

ASHFORD HILL with HEADLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 11th DECEMBER 2023

Present

Mr J Woodford (Chair), Mr P Clark, Mr S Hoskins, Mrs K Parker, Mrs K Saunders, Mr J Sunley and the Clerk, Mr S Marshall.

Cllr Rhatigan and Cllr Bound were also present together with members of the public.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Dunn and Cllr Mellor.

2. Declaration of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting for approval

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13th November 2023 were approved and signed by Cllr Saunders as Acting Chair of the November 2023 meeting.

4. Matters arising

Cllr Parker would be visiting the water meadow with another ROW Warden to assess the access issues when the meadow was less flooded. *

All other matters arising were covered in the individual Parish Councillors' reports.

5. Election of new Chair

Cllr Woodford had previously informed the Parish Council that he would be standing down from the Office of Chair of the Parish Council after the December 2023 meeting. The Chair asked for any nominations for the election of a new Chair with effect from the 1st January 2024. Cllr Parker proposed that Cllr Stephen Hoskins be elected as the new Chair, which was seconded by Cllr Sunley. By a show of hands all other Councillors were in favour of Cllr Stephen Hoskins being elected as Chair of the Parish Council. Cllr Hoskins accepted the Office of Chair of the Parish Council by signing a declaration of acceptance in the presence of Mr S Marshall in his capacity of Proper Officer of the Parish Council.

The Chair proposed that Cllr Hoskins relinquish his responsibilities as the lead Councillor for planning applications for Headley due to his election as Chair and Cllr Saunders kindly agreed to undertake the role of lead Councillor for planning applications for Headley.

6. **Budget & Precept 2024/2025**

The Clerk had previously sent Councillors a draft budget inclusive of a proposed increase in the precept of 5% together with explanatory notes relating to specific cost centres.

The Chair requested a proposer and a seconder to adopt the budget and precept proposal for 2024/2025. Cllr Clark proposed the adoption, seconded by Cllr Sunley with all other Councillors in favour of the adoption by a show of hands. The application for the Precept for 2024/2025 to BDBC was duly authorised by the Chair, Cllr Clark, Cllr Sunley and the Clerk.

7. **Highways**

The subject of pavements on the A339 being impassable because of vegetation and general road detritus was discussed again and Cllr Hoskins informed the meeting that he would pursue the issue with the County Council. *

Cllr Saunders reported that Cllr Mellor had been contacted to report the dissatisfaction of how the pavements from The Cedars to the A339 had been re-laid following works by Gigaclear. *

The Chair asked Headley Councillors to report blocked drains on the A339 near to Knightsbridge. *

Cllr Clark would report a large pothole on the B3051 opposite Wheathold which had received several temporary repairs. *

8. **Planning Applications**

23/02548/FUL – La Capanna (Formerly The Pineapple) Little Knowl Hill, Brimpton Common

- Change of use to car sales with retention of living accommodation on first floor –
- *Objection to be lodged*

23/02923/OUT – Land at Common Road, Headley

- Outline application for erection of one detached dwelling with access – *No objection*

23/02846/PIP – Meadow Cottage, Old Lane, Ashford Hill

- Permission in principle for the erection of 1 no. detached dwelling – *No objection*

9. **Reports**

Borough Councillors' reports

Cllr Rhatigan provided the meeting with an update on several planning issues in the villages.

Cllr Bound had previously sent a written report for Parish Councillors.

Chair of the Parish Council's verbatim report

"If I may I'd like to reflect on my term as the Chair of the Parish Council for Ashford Hill with Headley. It has been my honour to have held this position since May 2015. In early 2013, I joined as the youngest member of the Parish Council and was keen to help support my fellow councillors and chair. In mid 2014, I was voted to Vice Chair, however sadly our then chair's health was worsening, and the position opened up a year later, I then accepted the role of Chair.

Since then, I have worked hard to support the villages of Headley and Ashford Hill as well as the surrounding settlements of Plastow Green, Ram Alley and Wheathold. Early on I wanted to harmonise the two main villages of Headley and Ashford Hill within the council, making sure there was fair representation and investment focus on each where required, also embracing the need for all Parish Councillors to be involved in the running of the Parish Council and not just the chair. Having this mutual, democratic approach has meant that all locations within the Parish have been heard and where possible remedial actions or improvements made. I feel the Parish Council now has a very progressive and modern outlook on the needs of our community and the support it can offer within its limited powers.

Many significant improvements have been achieved, an early activity was the creation of a Parish website, which I created and maintained until the middle of this year. Our initial financial position was also not strong and without adjustment the Parish Council would have run in to financial challenges maintaining the services we provide, which includes the Clerk/Financial officer salary, legal insurances, maintaining the two Recreational Play areas, specific hedge cutting and our two litter collectors' salaries. I also set about looking for key projects which the Parish Council could deliver on. We identified the Headley old football changing room as a key facility we would like to enhance, as well as improvements to both villages play areas. With the help of local support and external funding managed by two parents along with the Parish Council, we were able to completely modernise the Ashford Hill play park in 2017. Headley's play facilities had also been updated recently before I was chair, but there was still some attention needed and investments required. With the necessary repairs being made and a new all-purpose play surface being installed, we brought these facilities up to a higher standard.

Planning has been one the most challenging and demanding parts for the Parish Council. Both villages have seen a large amount of development, some of which has been very welcomed and considered suitable, others have been less suitable and without any consideration of the natural street scenes of our villages. To better support our villages current and future needs the Parish Council undertook the development of The Neighbourhood Plan, supported by many residents who shared a similar outlook and passion.

Though there was a healthy level of scepticism of such a document and what it would provide, now it is adopted by Basingstoke and Deane, it provides the Parish with a supportive framework to guide any future development and may help prevent the erosion of our villages' characteristics and historical features. This was a huge undertaking of work and would not have been achieved without the dedication of all involved. This document has already proven itself recently with two speculative developments being denied or withdrawn as it guided the Inspectorate of the needs and the views of the Parish.

Other significant improvements included local broadband. Headley was very fortunate to get earlier access to superfast broadband due to the proximity of the telephone exchange (opposite the entrance to C111 of the A339) but Ashford Hill, Wheathold and Plastow Green were not. The Parish Council worked closely with Hampshire County Council and was fortunate to be selected as one of the areas of consideration during BT's roll out to Wave 2 of their superfast broadband to rural locations, which then paved the way for the areas like Plastow Green and later out to Wheathold.

As to significant projects, we the Parish Council, have delivered on a new multifunction room in Headley, an additional amount of parking along Thornford road, the resurfacing of the Ashford Hill recreational car park. Smaller but equally significant are the green picnic benches in Headley and Ashford Hill, as well as the two wooden Platinum Jubilee benches situated in feature locations in both villages. And for the keen on sport and football we have new goals in Ashford Hill and Headley, plus it's a delight to see the Headley football ground being used regularly again.

Before I close out, traffic speeds have been one of the key concerns expressed to the Parish Council as recorded during the various questionnaires we have been involved in. The most recent being The Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council has invested in Speed Limit Reminders (outside the primary school), the 3 SIDs (Speed Indication devices) and various other passive traffic calming methods (White gates, part funded by CIL monies). These have significantly helped but I feel not enough, and there is still more work that with local volunteers could help improve this further and I would like for the Parish Council to think favourably on this last request as chair – an investment in a new ANPR Community Speed Watch device and the encouragement of residents who are frustrated with speeding traffic to come forward and **to get involved**. This new device is simple to use and most importantly, it is very easy to capture and record vehicle speeds which the police can then act upon.

I have enjoyed working with our County, Borough councillors, and my fellow Parish Councillors (past and present) and feel I leave the Chair role in a very robust state. Finally, I would also like to thank Steven Marshall, our Clerk, for his support and wisdom over my term of office."

Parish Councillors

Cllr Sunley reported on the demonstration of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) equipment from Westcotec which had proved to be very informative, and the equipment found to be very appropriate for the use of the members of the Community Neighbourhood Watch.

Cllr Sunley proposed the purchase of the equipment at a cost of £3845 + VAT which was seconded by Cllr Parker.

Post Meeting Note

The Clerk had recommended to the Chair Elect that it would be good financial practice to secure a second quote for the ANPR equipment to ensure value for money was being achieved. The Clerk further recommended sight of a list of committed volunteers who would be willing, on a regular basis, to carry out the operation of the equipment together with a newly named co-ordinator to act as a liaison between the Parish Council and the police authority for the purposes of sanctioning offending drivers through the villages of both Ashford Hill and Headley.

Cllr Sunley further reported that the outstanding task of relocating the primary school's defibrillator to the Village Hall's external location was in hand. *

Cllr Woodford had obtained a quote from Scofell, the grounds maintenance contractor, to undertake the decommissioning of existing goals and nets and the transport and installation of the new goal posts and nets for the Ashford Hill recreation ground, at a cost of £575 + VAT. The quotation was proposed by Cllr Clark and seconded by Cllr Sunley with work scheduled to take place in January 2024. Cllr Sunley was to confirm an acceptable date for January 2024 with the Clerk who would liaise with Scofell. *

Following a question from the Chair, Cllr Sunley confirmed that the replacement of 'sharks' teeth' on the perimeter of the Ashford Hill recreation ground was also in hand. *

Cllr Hoskins presented information to the meeting, obtained by Cllr Dunn, for the fencing options for the playground at Headley recreation ground. Comparable quotes had been obtained from 2 contractors and the cheapest quote for the metal fencing option was proposed by Cllr Hoskins and seconded by Cllr Parker with all other Councillors in favour of the £9759 expenditure by a show of hands.

Cllr Hoskins had requested a quotation from Scofell, the grounds maintenance contractor, for remedial works on the Headley football pitch due to its recent extensive use by visiting teams. At a cost of £160 + VAT, there would be an application of equipment (Quadraplay) to brush, roll, spike and tine the surface of the pitch as well as a cut of grass on the pitch. Cllr Hoskins proposed acceptance of the quotation which was seconded by Cllr Sunley and by a show of hands all other Councillors were in favour of the proposal. It was commented that such expenditure was very acceptable, particularly given the level of income now being generated from the hire of the pavilion and the football pitch which the Clerk confirmed as £700 as at November 2023 within the current financial year.

Cllr Hoskins went on to explain that given the use of the football pitch on an ad hoc basis by other teams, other than Kingsclere Football Club (KFC), who have a contractual arrangement with the Parish Council, it would be fair that as KFC incur the additional cost of white lining the pitch, that when other teams book the pitch they are charged an additional £10 per session, currently £75, in order to allow the Parish Council to reduce the charge made to KFC by £10 when this eventuality occurs in order to assist KFC with the additional cost of white lining the pitch.

The suggestion posed by Cllr Hoskins was deemed to be very fair and reasonable by Councillors.

Cllr Hoskins encouraged other Councillors to enrol for the online ‘Code of Conduct’ training, the details of which had been sent to Councillors by the Clerk. *

Cllr Hoskins informed the meeting that Mr Geoff Allwright had submitted a grant request to Cllr Bound for the purchase and installation of a picnic bench which would be located opposite the Community Shop in Headley.

Cllr Hoskins provided a verbal report to the meeting on the status of a proposed ‘Multi Use Games Area’ (MUGA) project which had been tentatively discussed at Parish Council meetings in October and November 2023 and minuted as such. The November minutes reflect the intention of the Parish Council to set up a subcommittee of the Parish Council to look at the feasibility of such a proposal which would include gathering residents’ opinion and feedback of such a proposal. Cllr Hoskins reminded the meeting that the land owned and managed by the Parish Council was a ‘recreation ground’ and as such needed to provide facilities for recreation which was found to be attractive to all age groups within the community. A ‘levelling up’ grant to partially fund any such project had been applied for in order to meet the deadline for applications without any commitment from the Parish Council that the project would proceed. Discussions and debate by the membership of the subcommittee would include the potential physicality of the games area and its potential locations and any such discussions were still at the very early stages. A feasibility study and a recommendation by the subcommittee would be forthcoming in the fullness of time and presented to the full membership of the Parish Council for its endorsement or rejection. In the meantime, further consultation with residents would be taking place in order to ensure the fullest consultation and feedback process possible, the results of which would be forming part of the feasibility study and any ultimate decision making by the Parish Council.

Cllr Saunders, who in her capacity as Vice Chair of the Parish Council, expressed the Parish Council’s appreciation, on behalf of fellow Parish Councillors, for the outstanding achievements of the Parish Council under Joe Woodford’s leadership. Many examples of such achievements could be made but Cllr Saunders drew the meeting’s attention to Joe’s determination and commitment, despite some local opposition, to initiating the formation of a Neighbourhood Plan steering group, whose membership undertook a considerable amount of work to compile a local Neighbourhood Plan, which had recently and will undoubtedly in the future be effectively used to help defend the villages from significant housing developments.

The Clerk had received a quotation from Michael Rixon for the cutting of hedges in 3 locations in Ashford Hill at a total cost of £250 + VAT. The quotation was proposed by Cllr Woodford and seconded by Cllr Sunley with all other Councillors in favour of the works being undertaken by a show of hands.

10. **Recess**

The idea of an enclosed hard court for ball games, such as volleyball, netball, and football matches, commonly known as a 'Multi Use Games Area' (MUGA) at the Headley recreation ground was further discussed with Councillors and a local resident who expressed a concern that a fenced hard court would detract from the current view from their property.

Concern was expressed for the safety of pedestrians using Thornford Road in Headley as there was not a pavement to separate pedestrians from vehicles. The Clerk would bring the matter to the attention of the County Council who were responsible for the funding of such infrastructure projects. *

Further concern was expressed about the absence of a weatherproof path leading from Thornford Road to the Headley Pavilion. Cllr Hoskins had included the cost of such a provision in the original specification for the pavilion and its environs, but the overall budget provision spends did not allow for its inclusion at the time of construction. The matter would be further considered by the Parish Council. *

11. **Financial statement**

The Lloyds TSB current account of the Parish Council stood at £15,822.42.

The Lloyds TSB deposit account of the Parish Council stood at £27,352.55.

12. **Accounts for approval & payment**

Mr S Marshall – Clerk's salary & Expenses – Jan-Mar 2024 - £4027.46

Mr J Kirkby – Litter Warden's salary – Jan-Mar 2024 - £503.73

Mr P Kemp – Litter Warden's salary – Jan-Mar 2024 - £738.34

HMRC – Tax & Employee NICs – Jan-Mar 2024 - £1916.40

The Windsor Forest Colleges Group – RoW training courses - £1800.00

Miss K Dunn – Website management fee – Dec'23 – Feb'24 - £390.00

Bramley Business Services Ltd – PAYE administration - £105.00

Mr J Woodford – Landscape pole - £35.96

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.50pm.