

**ASHFORD HILL with HEADLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

**HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**Present**

Mr J Woodford (Chairman), Mrs K Cochrane, Mrs L Grist, Mrs K Saunders and Mr G Stewart.

Cllrs Mellor and Rhatigan and Mr Patrick Taylor, Editor of the Parish Magazine, were also present.

The meeting started at the earlier time of 7.00pm which will be the new start time of all Parish Council meetings conducted virtually.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Wyatt and Kinnear.

**2. Declaration of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of previous meeting for approval**

The minutes of the last full meeting held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and the Annual Return meeting held on Monday 22 June 2020 were approved.

**4. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising that were not covered by an agenda item.

**5. Highways**

Cllr Grist acknowledged the information received from the Chairman about the police authority checking the speed of motorists within the village. Cllr Grist expressed her appreciation to Cllr Mellor and the Highways department for the work undertaken to improve the white lining on roads through the Ashford Hill, as well as improvements to the road surface at Pam's Bridge to allow rain water to freely run away from the highway. The Chairman also confirmed his own appreciation for the work carried out together with the repairs to a number of potholes.

## **6. Planning Applications**

Councillors Saunders and Cochrane informed the meeting as to the details of planning applications received in both Headley and Ashford Hill since June 2020 together with their comments.

## **7. Neighbourhood Plan**

The Clerk read a statement from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – March 2020 - which is presented below:

“The good news is that, in the last month, we have received formal confirmation from B&D that we need neither an Environmental Assessment nor Habitats Regulation Assessment. That means that we can go ahead with our draft Plan to the extent possible. However, we have also been officially informed that the new Government regulations regarding Neighbourhood Plans state that no referendum can take place [until 6 May 2021](#) although this may change. I am seeking clarification from B&D as to how far we can progress in the current circumstances.

We are now in a new budget year and the funding round is open. However we are not sure what we can apply for until we know how much we can achieve this year.

The Team is obviously not permitted to meet other than electronically, which we can if needed, and are not permitted to go out and about gathering evidence as that is not an essential activity. However, we can all work from home and hopefully so can our consultants. Thus we can work on processing any comments that they come up with while we wait for the current situation to improve.”

The Chairman confirmed that there were minor clarifications required by BDBC.

## **8. Reports**

### **County Councillor**

Cllr Mellor’s report covered a number of subjects which he had been working on despite the restrictions caused by the pandemic. There were a couple of highways issues in both wards which were being delayed due to problems with the accessing of private land.

Whilst the County Council was only ever consulted over housing developments, Cllr Mellor expressed how inappropriate he felt the proposed housing development was in Thornford Road in Headley.

Whilst the local resilience forum was ready for the second spike in the pandemic, Cllr Mellor reported on the effects of the coronavirus on adult social care in the county.

Whilst the local household waste issue was still alive, as far as identifying appropriate locations within budgetary constraints, the recycling centres were now fully operational.

A cycling and walking strategy was being developed to ensure easier access to local shops.

The working population returning to the workplace was proving to be more problematic than pupils and students returning to schools and colleges. The proposed new housing development in Headey did not present a problem as far as the predicted increase in school places in the area.

### **Borough Councillors**

Cllr Rhatigan reported that the Borough Council had been exceptionally busy since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. The post of Chief Executive for the Borough Council was being recruited and a new Borough Commander for the police authority had been recruited. As a result of the opening of the police station in Tadley, there had been more police patrol cars passing through the villages. The problem of rural crime was recognised by the police authority but Cllr Rhatigan felt that it was important that local residents paid due regard to their own security measures in order to prevent and deter crime being committed.

The government had lowered to 850 the required number of housing units which was part of the Borough Council's review of the Local Plan.

Cllr Rhatigan shared his vision for the development of the borough to include a new hospital for the area and potential sites were currently being investigated and a further update would be available early in the new year.

One effect of the pandemic had been an increase in the level of unemployment in the area, rising from a low 1.7% to a worrying 4.5%, a level not seen since 1994. Both rural and urban businesses had been affected but mitigated by the Borough effectively administering central government funding to local businesses.

Cllr Rhatigan expressed his strong objection to the planning application for a housing development in Thornford Road in Headley and was confident that the application would be refused by the Borough Council. As far as the second field housing development proposal in Ashford Hill was concerned, the developers would not be able to use any allocation from the 5-year land supply plan which was a great achievement by the Borough Council. A travellers' site had been recently approved which gave the borough adequate spaces for travellers to occupy.

Despite the difficulties of the refuse collection service during the height of the coronavirus lockdown period, the service had resumed its normal standard of service. The overlooked bins as a result of the changes in the service had been rectified efficiently by a 'mop up' team. Cllr Rhatigan expressed his appreciation to Hampshire County Council for financing the arrangements with West Berkshire Council for the use of their recycling location. Potential sites for a recycling centre were being identified but Cllr Rhatigan confirmed the Borough Council's commitment to providing a local site for local residents.

## **Chairman**

The Chairman's verbatim report;

### **'Covid-19**

It has been an unusual year since March 2020, Covid-19 has seen many significant changes in our societal behaviour and ways of life. I must thank all the volunteers and local services who supported our local community throughout the lock down and subsequent months. It is not over and this Autumn and Winter may still pose more challenges to the Parish.

### **Usage of the Parish Recreational Areas**

Throughout the lock down it was pleasing to see that our recreational spaces were being enjoyed by the villagers and other local people. Since then there has been greater use of these areas. One local football club due to their field being closed chose to use AH open space for practice, I have spoken to the club's manager as it was felt this was not appropriate due to the contact restrictions. The club agreed but we did discuss their interest to use the parish's facilities to host a girls' football training session.

### **Oakfield Lane public open space and new Car Park**

The public open space within the development has not be maintained at all during the summer months. Many of the planted trees are either distressed or dead. I've been in contact with a resident on the estate who emailed Persimmon Homes about the situation. I wonder if our local Borough Cllr who had good working relations with the developer could enquire why this area has been left in such a poorly and unmanaged state. It definitely does not look like a village asset, which was how it was "sold" to the BDBC throughout the planning process.

In the same vein the village car park has yet to be completed, I also feel that Persimmon Homes have had ample time over the summer to complete the works in readiness for the new academic year. Again, if I could request our Borough Cllr to escalate this issue.

### **Ashford Hill Meadows and surrounding woodland areas**

Unfortunately, an outcome of many people discovering the beautiful Ashford Hill meadows and woodlands during the lock down, is that a few individuals have seen fit to abuse these areas. The keen sighted will have spotted new signs to the AH Meadows indicating NO BYCYCLES are permitted. I would also like to remind all residents that FOOTPATHS are not permitted cycle routes. While out in the woods I have noticed bike tracks leading to and from the woods through Butlers garage and other parts of the footpath network. Bikes are only permitted on Bridleways, or land with the land owners' permission or designed cycle route. Other than the bridleway in the woods, bikes should not venture onto footpaths and for that matter neither should horses! There is also evidence on the footpaths of that.

Also, in the Ashford Hill meadows we have had a few campers pitching tents and Natural England takes a very dim view towards this behaviour. So, to be clear this is also not permitted.

Lastly a man was spotted in the woods with an air rifle or rifle (with an attached silencer) and dog. We are not sure if this is someone local, I need to speak with the game keeper to see if this is someone with permission to hunt in the woods. If you happen to come across anyone with a gun or air rifle I recommend not to approach them.

### **Pheasant shooting season**

This starts from the 1<sup>st</sup> October through to 1<sup>st</sup> February. For dog owners please take extra care of your dogs. If your family pet is harassing or chasing the birds the game keeper is at liberty to act. It is advisable to keep your dog on a lead or under very close control. There are many loose pheasants running around the woods close to their pens at the moment.

### **October 2020 meeting**

For the foreseeable future we will be holding virtual meetings. New web links will be issued per meeting per month. As we will not need to travel we have suggested the start time is 7pm.”

### **Parish Councillors & Clerk’s comment**

Cllr Stewart confirmed that the Lengthman’s scheme had available hours to undertake work and Councillors \* were asked to convey ideas for work to Cllr Stewart. Cllr Stewart raised concern about a dwelling being able to be built within the grounds of an existing dwelling which Cllr Rhatigan later confirmed was permissible within current planning policy. Cllr Stewart was very appreciative of the government grant for the community shop which had allowed it to purchase a delivery vehicle and a new computer. The level of trade for the shop during the lockdown period had risen significantly.

Cllr Grist raised the problem of anti-social behaviour on the Ashford Hill recreation ground in the early hours of the night. The local PCSO was aware of the problem and had suggested a chain be put across the access to the car park. This proposed action had been supplemented with a warning notice having been installed. Cllr Grist further reported that parking on days of cricket matches on Chapel Lane was causing congestion and access problems, potentially preventing emergency vehicles from gaining access down the lane. The suggestion was made that the Cricket Club are asked to put out instruction signs for parking on match days. The Chairman agreed to pursue the matter with the Captain of the Cricket Club.\* Cllr Grist hoped to have quotes for the proposed car park improvements at the next meeting when Cllr Hiscock \* would be present.

Cllr Cochrane reported on the confusion of users of the new housing development's car park that serves the primary school parents. Despite the Chairman having sent the Head Teacher a copy of the car park plans which indicated the 'in' and 'out' locations, parents were still confused as to the correct parking procedure to adopt. The question of possible white lining, the correct procedure to drive into spaces as opposed to reversing into spaces and the appropriateness of the overhead barrier, were all issues discussed at some length. It was later decided in the meeting that the Chairman \* would provide the Parish Magazine with a schematic of the car park supplemented by an article written by Cllr Cochrane \* which were to be included in the next edition of the magazine.

The new government legislation regarding the '6 rule' in connection with precautions regarding the pandemic, applied to the playgrounds insofar as there could be more than six people in the playground dispersed throughout it and maintaining the 2-metre social distancing regulation but there could not be a 'group' of people that exceeded six in number who were not social distancing because of their 'household' or 'bubble' status.

Cllr Saunders reported difficulty with the opening of the ford gate in Thornford Road which Cllr Mellor kindly agreed to request that the Highways department investigate the problem.

The Clerk had nothing further to add than had already been covered by the reports but informed the meeting that since the pandemic lockdown in March, the Parish Council had been running very effectively despite meetings not being held. The Clerk wished to bring Councillors attention to the fact that the Chairman had been managing a high volume of issues during this period, invariably behind the scenes and on occasions supported by the Clerk and that such hard work and commitment should not go unnoticed by Councillors.

## **9. Recess**

Mr Patrick Taylor, Editor of the Parish Magazine, reported that following the distribution of a questionnaire, there had been an encouraging level of response amounting to some 70 replies. The overriding issue that was reported back via the questionnaires was the importance of planning control within the locality. To this effect, Mr Taylor requested that Councillors responsible for planning applications, insofar as providing comments from the Parish Council to the Borough Council, periodically write articles regarding planning issues for inclusion in the magazine.

Mr Taylor further expressed his concerns regarding the government's intention to change local planning with regards to aspects of land availability for development which potentially has immense implications as far as local communities. Mr Taylor urged the Parish Council to be actively involved in any consultation process the government would be offering in order to convey the potential implications of such a revision in planning legislation. Cllr Rhatigan assured the meeting that the Borough Council would be best placed to comment on the government's current 'white papers' and would be emphasising their opinion that decision making process should be more pronounced at a local level and not dictated by 'government down' decision making.

#### **10. Financial Statement**

The Lloyds TSB current account of the Parish Council stood at £20,281.71

The Lloyds TSB deposit account of the Parish Council stood at £10,692.30

#### **11. Accounts for approval & payment**

C Butler – Litter Warden's salary – October – December 2020 - £589.55

J Kirkby – Litter Warden's salary – October – December 2020 - £476.37

S Marshall – Clerk's salary Oct-Dec 2020 & expenses - £3772.46

S Hiscock – Playground maintenance - £40.00

HMRC – Tax & employee NICS - £1334.75

Bramley Business Services Ltd – PAYE administration - £50.00

HALC – Membership fee 2020/21 - £436.08

Premier Grounds & Garden Maintenance – Green waste disposal - £90.00

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.35pm.