

WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the twenty second Annual Parish Meeting 18 April 2023

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, T Mitchinson & R Trigg.

Members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence: None.

2. Chairman's introduction: The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Thanks was given to our three Borough Councillor and our County Councillor for their support and advice. Thanks were also given to the Parish Councillors who are all unpaid volunteers who serve for the love of their community.

The Chairman thanked all staff. The Council has appointed a new morning caretaker, Abdul, who is a really nice person and very dedicated. Along with Julie the afternoon caretaker and the cleaner, Peter, we have a really good team that keeps the hall running smoothly and hire fees are the main Parish Council income. Thanks went to Janet, the Parish Clerk, for all she does in supporting the Council.

Thanks also went to our team of volunteers, Jenny for tending the planters, has been awarded the Community Award 2022 for all the hard work she puts in. Chris who inspects the playgrounds and all the newsletter deliverers and litter pickers.

The Annual Report gives an account of what the Parish Council has done in the last year. The major scheme has been refurbishment of the tennis court which cost £14,000 and the Council is very grateful for County Councillor Tony Kingsbury's £1,000 donation towards the project from his Locality Budget.

The underfloor heating in the hall is erratic and the Council has had experts in to evaluate the issues. Luckily the Parish Council was notified that Welwyn Hatfield Council had been successful in its bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which means the Council will receive £5,000 per year for three years. The first two payments will cover the cost of the heating repairs. The Mayor and leader of Welwyn Hatfield Council came and presented the initial £5,000 cheque to the Chairman.

The hall hire fees have not changed for a number of years but after comparing the rates with other nearby halls it was agreed to increase rates while still ensuring they are competitive.

3. To approve minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2022: The minutes of the 2022 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. Events – Cllrs Corke & Pinney:

There are several events planned for this year. The annual car show on 1st May where there will be lots of interesting vehicles on display. Admission is free and there will be a charity collection.

A new event is being tested, Woolyfest, which will take place inside the hall and hopefully attract younger people.

Village Day will have more traditional attractions and, mindful of the cost of living, costs will be kept down. The community can get involved by taking part in a Bake Off competition, games and tug-of-war.

A Food Festival is also planned to take place in August.

A resident was assured that the Woolyfest will not be too noisy as it is inside, Parish Councillors will be present, doors will be closed and the bands noise levels will not exceed 1000 watts.

6. County Councillor Tony Kingsbury:

Cllr Kingsbury said he has been a County Councillor for two years representing Woolmer Green, Digswell, Welwyn, the Ayots and parts of Welwyn Garden City. As a County Councillor he has two budgets; the Locality Budget of £10,000 for various community groups, and £1,000 was given towards the tennis court refurbishment, and the Highways Locality Budget which is going to fund some resurfacing in Mardleybury Road and, next year, to reinstate the kerb on the bend by the Chequers. He also deals with other Highways issues such as flooding, overgrown vegetation and potholes.

Highways also receives money from the Active Travel Fund which in the longer term will pay for a safe walking and cycling route on the B197 from Welwyn Garden City through to Knebworth under the Safer Routes to School scheme. The current focus is on Woolmer Green and Oaklands. The aim is to reduce the speed to 30mph and widen pavements to make it safer to walk or cycle from the railway bridge to the shops and safer to cross the road. Reducing the speed will make the village pleasanter and reduce pollution.

Officers are currently working on the design and this will be consulted on in the autumn.

The County and Borough Councils give support to people in the cost-of-living crisis.

A new recycling centre is due to open in Tewin.

Questions:

It is not safe for walkers and cyclists to share the pavement. Account needs to be taken of older people who are walking.

Cllr Kingsbury: It needs to be safe but the road is quite narrow in Woolmer Green. The illustration in circulation is a concept drawing and the issue will be looked in to.

Cllr Trigg said that people using the recycling centre should take ID.

Cllr Kingsbury: This is loosely enforced but the aim is to make it fairer for Hertfordshire residents and stop people using the facility outside the county.

7. Church Report – Mrs Watson:

Mrs Watson read the Church's annual report which praised the appointment of the new curate, Christie Gilfeather, in July 2022, saying she was "a breath of fresh air". The church has formed links and shares the church with the Romanian church community which has been a rewarding experience.

The church served teas at Village Day, held a music evening, run a food table for those in need and provided a "warm space" over the winter at the village hall.

Mrs Watson said the church is there for people who are in need and people comment that it is a lovely Arts & Crafts church.

Cllr Pinney said Rev. Christie has been so good at engaging with the children at school.

Mrs Watson informed the meeting that Christie will be training for three years and is taking a doctorate.

8. Questions from the Public:

Cllr Trigg said he enjoyed the Parish Council Christmas carol event and hoped it will be back this year.

Cllr Gribble: Thanks to Cllr Pinney for organising it, and it will be back in 2023.

A resident said a group sang carols by the pond.

When will the puffin crossing be installed by the shops?

Cllr Kingsbury: Legal issues are being progressed by Highways. It does take a long time and is not part of the Safer Routes to School scheme.

The Parish Council should clean the war memorial and it had said it would provide a microphone as it is difficult to hear the outside service.

Cllr Pinney: He would consider setting up a microphone.

A resident thought the Parish Council should be aware that the stop cock to 2 Evergreen Close is by the road adjacent to 2 New Road. It is possible the pipework runs through the garden of 2a New Road.

How many newsletters are sent out electronically?

Clerk: 70. The cost of the paper copies is covered by advertisement income.

Councillor Cragg thanked the Parish Council for the hard work they do.

Cllr Gribble said the current six Councillors are standing again and no one else has submitted a nomination. He thanked everyone for coming along.

JRP 19.4.23