

Little Gaddesden Parish Council

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ELECTORATE
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL
on MONDAY 20th MAY 2019 commencing at 8pm

PRESENT: Cllrs. Hyde, Kelly, Lawson, Magson, Pritchard, Saner, Townsend. Also in attendance, Alastair Greene (Clerk), and eight members of the public.

APOLOGIES: County and Borough Cllr. Douris

1. WELCOME - Cllr. Kelly welcomed the public to the meeting and acted as Chair for the meeting.
2. MINUTES - The minutes of the Annual Meeting dated 21st May 2018 were approved as drafted.
3. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL for the year 2018-2019

The Chairman of the meeting Paul Kelly read out the report:

As both last year's Chair & Vice Chair did not seek re-election to the Parish Council on May 2, Cllr Irving's annual report for 2018-2019 is, at his request, being read by myself.

Ladies & Gentlemen

Continuing the pace set by Cllr Archer during her 3 years as leader, the year 2018-19 was another active one in which all Councillors and the Parish Clerk worked hard to progress a number of projects aimed at making improvements to the village environment and preserving its special character.

I would like to draw particular attention to the following:

In June 2018 the project to restore and renovate the Marian Alford Memorial at the entrance to Ashridge Park was completed and a service of re-dedication conducted by the Rev. John Russell in the presence of Councillors, schoolchildren and residents. We felled the trees behind the memorial, planted new Italian cypress trees to replicate the screening when the memorial was first erected and cleaned the stonework professionally. The well attended re-dedication ceremony took place on a pleasant June afternoon with Roger Bolton recalling the original ceremony of dedication for those present.

Early in the Council year, the project to re-equip and modernise the Village Hall kitchen was also completed, this time by the Village Hall Management Committee, but with the Parish Council organising grant-funding for the new kitchen from Luton Airport's Community Engagement fund, from Dacorum Councils community fund and from our own financial resources.

Right across the year a great deal of hard work was put in by Parish Councillors, led by Rachel Heaphy and Kathryn Magson, to create an outdoor fitness suite on the village playing fields. The project was completed early in 2019 having been conceived with the support of village youth, driven forward by the Parish Council with generous financial support from the VPA, Gaddesden Society and Sports Club, as well as from the Parish Council and Dacorum Council. The final touches to the project involving the creation of a basketball square are in hand with the support of a substantial donation from The Lawton Trust. In parallel, Councillor Lyn Hyde has put in much work with residents at Cromer Close during the year to re-equip and modernise the play equipment there.

Lyn also worked hard with the community to seed and plant a line of young oak saplings in the field beside Church Road to replace the aging and dead oaks near The Church. The result of this work should be

Signed.....Dated.....

evident for many, many years as the trees mature.

Throughout the year the village has benefited from the implementation of the A4146 Water End HGV ban and re-designation of the A4146 to B440 status. A consultation we commissioned in 2017 culminated in successful amendments to the scheme for the benefit of the village that were fully executed during 2018. Domestic traffic continues to increase and to be heavy however. Councillors Archer & Hyde have worked with the Police during the 2018-19 year to equip and train volunteers to operate a community-based speed monitoring activity under the auspices of the Police's Drive Safe Scheme. This is about to kick into action! The Council has also been active in working with Hertfordshire County Council through the Safe Routes to School scheme to influence traffic speed along the lower reaches of Hudnall Lane near the village green and has also applied for grant funding from the Police Commissioner to make other traffic improvements along Hudnall Lane. We await advice on whether these applications will be funded.

In October the Speed Indicator Device (SID) was moved from its position at the junction of Church Road and The Green to its current location opposite Chaselton on Ringshall Road. This work is funded through the Locality Budget which Councillor Douris holds and we are grateful to him for this and other support he gives to our Council. It is generally agreed that the SID has moderated the speed of vehicles through some areas of the village. Finally, on the traffic front, the post box at the junction with Nettleden Road was moved with the cooperation of The Royal Mail to a safer position around the corner on the Village Green.

Much of the Parish Council's work concerns review and comment on the significant number of planning applications residents and developers make month by month - usually a dozen or so each month. Cllrs Hyde and Archer had led this important, technical and time consuming review work with support from Councillor Kelly and The Parish Clerk over the year. The Council has also focused on how best to comment on and influence the production of the Dacorum Local Plan and Core Strategy which affects our development status as a village.

Since August a group of Councillors led by Cllrs Irving & Hyde, with the support of several volunteer residents, have commenced a comprehensive Conservation Area Character Appraisal, or CACA, to identify and document what factors make up the special character of the Little Gaddesden and Ringshall conservation areas. The purpose of the exercise is to document and consolidate our views on what makes Little Gaddesden and Ringshall special and enable the Parish Council to objectively review proposals for development and resist any inappropriate - out of character - proposals for material further development. This work is in hand with the support of Dacorum Planning and will need to be taken forward by the newly elected Council.

During the year a new contract was let for the maintenance of open spaces after a competitive tendering process. Councillors were also active in monitoring the propensity for parts of lower Ringshall to flood. Some assistance was obtained from the National Trust regarding the flow of surface water from the Ling which has been a material factor, but concerns remain and the Council continues in discussion with Hertfordshire County Council.

From all of this brief overview, which only touches on the Council's efforts for the community, it will be apparent that Councillors have worked hard this year and given generously and freely of their time. As Chair, I wish to thank them on behalf of the community, and once more to acknowledge the 15 years of service given by Cllr Louise Archer who stood down on May 2. During the year we were pleased to welcome John Saner to the Council who replaced Matthew Hargreaves.

I also wish to record our appreciation of the work of the Parish Clerk, also our Responsible Financial Officer, for executing the Council's decisions efficiently and keeping things on track statutorily. On the financial front, our annual expenditure excluding administration and insurances is about £30,000 on open

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spaces and local infrastructure. The bulk of our expenditure is funded by a grant from Dacorum Borough Council and a precept levied on residents as part of Council Tax. Whilst we also receive other income, such as funds from grant awarding bodies, donations from local societies and individuals, and ad hoc fees from film companies, we have considered it right to increase the precept for 2019-20 to keep pace with inflation, sustain levels of investment in the community infrastructure and fund small improvement projects across the village, including pathways, tree works and play equipment that inevitably need maintenance and renewal. The effect of this is to require householders to pay a little more per annum towards investment in services. However, we will continue to access community and capital grant funding from different sources to support major increases in spending such as on the Village Hall. Currently our reserves stand at £15k to allow for unexpected eventualities.

In terms of administration and governance, the Council implemented new GDPR regulations in 2018 and will launch a new dedicated website in June 2019. In 2018-19 we were pleased to receive clean opinions on both our internal and external audits. Our annual ROSPA inspection of play facilities was satisfactory and guides our safety priorities.

Finally, tonight a new Parish Council and Chair take up office having been elected by the community on May 2nd. Congratulations are due to those elected. They will need to pick up the reins, quickly work out their priorities going forward and, to be fully effective, bond as a team. I wish them well in all 3 directions. I believe having a number of clear objectives over the last 12 months against which to monitor our progress helpfully focused our efforts and I commend the new Council to do the same!

Cllr Rob Irving

Having read the report Cllr. Kelly together with the rest of the Councillors thanked Rob Irving in his absence for his great service to the Parish Council.

4. REPORT FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LITTLE GADDESSEN CHARITIES

The Clerk read out the report for 2018

The aim of the Charity as defined in the Charity Commissioners' "Scheme" which regulates its activities is to:-

"Relieve either generally or individually, persons resident in the Parish of Little Gaddesden who are in need, hardship or distress, by making grants of money or providing or paying for items, services or facilities calculated to redress the need, hardship or distress of such persons"

The Trustees during 2018 were:-

The Team Vicar of Little Gaddesden Church - Reverend John Russell, (Chairman)

Mrs Jane Murray

Mrs Louise Archer as representative of the Parish Council

Mrs Pat Catchpole

Mr Michael Thompson nominated by Ashridge College

(Mrs Pat Catchpole acted as Secretary and Treasurer)

The Accounts were examined by Hillier Hopkins, Chartered Accountants of Watford. The expenditure for the year was £524

Signed.....Dated.....

The strictest confidentiality is observed in the handling of requests for assistance and details about cases are never made public in any form. Any of the Trustees, however will be glad to answer questions of a general nature on how the charity operates.

Pat Catchpole

As Louise Archer did not stand for the election as a Parish Councillor Little Gaddesden Charities have asked for a Councillor from the newly elected Council to be nominated as the representative.

5. REPORTS FROM OTHER CLUBS

None

6. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

No notice of any written resolutions had been given.

7. QUESTIONS/AOB/ELECTORS

None

There were no other comments or questions and so the business of the Annual Meeting of the Electorate concluded at 8.20 pm.

Signed.....Dated.....