

# **WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Parish Meeting 19 April 2016**

**Present:** Cllrs A Gribble (Chair), P Corke (Vice Chair) S Hall, J Hawkins & A White.

**In attendance:** J Pearce (Clerk); Herts County Councillor R Smith; Borough Cllrs J Cragg & R Trigg; members of the public.

**1. Chairman's Introduction:** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced County Councillor Richard Smith & Borough Councillors Julie Cragg & Roger Trigg. He informed the meeting that Parish Cllr Dale Wilson had resigned due to work commitments and that there was a vacancy on the Council. He referred the meeting to the Parish Council's Annual Report 2015/16 on the tables and highlighted the improvements to the hall of a new vinyl floor, half the cost contributed by the regular dance club and new curtains. Cllr Gribble thanked County Councillor Richard Smith for paying for the new track from his Locality Budget. The Chairman also thanked the Clerk who is the engine behind the Parish Council and works tirelessly.

**2. Apologies for absence:** Borough Cllr Steve Markiewicz.

**3. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2015:** The minutes of the 2015 Annual Parish Meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**4. Landlady of the Red Lion, Wendy Jones & Punch Taverns Area Manager, Mike Taylor:** Wendy said she was looking forward to village life in Woolmer Green and to meeting villagers. She will oversee the refurbishment of the pub and is excited at the prospect of running the business.

Mike Taylor introduced himself and complimented the large turnout at the meeting. He said that since Libby & Steve's retirement unfortunately the pub had to be closed. Sadly former landlord Steve has since passed away. It was clear that for the pub to be successful it needed a refurbishment and work will begin soon. The budget is over £250,000 and will include opening up the two bars into one. It is also essential to recruit the right candidate to run the pub and Wendy came "top of the list".

Mr Taylor was asked why it is taking so long to reopen the pub. Mr Taylor said a lot of research was undertaken before the refurbishment budget could be approved as well as ensuring that the right person was selected to run the business. Mr Taylor was asked if they will have music by a resident that lived near the pub. Mr Taylor said there were plans to have occasional music nights and if noise became an issue to please let them know. Mr Taylor was asked if the sports bar area would disturb diners following the bars being combined. Mr Taylor said that would be down to the operational running of the pub but the areas were separate from each other.

**5. County Councillor Richard Smith:** Cllr Smith said the roll of the County Council had changed considerably since he joined in 1966. Following the introduction of the Local Government Act 1972, Welwyn Hatfield Council was established and the County Council was reformed. A major change was when the responsibility for public health was transferred to the County Council from the NHS in 2013. Planning has been passed to district authorities following the abolition of Structure Plans although the County Council are consultees.

The County Council has always been responsible for education and, although some aspects have been removed, the key responsibilities still remain with the County Council. These include the provision of school places, building new schools, home to school transport, early years and special needs. The County also runs the admissions service and acts as the clearing house to pass Government money to schools.

Since 2009 County Council Members administer a £10,000 Locality Budget to give to community projects and a £90,000 Highways Locality Budget to spend on highway improvements that Highways do not consider a priority.

Cllr Smith hoped everyone found his talk interesting and answered questions.

**6. Chair of Governors, Sue Gray:** Ms Gray has been in secondary education for 39 years and has been a governor at Woolmer Green School for 4 years. School Governors face ever increasing responsibilities and work closely with the school's management. At Woolmer Green School there is a strong, enthusiastic team of governors that work to protect the Christian ethos and aspire to attaining the status of outstanding.

**7. "Wheels on Woolmer Green":** Residents Grant Pinney and Rob McGuinness approached the Parish Council to ask if they could put on a car show in the hall grounds. The Council agreed to the proposal. Grant already had experience of running car shows and lots of interesting vehicles will be arriving on Bank Holiday Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May. There will also be stalls, a bar, food & refreshments, a band and prizes will be awarded for the best vehicles. All donations will go to a good cause in the village.

**8. Questions from the public:** A resident gave a presentation on the problem of the non-native invasive weed, *Crassula helmsii*, that has taken hold in the village pond. They were concerned that if the Parish Council continues to follow the advice of the County Council's Countryside Management Service to leave it undisturbed, it will eventually cover the pond completely. They had also obtained a quote for one treatment of the weed with herbicide.

The Parish Council said that evidence gathered from case studies showed that attempts at control had not been successful.

A resident asked if a warning sign could be erected by the pond and the Chairman agreed to include this on the next agenda.

A resident asked the meeting to vote on a proposal and the Parish Council amended the wording to include Defra:

"This meeting resolves that the Parish Council shall request the Welwyn Natural History Society and Defra to advise on the maintenance and conservation of Woolmer Green pond, including assessing the merits of quotations obtained from Maydencroft or others with a view to taking the action necessary for the conservation of the pond before the end of September 2016."

Members of the public at the meeting voted in favour of the proposal and it will be included on the agenda of the next full Council Meeting.

## **9. Close of Meeting by the Chairman.**

JRP 5.5.16