

WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Twenty first Annual Parish Meeting 26 April 2022

Present: Cllrs Andy Gribble (Chairman), Phil Corke (Vice Chairman), Tim Dix, Sarah Hall, Rob Horton & Grant Pinney.

In attendance: J Pearce (Clerk).

Herts County Councillor T Kingsbury, Borough Councillors J Cragg & R Trigg.
Members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence: None.

2. Chairman's introduction: The Chairman said it was good to be able to hold a face-to-face meeting again after Covid-19 restrictions prevented the 2020 Annual Meeting from taking place and a hybrid meeting had to be held last year.

He welcomed County Councillor Tony Kingsbury who has taken over from Councillor Richard Smith, Borough Councillors Julie Cragg & Roger Trigg and thanked them for attending meetings and their continued support. The Parish Council were saddened at the death last year of borough Councillor Steve Markiewicz who had also been so supportive over many years.

The Parish Councillors were introduced, who are volunteers and not paid for what they do. The Clerk was thanked for her work as the Council could not function without her. Morning caretaker, Madeline, who had worked for the Council for 18 years retired last year and the Council sends her its best wishes. Thanks to caretaker, Julie, who had covered morning caretaker duties as well as her own and kept the hall running smoothly.

Copies of the Annual Report were available on the tables. The Parish Council has had to restrict what it could do due to the pandemic but throughout staff were paid in full when furloughed and government funding has meant finances are stable, therefore the precept has not been increased this year.

During the coming year the Council plans to refurbish the tennis court and the Chairman thanked Cllr Tony Kingsbury for his contribution from his Locality Budget towards the cost.

3. To approve minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2021: The minutes of the 2021 Annual Parish Meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. To receive the Annual Report: No questions were raised.

5. County Councillor Tony Kingsbury: Cllr Kingsbury paid tribute to his predecessor, Richard Smith, who would be a hard act to follow. He explained that he has a £10,000 Locality Budget to allocated to good causes in his East Herts ward.

He also has a Highways Budget; most this year's allocation had been approved by Richard but next year he is looking to resurface the entrance to Mardleybury Road.

Another issue he is aware of is flooding in New Road and work on this is due to be done around 10th June.

Bigger projects are improvements to the B197 which is being looked into between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City but the key area is Oaklands to Woolmer Green. There is money available to do design work on this stretch and if funding is available, improvements could be introduced in a couple of years' time. It may not happen very quickly, but Cllr Kingsbury said he was very keen for something to be done.

It is hoped a traffic survey will be carried out in Oaklands to enable a traffic sign to be installed there but unfortunately a survey undertaken in Woolmer Green a couple of years ago concluded it was not appropriate to install one here. Cllr Kingsbury agreed that 40mph speed limit through Woolmer Green was too fast but changing it is not something that can be done in the short term.

The County Council have been supporting the Jubilee Queen's Green Canopy initiative and funding was given to Woolmer Green for some trees.

There has been good partnership working between the County and Borough on supporting communities through Covid-19.

Currently the County is triaging people bringing people in from Ukraine

A resident stated that the situation with the 40mph speed limit on the B197 had been going on for 15 years. Why does it take so long for something to be done?

Cllr Kingsbury said hopefully something will be decided in the next couple of years but agreed it takes a long time to get things done. However, Oakland and Woolmer Green will be focused on and walking and cycling routes will be prioritised.

Cllr Gribble said introducing a puffin crossing may have some effect in slowing traffic down as it enters the village although it won't improve the area by the school.

- 6. Wheels on Woolmer Green – Cllr Pinney:** Wheels on Woolmer Green will be held on Bank Holiday Monday, 2nd May, and is now in its 5th year and gets bigger each year. Woolmer Green Band will be playing and there will be live music. The entrance to Hall Lane will be coned and marshalled and the pubs have been asked if their car parks can be used for visitors.
- 7. Village Day – Cllr Corke:** It's been 2 years since the last Village Day so it will be good to bring the community together again. There will be stalls, rides, dance, live music and Woolmer Green Band. Following Village Day there will be a picnic in the park with live music to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee.
- 8. Questions from the Public:**

Could the litter picks take place more often?

Cllr Horton said they could and suggested they could take place quarterly.

Could a lit Christmas tree be erected in the village?

Cllr Pinney said the problem was where to put it on the main road and how to connect it to an electricity supply. Also, it would be good if people were able to gather around it for the carol singing event. Perhaps a tree could be planted in the hall grounds, but it wouldn't be visible on the main road.

The trees have been decimated along the railway line and the hedge has been cut down. It looks dreadful. Can we complain about it?

Cllr Pinney said that Network Rail had consulted on it but concluded the work was necessary. Cllr Cragg suggested Network Rail should be asked to contribute to communities as part of the Queen's Green Canopy scheme.

Cllr Trigg commented that despite the rain, the Carols round the Tree event on Christmas Eve was brilliant.

Cllr Cragg commented that the Parish Council puts in a lot of work, time and effort and hopes the community appreciates it.

Cllr Trigg asked if the new residents on the Taylor Wimpey estate are involved in the community. It is hoped they will attend Village Day and village children have used the small play area. The school have not been over subscribed and some of the new residents have volunteered to deliver the newsletter.

TFL taxis regularly park along London Road waiting for trade from the pubs. They have been challenged for blocking driveways and can be quite aggressive.

Cllr Cragg said this takes business away from local businesses, but taxis licensed in London are allowed to operate anywhere. It is a known issue and being investigated.

Cars regularly park on the bend by the Chequers pub at school drop off and pick up times which is dangerous.

Cllr Corke said he had been working with the school and the police have dispersed people once or twice but when they are not in attendance people just continue. Even if yellow lines were introduced, they would not be enforced. Chequers have closed one of the pub entrances and the

area of the dropped curb is being used as a lay by and obstructing the footpath. There is an alternative as parents can park in the hall car park and join the walking bus, but some continue to park on the main road.

Cllr Kingsbury said he would observe the area during an afternoon and take up the issue of the dropped curb with Highways.

Cllr Gribble thanked everyone for their comments and looks forward to seeing everyone next year.

JRP 27.4.22