

MINUTES of the ASPENDEN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held in COTTERED VILLAGE HALL on Tuesday 25th May 2021 at 6.00pm.

Present	CLlr Richard Blackburn (Chairman) CLlr Stuart Chambers CLlr Steve Kennedy County Councillor Jeff Jones PCSO Paul Dearman	CLlr Tracy Devonshire (Vice Chairman) CLlr Andrew Huggins CLlr Thomas Poulton
Officer attending	0 members of the public Denise Anderson (Clerk)	

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Neil Curtis ASPCC Secretary

2. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2019

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13th May 2019 having been circulated previously, were before the meeting and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Firstly I would like to introduce the current Parish Councillors:

1. Richard Blackburn
2. Stuart Chambers
3. Tracy Devonshire
4. Andrew Huggins
5. Steve Kennedy
6. Thomas Poulton

Due to Covid 19 lockdown restrictions imposed last year, the Annual Parish Meeting that was supposed to take place in May 2020, was unfortunately cancelled and my report below will cover the two-year period from 2019 – 2021.

Dandara Development (Keepers Chase)

Despite the many local objections, Dandara were granted consent in June 2019 for the development of 65 new dwellings just off Aspenden Road. Councillors from Aspenden Parish Council and Buntingford Town Council sought to secure improvements to the associated highway proposals and a number of measures were taken on board:

- i. Upgrading a section of the public footpath running through the nearby industrial estate, thus providing a safer pedestrian/cycle route into Buntingford;
- ii. Cutting back the over-hanging undergrowth along the existing pavement running along Aspenden Road and repairing/replacing the current post/rail fencing;
- iii. Clearing the built-up mud on the verges at the bend of Aspenden Road, thereby slightly widening the road;
- iv. Introducing a priority right of way along part of Aspenden Road, with one "holding point" located just before the White House and the other "holding point" located just over the River Rib Bridge;

Councillors, whilst recognising the benefits of the highway amendments, felt that they did not go far enough, however County Highways deemed them sufficient and together with the Head of Planning and Building Control recommended permission be granted. The works disappointingly will only be completed prior to the final occupation of the development, i.e., the last house on the development.

Under the terms of a S106 Agreement the following contributions will be made by the applicant:

1. Aspenden Village Contribution – £17,155 towards upgrading and maintaining Aspenden Village Green and/or its playground;
2. Youth Facilities Contribution - £2,683 towards the reconfiguration of the youth lounge at Buntingford Young Peoples Centre;
3. Community Buildings Contribution - £16,154 towards the provision of a community/village hall in Buntingford;
4. Community Transport Contribution - £26,780 towards the provision of community transport in Buntingford;
5. Upper Education Contribution - £93,811 towards the expansion of Freman College from 8 forms of entry to 9 forms of entry;
6. Library Facilities Contribution - £10,865 towards the cost of reconfiguration of the adult lending section of Buntingford Library;
7. Middle Education Contribution - £91,362 towards the expansion of Edwinstree Middle School from 4 forms of entry to 5 forms of entry;
8. Outdoor Sports Facilities Contribution - £60,527 towards the provision of outdoor sports facilities within the parish of Buntingford;
9. First Education Contribution - £111,186 towards the cost of expansion at Millfield First School;
10. Recycling Contribution - £4,680 towards the provision of recycling bins to each dwelling;
11. Street Lighting Contribution - £11,000 towards the improvement of street lighting in the vicinity of the development;
12. Sustainable Transport Contribution - £36,850 towards surface improvements to the rights of way corridor through Watermill Industrial Estate;

Works commenced in October 2019.

In October 2020 Dandara submitted a further planning application (Phase 2) for an additional 23 houses on the site adjacent to Phase 1. The Parish Council submitted a number of objections to the proposed development along with Buntingford Town Council and many local residents. The planning application to date remains undecided.

Village Green

Play Area - the Parish Council will shortly be submitting an application for access to the S106 funds held by East Herts Council which are available for the maintenance and upgrade of the play area and village green. Subject to the release of the funds we are aiming for the works to start during the summer.

A new Notice Board and two new rubbish bins were recently acquired and have kindly been installed by Chris Newman.

Grass Cutting - during Covid 19, a team of volunteers comprising Rob Devonshire, Steve Parlor, Steve Overton, Tony Burton and Steve Merriman kept the village green grass cut.

Tree Works – following a risk assessment required under the terms of the Parish Council's insurance policy, a number of trees surrounding the village green were identified as requiring attention and these works will be carried out during the course of 2021.

Village Clean Up

The last clean-up day was held in December 2019, prior to the introduction of the Covid 19 lockdown restrictions and over 700 spring bulbs were planted along with three new trees on the Village Green. I am pleased to report that Sunday 23rd May 2021 saw the village clean-up day resurrected with over 20 residents hard at work tidying up the green.

Defibrillator

May 2020 saw the installation of a defibrillator in the old phone kiosk opposite The Fox, funded by the Parish Council – a demonstration will be organised for later on in the year.

Village Survey

In June 2020 over 70 village surveys were delivered – only 10 were returned which was disappointing, but it did clash with the imposition of the Government lockdown, so residents naturally had more important issues to attend to.

Of the replies residents were keen to see:

- 20mph speed limit
- Cutting back of overhanging trees/hedges
- Resurfacing, regular repairs of potholes
- CCTV
- Lighting
- Upgrade & regular maintenance of play area equipment and benches
- Quarterly newsletter

Now that lockdown restrictions are being lifted, we will be re-issuing the survey and hope to achieve a more comprehensive response.

Website

In September 2020 a new Parish Council Website was set up www.aspendenpc.org.uk and our thanks goes to Denise Anderson, our Parish Clerk, for successfully handling this project.

Highways

The parish Council remain vigilant and regularly report issues to East Herts including the many pot holes along Aspenden Road, over hanging vegetation, road sweeping etc. although we are completely dependent on the response by the Council.

The Village sign at the entrance to Aspenden was knocked over in September 2020 and despite a replacement being sourced we are still awaiting Highways approval for its installation.

4. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JEFF JONES

Councillor Jones said he was pleased to be re-elected with a 61% of the vote share.

He reported the following:

- Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) had its first Green Councillor; East Herts District Councillor Ben Crystal.
- The first Full Council Meeting face to face had taken place and although zoom had allowed meetings to continue it was not the same as meeting physically. In order to comply with Covid-19 restrictions the County Council had to hire the Gordon Craig Theatre as they couldn't use the Council Chamber.
- There had been a communication from the HCC Director of Public Protection stating there would be focus on Lateral Flow Testing and the use of free Lateral Flow tests as well as the second vaccinations being brought forward as they were proving to be effective against the virus.

- **Village Sign**

Cllr Jones had received a quote from the HCC Senior Engineer, Highways, Environment & Infrastructure with regard to the village sign. The quote contained two elements, the first being the initial site visit and possible meeting with a member of the parish council to discuss the proposal. The second element being the supply and installation of the sign assembly following agreement with the Parish Council. The overall cost being approximately £1,570.00.

- **Aspenden 3: upgrade bridleway to restricted byway**

Cllr Jones had received an email from HCC Senior Projects Officer, Countryside and Rights of Way, Environment and Infrastructure stating that a claim of this kind is not a *fait accompli*. If the route is considered to be upgraded to a restricted byway there are measures that inhibit illegal use such as physical barriers. This allows for legitimate movement but hinders other vehicles. However, the way may not be upgraded, depending on any opposition. The Senior Projects Officer stated he would be happy to meet the land owner onsite should that occur and discuss possible vehicle inhibitors and other potential measures depending on site and layout.

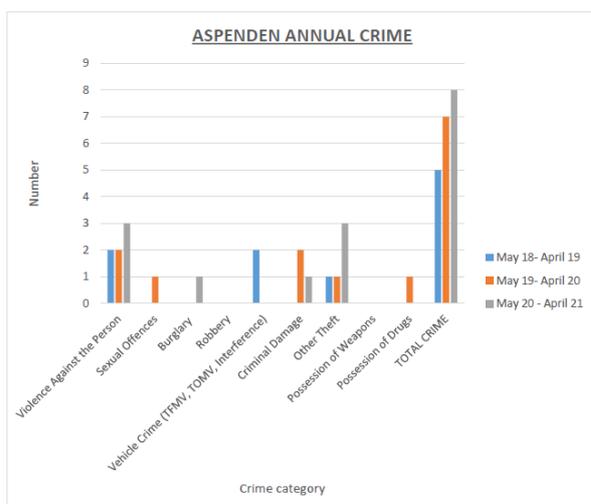
5. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR ANDREW HUGGINS

Councillor Huggins reported the following:

- East Herts District Council (EHDC) were delivering on their manifesto to build 10,000 new homes before 2023.

- New Leisure Centre in Bishops Stortford.
- Refurbishment of Ward Freman Pool and Gym
- The re-development of Charringtons House in Old River Lane Bishop's Stortford into an arts facility with residential space above has had its budget hit along with rules on government spending which will result in a smaller theatre and cinema.
- Hertford Theatre upgrade.
- EHDC has had its finances affected badly with a loss of revenue through car parks and other revenue streams as a result of the pandemic. Government money has helped but there is still a shortfall. One of the reasons for the brown bin charging and further savings will be needed.
- EHDC Planning under strain with officers' caseloads of normally 20-30 applications now up to 70 applications. An email has gone out to Parish and Town Councils advising of these current difficulties.

6. REPORT FROM HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE – PCSO PAUL DEARMAN



PCSO Paul Dearman reported that there appears to have been a slight increase in recorded crime year on year albeit the numbers are very low. These figures only represent events which have been formally recorded on Police systems as a crime, and so do not include other reports such as un-crimed Anti-Social behaviour or suspicious activity.

CCTV was discussed as a possible anti-social behaviour deterrent around the Cricket Pavilion. There were concerns this could get damaged and PCSO Dearman suggested it could be caged as it is on sites in Buntingford.

He said that quote 'a number of dog thefts' was being spoken about but none had been reported in the area although there had been an issue in Cottered last year. He added that there were also posts on Facebook about quote 'white vans kidnapping children' and this was actually not happening.

7. REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club - Neil Curtis (ASPCC Secretary)

The village cricket club currently plays Saturday league cricket in Cambridgeshire Cricket Association Junior Division 2 South, having moved from the Herts & Essex league after the 2019 season. A diminishing pool of players has meant Sunday friendly matches have been a rarity over recent seasons. The Aspenden village green is a picturesque, if compact, setting for cricket and The Fox a welcoming venue for post-match relaxation.

The 2020 season was drastically reduced by the covid-19 pandemic. Only 7 fixtures were completed, with the vagaries of summer weather claiming a further three games. Social distancing meant very limited use of the pavilion, no teas and frequent hand sanitisation breaks during play. Nevertheless, the club were very happy to be able to play some cricket from late July to mid-September.

This year, the season began with two friendly wins in good April weather. A first full season in the CCA league started at the beginning of May. Covid-19 playing conditions are still in place. At the time of

writing, the league cricket has been very competitive with a win, a loss and a rain cancellation. The club hopes to play around 20 matches over the 2021 season, weather permitting. We look forward to having use of the pavilion soon, although the traditional cricket tea is unlikely to return this year. The cricket club is happy to hear from new players.

Aspenden Village Fund – Steve Parlor (Treasurer Aspenden Village Fund)

The Aspenden Village Fund (AVF) charity was entered onto the Register of Charities on 14 October 2019. Registered Charity Number: 1185788.

The Purposes and Objects of the AVF are:

1. The advancement of community development - to promote rural regeneration and local volunteering;
2. The advancement of health and saving of lives;
3. The relief of those in need, by reasons of ill-health, disability or other disadvantage.

AVF attempts to raise funds to:

1. Organise and run the Aspenden village Fete.
2. Help with maintenance and improvement of a children's play area on the Village Green.
3. Donate to other selected Charities which have a connection to the Village and its residents, such as Parkinson's UK and the Royal Papworth Hospital Charity.

In order to carry out our Purposes, the AVF will organise local village events (ie Aspenden Autumn Ball) to raise funds in order to help with the organisation and running costs of the annual Village Fete. The inaugural Ball on 14 Sep 2019 was a huge success. We were able to donate £780 each to Parkinson's UK and the Royal Papworth Hospital Charities.

The AVF is run by a committee of 7 volunteers, five of which are long term residents of the Village. Of these, four are appointed Trustees, two of which are long term residents of the Village and two have a long-standing connection to the Village. A member of the Committee is also Chair of the Parish Council.

Unfortunately, the planning and organisation of a second Aspenden Village Ball in Sep 2020 had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. It is hoped to stage the next Ball in 2022 - Watch out for updates on the

Aspenden Village FB page or Village Notices. Anyone interested in either volunteering to help with the organisation of the Ball or who would like to be a named Sponsor of the event can contact: Steve Parlor Treasurer Aspenden Village Fund STEPHEN.PARLOR@sky.com Mobile: 07792 204571

The Fox Petanque Team – Steve Parlor

The Fox Petanque Team is a Petanque team representing The Fox Pub in Aspenden. We are one of 13 teams competing in one division within the Independent Petanque League. Details on the League; results, schedule of games, rules etc. can be found on the [Independent Petanque League](http://www.independentpetanqueleague.com) website. We normally play our matches on a Wednesday evening; either home or away, from 8-11pm, from Apr-Sep. Each Team within the League will play a Home and Away match against each of the opposing teams. In addition to league matches, the league also runs a Knock Out competition; including a Plate competition for the first-round losers. The Fox Petanque Team Captain is Steve Parlor who selects his weekly team of 6 from a squad of 16-20 persons. Selection is mainly made on availability rather than talent...whilst we want to naturally win, we don't take ourselves too seriously. The publican of The Fox, Mr Robert Devonshire, kindly provides the gravel piste at the pub. He also, makes available to the teams whilst playing refreshments and a post-match light meal. Since the arrival of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns from Mar 2020 the Petanque League has suspended its activity until further notice. It is unlikely that it will recommence until the Spring of 2022. Anyone interested in being part of The Fox Petanque team can contact me at STEPHEN.PARLOR@sky.com or 07792 204571.

Pavilion Committee – Gordon Devonshire (Chairman)

Due to the fact that both the Chairman and the Secretary/ Treasurer (Steve Merriman) are not able to facilitate online meetings, the Pavilion Management Committee have not met since the start of the Covid-19 restrictions. We will arrange an AGM when restrictions have been fully lifted.

We have been keeping an eye on the state of the building and have undertaken repairs as they have been required. There are no major issues with it at this time.

8. OPEN SESSION

There being no questions or further business the Annual Parish Meeting closed at 6.38pm and was followed by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

Signed _____

Date _____