room to stone walls and introduce rooflight to west elevation

After discussion, Councillors agreed that they had no objections to this application.

13 Hitchin Road – 07/02187/1TCA

Removal of 7 Conifer trees and Plum tree

2 Hambridge Way – 07/02263/1TCA

Crown reduction by 30% of Conifer tree

There was discussion about the **School Craft House**, a planning application for which had recently been refused by NHDC Planning Department for a variety of reasons, although the Parish Council had found the plans acceptable. This house is now something of an eyesore and in a very dilapidated state and Councillors would like to see it made habitable and put to good use. However, it was felt that no planning application would ever be acceptable to the Planning Department if they continue to use the same criteria as had been used to refuse the recent application. As one of the reasons for the refusal had been the absence of vehicular access or parking facilities, it was thought that if access could be made from the car park at the rear of the Village Hall, and parking space provided there, a planning application

might succeed, and it was suggested that the Village Hall Management Committee be approached and asked to reconsider this issue. The clerk was asked to find out from planners what would need to take place for a planning application for this house to succeed.

Decisions

1 Coleman's Close – 07/01831/1HH

Full Permission Householder : Two rear dormer windows to facilitate conversion of loft to provide additional bedroom – proposed development granted

5 St Mary's Close – 07/01975/1TPO

Removal of Leyland Cypress tree – no objection

153.07 HIGHWAYS

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

The broken street signs and low Give Way sign in Royal Oak Lane had not yet been replaced, and the clerk had still not received a response to the suggestion of parking bays in Crabtree Lane.

It was mentioned that there is a National Speed Limit Sign some distance down Hambridge Way. As this is clearly an anomaly, the clerk was asked to request its removal.

A number of Councillors had met Jacque Grant, a representative of CDA for Herts to discuss the possibility of traffic calming and a reduced speed limit in the village. Ms Grant felt that the best way to proceed would be to consult residents and produce a Parish Plan, which should incorporate a Transport Plan, based on that consultation, Although the Parish Council would not want the rural appearance of Pirton to be spoiled by very obvious traffic calming methods, Ms Grant had suggested the installation of lines of granite setts, which are very discrete. It was reported that the school is already preparing its own traffic plan and is seeking funding for a bike shed.

154.07 INSURANCE

A letter had been received from the organisers of the Grand Bonfire and Firework Night requesting that they become a sub-committee of the Parish Council, and enclosing minutes of recent meetings. Acting as the Events Committee, it was proposed by Mr Goddard, seconded by Mrs Bailey and **RESOLVED** that the Bonfire Night organisers become an official sub-committee of the Parish Council. The members of the Bonfire Night sub-committee being Stuart Alexander (Chairman), Mark Payne and Richard Hill, with James Vaughan as Parish Councillor representative. Mr Vaughan reported that a professional company would set up and light the fireworks and that in his view, appropriate precautions had been made for the safety of spectators. The Bonfire Night sub-committee will ensure that the fire is completely extinguished on the night, to prevent a recurrence of last year when some items from around the Recreation Ground were thrown onto the fire by youths after the organisers had left. It was agreed that any profit remaining after paying for the fireworks should pass through the Parish Council accounts before being donated to the PSSC.

The clerk was still waiting to hear from the Allianz Cornhill whether the claim for the cricket nets would be met.

155.07 **GENERAL PARISH MATTERS**

Gypsy and Traveller Site – Councillors discussed this further with Mrs Strong at considerable length. Although NHDC had stated that they can accommodate only two representatives per parish at the briefing session on the 21st November, Mrs Strong believes that all Councillors from parishes or towns where a potential location had been identified should be able to attend, and she would endeavour to ensure that this was possible. Mrs Strong confirmed that she would arrange for a Senior Planning Officer from NHDC to attend an open meeting in the village to explain the process in depth and to answer residents' questions, and a date for this would be chosen after the 21st November meeting.

Mrs Strong left the meeting

Following further discussion of the issue, Councillors agreed to write to NHDC to express their opposition to the selection of Pirton as a suitable location for a Gypsy and Traveller Site, and to state that they wish to be involved in and kept fully informed about all aspects of the process.

Dog Waste Bins – the Clerk had been informed that all dog waste bins should be emptied every week, but that if this is not happening, the Grounds Maintenance Department at NHDC should be informed. Councillors who walk dogs regularly would try to monitor the frequency of emptying.

Postcards – these had now been printed and delivered to the Parish Council. The homeowner who wished to buy 100 had done so, and cards would be offered to the Village Shop at 17p each.

Maypole – it was reported that the erection of a Maypole by the Pumpkin Club cannot proceed until the Parish Council are satisfied that adequate insurance cover is in place. The Pumpkin Club had now arranged insurance with the NFU Mutual and the clerk would ask the Allianz Cornhill for their opinion of the cover provided.

Church clock – after discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the necessary steps be taken to enter into a three year maintenance contract.

Middle Green bench – the new bench had now been installed.

Recycling – it had been noticed that a large plastic bottle recycling facility had been placed in the car park of the Fox, although Councillors had believed no venue had yet been selected for this.

Weed-killer spraying – a member of the Parish Council had been approached by a resident who was concerned that the chemicals contained in the weed-killer that had been sprayed along the sides of the roads in Bury End and Great Green could present a danger to residents and pets as well as causing damage to nearby hedges. Mrs Waters would speak to the operator of the weed killer spray to pass on those concerns.

156.07 **CORRESPONDENCE**

An invitation to the Hertfordshire Conference on the 6th November had been sent by HAPTC. It was agreed that the Chairman and Clerk would attend this.

The Parish Council had also been invited to the next Southern Rural Inter-Parish meeting on 22nd November. The clerk would attend this meeting.

The clerk had been asked by Mr Simmons if the Parish Council would like him to clear and cut back the footpath between Davis Crescent and Little Lane. Councillors did not feel this was necessary yet, but it was agreed that the clerk should ask Mr Simmons to properly install the dog waste bin on Great Green, which has been leaning up against the bus shelter for some time.

Shillington Parish Council had approached Pirton Parish Council asking whether Pirton would be willing to work with them by contributing suggestions and comments during their Parish Plan process. The clerk was asked to reply in the affirmative, and to mention that Shillington would be expected to reciprocate when a Parish Plan for Pirton is being prepared.

157.07 **REPORTS**

Recreation Ground and Sports & Social Club

The clerk had not yet received a reply to her letter to the new owners of the Old Vicarage concerning the piles of waste soil.

The clerk had contacted a number of firms who could carry out the MUGA re-marking and who had asked for further information of what was required. Councillors suggested that representatives of the firms should be asked to visit the Recreation Ground to give their advice on the re-marking, and the clerk was asked to arrange this.

The Chairman reported that his set of master keys had been taken from the Clubhouse some weeks earlier during a PSSC event. As a temporary measure, the doors had been fitted with padlocks, but it was felt that it would be necessary to replace the locks to all of the doors. The Chairman asked if the Parish Council would underwrite the cost of this, although it was hoped that the Property Insurance for the Clubhouse would then reimburse the Parish Council. It was proposed by Mr Vaughan, seconded by Mr Goddard and **RESOLVED** that the Parish Council should bear the initial cost of replacing the locks.

Play Area

Nothing new to report on quotes for replacement metal gates.

Bury Trust

Nothing new to report

158.07 **VILLAGE UPDATES**

Environment - North Herts Landfill

No report as Mr Kitchiner was not present.

Pirton School

Nothing new to report

Village Hall

There would be a meeting the following week when the subject of improved lighting would be discussed.

Youth Matters

It was thought that no new volunteers had yet come forward to help run the Youth Club. Councillors discussed how much responsibility the Parish Council should have for the Youth Club, if any.

Parish Paths Partnership

At a recent meeting, the P3 group had volunteered to take on maintenance of internal footpaths in Pirton, which will be funded by P3. There had been some discussion about how best to proceed and the awarding of contracts. The laminated maps will be displayed on the plinths using P3 money.

Tree Warden and PEAP

A PEAP meeting would be held on the 30th October.

Neighbourhood Watch

There have been two reported incidents over the last month.

Rands Trust

Mr Goddard reported that the Rands Trust was selling some of its property.

159.07 ITEMS FOR CIRCULATION

Blue Circulation Box:-

NALC Annual Report and Accounts

Newsletter from Standards Board - September

The Icknield Way Association Newsletter - autumn

HAPTC Newsletter - September

Crime Figures - September

PSSC meeting minutes – July and August

Minutes of Recreation Ground Committee – 17 September

Report from Lea Sports on New Pavilion Project

Letter and brochure from Mid Beds DC re Core Strategy – 21 September

Letter and brochure from Defra re Climate Change

Letter from NHDC and File Note re 1 Coleman's Close

NHDC Members' Information – weeks ending 14, 21 and 28 September

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Council Meeting will be on **Thursday November 8th 2007** at 7.45pm in the Village Hall.