**HOLWELL PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

**HELD ON TUESDAY 31ST JANUARY 2023**

**IN THE BOWLS CLUB AT 7.00 P.M.**

**Present: Members of the Public:**

**Ms Yvonne Hart (Chairperson) Claire Strong**

**Mr Colin Everett Chris Williams (Conservative)**

**Mrs Wendy Harris Louise Peace (Lib. Dem)**

**Ms Sue Young Nick Jones**

**Mrs Ann Warner (Clerk) Rosemary Gainsford**

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Parish Councillor Martin Thurlow. PCSO Heather Burrows and Hertfordshire County councillor David Barnard. These were accepted and approved by the Parish Council.

1. **Minutes:**

The Minutes of the previous meeting which had been circulated to all Parish councillors were agreed to be a true record and were duly signed by the Chair Ms Yvonne Hart.

1. **Matters to report:**
   1. **Police Update:** No report was received
   2. **County and District Councillors Reports**: No County or District Councillors were present.

However, NHDC Councillor Claire Strong gave a short report to update the Parish Council on the following:

Preparing for budget

Approved the Wards

Planning application for 22/01687/FP has still not been called in-not determined. Ms Yvonne Hart is waiting for the date where she will accompany Councillor Claire Strong in making comments to the committee against the proposal.

Ms Hart invited parishioner Nick Jones to address the meeting:

Mr Jones raised concerns regarding 3 persons arriving in their car into the village every weekend. They are congregating in the parking area in Rands Meadow and inhaling Nitrous Oxide and leaving canisters and rubbish lying on the ground. (Photos were provided for the Parish Council to see)

Mr Jones and other parishioners have taken it upon themselves to clear up this rubbish and dispose of it.

Mr Jones requested the help of the Parish Council to deal with this problem as he and others are very concerned for the welfare of the teenagers in the village and how this will affect them.

Mr Jones would like some kind of street lighting in this dark area to help discourage these persons hanging around. Also, a request for a litter bin in this area.

The Parish Council are very concerned and have agreed to write to Settle Housing who are responsible for this parking area and request security lighting. The Parish Council will also be writing to Highways and requesting an extra litter bin for this area. The Clerk will also speak to PCSO Heather Burrows to inform her if this anti-social behaviour.

* 1. **Recreation Ground Issues:**

**Pavilion:-** It was brought to the attention of the Parish Council that there could be a slip problem on the decking steps and that there are products that can be brought to prevent this. The Parish Council will look into this matter.

The clerk was instructed to arrange to have a concrete base laid for the Vic Harvey bench outside the Pavilion.

It was reported that damage by someone riding a motor bike across the wet grassed area in the recreation ground has caused extensive damage. As we cannot ascertain who has done this damage, we will have to arrange for our groundsman to repair this area at great expense to the Parish.

It was agreed to purchase a new padlock for the second gate into the recreation ground.

The clerk reported that she had been approached by a resident about arranging a Parish Picnic. Dates for this event would need to be arranged around existing bookings. Ms Hart would speak to the cricket

Club about their fixtures for the summer and report back with the available dates.

The area around the New Pavilion needs tidying up before the official opening and Ms Hart would be speaking to the football and cricket clubs about this. Mr Jones and Parish Councillors offered to help with this tidying up in half term. The clerk was instructed to speak with the builder and arrange for the rubble and bricks left in the car park to be removed.

Risk Assessment for Recreation Ground and buildings- This will now be carried out by Parish Councillor Wendy Harris and will liaise with past Parish Councillor Rosemary Gainsford.

It was suggested that the Grand Opening of the Pavilion should take place on Monday 8th May around the Coronation Celebrations . A leaflet drop will be sent around the village confirming this and inviting everyone to attend.

* 1. **Children’s Play Area:**

**Play Inspection - Repairs**  CPM Playground Limited are very busy at the moment and there is an anticipated 12 weeks wait before they can commence work.

* 1. **Rights of Way:- Access to play area from Holwell Road (Definitive Map).** Although this was found in the Parish Council’s favour, an appeal was received by the Rights of Way team and this has again put back final decision as this must go back to the Inspector again. This situation may have changed due to the selling of the property. The clerk will make enquiries.

**Bridleway 5 –** Way marker is in the ditch and needs to be reinstated. The Clerk will contact Parish Paths to arrange this.

* 1. **Highways:-** Pot hole outside Lawton’s Farm to be reported and overgrown hedge near Bus shelter on the Bedford Road

1. **Finance:**

**After inspection of the financial statement provided** by the Clerk and the forecast for the following year and taking into account the rise in utility bills, **it was agreed at a full meeting of the Parish Council that the Precept for the year 2023/24 should be increased by 10% from £9,342.04 to £10,276.24.**

It was agreed that the clerk’s wages should be raised by £500.00 in line with the recommendations of Herts Association of Town and Parish Councils 2020/21.

The Following payments have been made between meetings:

Bulb energy 321.17 December invoice

NHDC 60.00 Play inspection

Bulb energy 321.17 January invoice

Monies received in December/January

Football Foundation £1,327.25 final grant money for Pavilion

North Herts Lottery £ 4.00 grant

HMRC VTR £2,813.80 VAT refund

BHIB £489.57 insurance refund

NHDC £5,000.00 final grant for Pavilion

North Herts Lottery £4.00 grant

The Parish Council are still in dispute with the Castle Water over the excessive utility bill which the ombudsman is investigating.

The Parish council are also in dispute with Bulb energy over their utility bill for the Pavilion and Bowls club as this is excessive as these premises are hardly used during the winter months.

The auditors PKF Littlejohn have issued a Public Interest Report: Certifying exemption from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31st March 2021 where the exemption criteria were not satisfied. The Parish Council are in disagreement with the Auditors PFK Littlejohn over their fees and lack of clarity of information.

1. **Correspondence:**

All Correspondence has been circulated:

1. **Matters for special consideration:**

**Planning Applications:**

**Outline Planning application for 10 dwellings (all matters reserved) land south of Holwell Road**

**Holwell, SG5 3SQ**

**Holwell Parish Council response to this application:-**

The Parish Council have made their observation and submitted them

**Warm Bank:-**

It was agreed that there was no call for a warm bank in Holwell as the village is well served by Pirton Chapel warm bank and those in Hitchin Town.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on 14th March, venue to be agreed

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting was closed at 9.15. pm.