

MINUTES of the ASPENDEN ANNUAL MEETING of the PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 23rd MAY 2023 at 7.00pm in WESTMILL VILLAGE HALL.

Present Cllr Richard Blackburn (Chairman) Cllr Tracy Devonshire
 Cllr Andrew Huggins Cllr Tom Poulton
 County Councillor Jeff Jones
 No members of the public

Officer attending Denise Anderson (Clerk)

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN 2023-2024

23.23 Cllr Blackburn was proposed by Cllr Devonshire and seconded by Cllr Poulton.
No other nominations proposed.

It was unanimously resolved to elect Cllr Blackburn as Chairman for 2023-2024.

Cllr Blackburn signed the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took the Chair for the meeting.

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN 2023-2024

23.24 Cllr Chambers was proposed by Cllr Poulton. Cllr Chambers was not in attendance and no other nominations were proposed therefore it was decided to carry this Agenda item over to the next meeting.

CO-OPTION FOR 2 VACANCIES ON PARISH COUNCIL

23.25 Andrew Huggins put himself forward for co-option to fill one of the vacancies on the Parish Council.

Unanimously resolved to co-opt Andrew Huggins on to Aspenden Parish Council.

Andrew Huggins signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the Parish Council.

APOLOGIES

23.26 Apologies were received from Cllr Stuart Chambers who was away.
Apologies were received from PCSO Paul Dearman but he sent a report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

23.27 None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

23.28 County Councillor Jeff Jones congratulated Cllr Blackburn on his appointment as Chairman. He reiterated that although he hadn't been re-elected as a District Councillor, he was still a County Councillor. He said that the election district had lost 3 seats to the Green Party, which was disappointing but he looked forward to being re-elected in 4 years' time. Cllr Blackburn thanked him for his support as a District Councillor.

- The new Buntingford First School had its 'Topping Out Ceremony' and works were on schedule. The first intake will be a two-form entry in September, with capacity for 350 children and a nursery
- The Active Travel Fund (ATF) Phase 1 scheme is on schedule for completion in July 2023. Funding has been secured for Phase 2 from Market Hill to Vicarage Road and a proposed one-way system through the High Street. There will be a full consultation on this proposal. There are also plans for a 20mph speed limit to be implemented from Hare Street Road to the Bowling Green Lane roundabout
- The A507 Weight Limit restrictions were on schedule for this summer
- An extra £5m budget had been allocated to pot hole repair

Cllr Blackburn raised the issue of the road between Aspenden and Westmill stating he had reported this three times to Highways and on each occasion getting a response saying it wasn't unsafe.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

23.29 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 23rd February 2023 having been circulated previously, were before the meeting and signed as a correct record.

STAFFING COMMITTEE

23.30 Cllr Chambers, Cllr Devonshire and Cllr Poulton were appointed to serve on the Staffing Committee for the forthcoming Council year.

PARISH COUNCIL DOCUMENTATION

23.31 The Clerk confirmed that she hadn't received any guidance from HAPTC with regard to any amendments to Council documents and Councillors hadn't requested any changes.

Cllr Huggins proposed that these were readopted on block this was seconded by Cllr Blackburn.

Resolved to approve and readopt all Council documents; Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessment, Register of Assets, Complaints Procedure, Publication Scheme, Privacy Policy, Staffing Committee Terms of Reference.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

23.32 Aspenden Parish Council Chairman's Report (May 2023)

The current serving Parish Councillors are:

1. Richard Blackburn
2. Stuart Chambers
3. Tracy Devonshire
4. Thomas Poulton

Cllr Steve Kennedy resigned in October 2022 and we would like to thank him for his contribution whilst a Parish Councillor. Cllr Andrew Huggins did not stand for re-election and similarly we offer our thanks for his contribution over the past 4 years.

Five Parish Council meetings have taken place since my last report in May 2022:

- 24th May 2022
- 26th July 2022
- 27th September 2022
- 22nd November 2022
- 28th February 2023

Full details of all meetings can be found on the Parish Council website www.aspendenpc.org.uk

My thanks to Rob and Emerald Devonshire for kindly hosting the Parish Council meetings at The Fox for the past few years and we wish them well in their new venture. We hope to continue with this arrangement when The Fox is under new management, and will keep you posted.

My thanks also to Denise Anderson, our Parish Clerk, who spends some considerable time in ensuring the Parish Council runs smoothly and efficiently.

Below is a general update on the various activities of the Parish Council and the issues it has been involved with over the course of the past year:

Village Green Benches

Two new benches commemorating Cyril Berry and the late Maxie Franklin have been placed on the Village Green. Our thanks to Chris Newman who kindly undertook their installation in his free time and at no cost to the Parish Council.

Village Signs & Planters

Two new Village Gateway signs have been installed on Aspenden Road and our thanks to Councillor Jeff Jones for arranging this on our behalf. Our thanks goes, once again, to Chris Newman for building and fixing four large planters which are now full of bulbs, thanks to Stuart & Jenny, and Tom for providing top quality soil.

Village Bulb Planting & Autumn Clean Up

Over a thousand bulbs were planted throughout the village on Sunday 30th October together with a general tidy up of the village. Help on the day came from Jennie, Stuart & Janet, Ellie & Barnaby, Mike, his children and Sarah & Hugo.

Village Green Litter Picking

Unfortunately, East Herts Council have ceased to provide funding for our litter picker, Jeff Poulton. The Parish Council has however decided to provide funding so the service can continue and there should be no change to the current arrangements.

Queen's Jubilee

Sara Poulton and Elizabeth Huggins organised a family picnic on the Village Green to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee and the Parish Council funded the hire of the Bouncy Castle. The party also celebrated Jimmy Shambrook's 90th Birthday.

Cllr Stuart Chambers also kindly organised the planting of a Lilac tree & commemorative plaque.

Queen Elizabeth II

Aspenden Parish Council was deeply saddened by the death of HRH Queen Elizabeth II and a one-minute silence was observed at the start of the Parish Council meeting on 27th September 2022 in her memory.

Cllr Tracy Devonshire kindly represented the Parish Council at the Civic Service of Remembrance and Celebration of the life of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at St Peters Church, Buntingford on Sunday 18th September 2022.

Kings Charles III's Coronation

St Mary's Church and the Parish Council hosted an afternoon tea party with children's games on Monday 8th May 2023 to commemorate and celebrate King Charles III's Coronation. It was well attended by local residents and donations to the Church raised c £120.

Glyn Jones

It is with much sadness to report the passing of Glyn Jones, a much loved and long-term village resident. A service celebrating Glyn's life was held on Tuesday 7th March at St Mary's Church.

Planning

East Herts refused consent for the proposed development of 350 houses, a new A10 junction and 4,400 sqm of commercial space on land east of the A10 (3/22/1151/FUL) stating the proposals would:

- encroach into the rural area beyond the settlement boundary to the detriment of the character, appearance of the area;
- represent an unsustainable form of development;
- have an adverse impact upon the adjoining occupiers;
- give rise to severe impact upon the highway network

Dandara Phase 2

Construction of Phase 2 has progressed, however to date, no agreement has been reached between the Developers and East Herts Council in respect of satisfying the planning conditions relating to the proposed highway works which will need to be completed before first occupation. We understand the Developers are seeking to close Aspenden Road whilst the works are carried and we have lodged our objection to this proposal.

Highways

The poor condition of Aspenden Road is well documented and we are continually reporting pot holes, and broken surfaces etc. to East Herts Council who seem only to undertake patch repairs which do not last. The significant amount of increased traffic using Aspenden Road and Westmill Road due to the on-going London Road works, has only made the situation worse. We have raised this with Cllr Jeff Jones who has assured us that once the London Road works are completed, a more permanent solution will hopefully be found.

In addition, with the narrowing of the access from two lanes to one, at the junction of Aspenden Road and London Road, we have raised the dangerous issue of parking between Luynes Drive and Nut Slip – again, we are advised that this will be reviewed once the London Road works are complete.

A507 Update

Following further consultation, Hertfordshire County Council have agreed to extend the area covered by the proposed weight limit restriction along the A507, effectively banning over 7.5T HGVs, from the Buntingford A10 Roundabout to the Clothall Road, South Road and Wallington Road Roundabout at Baldock. HGV traffic will be rerouted to the A602 and A505. Appropriate signage will be placed at key locations. There will be an "except for access" arrangement in place allowing deliveries and operational needs of business and farms. A consultation period closed on 12th March 2023. Subject to feedback, the scheme is likely to commence Summer 2023.

FINANCE

23.33 Finance report and payments authorised

To receive the finance report. The report is an appendix to the minutes.

The Clerk and Cllr Blackburn will work together on the Budget Tracker sheets and circulate after the meeting.

23.34 Annual Governance and Accountability return (AGAR) 2022-2023

The completed AGAR 2022-2023, having been circulated previously, was before the meeting and the following documents required approval at this full Council meeting.

23.35 Certificate of Exemption

It was resolved to formally certify that Aspenden Parish Council meets the qualifying criteria for exemption.

The Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer signed and dated the Certificate of Exemption.

23.36 Internal Auditors Report

Cllr Huggins absented himself from this Agenda item as his partner was named on the additional report.

Councillors noted the comments made on the additional report supplied by the Internal Auditor

It was resolved to approve the Internal Auditors Report

23.37 Annual Governance Statement

It was resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement

The Chairman signed the Annual Governance Statement

23.38 Accounting Statements

It was resolved to approve the Accounting Statements

The Chairman signed the Accounting Statements

23.39 Dates for the period of Public Rights

It was resolved that the period of Public Rights would be Monday 5th June to Friday 14th July 2023

23.40 Parish Council Insurance

Resolved to approve a renewal quote of £1,665.37 for the forthcoming year.

23.41 Parish Council Bank Account

Resolved to approve the Parish Council banking from Barclays Bank to Lloyds Bank with a view to moving to online banking.

PLANNING**23.42 Planning Report**

To receive the updated Planning Report. The report is an appendix to these minutes.

23.43 Planning Applications since the Parish Council meeting on 23rd February 2023

3/23/0796/FUL	Little Meadow Baldock Road Buntingford Hertfordshire SG9 9RH	The Parish Council made no comment on this Planning Application
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23.44 Planning Applications

None

HIGHWAYS

23.45 Any matters were dealt with in Cllr Jones's Report.

PARISH MATTERS**23.46 Police Report**

PCSO Dearman had provided an Aspenden Year on Year report which showed recorded crime in the past 12 months being lower than for the same period in the previous 2 years

23.47 Village Green and Pavilion Committee

Cllr Blackburn presented a report and proposed that the Parish Council temporarily take over the

responsibility and management of the Pavilion Committee and create an Interim Management Team in addition to a separate Project Working Group to explore the replacement of the Pavilion with a multi-purpose Village Hall. This was seconded by Cllr Huggins.

Resolved that Parish Council temporarily take over the responsibility and management of the Pavilion Committee with an Interim Management Team.

23.48 General Village Matters

I. Spring Clean 2023

Cllr Chambers and Cllr Poulton had agreed to oversee the maintenance of the Village Green verges.

CLERKS REPORT AND CORRESPONDANCE

23.49 Clerks Report

The Clerk distributed the Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Declaration of Election Expenses forms for Councillors to complete.

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Date	Meeting	Venue
Tuesday 25 th July 2023	Parish Council Meeting 7.00pm	To be confirmed
Tuesday 26 th September 2023	Parish Council Meeting 7.00pm	To be confirmed
Tuesday 21 st November 2023	Parish Council Meeting 7.00pm	To be confirmed
Tuesday 27 th February 2024	Parish Council Meeting 7.00pm	To be confirmed

Agendas will be put on the Parish Council website www.aspendenpc.org.uk and the village noticeboard.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed _____

Date _____