

PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

The monthly meeting of Pirton Parish Council was held on
Thursday 10th January 2008
at Pirton Village Hall.

Present:

Mrs Diane Bailey
Mr Michael Goddard
Mrs Rosemary Hamilton McLeod
Mrs Margaret Johnson
Mr Steven Kitchener
Mr Rodney Marshall
Mr David Saunders (Chairman)
Mrs Jennifer Smart (Clerk)
Mrs Claire Strong (District Councillor)

Apologies for Absence:

Mr Nigel Brook (County Councillor)
Mr James Vaughan (work commitment)
Mrs Pamela Waters (vice-Chairman) (holiday)

Also present:

PCSO Nikki Williams and colleague

001.08 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation

002.08 PCSO NIKKI WILLIAMS

PCSO Williams reported that there had been ten reported crimes in Pirton since the 1st October, two of which were the theft of BT Exchange cables on two separate occasions. PCSO Williams stated that BT has no plans to increase security as the theft of cable is happening all over the country, and extra protection is not usually provided in rural areas. It was mentioned that there had been a recent spate of credit card frauds, believed to be stemming from a petrol station in Hitchin, although Letchworth residents were recently targeted by criminals and many credit cards cloned there. Much of the crime in Pirton is youth related and it was mentioned that a number of trees on the grass verge at the beginning of West Lane had been deliberately broken, presumably by vandals, although it was thought that the trees were dead anyway due to close strimming. One Councillor asked how often PCSO Williams visits Pirton, and she replied that either she or PC Matt Jenkins drive through Pirton most days. It was again stressed that the police can only take action if crimes are reported to them, and that they will come out to deal with nuisance youths.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR MRS STRONG

Mrs Strong asked for Councillors' opinions of the recent briefing by NHDC on the Scott Wilson report, and mentioned that three of the nine areas of search had recently been removed from the list of potential Gypsy and Traveller Site locations, and that the area West of Stevenage had been added to it. One Councillor reported that he had spoken directly to one of the Senior Planning Officers at NHDC and had asked him what criteria had been used to eliminate the three sites; he had been told that at a Cabinet Meeting on the 18th December, a member of the public, who was thought to be a Council Chief Executive, had challenged the three sites on topographical grounds, and that against the advice of NHDC Planning Officers, members had voted to remove those three sites. Councillors expressed their surprise at this development, as it seemed to be totally against the process that they had been assured all the sites would have to go through, but Mrs Strong explained that the sites that have been removed were those that were the lowest graded and almost certain to be removed anyway. Mrs Strong then reminded Councillors that the most important thing is for the residents of Pirton to object in writing and to put forward constructive reasons for the un-sustainability of a site at Pirton. Mrs Strong was asked whether Planning Officers would be able to assist residents by suggesting reasons for objections to the site, and replied that they would answer questions. Mrs Strong was also asked whether NHDC would make a compulsory purchase order for land to develop as a Gypsy Site, and replied that only if a whole site meets all the requisite criteria would ownership be considered, and a compulsory purchase order made if necessary. NHDC are still considering the possibility of expanding existing sites in Stevenage and Codicote to supply the additional pitches required, and that West of Stevenage will no longer be designated Green Belt by the time the extra pitches are required. Mrs Strong repeated that the number of separate letters of objection will carry weight, and that objections must be made on solid planning grounds, for example difficulty of access, lack of screening, poor public transport links and lack of local employment. The Chairman mentioned that the Parish Council intends to meet with Holwell Parish Councillors prior to the public meeting on the 31st January to discuss how to run the meeting..

Mrs Strong left the meeting

Councillors expressed their extreme disquiet with the fact that three of the nine sites had been removed from the list when NHDC had assured all those who had attended the briefing that no decisions would be taken until the end of the consultation on the Land Allocation Development Plan Document in March. There was discussion about the organisation of the public meeting on the 31st January, and it was suggested that photographs be taken of the area of Pirton that has been selected and enlarged to demonstrate to Officers of NHDC the unsuitability of Pirton as a Gypsy Site. Mr Goddard would approach Chris Ryan to ask him to take appropriate photographs, and it was **RESOLVED** that the Parish Council would pay for these. The Parish Council believes that Planning Officers should help and give advice about the nature of appropriate objections to the proposals. Councillors then discussed the best way of informing residents of the objections they can include in their letters, and it was agreed that a letter listing possible objections should be delivered to every household. Councillors also discussed lodging an objection to the removal of the three sites from the list and, more particularly, the way this had been carried out. The Chairman said he would ask Ian Barker of Holwell Parish Council for his views on this. The clerk would produce posters advertising the meeting, as

well as invitations which would be distributed to everyone in Pirton. It was also agreed to hold a preparatory meeting on the 17th January at Crabtree House.

003.08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda

004.08 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2007 were confirmed and signed.

005.08 OUTSTANDING ITEMS

Coleman's Close – Section 106

The Parish Council's solicitor had sent a new engrossment for signature by the Parish Council to replace the previous one which had been signed by the previous Chairman. The new form was signed by Mr Saunders and Mrs Bailey, and would be returned to the solicitor.

Grants

Grant Funding Awards – 2007/8

Nothing new to report

Engagement with Youth

The clerk had obtained some information from HAPTC about the appointment of a young person to act as an advisor on Youth Matters to the Parish Council, and it was suggested and agreed that this be discussed in conjunction with Item 9 on the Agenda – Production of a Parish Plan.

006.08 FINANCE

Bank accounts as at 7th January 2008:

Business Premium Account	£14,961.92
Community Account	<u>£10,385.82</u>
	£25,347.74
Contingency Account	<u>£10,623.15</u>
	£35,970.89

Monies received since last meeting:

Bank Interest – Contingency Account	£44.83
Bank Interest – BPA	£66.18
Allotment Rentals	£10.00

It was proposed by Mrs Bailey and seconded by Mrs Hamilton McLeod that payments totalling **£914.98** as detailed on the monthly Finance Statement be made in full.

The clerk reminded Councillors that there was still a large balance shown in the Community Account because Barclays had not transferred £10,000 when they had been asked to. It was suggested and agreed that the clerk should ask the bank for one month's interest on this amount.

007.08 REQUESTS FOR FUNDING

Welcome to Pirton Evening: A request for a grant had been received jointly from the Methodist Church and St Mary's Church towards the costs of printing booklets to be given to newcomers to the village and also handed out at the next 'Welcome to Pirton Evening' The Parish Council wished to demonstrate its support for this project, and it was proposed by Mrs Hamilton McLeod, seconded by Mr Saunders and **RESOLVED** to make a grant of £50.

Trees in West Lane: A number of small trees planted in the grass verge at the beginning of West Lane had recently been broken by vandals. The trees were thought to have been already killed by close strimming, and Mr Marshall offered to remove the broken pieces. It was also suggested that the Parish Council fund the planting of new trees there with strong guards. It was proposed by Mr Goddard, seconded by Mr Kitchiner and **RESOLVED** to spend up to £100 on three new trees and guards. Tree Warden Mr Kitchiner would consider which species would be most suitable.

008.08 VILLAGE OF THE YEAR PRIZE

Quotes for improved lighting outside the Village Hall are still being obtained.

009.08 HIGHWAYS

The clerk had now spoken to the Area Engineer about all of the outstanding issues, and had been told that as he no longer has responsibility for the Give Way signs in Royal Oak Lane they will not now be replaced after all. The clerk had also been told that the suggestion of parking bays in Crabtree Lane would not be followed up. However, a new pointer to Shillington would be installed at the Great Green/Priors Hill junction and the national speed limit sign in Hambridge Way would be removed.

010.08 INSURANCE

Nothing new to report.

011.08 SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no sub-committee reports

012.08 PLANNING

Applications

28 High Street – 07/02863/1TCA

Raise Ash tree (no.1 on plan) by five metres. Remove lower branches from two secondary trunks of Ash tree (no.2 on plan) and remove dead wood and crossing branches. Remove Ash tree (no.3 on plan)

26a High Street – 07/02964/1TCA

Remove one Fir tree

Decisions

4b Royal Oak Lane – 07/02264/1PUD

Lawful Development Certificate : Proposed installation of two rooflights to front, one rooflight to rear and one window in north east gable end to facilitate loft conversion – proposed development granted

41 High Street – 07/02504/1LB

Listed Building Consent: Two and single storey rear extension. Single storey rear extension and conversion to existing garage to create study/guest bedroom, shower room and utility room with two rooflights to western roof slope. New partition and door to form bathroom. New master bedroom and en-suite shower room formed following removal of internal partitions. Kitchen and WC internal partitions to be removed to provide open-plan kitchen/dining room in rear extension – conditional listed building consent.

41 High Street 07/02505/1

Full Planning Permission: Two and single storey rear extension. Single storey rear extension and conversion to existing garage to create study/guest bedroom, shower room and utility room – conditional permission

Pirton Court, Priors Hill – 07/02795/1TCA

Removal of 4 Leyland Cypress trees – no objection

The clerk was still trying to arrange a mutually convenient date for **Mary Caldwell** of NHDC Planning Department to attend a special meeting on Planning Issues and Training with Councillors.

013.08 PARISH PLAN

Mrs Bailey had looked through the guidance supplied by CDA for Herts, which suggests that preparation of a Parish Plan would take 12 to 18 months and that the Parish Council has only a supportive role during the preparation of the plan, but takes responsibility for implementing its recommendations. The guidance suggests that boards covering various different topics are placed around the hall where the initial meeting is to be held, and residents given post-it notes on which to write their suggestions, which they then attach to the relevant boards. Residents should also be handed a questionnaire as they leave, for completion and return to the Parish Council. It was agreed that the date for the initial meeting would be chosen after the Gypsy Site consultation had ended, and felt that a meeting in the spring might produce a better turnout than a winter one.

Engagement with Youth

The clerk had obtained some information from HAPTC on the subject of the appointment of a youth advisor to the Parish Council, which had been circulated among Councillors before the meeting. Although Pirton does suffer from vandalism, it is mostly of a relatively minor nature. Although some Councillors feel that some children become vandals because of poor parenting, others feel that vandals can have good and caring parents. Ways of involving parents in the Youth Club were discussed. It was mentioned that bonfires have been started by young people on Toot Hill in the early hours of the morning, and asked whether the parents of those children knew where they were or what they were doing. It was thought that most vandals are of secondary school age, and although some people think they know the names of the trouble makers, they lack proof. It is not safe to assume that the trouble in Pirton is being caused by youths who live in the village, as it could just as

well be caused by youths from outside Pirton. There was discussion about how much the Parish Council could do to combat vandalism and agreed that although new facilities might be provided, there was no guarantee that the trouble makers would use them instead of creating trouble. It was agreed that part of the Parish Plan would be aimed specifically at young people, and that youngsters could be invited to a separate meeting, possibly one earlier in the day for primary school age children and a later one for secondary school age children, but that the quest would continue to find a young person to represent youth on the Parish Council.

014.08 **POTENTIAL GYPSY SITE**

The clerk had booked the Village Hall and arranged for Senior Planning Officers from NHDC to attend a meeting on Thursday 31st January. A notice of the meeting would be placed in the Parish Magazine, invitations delivered to every household in Pirton and posters would be displayed around the village as well.

015.08 **PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER**

The Chairman was still preparing the newsletter.

016.08 **PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE**

Mr Marshall was still looking at various websites and it was hoped that someone in Pirton would be able to design one for the Parish Council.

017.08 **GENERAL PARISH MATTERS**

Dog Waste Bins – Councillors volunteered to each check a particular bin every Saturday for at least the next few weeks to try to establish whether or not they are all being emptied every week.

Maypole – Mr Marshall reported that the Maypole would be erected soon in the marked position on Great Green.

Telephones - the clerk was asked to write to BT to ask them what extra security measures they intended to put in place following the loss of service to Pirton caused by the theft of Exchange Cables on two separate occasions. The loss of telephone service was inconvenient to everyone, but elderly and sick people also lost use of their emergency alarms, people running businesses from their homes were unable to do so, house alarms sounded unnecessarily. Furthermore, the shop was unable to take credit card payments or top up mobile telephones, which became much more important when the land-line telephones were not working. The clerk was also asked to raise with BT the issue of compensation for the inconvenience.

School Craft House - Councillors continue to be very concerned about the Craft House, which had recently been vandalised and become even more of an eyesore than before. The clerk was asked to write to the owners to request that they secure the property against intruders, especially as it is structurally unsound. The clerk was also asked to contact the Planning Department to ask them if any planning application would ever be granted while there is no vehicular access, and if so, what that might be.

Bus Shelter - it was mentioned that the bus shelter on Great Green is becoming a target for petty vandalism.

CPRE - The Campaign to Protect Rural England would like to feature Pirton in their Down Your Way feature in their February newsletter. Mrs Hamilton McLeod would complete a questionnaire and approach Chris Ryan to ask him if some of his photographs of Pirton from the Village Design Statement could be used.

Church Upper Room Project – Mrs Johnson reported that the Church had been successful in its application to WREN for a grant of £50,000, which was partly due to the support shown by the community for the project. It was hoped that work would start by the end of the year.

018.08 **CORRESPONDENCE**

A letter had been received from NHDC notifying the Parish Council of a forthcoming Planning and Building Control Customer Liaison Panel Meeting. It was thought that Mr Vaughan might be interested in attending and the clerk would pass the information on to him.

019.08 **REPORTS**

Recreation Ground and Sports & Social Club

A further quote was still awaited for the re-marking of the MUGA.

The Burns Night would be held at the Clubhouse later in the month and a Casino Night run there by the Tennis Club in February.

Play Area

Nothing new to report on quotes for replacement metal gates.

Bury Trust

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 19th February.

020.08 **VILLAGE UPDATES**

Environment - North Herts Landfill

Mr Kitchiner hoped to attend the meeting later in the month.

Pirton School

Nothing new to report

Village Hall

Nothing new to report

Parish Paths Partnership

Nothing new to report

Tree Warden and PEAP

Nothing new to report

Neighbourhood Watch

A car had been broken into and various other acts of minor vandalism committed.

Rands Trust

The deadline for grant applications from organisations in the village had now passed and there would be a meeting later this month to decide on the awarding of grants.

021.08 **ITEMS FOR CIRCULATION**

Blue Circulation Box:-

HAPTC Newsletter – December

P3 minutes – 27th September

Code of Conduct explanatory information from NHDC- 7 December

Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust Newsletter – winter '07

Email from CPRE 2 January

Crime Figures – December '07

Community Empowerment Awards from NALC - 2007

LCR from NALC - January

The Clerk - January

Clerks and Councils Direct - January

Hertfordshire Highways Bulletin – 10 December '07

NHDC Members' Information – weeks ending 14 & 23 December, 4 January

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Council Meeting will be on **Thursday February 14th 2008**
at 7.45pm in the Village Hall.