

## **Wheathampstead Annual Parish Meeting**

**16 May 2018 – 19:30**

Present:	Councillors	D Johnston	Chairman
		J Booth	
		G Clark	
		D Davies	
		E Habib	
		L Halford	
		S Haynes	
		O McKenzie	
		R O'Brien	
		T Reason	
		T Ryan	
		P Woodhams	
		J Warren	Clerk to the Council
		K Ly	Finance and Meetings Administrator
		Press	0
		Public	32

### **2018-1 Chairman's Welcome and Address**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced the four new councillors co-opted within the year following councillor resignations. Councillor Johnston also advised that having accepted the office of Chairman for six years he believed a change would be good and he would not stand for re-election at the Annual Council Meeting on 31 May.

County Councillor Annie Brewster had sent her apologies because of a diary clash. He was also aware that the meeting date coincided with a History Society meeting which a number of residents had attended.

As in previous years the format of the meeting would follow a review of Council matters followed by refreshments and an opportunity for questions; PCSO 6434 Joshua Walton was available for crime prevention advice. Boards with information about the Neighbourhood Plan, and draft versions of the Plan were available for comment and suggestions. A draft design for the Crinkle Crinkle Garden (adjacent to King Edward Place and Rectory Meadow) was also on view. Again, comments were sought so that an improved draft could be formally consulted upon during Village Weekend (8 July 2018). Simon West, the District Archaeologist, would then give a presentation on recent St Albans Archaeology.

### **2018-2 Minutes of 2017 Annual Parish Meeting**

The Minutes of the 2017 Annual Parish Meeting held on 10 May 2017 were unanimously approved (proposed by Mr Iain Begg).

#### **Resolved:**

**To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2017 to be a true and fair account and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

### **2018-3 Council Structure and Financial Report**

The Chairman said that Wheathampstead Parish Councillors were all volunteers. They acted as a corporate body making collective decisions, no councillor had individual responsibilities. The Clerk, as senior paid officer of the Council was the only person legally permitted to make decisions. The Council employed 2.6 full time equivalent staff (Clerk, Finance and Meetings Administrator, Events and Communications Administrator and Caretaker) and

otherwise relied upon contractors and volunteers. In particular he drew attention to the open space rangers and the volunteer group which met monthly to support the ongoing maintenance of the parish

As shown by the map Wheathampstead Parish was a peculiar shape, resembling somewhat a Scottie dog. It had been a more regular shape, defined by for example field boundaries, when what is now Harpenden was part of the parish. The Parish was approximately 26m<sup>2</sup> with a population of 6,410 at the last census.

A budget summary was shown with comparatives of 2017-18 and 2018-19. Comparisons were also made of precept and 'Band D' to neighbouring parishes. The calculation of 'Band D' as being precept/tax base was explained. In less densely populated areas fewer people supported the expenditure. Councillor Johnston also explained the need for reserves, both those for identified projects, currently the largest one being refurbishment of the Memorial Hall, and general reserves for unplanned events or disasters. In recent years Wheathampstead Parish Council had established a reserve for assets maintenance hoping to avoid unpleasant surprises such as the need for a new roof that happened in 2008. The library move from the Memorial Hall to the Fire Station was progressing, the vacated space would then be refurbished and reassigned as part of the broader plans for the Memorial Hall.

In 2017-8 £8,001 in specific grants had been given to a variety of Village organisations. In addition Wheathampstead Parish Council on occasion gave 'free' use of its facilities, effectively grant aid for, for example, room hire.

Procedurally the Council was firming up hall bookings. This was to ensure that hirers used facilities as booked and were thus insured in case of any accident, and that double bookings did not occur. Clarity of bookings was needed, this would also be more transparent when showing Council's offer of room hire. Embarrassment had arisen when hirers arrived early or left later than booked and overlapped with other hirers. It was acknowledged that traditionally bookings had not been enforced so for some payment for hire period may result in an additional charge. Grants were available and included room hire for meetings.

#### **2018-4      Review of 2017-18 and plans for 2018-19**

The Parish Council continued to lobby on a number of issues including the new secondary school to be located in Batford, speeding and traffic issues and Butterfield amenity space.

Through 2017-18 major projects included leading on the Neighbourhood Plan, the four year Memorial Hall renovation plan, the long awaited Butterfield pavilion, Crinkle Crankle Garden and boules court, refurbished artificial tennis courts and river improvements. In respect of the Neighbourhood Plan the Chairman gave a run through of process and progress. He advised that an analysis of the housing needs assessment forms mailed to all households identified a need for smaller properties for first time buyers and older people wishing to downsize.

St Albans District Council's recent report on district wide recycling showed Wheathampstead in a very poor light, for all waste the parish ranked 17/20 and 19/20 if green waste was omitted.

High Street parking was identified as an issue, with the need to balance highway regulations, quick access to shops and businesses and blocking the High Street particularly around the Tesco loading bay. County Councillor Annie Brewster was working with concerned parties.

Two new heritage style wooden bus shelters were to be installed on the High Street (opposite the Lych gate) and Lower Luton Road opposite Rose Lane, replacing tired metal ones. They were to be joint funded by parish and county.

Following consultation with the volunteer rangers new open space noticeboards with interpretation panels were to be installed in five locations. There would be space for local information including ranger's notes, the Countryside Code, planned activities etc.

He reported that the Parish Council was gearing up to compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations which would come into force on 25 May. The new regulations were designed to protect individuals but in so doing presented administrative changes and what may seem to some a burden as information was sought.

The James Marshall Foundation had been supporting young people in Wheathampstead and Harpenden since 1722, at which point it was a single parish. A total of £78,016 had been given as 147 grants in 2017-18 to Wheathampstead residents for educational, job and character building opportunities to enhance their career potential.

The Parish Council supported younger people by sponsoring dance, drama and singing sessions weekly at the Memorial Hall run by the Top Hat stage school, and the Youth Project run by HCC's Youth Connexions service. The Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) was available for free use outside hired periods, and most of the play equipment in the parish was owned and maintained by Wheathampstead Parish Council. Nomansland Nature Quest, also sponsored by the Parish Council was proving popular.

Refurbishment of the Memorial Hall continued. Audio visual had been upgraded, the main hall decorated and sound baffles installed. These were put to good effect by the Drammatic Society and potentially a new cinema club. The next stage was to instruct an architect and consultation.

Also supported were Citizens Advice and the police with room space and grant aid. PCSO 6434 Joshua Walton joined the meeting to offer crime prevention advice.

Events were an important aspect of village life, from the monthly ranger meetings through Litterblitz to Christmas Lights Up and Village Weekend. The input of many volunteers throughout the parish was key and the events could not function without the enthusiasm and support. Volunteers also featured heavily in projects such as the river bank erosion/ access projects, station platform and Bury Green Garden. Sponsorship of the latter was gratefully received from Borrás Construction, and the support too of the Wheathampstead and District Preservation Society. The river project relied heavily on volunteers but was paid for by a grant from the Wild Trout Trust. Since April the library was manned by 40+ volunteers. In due course they would move from the Memorial Hall to the newly refurbished Fire Station

## **2018-5 Volunteer awards**

In order to acknowledge the huge impact of hundreds of local volunteers the Parish Council had launched WPC Awards. Residents who volunteered on a regular basis would receive a green badge; gold badges were to be awarded annually to those who showed extraordinary commitment to the community. Nominations were requested.

Inaugural gold badges were awarded to:

Julie Bell      key member of WDPS and WEB and for Heritage Trail

Andy Ellis Key to achieving WWFC FA Charter Club status, ATP sponsorship  
David Law Rotary, PPG, Thursday Club, Wheathampstead Community Group  
Nonwe Maw Ran a Luncheon Club for elderly some 40 years  
Marion Oxley Many years chair WCG, St Albans CAB, started PPG and U3A  
Norman Whitwood influential in WEB, Heritage Trail, Lights Up.  
Julie Bell, Andy Ellis and Marion Oxley were present and received their awards.

## **2018-6 Questions**

Mr Begg stated his concerns about the High Street. He had spent 8 years as a parish councillor to 2015 and now participated as a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. His concerns centred around High Street parking and the impact it had upon local businesses. He suggested that kerb height be looked at and very short-term parking be introduced on the High Street and Station Road, longer term parking being available in East Lane Car Park. Mrs Haynes requested that any short-term restrictions take account of people with reduced mobility

Mrs Watkins asked about parking enforcement. District councillor Sandra Wood reminded all that parking wardens came with a cost and though seldom seen in the Village would respond to telephone calls regarding vehicles causing obstructions etc.

Mr Cornell raised concerns that East Lane Car Park was becoming congested with vehicles belonging to people participating in commercial walking groups

Mrs Ball, speaking for residents of Necton Road, raised concerns of parking congestion with increasing numbers of cars per dwelling and of parking by Marford Road residents and visitors. Necton Road being a narrow crescent of 95 homes, few with off road parking. She suggested that perhaps resident permits be considered, grass crete be provided on the junction with Marford Road, or that residents have permits to park in the Memorial Hall car park overnight.

It was acknowledged that parking issues abounded in many areas of the parish. The Clerk had raised these with the county councillor and agreed that this be discussed at the meeting with Hertfordshire County Council highways officers in June. Any changes were likely to require resident consultation.

Ms Bell observed that a number of the Parish Council's noticeboards were unusable, notices did not stay pinned in place. The Chairman advised that the Council was reviewing the need for them, wished to identify which locations were required and remove unnecessary boards.

Ms Giles asks about cycle routes to the proposed new school in Batford. The Chairman advised that cycle routes were an ongoing concern. The Parish Council's desire was for cycle and footpath routes to adjacent settlements, this had been previously stated in responses to the St Albans Green Ring project and was included in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Sustrans were working with County to establish cycle routes. In relation to a cycle route along the Lower Luton Road to Batford County Councillor Brewster had physically accompanied officers along the route, resulting in it being deemed not to be a safe route to school.

## **2018-7 Guest speaker – Recent St Albans Archaeology**

Simon West, District Archaeologist gave a fascinating, illuminating presentation about recent 'finds' in and around Wheathampstead. He commended Wheathampstead for her support of his department's work.

Turners Hall Farm excavations had revealed some of the best bronzes of their type found in Roman Britain. He described the nature of the dig, and that it uncovered a Roman villa and round house. The main grave was found by a metal detectorist, and the context and association of grave material had become lost. Because of the risk of looting the site was excavated over two days, items removed were then examined for the next three years to establish context. There appeared to be a bath house for the use of the village people, also evidence of late Iron Age/ early Roman coin minting. The building was probably two storey with decorated walls and perhaps mosaics.

Other items found included a Celtic infuser, Patera liberator bowl, Germanic jug, textiles from the Eastern Mediterranean and evidence of imported foodstuffs including lentils and grapes. He also showed pictures of items made from elephant and walrus ivory, silver broaches from Spain and early fifth century coins.

The Sandridge hoard of coins thought minted around 406 AD could have been deposited in the eighth century. There were only gold coins, no silver or bronze, and probably deposited with plans for future retrieval. There was no context for archaeology.

The Batford site of the Katherine Warrington School was possibly a seventh century Anglo Saxon Royal burial . 2metre trenches had been dug across the site and the 'bottom ' (south ) end cleared. If proved to be a Middle Iron Age site this was very unusual in this area. Significantly more funding would assist to use modern techniques to examine the remains found.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 22:15.**

**Dated this            day of            2019**

**Chairman**