

ASHFORD HILL with HEADLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 12th FEBRUARY 2024

Present

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

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

1. **Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Saunders.

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 8th January 2024 were approved and signed by the Chair.

4. **Matters arising**

The Chair had requested that the Clerk compile a paper to reflect all outstanding issues from previous minutes in order not to overlook matters that still needed to be resolved. The updated paper would be the basis for discussion under agenda item 4 for forthcoming meetings.

The paper was worked through at the meeting and would be amended according to the updates provided by Councillors and the Clerk.

The matters arising from the paper that had been partially concluded or that required further action included;

- Cllr Clark had previously reported that a meeting was scheduled later in the month with Cllr Rhatigan and Mark Smallfield from BDBC to discuss the potential of a site for allotments.

Update: A meeting to discuss a potential allotment was still to be arranged

- Cllr Sunley confirmed that the two outstanding issues relating to the new goal posts and nets for Ashford Hill recreation ground and the relocation of the defibrillator to the Ashford Hill Village Hall location, would be dealt with before the next meeting.

Update: Cllr Sunley had contacted Scofell to arrange a date for the installation of the goal posts and nets. Later in the meeting, it was decided that the defibrillator currently located at the primary school in Ashford Hill would remain in its current location and the purchase of a new defibrillator for Ashford Hill Village Hall would be considered in the future.

- Cllr Sunley agreed to look at the broken wooden bollard at the Ashford Hill recreation ground car park

Update: Cllr Sunley would contact Mr A Miles to obtain a quote for the replacement of bollards.

- Cllr Bound kindly agreed to add more information to the County Council's website regarding the problem of detritus on pavements on the A339 in Headley on the pavements between Headley Tyres and the county border at Knightsbridge.

Update: The Highways portal showed that the work required had been registered and would be undertaken within 2 months.

- Cllr Saunders agreed to take photographs of the re-laid pavement following works undertaken by Gigaclear and send them with a supporting statement to 'Streetworks'.

Update: Completed.

- Weatherproof path from Thornford Road to the Headley Pavilion

Update: Cllr Dunn had received a quote for £2135 to excavate a pathway from Thornford Road to the Headley Pavilion steps which would include the laying of a 'geotextile' woven membrane for the path as well as for hard standing for parking.

Cllr Clark proposed the undertaking of the path installation which was seconded by Cllr Parker. The Clerk was asked to inform the contractor to proceed.

Cllr Woodford commented on Cllr Morrow's report which referred to the Basingstoke & Deane 'Pride in Place Fund' and suggested that the fund may be a resource to fund the access path to the Headley Pavilion. The Clerk would enquire with the Council but if funding was not forthcoming the path would be funded from the residue of the award from 'The Headley Trust' and The Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts'. *

- Cllr Woodford to resurrect CSW membership and liaise with the local police authority reference to confirming that the proposed equipment for monitoring motorists' speeds was the only approved equipment and only available from Westcotec – covered in emails from Cllr Woodford on 16 & 17 December 2023 supplemented by email sent by Chair asking who the new Co-ordinator is to replace Cllr Woodford.

Update: Cllr Parker would enrol 4 volunteers to undertake the speed monitoring in both villages by requesting them to complete an application form provided by the police authority. A Ms Stacey Power, an Ashford Hill resident, had kindly agreed to act as the Co-ordinator for the scheme.

- Presentation by the local police authority

Update: The Clerk had contacted the Basingstoke Rural Neighbourhood Policing Team and had arranged for Sergeant Martyn Evans to make a presentation about rural crime and the 'Hampshire Alerts' initiative which alerts signed up members to report and be alerted to crimes in the area. Parishioners are encouraged to join the 'Hampshire Alerts' initiative and to undertake a short community survey;

<https://www.hampshirealert.co.uk>

<https://survey.hampshirealert.co.uk>

The presentation will take place on Monday 13th May 2024 at Ashford Hill Village Hall following the Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council.

- Rio Fitness 'Boot camp' on Ashford Hill recreation ground

Update: The Clerk had contacted David Cahill regarding the arrangements for the 'boot camp' to take place on Ashford Hill recreation ground and had received a copy of the company's Public Liability Insurance cover.

- Playgrounds – treatment of algae

Update: Scofell has undertaken treatment of the algae on the flooring of the two playgrounds. The Clerk raised a related 'matter arising' insofar as the requirement to cut back excessive epicormic growth on a tree in the Ashford Hill recreation ground car park. Scofell had provided a quote for £250 to undertake the appropriate work on the tree. Cllr Sunley proposed that the work should proceed, and the proposal was seconded by Cllr Clark.

- Cllr Mellor had requested an outline of a specification from the Parish Council following its request for a public pavement to be installed along Thornford Road in Headley

Update: Cllr Mellor had provided the Chair with additional information regarding a potential pavement, and it was agreed that the Chair would contact residents who would be affected by such a proposal in order to receive their opinions.

Cllr Woodford commented on the minute of January's meeting which referred to the potential siting of EV charging points in Ashford Hill car parks. Cllr Woodford was concerned about the noise pollution of such stations and the potential impact on residents. Whilst this point was noted, Cllr Morrow, who originated the question, confirmed to the meeting that funding was currently not available for this initiative to proceed.

5. Highways

The Chair had been in conversation with Cllr Mellor regarding the condition of the B3051 and it was agreed that a Highways Manager would inspect the road to consider any remedial works. Cllr Sunley reported to the meeting that some degree of remedial work had been carried out that day on the road in question but not to a very high standard and reiterated how the unsatisfactory condition of the road affected the houses and residents living along that stretch of the B3051. Cllr Rhatigan confirmed that the inferior work carried out on the same road by the housing development company had been reported to the management of the company who were awaiting traffic control permission from HCC in order to allow them to undertake more suitable repairs.

Cllr Mellor had provided the Chair with additional information regarding a potential pavement in Thornford Road in Headley, and it was agreed that the Chair would contact residents who would be affected by such a proposal in order to receive their opinions. *

Cllr Parker reported on what appeared to be fly tipping on Huntsmoor Hill as well as a chevron sign on the hill which had been dislodged. Cllr Parker would report the matters to the relevant Councils. *

The ongoing flooding of the highway near to Kerry Lodge / Fair Oak Farm / Sascron in the direction of Ashford Hill village was raised again by Cllr Clark who whilst agreeing with the conclusions when the matter was discussed at the last meeting, remained very concerned about the worsening situation on the road which posed a major hazard to drivers. Further discussion ensued which involved Cllr Mellor and Cllr Woodford and it was agreed that Cllr Woodford would send the Chair the email string of previous correspondence with the Highways department which had suggested the water jet blasting of the culvert under the road which may be blocked and causing the flooding to become worse than it had been in previous weeks. *

6. **Planning Applications**

23/03128/FUL – The Old Baptist Church, Thornford Road, Headley

- Installation of 16 no. ground mounted photovoltaic solar panels to provide power to the Community Shop
- *No objection*

24/00118/LBC - Holdrop House, Holdrop Hill, Headley

- Proposed replacement of dormer windows to rear extension and replacement window to cloakroom, insertion of double doors to rear extension

No objection

21/03656/ FUL – Land north of The Chalet, Newbury Road, Headley

- Erection of 14 no. dwellings and associated works

Original objection reiterated

24/00229/LDEU – Workshop & office rear of Goose Hill House, Ashford Hill Road, Goose Hill

- Certificate of lawfulness for the existing commercial use

No objection

7. **Reports**

County Councillor's verbatim report:

"Budget Consultation"

There has been widespread coverage of the consultation document seeking the public's views on where there can be cuts in the budget for 25/26 when, given the current situation, HCC expects there to be a shortfall of c£125M. Unfortunately, the media seemed to take this as a 'given' with all the options being taken as a certainty.! Far from it, HCC still pursues the Govt for full funding on issues and is hopeful that this will be achieved. Still, as opposed to the likes of Birmingham, Southampton, where the Govt has had to step in because of serious shortfalls in the past year(s), the strategy of the Council is one of working two years ahead to ensure budgets will be met with minimum inconvenience to the residents.

Hampshire County Council is in reasonable shape- would be one of the last of the local Authorities to seek some Section 114 action. HCC currently has some £700M in reserve-committed reserve for some expenditures and HCC will dip into that if necessary for the 24/5 budget which will be approved this week. HCC has the lowest Council Tax of the shires and it could be debated that had we not frozen Council Tax for 5 years in the period of austerity circa 2011/2-16 then perhaps we would not be forecasting a deficit; perhaps too had the county not borne some share of HMG'S £400BN additional generous expenditure during COVID with benefits, furlough schemes and at times bordering on recession, then the current priority of reducing national debt would have not been so dramatic as to affect everything the Govt can do. Suffice to say, many expect the Govt to be more generous in compensating County Councils for some of its enforced expenditure such that the sought after savings will not be so large.

I would ask all PC members and residents to give some thought to the consultation. Obviously, some of the Councils £2.3Bn turnover is for statutory issues...the Children's Services including education and Adult Social Care are difficult to consider further savings on an ever growing budget; however there are areas such as Home to School Transport where the costs will have escalated from £32M to est.£70Mper annum by 2026- some unnecessary but enforced by long outdated legislation. This is largely resultant from commitments to transport SEN students where we will probably need to 'cut' or rather find other ways of financing. There are some smaller items being considered such as HWRC where some small tips , mostly close to other tips, could be shelved or replaced by very large tips more in line with recycling requirements (again, my ward is not involved in that) and also the subject of lollipop ladies/gents being formally reduced; there are some 111 vacancies not filled as difficult to find replacements nor do schools regularly say they want them. Alternative ways of protecting the children are available. In Tadley Baughurst and the other villages in my ward, we do not employ them, and safety has not been impaired nor has there been any negative comment re the need.

Bus Back Better and/or Active Space transportation.

HCC is committed to better public transport along with more Active Space Mobility, be it Cycle and walking paths or e.g. better bus schedules. Normally, where a service is justified but unlikely to break even, subsidies must be used to ensure the likes of Stagecoach in Basingstoke and Deane can operate viably. Am pleased to advise therefore that the high frequency No 2 service from Basingstoke to Tadley/Baughurst is not subsidized, the loads have only just got back up to those enjoyed pre pandemic and the most encouraging news is that we now expect 2026 to see the implementation of a full electric fleet replacing the low emission buses we currently have on the route. Of course, the route has the benefit of many passengers alighting/joining at the hospital; irrespective of the outcome of the decision as to where the new hospital will be built, we see a steady improvement in the bus services in our area; a bit odd therefore that the pan Hampshire consultation features possible savings. The extension of the £2 flat fare is welcomed and although we believe, as do the passengers when surveyed, that the Senior Citizen Concession could possibly bear a small administration fee (-the law would have to change), we do not foresee much change there. Perhaps we will be looking at more small bus operations to serve the villages; having mentioned that, demand for Community Transport is not high be it Dial a Ride, Taxishare etc. I have nothing to report re the joint Link service on the A339.

The cycle /walking path network has been comprehensive in the South of the County and now things are starting to move in the North. We still have not fully finalized the network in the Tadley /Baughurst area- again there is a budget limitation on what can be done but still anticipate work to start in 2024/5.

Highways

A further statistical report on progress was dispatched in January. The news of budget increases for Highways Maintenance by HMG grant to appease the national issue of potholes is very welcome and will be used extensively. This was on top of the divergence of some funds for projects such as major road resurfacing on the A roads to pothole filling etc and will only be realized once additional maintenance crews are recruited etc. The drop in pothole reports/updates is pleasing yet surprising considering the weather issues since December with record rainfall (a plus being little frost) precluding some work and possibly damaging recent activity. The rural areas admittedly lose out in frequency of coverage due proximity and the problem being that the haunches cannot benefit from the technology- nor are a priority as they tend to be C /unlisted roads. Once there is sufficient work in the area then Highways Ops dispatch. When the crews have their allocated duty, we now find that the 'Find It, Fix it' scheme where some early repair work is undertaken on non-reported surface issues seen during their coverage of the allocated work is very productive in cutting down calls. Still though the issue remains; the road structure in rural areas is old; the problem of haunches not being filled is now being looked at and of course we anticipate more flood activity as the effects of Climate Change continue. It was good to see lengthsman activity clearing some of the ditches in the past few weeks to steer more water from the road surface. The cooperation of the landowners in this respect is very welcome. Where there are banks/bunds precluding surface water from returning to the gullies, then HCC has been creating a relief; in some areas where there are no banks/bunds between the road and the ditch and only natural drainage then we have a real problem. The water table is very high, landowners have nowhere to pump the water too. Responsibility for the drainage issues like this is explained in the website.

Finally, in respect of Highways, the issue of speed limits continues. I reported last year on the outcome of a HCC Working group that reviewed dropping the 30mph limit to 20mph in some residential /urban areas. The outcome of the report /consultation with response from 10000 residents/councillors etc was pretty much to extend the usual areas but focus on enforcement at 30mph rather than any 20 limits outside the current areas. There is though going to be an opportunity for Parishes to introduce speed limits at their expense; this awaits finalization but of course would be dependent on those parishes securing good developer contributions be they CIL or S106 to contribute to the cost of the Community Funded Initiative.

Clearly the agenda focus is moving from potholes etc to EV charging and, should there be any developments in legislation, pavement parking.

Health and Social Care

HCC is to spend some £173M on new Care Homes with a focus on dementia. These will add capacity and modernize the facilities we offer at a much lower cost than private care homes levy. Social Care in Hampshire costs more than £1Billion pa and with the population that is over 85 years in age increasing by 1000 per annum in the County, this programme is essential. Locally in B & D the Oakridge facility will be replaced and expanded.

Children's Services

Hampshire CC is one of the very few Children's Services that is overall Outstanding. As to whether this can be continued with a new Ofsted system for inspection now in place, only time will tell. January registrations were as expected and with 97% of the children getting their 1st or 2nd choice in my ward. HCC continues to plan/open another 12 schools in the next five years, some because of new development sites, others due upgrading requirements. More on that in March.

Climate Change

The annual HCC report on Climate Change activity was published in December and it is an excellent document. Whilst every decision in Hampshire must consider the effects on Climate Change, the output is clear that economic development does have a role to play. Worth a read, locally too I have supported some green activity with my County Councillors Devolved Budget. Always happy listen to any new projects in the Division, be they 'Repair Shops or school Farm projects etc.

A big thank you to Ashford Hill Headley for their new initiative re Rights of Way; to Baughurst PC for their work on the Repair Shop; to Ecchinswell/Bishops Green for their backing the local Community Association and of course Tadley TC for the help and understanding the difficulties caused by the land grab activities in their patch which have certainly occupied some of my time in the past 3 months."

Borough Councillors' reports

Cllr Rhatigan reported that he was concerned regarding the Parish Council's continued opposition to the 'Sawmill' housing development application. As Cllr Rhatigan had previously explained, the deferred scheme would still include social housing which was of a high standard and was an essential local provision and which would be difficult to procure from other social housing organisations in the future.

Cllr Rhatigan expressed his concern regarding the amount of accumulated litter in the drainage pond on the Oakfield estate which demonstrated the problems associated with not having a management company taking care of such matters.

Cllr Bound had previously sent the Clerk his report which had been forwarded on to Parish Councillors. Cllr Bound further reported that the Wrens Farm planning application appeal had not been successful.

Cllr Morrow welcomed comments from residents regarding the Borough Council's 'Housing Land Supply Position'. The Council's 'biodiversity' strategy was taking shape with the appointment of a Liaison Officer to engage with local groups. Cllr Morrow further reported on the work of the 'MAD' team who were undertaking the clearing up of sites throughout the borough.

Chair of the Parish Council

The Chair had sent the Clerk his opinions regarding the potential spending priorities of future County Council's budgets which had been accompanied by opinions expressed separately by Cllr Woodford and Cllr Dunn.

The Chair and Cllr Parker had attended a recent presentation on the Code of Conduct for Councillors presented by officers of the Borough Council. The Clerk had distributed hard and electronic copies of the presentation which the Chair urged each Councillor to read and absorb as it was an important code by which he would want to conduct the business of the Parish Council. Following several questions from the Chair and Cllr Parker following the presentation, the Clerk was able to confirm to the meeting that the latest code and pledge had been adopted by the Parish Council in 2020 and the new code forms part of any new Parish Councillors' induction. The Clerk was also able to confirm the upkeep of the Register of Interests which again formed part of the induction programme for new Parish Councillors.

The Chair expressed that it was important for Parish Councillors when communicating via email to parishioners and third parties in their capacities as Councillors on any matter that the content of the communication is first shared with the Chair and/or Clerk to ensure it is appropriate and accurate.

The Chair reported that the garden fence of a resident in Thornford Road had been repaired by the Parish Council as damage had been caused by a fallen tree on Headley recreation ground and that another tree was required to be removed and a quote was being obtained for its removal. *

The Chair and Cllr Parker had visited Cheam School to meet with the Bursar to discuss several issues including the proactive steps the school had recently taken to improve the road congestion and pollution caused by parents 'dropping off' and 'picking up' their children. The strategy had included the use of several buses to collect pupils from the vicinity of their homes and to return them home at the end of the school day which had significantly reduced the number of vehicular movements at peak times of the day. The school was very keen to work with the community generally and other meetings were planned for the future.

On receipt of information regarding outdoor gym equipment designed to improve adult health, the Chair agreed would be given consideration as a future project to improve the recreational grounds' facilities.

The Chair had received plans from the Cricket Club to install new doors to the pavilion in Ashford Hill. Ashford Hill Councillors had been consulted over the design and there had not been any objection to the proposal and the Clerk would inform the Club accordingly.

The Ashford Hill Gardening Club had contacted the Chair regarding a request for a grant from the Parish Council to assist the Club with their financial deficit. Councillors expressed a divergence of opinion regarding the funding of local clubs and organisations. It was agreed that grants should be awarded and based on specific criteria being met which included that any grant awarded was on a 'one off' basis and it was not guaranteed that the grant would be given in subsequent years and therefore any grant awarded could not be guaranteed as yearly income. The Clerk interjected to give some context to the debate insofar as to explain what S137 funding was designed for in terms of the Parish Council supporting local clubs, organisations and events and how that practice had reduced over the years which in essence had been used in the past to promote social cohesion. The Chair proposed that a 'one off' grant of £200 be awarded to the Ashford Hill Gardening Club and by a majority show of hands, the proposal was adopted.

The Clerk confirmed to the Chair that Mr David Cahill from Rio Fitness had been contacted to confirm the Parish Council's approval to use the Ashford Hill recreation ground for a weekly 'boot camp' event and Mr Cahill had supplied the Clerk with a copy of Rio Fitness's Public Liability Insurance cover.

The Chair suggested two alternative dates for the annual 'litter pick' to take place which were Saturday 16 March or Saturday 23 March 2024. The Chair requested that Councillors inform him of their preferred date. *

Parish Councillors' reports

Cllr Woodford reported on the installation of appropriate signage aimed at cyclists at the entrance to the Ashford Hill recreation ground and at the entrance to Butler's wood. Cllr Woodford expressed his congratulations to Cllr Hoskins for his succession to the post of Chair of the Parish Council and offered his fullest co-operation in providing information and support in the coming months.

Cllr Parker reported on the training that had been completed by the RoW volunteers but expressed concern regarding the amount of administrative based bureaucracy required by HCC including the requirement for all volunteers to be first aid trained as well as the need to have insurance policy cover in place. Cllr Clark agreed to pass on to Cllr Parker the contact details of the new gamekeeper for Pelham Woods. Cllr Parker would be looking into the safety issues at the water meadows when there was better weather, and Cllr Rhatigan expressed concern over the slippery nature of the broad walks across the meadow.

Cllr Dunn further reported on the questionnaires that had been distributed with the Parish Magazine and that were available on the Council's website until the end of the month, which related to the idea of installing a 'multi use games area' on Headley recreation ground and which were seeking the opinions of residents for such a facility on the recreation ground. Cllr Dunn reported that most respondents to the questionnaire had been in favour of such a provision.

The Chair had previously reported that the Parish Council had been awarded £30,000 towards the cost of a MUGA by the government's 'Shared Prosperity Fund' from the Department of Levelling up, Housing & Communities.

Whilst the specific location of any MUGA was still under consideration together with other considerations such as fencing and lighting, the Chair requested approval from Councillors to proceed with these considerations which would include the planning application stage for the MUGA as funding for the potential project was now in place. All Councillors present were in favour of continuing with the feasibility study for such a project.

8. **Recess**

There were no questions or comments for the Chair from the public other than consideration being asked to be paid to the defibrillator located at the primary school remaining which was agreed upon by the Council.

9. **Financial statement**

The Lloyds TSB current account of the Parish Council stood at £6876.23

The Lloyds TSB deposit account of the Parish Council stood at £27,862.21

10. **Accounts for approval & payment**

Mr A Miles

- New Headley playground fencing - £9758.88
- New picnic bench installation Headley recreation ground - £150.00
- Resident's fence repair Thornford Road / Headley recreation ground - £385.00
- Bench repair Headley recreation ground - £85.00

Monger & Rixon – Flailing of hedges on Ashford Hill recreation ground - £300.00

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.55pm.