

LITTLE MUNDEN PARISH COUNCIL – Annual Parish Meeting 04 April 2019

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman

In the absence of other nominations, at the May PC meeting I agreed to stay on for another year. I will not be standing for re-election to the Parish Council at the local election to be held on 2nd May, so this is my last hurrah both as Chairman and as Parish Councillor.

Local Elections 2nd May

Talking of the local elections, I am pleased to report that two or three people showed interest in standing for the Parish Council and that, with those present councillors who are willing to stand for re-election, there should be a full Council. However, an email received by the Clerk earlier today gave notice of an uncontested election, meaning that no more than seven – the maximum - valid nominations were submitted to EHC.

East Herts District Plan

East Herts Council adopted the District Plan, which sets out the planning framework for the District for the period to 2033, at an Extraordinary Council on the 23 October 2018.

The District Plan now holds full weight in the determination of planning applications.

Neighbourhood Planning

The result of the YES/NO ballot held on 8th and 9th of July last year on whether to develop a Neighbourhood Plan was a landslide NO vote – 105 NO, just 6 YES. This means that the PC has no mandate to initiate or to finance the process.

If residents subsequently decide that they want a Neighbourhood Plan, they will need to set up a Neighbourhood Forum, involving a minimum of 21 people from the community.

Possible Development of Home Farm Farmyard

At the request of a resident at the Parish Council meeting last month, I have given an update in the April newsletter. So I won't elaborate any further now.

The Parish Council is not anti development in principle. We recognise that villages can, and probably should, evolve over the years and that it is important for our local facilities – school, church, shop, village hall, pub – to thrive; if the right development in the right place is proposed, then we would give it positive consideration. But 39 houses and an unspecified amount of commercial space on a 3½ acre site fronting Munden Road and Whempstead Lane is not it.

Unauthorised development at Wheelwrights Farm

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State held a (deferred) Public Inquiry on 11th January. We understand that the decision is expected any time now.

Horses' Meadow

Play Equipment

The PC's original intention was to look into the possibility of providing additional play equipment suitable for the younger children who are not catered for at present. A 'complete' redevelopment of Horses Meadow, as proposed by the playground equipment supplier contacted, into a comprehensive play area occupying half the football pitch was not what we were thinking of

Accordingly, we have drawn up alternative plans incorporating perhaps a third of the equipment in the first proposal and are in the process of getting accurate costings so that both proposals can be considered side by side.

Litter

Recently there has been a considerable amount of litter, including nitrous oxide canisters and balloons, fast food wrappers, bottles and cans, left on Horses Meadow and in the car park. There have also been complaints about noise at night. We have been shutting the outer gate at night to try and discourage youngsters' cars from going into the car park, with no success. It is therefore proposed to transfer the padlock from the inner gate to the outer gate and to lock this gate between 5.00pm and 7.00 am Monday to Thursday and for the whole weekend from 5.00pm Friday to 7.00 am Monday.

Dog poo

Dog poo is still an issue around the parish, particularly on Horses' Meadow. To encourage dog owners to be more responsible, we put up a sign asking that dogs be kept on a lead, that dog mess be cleaned up and we installed a dog poo bin at the bottom of Horses' Meadow next to the general litter bin. Sadly the sign, together with that asking for the inner gate to be left clear of vehicles, has been torn down; and wilful damage has been done to the fencing. 'Clear up your dogs' mess' signs have been posted round the village, but to little avail.

Traffic Calming / Village Signage

We are in discussion with Hertfordshire Highways about moving the 30mph restriction sign at the southern entrance to Dane End to the far side of the bridge and with other interested parties about erecting attractive village gateway signage at both ends of Dane End better to present our village to visitors and those passing through.

I would like to see this done in conjunction with steps to keep the village tidy, particularly along Munden Road, the Dane End Tributary and Whempstead Lane where it borders Horses' Meadow.

Grass Verge outside Nos. 2 & 4 Easington Road

We accept that the grass verge outside no. 2 Easington Road is a mess. HCC quoted £3,000 to install bollards outside nos. 2 & 4 Easington Road. Although we consider the problem to be HCC's, and despite the fact that we think the quote unreasonable and made suggestions as to how it may be reduced, the PC did offer to contribute to the cost.

The resident at no. 4 Easington has put in 3 bollards (cost around £60), which seem to be doing the trick for him. Once the shop extension has been completed, we will recontact HCC and, if they still do not accept responsibility to pay for the bollards, than the PC may reseed outside no.2 and put in bollards (perhaps 4) the same as those outside no. 4.

Transparency Code 2016

Councillors noted that, to comply with the Transparency Code, there is an obligation on smaller authorities to publish (on the website) all items of expenditure over £100, end of year accounts, annual governance statement, internal audit report; list of Councillors' responsibilities and minutes, agendas and meeting papers of formal meetings.

Steps have been taken to ensure the PC complies with the code and Councillors are aware, through the Risk Assessment Schedule (updated annually), of their ongoing responsibilities under the code.

Church and Parish newsletter

Discussions between the PC, the Church and the editor with a view to considering revisions to the format, including the possibility of paid-for ads to help fund its publication, have been on hold pending the arrival of the new vicar. Now John Chitham is in post, the PC will be talking again with its partners.

Common Land – The Old Chalk Pit

It seems clear that this area of common land is indeed under the control of the Carters, but they are happy to cooperate with us to turn it into something 'natural' of benefit to the community, perhaps an orchard, native trees, nature reserve, et cetera.

The Council will continue to explore possibilities with the Carters and communicate with parishioners when we have agreed suitable options.

Rest & Welcome, Haultwick

A planning application was submitted in November last year for the part demolition of the pub, erection of single storey extension with canopy, alterations to roof and to windows, and parking provision. The proposals are designed to provide a fully refurbished village pub with a new bar and restaurant area. East Herts Council advised yesterday that both planning permission and listed building consent has been refused.

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