



Latimer & Ley Hill Parish Council Meeting | MINUTES

26th April 2022 / 7.30pm at Ley Hill Methodist Church, Ley Hill

ATTENDEES

Cllr Anne Birkett (AB), Cllr Steve Thorp (ST), Cllr Chris Gregory, Cllr John Drewery, Claire Leek (Parish Clerk)

Public : Rita Richardson, Margaret Faulkner, Lorraine Pearce, Richard Pearce, Sarah Peterson, Ian Walter, Neil Branscombe, Angela Bransco

AGENDA TOPICS

| Apologies for Absence |

Cllr Nigel Hill, Cllr Chris Harris

Jenet Hill, Neil Lamond, Joy Lamond, David Peterson, Ros Walter

| Chairman's Statement |

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the Latimer and Ley Hill's Parish meeting – the first face to face one since 2019, and introduced the Councillors present, and the Clerk.

Cllr Birkett stated that the purpose of this meeting was to share the achievements over the past year and for any members of the public present to speak to the PC about any current issues which may affect our local community.

A slideshow projected on the wall showed many of the accomplishments over the past year, most of which have been suggested by our parishioners. A particular mention went to:

- The creation of the poppy waterfall to celebrate the centenary of Ley Hill Memorial Hall
- The completion of the Dilly Dell Activity Trail which was officially opened in July at the Village Picnic.
- The planting of yew whips in the Burial Ground to grow into a hedge which will eventually replace the fence.
- The recommencement of Community Speed Watch which the PC are using in conjunction with our MVAS to help reduce the number of speeding vehicles on our roads.
- The organisation of monthly Coffee and Chat coffee mornings and the annual Silver Sunday afternoon tea for older parishioners.
- The installation of a new bench on Botley Road and the Little Library.

Thanks were given to Claire, the Parish Clerk, fellow councillors and a growing team of local volunteers, who give up their time so generously, these achievements would not have been possible without their help. The Chairman gave special thanks to a few people specifically:

- Neil Lamond and Jo Walsh for the erection of the poppy waterfall
- Jerry Harborne for organising the Community Speed Watch programme
- Chris Giddings for building the Little Library.
- Ros Walter for organising the Little Library
- Heather Sprake and Jayne Dobbie for regularly serving refreshments at Coffee and Chat
- The team of people who always litter pick whatever the weather
- Paul Woodstock and Karen Holt for running the Community Choir

Cllr Birkett explained that most of the activities mentioned go beyond the remit of the Parish Council and that judging from the variety of requests the councillors and Clerk receive from parishioners there is some confusion as to the powers and responsibilities that Parish Councils have. The main responsibilities were detailed:

- The maintenance and administration of Tyler's Hill Burial Ground
- Considering and commenting on any planning applications for the area. The PC met with owners and contractors of Meadham's Farm at the beginning of operations.
- Provision of street lighting
- Provision of litter bins and organisation of litter blitzes. Although not responsible for fly tipping, the PC regularly report fly tipping.
- Monitoring and reporting the condition of footpaths, bridleways and public rights of way. The PC have recently contributed towards the cost of repair to a footpath alongside the Dell, which was carried out by the golf club.
- Monitoring and reporting the condition of pavements and the highway.
- Provision of some public seating. The PC have recently refurbished some seating and provided a new seat on Botley Road.
- The maintenance of the Bus Shelter on Rushmere Lane. The PC have recently cleaned the bus timetables around the village.
- Monitoring and reporting condition of open spaces and common land. The PC maintain the Beacon, which was painted for the Poppy Waterfall and spread chippings on the muddy areas in the Activity Trail.
- Communication with parishioners by means of website, email newsletters, noticeboards and social media.

The PC are always happy to point parishioners in the right direction at Buckingham Council if the PC can't help and encourage anyone to report fly tipping, potholes, damaged signs, unsafe pavements etc through Fix my Street.

The Chairman added that the PC are lucky they can easily enlist the help of three Chesham Councillors, Emily Culverhouse, Joseph Baum and Gareth Williams who of course is a Ley Hill resident, who always acts very quickly if approached with a problem.

Obviously, the PC cannot fulfil the responsibilities and all other activities to improve life in the parish without sufficient funding. That's where Claire, the Finance Officer, will explain further.

| Financial Commitments - Clerk |

The Clerk explained that as with all parish councils Latimer and Ley Hill PC apply for an annual fund from Bucks Council called the precept, and this forms part of a household's council tax bill. Every year around November, the finance committee meet to discuss the expenditure, any known or expected costs for the following year and all the ideas put forward during the parish council meetings and from councillors. A breakdown of the expected expenditure is produced, and this forms the basis for the precept request which has to be agreed by the PC and sent into Buckinghamshire Council early January. The precept is received in two instalments, April and September.

The precept is used to fund the financial obligations of the parish council. The Clerk detailed that when generating the budget, the finance committee, which comprises the Clerk and three councillors, break the expenditure into categories and these underlie the financial obligations of the PC. These were explained further:

- Administration – this category accounts for the largest expenditure and covers the cost of the Clerks employment for 12 hours a week, the website and email hosting, all IT and stationery requirements, any election costs (even when uncontested) and the insurance for the PC.
- The Burial Ground is the next largest expense. The PC are responsible for maintaining Tyler's Hill burial ground and also the administration of any burials. The PC have a brilliant contractor who cuts the grass every fortnight over the spring/summer months and our BG administration is carried out by Jenet who does a wonderful job. The trees, fence, bushes and benches all require maintenance at some point, and every 5 years a topple test of the headstones is required at cost to PC. Annually, the BG costs the PC over £7,000.
- Other expenses every year include the maintenance and repair of the streetlights, as well as the electricity costs for these. These run along Botley Road, through the village and along Jason's Hill. The PC are slowly changing all the lamps to LEDs and budget for 2-3 each year as and when they fail. Yearly the streetlights and electricity cost close to £4,000.
- The Christmas lights are purchased by the PC who pay each year for their installation and any upgrades required. The maintenance of the Beacon, which involves painting it, is also the responsibility of the PC, and this was carried out (on the outside only) prior to the remembrance service in November and will be painted inside following the lighting of the Beacon for the Jubilee celebrations in June.
- Over the past two years the PC have had to match the funding from Bucks Council to build the Dilly Dells activity trail. There will be continued maintenance costs for the trail, although at the moment these are minimal.
- The final category on the budget is Village and Community, and the Clerk explained that this is money set aside for things that the PC would like to do for the community, rather than the aforementioned responsibilities. Unfortunately, this has been hampered by Covid in recent years, but last year some funds were used towards the village picnic, and this year the PC have allocated money for the Jubilee event, and other ideas for events in the village.

It was explained that wherever possible the PC will look for funding to help the budget stretch further. Last year funds were secured to pay for the Silver Sunday event held at The Memorial Hall for the older parishioners and this is something the Clerk hopes to be able to apply for each year.

The Clerk added that the PC aim to balance the budget and although there are some reserves, the PC does not want to be running at a deficit each year. This impacts how much can be done on top of the obligations. As well as any funding opportunities, the PC do receive income from the burial ground, although of course, this is variable year to year. When the budget is set, the finance committee and PC try to plan ahead as best as possible. This year a budget line entry for smaller projects off the back of the parish survey has been added. The survey results will be used to shape the budget for the next couple of years. A small contingency is also included.

The budget for the year ahead is £26,000. When we take into account the likes the Burial Ground, the administration costs, the electricity and streetlights, the PC are only left with a budget of around £5,000 for anything that falls outside of our expected responsibilities. The Clerk emphasised that the PC try to make this go as far as possible.

The Clerk explained that all accounts, expenses and finance reports are available on the website. The accounts are audited every year and this documentation is also available.

| Questions for the Councillors |

Q: What is the timeline for any Parish Survey actions? The survey is open until end April 2022. The Clerk explained that an initial look at the suggestions received would be carried out at the next meeting of the PC in May. A deeper look at the responses would then take place over the early summer months and a communication will be sent out to the parishioners. Early indications show that a lot of responses are related to matters that are not the responsibility of the PC. Explaining this, and what can be done about these issues, will form part of the communication back to the parish.

A small amount of money has been allocated this year for any smaller, quick wins that can be implemented as a result of the survey. Anything larger will be discussed and Councillors given the opportunity to take on projects that interest them. These will need to be researched and the PC then agree to take them forward. The money for these larger projects will be considered in next year's budget.

Q: Who is responsible for the streetlight location in the village? A new light is required outside the school. It is very dark outside the school down to Broomstick Lane with streetlights (often faulty) on the opposite side of the road not projecting the light needed. In addition, the footpath is dangerous, and more light is needed to navigate the poor state of the footpath.

The PC will look into this issue and contact Buckinghamshire Council for advice. In relation to the faulty streetlights, the PC are not responsible for those particular lights but can pass on the information to Buckinghamshire Council via Fix My Street portal. It is very hard for the public to determine who is responsible for which streetlight in the village, so if there is an issue, parishioners are encouraged to report it to the Clerk.

It was suggested that a communication regarding Fix My Street, and what can and should be reported via the portal could be circulated and it was agreed that this was a good idea.

Q: CCTV has recently been installed on the roof of the cricket club to capture footage of bikes causing damage. Could technology like this be employed to record footage of fly tipping? Cllr Birkett explained that Buckinghamshire Waste team do have a specialist team that use CCTV for the worst affected areas for fly tipping. Despite regular reports, the village is not considered bad enough compared to other areas locally. The PC and the residents need to continue to report fly tipping via Fix My Street.

The PC have developed a strong relationship with the Estates team at Bucks and need to establish a good relationship with the highways team going forward. This will hopefully help with the fight against fly tipping in and around the village.

Q: What is the latest at Meadham's Farm? The PC are aware that operations are ongoing and one of the cells is filling up fast with inert material. The PC have a contact on site and email if and when there is anything of concern. Although a few weeks ago there were a few comments about vehicles in the village, the lorries do not seem to be a big problem, not seen to be speeding or overflowing. The PC advised the operations manager of our preferred route, avoiding going past the school and into Chesham, and drivers seem to be adhering to this (although there is no obligation for them to do so).

The PC are happy to act as a conduit between the local residents and operations at Meadham's Farm and will feedback anything of note or concern.

Q: An observation that cars being test driven from the Aston Martin garage are speeding through the village. Can anything be done? Cars have been seen throughout the village and it may be worth contacting the garage in Bovingdon to let them know that this is being noticed and to remind those that take the cars for a test drive to be respectful when driving through the village.

Q: Who is responsible for road sign cleaning? The PC are responsible, and councillors take on the task themselves when signs are particularly dirty. Have previously had the job carried out by a contractor, and residents also get involved.

Q: Common Land Easement. The owner of the old sewage works on Jason's Hill wanted to reassure the PC that there is an easement in place for the paving laid on common land. The paperwork is being processed but is very slow but agreement in place and in communication with David Stowe at Buckinghamshire Council. They have also reached an agreement regarding the trees on common land that overhang the owner's property.

Vote of thanks. Ian Walter and Sarah Peterson expressed their thanks for the pro-active rather than reactive way the PC have been working. They suggested the PC help to breed the wonderful community in Ley Hill.

Meeting Closed at | 08.20pm |

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Councillor Anne Birkett (Chairman)
Latimer and Ley Hill Parish Council

Next Meeting | 11th May 2022 | St Mary Magdalene Church, Latimer