

## **PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL**

The **Annual Parish Meeting** of  
Pirton Parish Council was held on  
**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010** at Pirton Village Hall.

### **Present:**

Mrs D Bailey  
Mr M Goddard  
Mrs R Hamilton McLeod  
Mrs M Johnson  
Mr S Kitchiner  
Mr R Marshall  
Mr D Saunders (Chairman)  
Mrs P Waters (vice-Chairman)  
Mrs J Smart (Clerk)

### **Also Present:**

PC Matt Jenkins and PCSO Heather Burrows

One resident:  
Mr A Smart

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Mr J Vaughan

### **MINUTES OF THE 2009 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

These were agreed to be a true record and were duly signed.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Chairman Mr Saunders had prepared and circulated a report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

### **FINANCIAL REPORT**

Mrs J Smart, Responsible Financial Officer to the Parish Council, had prepared and circulated a report relating to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2010, which is attached to these minutes, together with a copy of the Income and Expenditure account.

### **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

Mr Brook reminded Councillors that his Locality Budget Grant was still in operation. Council Tax for the coming year was unchanged, although the County Council was conducting a wide ranging review of all of its work, principally to ensure that it achieves value for money. Mr Brook thanked Parish Councillors for their hard work and for continuing to serve the community.

### **POLICE REPORT**

PC Jenkins reported that Hertfordshire police had been 'pathfinders' for a particular type of community policing, which had now been chosen as the way forward and was part of a 'Policing Pledge', which included the holding of regular surgeries and identification of three main priorities for each area. The Police were also working with landowners to target burglars particularly those responsible for the theft of metal. No

Cold Calling zones had been established in some villages, but this was only possible where a certain level of crime existed. PC Jenkins reported that the numbers of recorded crimes in Hitchin and the surrounding villages had been lower for the year to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010 than for the previous year, and had been significantly lower in Pirton. 100 pagers had been bought and were proving useful. PC Jenkins was asked about action that could be taken against vehicles being parked on pavements, and suggested that residents take registration numbers and pass them on to the police, who could deal with inconsiderate parking or the causing of an obstruction retrospectively. Pedestrians, especially those pushing a wheelchair or pushchair, should not be forced to walk out in the road because a vehicle was parked on the pavement. PC Jenkins was also asked what could be done about motorcyclists racing around the fields between Hitchin and Pirton, and reported that he had dealt with some offenders the previous weekend, and would take action against others if they were reported to him.

Mr Saunders thanked PC Jenkins and PCSO Burrows for attending the meeting

### **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

Mrs Strong stated that the previous year had been very challenging for the District Council, in particular resisting the development of Hertfordshire Green belt by Luton developers and closing the budget, although savings had been made through new contractors being used. Plans for the redevelopment of Churchgate in Hitchin would soon be on display for public consultation. Waste and recycling continued to be priorities for the District Council, who were especially looking at commercial waste. The Biffa site close to Pirton had now been closed, so rubbish was being taken elsewhere for disposal at the present time, although NHDC were investigating the production of energy from waste. The results of the Local Development Framework consultation as far as Site 64 in Pirton was concerned should be known by the end of the year. Mrs Strong was pleased that the new Clubhouse Committee had been helped by the awarding of a grant by the District Council.

There were no other reports and the meeting closed at 8.25pm

# Pirton Parish Council – Chairman’s Report, May 2010

## *A year of consolidation*

This report covers the period May 2008 – May 2009, it is the third year of the current 4 year term of this Parish Council.

It is hoped that the following discourse encapsulates and fairly reflects our activities over the past 12 months.

The Council spend a great deal of time discussing and dealing with the minutia of regular administration matters, whilst more important issues are dependent on action and responses from various other bodies who operate at an even more leisurely pace than our monthly meetings dictate.

### GENERAL MATTERS

We have continued with the general ongoing business of the Council; planning matters, highways, consultations, correspondence etc.

*Planning;* Apart from the usual clutch of minor developments and extensions there have only been two applications of note.

Firstly in August, within the North Herts. Land Allocations Document was an application to include the large field adjacent to Priors Hill as an approved site for development. This caused some alarm within the village, consequently the Parish Council facilitated a public meeting to discuss the issue. District Council officials were available to explain the situation and answer questions; they did allay many fears; however the general feeling of the meeting was to oppose any such development. Individuals were advised to write and object, they were also given advice as to the form this should take and the nuances of the consultation procedure. The Parish Council have also added their official objection via the same process. The outcome of the consultation should be published within the next few weeks, we expect a “positive” negative outcome.

Secondly in March, there was an application to establish a ménage and equestrian centre at the distant end of Burge End Lane. There was some local concern that this was to be a commercial venture which would result in much extra and unwelcome activity in the area. However the Parish Council have been assured that this is a private venture and there will be little change to the local environment.

The ongoing issues of the Tithe Barn and Craft House are exactly that (ongoing), despite efforts we are unable to influence events and can only await developments.

On the positive side, the matter of the recreation area and green at Coleman’s Close (section 106) has finally been concluded, the handover to Parish Council care was completed in October.



*Highways:* Are a County Council responsibility rather than a district or parish issue, we spend a great deal of time progressing minor issues such as signage, drainage and general maintenance with the authorities, but with no immediate and little ultimate success.

Burge End has been a particular area of concern to local residents, however this is a narrow but legitimate highway and there is little that can be achieved.

Last year at this time we were concerned about the condition of the access to the playing field (a private road). Again the Council are not directly responsible but it seems that some repairs are imminent and there may be improvements in the near future.

We are concerned that the village pond has overflowed extensively into the High Street during this wet winter. There is no clear responsibility for this, it is a highways issue but the problem may lie within the village drainage system which could make it a water board or landowner problem. It is hoped that this can be resolved over the summer months, but in any event it is planned that the pond will be comprehensively cleaned and "sorted" in the autumn, funds permitting.

We are pursuing clarification of registration for various plots of land around the village with a view to allocating ultimate responsibility and ownership to them.

The quest for more appropriate insurance arrangements has continued; the next suitable opportunity window is imminent and we hope to be in a position to make alternative provisions in the near future.

Last year we were pleased with the introduction of our newsletter which should have been a quarterly publication. This has unfortunately lapsed (due almost totally to the chairman's technical shortcomings and lack of editorial inspiration). We are, however, resurrecting this project in slightly changed format, the first revamped issue should be ready in June and we will make every effort to ensure regular publication.

The Council website continues; it is regularly updated and contains enhanced information, it is our intention to increase the data base and make the site more pro-active. Our monitoring procedure demonstrates an increased use (particularly by ex residents).

It was decided not to enter the village of the year competition in 2010 as it was felt the whole process was becoming a little tired also in order to give the presentation team and the judges a well deserved break. We intend to renew our participation next year in the expectation that there will be some tangible and completed projects with which to impress the judging panel.

We have two new notice boards (courtesy of a grant from County Councillor Nigel Brook). These will replace those opposite the Fox and should be erected shortly.

There has been a major restructuring of the Bury Trust administration, this should make for more effective and efficient management; and replaces the cumbersome two tier Parish Council dominated original constitution.

Two further litter picking days have been successfully completed during November and May, this included planting extra bulbs around the village on the autumn occasion.

At the budget meeting in November we were pleased to limit our precept to £26,180 (a 3% increase). This, in spite of rising costs, should not curtail our effectiveness or spending.



## SPECIFIC PROJECTS

*The Parish Plan:* Is stuttering along; the steering group has dwindled and unless new members are recruited there is a distinct possibility that the plan (as intended) may be abandoned. On the positive side the group have produced a "village directory" which should be of great use and interest to parishioners, this should be delivered to households with the resurrected newsletter in early June.

*The replacement recreation ground pavilion:* Also proceeds at a very slow pace. A design has been agreed and planning consent granted. There should be an open evening at the existing premises to demonstrate this progress and gain support. We now begin the long road to obtaining funding; to date we have £23,000 (of some £650,000) The availability of funding in the current economic climate does not auger well for this project in the short term, but ultimately we are confident of success.

*Engagement with youth:* Plans are still current to promote the formation of a youth club. It has been ascertained that the P.S.S.C. can be used as a temporary venue and the Chapel Hall has been suggested as an eventual permanent site; but the provision of a leader and the infrastructure needs to be put in place, much work remains to be done and there is no immediate prospect of actually starting.

We are again encouraging youngsters to attend basket ball coaching on the MUGA this summer and discussions about other youthful diversions are ongoing.

*Allotments:* We have a list of some 12 or 14 parishioners who would welcome the provision of an allotment. It has been ascertained that our existing site will sustain 4 or 5 plots rather than the existing 2; this will be implemented (finances permitting) after a certain amount of clearance and shuffling has been achieved. This will help but no suitable new site has yet been identified. There may be some positive progress when we have a much delayed meeting with N.H.D.C. officials.

*Affordable housing:* Another very slow burner; we need to identify suitable land, establish a need and then implement bespoke ground rules. We *may* have some land and the recently conducted Housing Needs Survey *may* establish the need; given two positive answers there will then begin an endless round of discussions with local authorities, landowners housing associations and other interested parties. We may achieve a satisfactory outcome but if so it will no be for some considerable time.

## CONCLUSION

Here ends the report of this year's Parish Council activities; it may appear negative in some instances but it is a realistic assessment of our current position. However, we have much to look forward to; we are excited that when (not if) our plans are realised they will greatly enhance an already well served community.

Sincere apologies for any omissions or thanks not extended. We are greatly indebted to many friends and parishioners who are helpful and supportive beyond the normal terms of public spirit.

We are especially grateful to County Councillor Nigel Brook and District Councillor Clair Strong who are both of great assistance to us between them they attend and advise at most of our meetings.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors and the Clerk for their efforts, there really is much unseen work that goes on behind the scenes. We here in Pirton have a good and dedicated team, all of us are readily approachable and will do the best we can for the benefit of "one of the best village in Hertfordshire".



## **PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Financial Statement – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010**

An income and Expenditure Account for the 2009/2010 financial year is attached. Amounts in some of the headings are broken down in detail on the reverse and represent the day-to-day running costs of the Council, including village maintenance and ongoing responsibilities.

Towards the end of each year the Council holds a Budget Meeting to review the following year's finances. The Council keeps a close check on expenditure at its monthly meetings and controls the budget carefully. In November of 2008, after much discussion, the Parish Council agreed an increase of 4% in its precept for the year 2009 to 2010. This increase was agreed to enable the Council to meet its various regular commitments as well as engaging with youth, issuing regular newsletters, supporting the new Clubhouse project and the Parish Plan. The Parish Council also agreed grants to all the village organisations that had requested financial assistance.

The Parish Council reduced the contingency account by £3,000 to add to money set aside during previous years towards the expenses of the proposed new clubhouse, but it was agreed that the so far unused £1,000 grant to the PSSC would be transferred to the contingency account. The Parish Council would endeavour to transfer a further £2,000 to the Contingency Account when funds allowed.

Grants received this year included £1,300 from Nigel Brook's Locality Grant towards the new notice boards, £2,000 from NHDC towards the proposed Youth Club, £100 from the Ward Member's grant towards work on the War Memorial and a £958 grant for Parish Paths.