



HUNSDON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held at 8.00pm on Monday 19th November 2012 in the Village Hall, Hunsdon

Present: - Chairman D Gibbs, Cllrs D Kitching (Deputy Chairman), N Clark, S Oliver, B Toll, H Brown

In attendance: - J Robinette (Clerk), John Ashley (PPP Warden), D Clark (PP), Dist. Cllr M Newman, Cty Cllr R Beeching. 26 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence.

None received.

2. Approval of minutes of both the Parish Council meeting held on 22nd October 2012.

Agreed & signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising.

S106. Agreement. This money was still not forthcoming from EHDC. Clerk and Dist. Cllr to chase again.

4. Reports from members representing the Parish Council on outside organisations and attending meetings on behalf of the Council

(a) Hunsdon JMI School Governors. Nothing to report.

(b) Parish Paths Partnership. The Modification Order decision had not been confirmed. A detailed report had been sent to the PC. In essence the planning inspector was not convinced that in the period between 1978-1998 people had been walking the paths across the aerodrome without permission. John Ashley stated that HCC would be communicating with Savills and farmers to resolve issues locally.

(c) Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). An E Mail had been sent some months ago to the HPC from the VOTY committee asking for suggestions to revitalise this competition. Cllr B Toll asked the Chairman D Gibbs if there had been any feedback. Nothing had been received.

(d) Poor's Land and Stock Charity. Nothing to report.

(e) Village Hall Management Committee. A new bookings clerk had been appointed. Mrs. T Curtis is to take up the role. Both a handyman and minute secretary had also been recently appointed. Cllr H Brown had informed the new booking clerk of the dates for the PC meetings however the clerk will confirm in writing to Mrs. Curtis.

(f) Allotments Nothing to report.

(g) Police Liaison Cllr Kitching informed the council that there had been 2 non-residential burglaries, 15 thefts and 3 attempted thefts of possessions in cars. He urged all residents to lock their cars. SID, the speed indicating device can now be borrowed by the PC to evidence traffic flow. Training is necessary before use.

(h) SHN. Cllr Clark informed the council that the LDF meeting for EH was scheduled for 28th November. Although a lot of data is now readily available, the preferred options would not be published until next year.

(i) District Council. Dist. Cllr M Newman stated that EHC housing Strategy was too small and fragmented, in which case it was possible for the government to step in and determine the housing stock, vulnerable to this. Dist. Cllr Newman stated that EHDC Local Plan was current and therefore should not be vulnerable to the government being involved.

EHDC car parks operate a Ring go system. At present it costs the users 10p. However to encourage people to shop locally within the towns EHDC has now decided to absorb this charge. Cllr Newman stated that the local bus service had become erratic and unreliable. He was at present collecting data to challenge the bus company's service. New constitutional boundaries have been proposed, reducing the number from 533 to 502. In this proposal Hunsdon ward would be with Broxbourne rather than Stortford. Mr. C Walker is Broxbourne's local MP at present. There is a website for anybody to make comments, see www.consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk

(j) County Council. Cllr R Beeching informed the council that Mr. D Lloyd had been elected as the new police commissioner. Voting turnout had been poor across the country and county. Adult social care within Herts County took up 48% of the Cty overall budget. "Hertfordshire local" has been a successful initiative; 644 grants had been given out. Both The locality budget and Herts highways budget schemes continued, with grants being given to Hunsdon.

5. Parish Plan.

Nothing to report.

6. Village Infrastructure.

a. Bus Shelter. The oak engraved panel had been ordered to commemorate QEII's Diamond Jubilee. It is hoped that it would be in place shortly.

7. Planning

a. Decision by EHDC Development Control on earlier applications.

- i. New Chapel and Community centre with car parking... GRANTED

b. New Applications:

- ii. Olives Farm, Stanstead Road. Replacement of 2 new windows.

c. Consequences of EHC Development Control Committee decision on chapel application.

The clerk asked the councillors to e mail her by Friday this list of conditions that HPC would like to put forward to the planning dept. concerning the recent granted PA. If local residents wished to suggest any additional conditions then these too need to be directed to the council for consideration before Friday 23rd November.

Alternative land. The HPC will write to the PCC to determine the status of the land if/when handed over to the PC. St Francis Chapel. The HPC will write to the PCC to ask what the intentions are to keep this grade II listed building.

d. New Chapel HPC Statement. Cllr D Kitching read out the following statement.

"An application for a new chapel was first submitted just over a year ago. However, after a public meeting at which much opposition to the proposal was voiced, it was withdrawn by the Parochial Church Council. Now, a year later, a new application has been submitted, including a proposed building and location which is unchanged since the original application. The Church Council has held no consultations with the village during the past year but Hunsdon Parish Council held another public meeting on 24 September 2012 to gauge public opinion. It was attended by over 90 villagers and, in a straw poll of those present, all but 10 opposed the application. The majority of written submissions to East Herts Council were also opposed to the planning application.

Few, if any, villagers would not acknowledge that the existing chapel is in a very poor state of repair. And few, if any, villagers would not accept that some form of new chapel is required. However, it is abundantly clear that the majority of parishioners are opposed to the plan as currently submitted and, in taking into account various planning considerations and being representative of the village as a whole; Hunsdon Parish Council supports that view.

The officers of East Herts Council Development Control, in reviewing the planning application, recommended that it be refused and it was referred to committee. A Development Control Committee meeting was then held in public on 7 November 2012. At this meeting Hunsdon Parish Council made a statement opposing the planning application and supporting the officers' recommendation that it be refused.

In his submission to committee Cllr Michael Newman, our Ward District Councillor, then proceeded to counter many of the negative observations made by the Development Control officers. This included, for example, the fact that Council had previously approved development on recreational land in Bishop's Stortford without alternative land being offered, thus contradicting policy LRC1.

He also quoted the Hunsdon Parish Plan as supporting a new chapel. This statement to Council was misleading because the full Parish Plan states: *"To consider the repair and possible extension of St Francis Chapel (if viable) or the development of the site to provide suitable accommodation to meet the needs of the present and future worshipping community and to serve the greater village community"*. Nowhere does the Parish Plan support building other than on the existing site and certainly not on the recreation ground. Cllr Newman failed to mention this.

Cllr Newman also highlighted the fact that the main difference between the most recent planning application and that submitted last year was the offer of additional land in compensation for the land lost to development. This he regarded as a positive move. He did not attempt to portray that the land on offer is removed from the current recreation area, is screened from view and is unsuitable as a children's play area.

Cllr Newman went on to quote from the National Planning Policy Framework as apparently being supportive of the new chapel project. He quoted the NPPF as saying that planning policy *"should promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship"*. What Cllr Newman did not say was that the NPPF goes on to state that *"Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements or the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location"*. Since these provisions have not been met, the Parish Council would therefore argue that the NPPF is supportive of retaining village recreational facilities rather than build on them.

Throughout his submission to the committee he gave weight to arguments opposing the officers' recommended refusal. When it came to the vote, he voted to support approval of the planning application for the proposed new chapel.

The East Herts Council Code of Conduct for Councillors states that:

"As a Member of East Hertfordshire District Council, my conduct will in particular address the statutory principles of the code of conduct by championing the needs of residents - the whole community and in a special way my constituents, including those who did not vote for me - and putting their interests first".

In disregarding the views of the clear majority of Hunsdon residents in his submission to the Development Control Committee, Cllr Newman has failed to be representative of the community at large. His statements to the committee were selective and misleading. He presented a one-sided rather than balanced view and promoted, rather than countered, the planning application. His overall viewpoint was clear for all to see when he voted to support the application rather than at least abstain.

As a direct result of Cllr Newman's conduct at the public meeting of East Herts Development Control Committee meeting held on 7 November 2012, Hunsdon Parish Council has lost confidence in his ability to represent fairly and impartially the majority of residents of Hunsdon as its Ward Councillor."

Cllr D Kitching asked for further comments from councillors.

Chairman D Gibbs read out the following from a prepared statement. Chairman D Gibbs stated these points were of planning issues taken from the Planning Development control committee meeting of 7th November and not personal. "To the PCC and the Vicar – Planning Officer accused of bias and errors. However, Church one mile outside Village, suddenly?

Too Cold – previous members of the clergy were more tolerant.

New building uses eco-friendly technology – so why can't this be applied to St Dunstan's; many listed churches have ground heat installed. Lighting improvement would be no problem.

Loss of land is "small and rarely used", it is recreational land for all ages, especially for children –there has been a community vacuum created.

New building sustainable – where are these figures for maintenance

To Dist. Cllr Newman .You stated that the new Chapel would be more accessible – many (?) elderly people find it difficult to visit church –can't lifts be organised, surely the Christian way to help worshippers.

You are the Ward Councillor – elected by the community – your first duty is to your constituents whether they voted for you or not, you have not carried out that duty. Your comment on the first public meeting resulting in a 50/50 split is untrue; you used it as a platform to expound your theory that public meetings only attract objectors, excusing the weighty "NO" from the second public meeting which has since increased. You are obviously oblivious to the following:-

You failed to pursue this councils attitude towards the building of a new chapel, that is has a positive approach towards such an enterprise. You were well aware that this council, which represents the feelings of this community, agrees with the PCC's for a new chapel but not on the playing field and not such a huge building- this was never put to the Planning Committee. You did not mention that the Architects said there would be no commercial retail space, no transport implications and there would not be a detrimental impact to open space and existing trees would not be affected.

Only 5 members of the Pl. Committee visited the chapel or were shown the offered extra land, one could not remember where it was. Your answer to Cllr Tim Page who asked you to define the current use of the offered area was totally evasive, he had to ask you again, and you replied "An open space, no defined use".

Your display and reading of the Parish Plan Brochure was obstructive to the truth and did not explain that it was a work in progress and stating that this Council has never pursued a building on the playing field. You were on the working party which proposed it and on the Parish Council which adopted it – you have no excuse for not knowing what is in it.

Your detailed description of the Bishops Stortford Planning application being granted for building on playing fields had nothing to do with Hunsdon Village but only served to underline your personal belief in only what the PCC want. Your further comment that your wife is a church goer, but you were not was not of planning concern but obviously sort to add a sense of personal axe to grind. The fact that the PCC are the applicants for this chapel build and your wife is a member of the PCC casts an uneasy sense of perception on you argument. The EHC have accepted an application which has now been recommended for permission by the husband of an applicant.

Did you revise the Glebe land description by the PCC from vacant to village recreational ground, designated as such in the EHDC Local Plan; policy being Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, as it is outside the village envelope?

Was LRC1 understood by the P.Committee and that as an alternative it would have to be flattened, grass sown and maintained before being considered, which is unacceptable. Was this area plus the old allotment land ever suggested as an alternative build site? Did you comment upon the inadequate car park? Did you remind the P.Committee that Wareside and Widford Churches will follow Hunsdon in Centuries of worship and history to the scrapheap? Their Parish Councils have not been consulted at all. Was the P.Committee advised to consider an alternative build site which would be ideal on the old Allotment site/extra land? Easily accessible especially for the priest-in-charge. Were the environmental effects mentioned, ENV11, hedgerow/trees? ENV1-to reflect local distinctiveness?

The COMMITTEE. How was the decision arrived at?

There was little discussion the DC did not represent the views of the community, less than half the Committee said anything at all, did they understand the pros and cons? Did they all visit the site? Did they speak to anyone other than the PCC? Why have the PCC resolutely ignored the PC's offer to talk. A small number of parishioners and ill-informed planning committee have achieved their goal – at enormous expense to our community – the expense of losing a quarter of the only playing field we have; the finance expense is of no consequence to the church authority as a benefactor is at hand. Wouldn't those hundreds of thousands of pounds be more usefully used to heat the church with ground heat technology, provide an extra room plus improved lighting even a donation towards a mini

bus to convey worshippers to and from the three churches in the Benefice- do not say it is impossible to achieve on a Grade 1 listed building 800 years old, beautiful, stuffed with history, decorated, water and w.c. laid on. Suddenly it is almost a mile from the Village; show me a Village which has a central church.

My parish church at Broxbourne had similar problems, is almost as old, on the far edge of the village but has surmounted similar problems

Planning policy was non-existent or was it all detailed for discussion prior to the meeting, if so this PC wishes to have sight of the meeting minutes, or was it secret? Standards and guidance were personal, biased and blatantly incorrect. The P.Committee of Nov.7th was a travesty, there is a strong suspicion that due process was skewed to such an extent that the decision was made on insufficient knowledge, bad advice, a general ignorance of planning procedure, and, as displayed by the lack of member discussion, a predetermined result. It is crystal clear, to use your words, that you had no intention to represent your ward as elected Councillor on the planning application."

Clr N Clark stated that he was both dismayed and angered when he watched the webcast live. He stated that he knew the PA would be granted once Clr Alexander had entered into the discussion.

Clr D Kitching proposed a Vote of No Confidence in Clr M Newman, seconded by Clr S Oliver. Clr B Toll stated that he wished to hear comment from Dist. Clr Newman before voting. Clr Clark stated that the meeting could be suspended to listen to an individual's comments. This was proposed by Clr Clark and seconded Chairman D Gibbs. The council therefore suspended its meeting to ask for comments from Dist. Clr Newman. Dist. Clr Newman read from a prepared statement as follows.

"The twelve members of EH Development Control Committee decided to grant this permission by an overwhelming majority. Each member reaches his / her decision at the meeting but based a number of submissions of which the planning officer's report is only one. Individual visits made to the application site are likely to be important, the speakers for and against are clearly an influence, I gave my crystallisation of the decision to be made and this was followed by the open debate among the committee. Each member is sensible and conscientious in reaching his / her own view and - quite rightly - no one member has any undue influence. No other person knows what led individual members to vote in the way they did, but the committee system of decision is wholly open and transparent and yet properly monitored to ensure propriety. Presumably it was a confidence in this system that was behind the PC's request for the application to be taken by committee.

Looking to the future, there are clearly a number of consequent activities, including

- Defining the appropriate EH Planning conditions of the approval
- Addressing the matter of the Diocesan Glebe Committee lease
- PCC's architect working up the internal and external design details of the new chapel

... and I am sure that each of these agencies would welcome a positive contribution from the PC."

The council meeting was then resumed. The Vote of No Confidence was carried unanimously.

8. Finance

a. Spending for approval

Clerk's salary for Nov/Dec	£592.20
J Ashley (flowers for pump)	£20.00
D Gibbs expenses (ink, laminator, mileage)	£51.67
J Franklin Hedge cutting	£210.00
J Franklin grass cutting	164.50
Wages (Litter pickers)	£250.00
J Robinette (O/time.10 hours)	£134.60
CPRE sub	£29.00
Archer (engraving of bus shelter) to be completed in Dec	£163.44

(b). Precept The Councillors agreed that the precept figure should be £14545 for 2013/14, a similar figure to last year's. Funds would be allocated to village projects. The clerk will finalise the paperwork and send the initial paperwork to East Herts. The clerk agreed to investigate the conditions surrounding Section 137 in order to try to help the local post office. A final precept figure and formal paperwork would be completed at January's meeting.

9. Correspondence.

- a. None received.

10. Any other business

- a. **Street signs.** There are a number damaged in the village. The clerk will list and send to HCC.
- b. **Village Forum.** Cllr Clark informed the council that his would commence in the New Year.
- c. **The Pump Railings.** These had been damaged by a delivery lorry. The clerk informed the council that the loss adjuster was visiting on Tuesday. Also the blacksmith from M Hadham forge was to quote for the repair.
- d. **CDA.** J Tirelli will ensure the PC is on the CDA mailing list.
- e. **Leftover Spoil.** J Felstead asked if the left over spoil in Back Lane could be removed. J Ashley stated he would speak to N Maddex.
- f. **New Chapel.** Members of the public addressed the audience asking questions regarding this application.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

Minutes are always available on the village web site - www.hunsdon.org.uk .