

**MINUTES FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
ICKLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN ICKLEFORD VILLAGE HALL BETWEEN
7.00 PM AND 9.00 PM ON TUESDAY 24TH APRIL 2008**

Present: Councillors PJ Crowe (Chairman), M Maxwell, C R Thurstance (until 7.45 pm), Cllr D Chapallaz, K, Goldie, J Carlyle, G Palmer and T Stephenson.

Officer present: Katrina Henshaw (Parish Clerk).

Also present for the meeting:

County Cllr Brook, District Cllr Gibbs

PC Matt Jenkins, PCSO Nikki Williams and PCSO Elaine Cuozzo

Representatives from

Ickleford Parish Plan Steering Group

Barn Owl Project

Ickleford Common Holders

St Katharine's Parochial Church Council

Ickleford Primary School

Ickleford Pre-School

Ickleford Scout Group

Ickle Drama

Sticky Mitts

Ickleford WI

Ickleford Sports and Recreation Club

Ickleford Pony Club

99 residents + children from Ickle Drama

148 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

148.1 Apologies were received from Mike Wadsworth and Andrew Hunter.

149 SUMMARY OF THE FORMAT

149.1 Around the hall there were displays and representatives from the organisations present. Refreshments were provided by the WI and the children from Ickle Drama did a 10 minute show on the stage for all to watch. Residents were encouraged to ask Councillors and representatives of the organisations any questions they wished.

149.2 Each resident was invited to sign in and supply their address / e-mail address if they wished to be kept up to date about future events, news and crimes in Ickleford.

149.3 The Parish Council made residents aware of the dates when Cadwell Bridge was due to be closed for essential repairs to the railway line. Also available were pictures of the way that Dean and Dyball Rail Ltd proposed to transport the bridge into the village.

149.4 The Parish Council had a few posters asking questions which residents had the opportunity to respond to.

149.4.1 Making Ickleford 'plastic bag free'.

Residents were advised that Bowman's has offered to look into the possibility of co-sponsoring this proposal and were asked if IPC could work with Ickleford Stores to stop giving plastic bags, and offer bags for life instead.

Ten residents responded to this question, all of whom were in full agreement. One resident suggested that paper bags were given for fruit and vegetables. In addition Nick and Jean Jones from Ickleford Stores offered total support to this proposal.

149.4.2 Bringing mobile services to Ickleford.

Residents were asked if there was a demand for mobile services visiting the village. They were advised that these occur successfully in neighbouring villages and examples given were butcher, fish and chips and baker.

Seven residents responded to this question and requested a butcher (2), fish and chips (5), baker (3) and fishmonger (4).

149.4.3 Interested in Computer Courses at Ickleford School?

Residents were advised that IPC were working with the school and North Herts College to provide IT courses in the village. The courses could include 'Get Started with Computers' (a complete beginners 6 week course for learners with absolutely no computer skills), 'Next Steps with Computers' (follow on from 'Get Started with Computers'), Internet and Email for Beginners (follow on from 'Get Started with Computers') and 'Digital Photography' (using Photoshop, learning about digital cameras, downloading and enhancing an image).

Ten residents responded to being interested in these courses – 'Get Started with Computers' (1), 'Next Steps with Computers' (4) and 'Digital Photography' (7). There was also one request for language courses and two requests for an art club.

149.4.4 Our priorities for the Ickleford PCSO.

Residents were advised that based on the Parish Plan questionnaire, IPC had asked PCSO Elaine Cuzzo to focus on speeding, maintenance of HGV ban, anti-social behaviour, parking, off-road vehicles and litter/dog fouling.

Seven residents wrote comments to these suggestions and stated that parking (4), speeding (5) and maintenance of HGV ban (2) through the village should be major priorities. There were two requests for a safer way for pedestrians to get under Cadwell Bridge, one suggestion to narrow the bridge by Bowman's Mill to stop lorries being able to go over it and one request for more dog bins in the village.

149.4.5 The 2nd Annual Litter Collection Day.

Residents were reminded of the very successful litter collection day held in April 2007 and were asked if they could help out this year and if they had any suggestions of other things that IPC could do anything additional (e.g. ask NHDC to collect larger items or re-cycle yellow pages).

Five residents offered to help at the 2nd Annual Litter Collection Day.

149.4.6 What do our younger residents want?

Residents were asked how IPC can find out what the under 18s would like and how IPC can assist with this.

Only one resident (aged 16) responded to this question who said she would like a bus service from Ickleford to Baldock.

149.4.7 Do you have an idea for a village activity?

IPC asked if anyone was interested in a book club, a village 'fun day', a talent show or any other activity and were asked how IPC could assist with this (e.g. venue, expertise, advertising).

Three residents responded and requested a book club (3) and a village 'fun day' (2).

150 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR PATRICIA GIBBS

150.1 Cllr Gibbs read the following report:-

“Often Philip and Nigel leaves me little to say about the year.

However, I will try and identify some District Council specific things which may have affected Ickleford. We do, of course, continue to support all our rural areas with the Southern Rural Discretionary grants, Parish Amenity Capital Investment Fund (PACIF) and the Parish Environmental Enhancement Fund, all of which Ickleford have benefited from.

After the sterling work that the Parish Council and its co-opted working party did on the Parish Plan, which incidentally has been used as a fine example to other parishes embarking on that process, I am hopeful that some of the transport issues which were identified will be tackled in the not too distant future. I have been assured that Ickleford has been identified as a ‘selected village’ in the 2009/10 Highways Partnership plans for investment. The Parish Plan transport issues included in that has helped to steer that investment. I am also hopeful that this year we, the District Council, may be able to help find some other funds to get some of the work underway. There were other issues which the Parish Plan highlighted and in time these will all need attention both from the District and County Council.

I must mention recycling; the new system which was introduced in October last year has been a major success. Our recycling rates are well beyond those which we anticipated and we have also reduced considerably the use of the landfill site. Unfortunately, we have yet to be successful in finding a site for plastic recycling in Ickleford. One or two avenues have been explored but with no outcome. I would ask that if anyone has any ideas which the Parish and District Councils have not already tried I would be pleased to pass these onto Cllr Lynda Needham, our Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling.

On broader issues we are still being assaulted by proposed new housing developments and sites for Gypsies and Travellers. There are now plans in the pipeline for 8,000 houses east of Luton in North Hertfordshire. These proposals were made without even consulting North Herts District Council. There is also potentially a proposal for a Gypsy and Travellers site near Pirton and Pirton and Holwell residents have been galvanised in to objecting in the strongest terms to these plans from EERA, The East of England Regional Authority. It now looks that new guidance which is being issued from EERA will ask planning authorities to look at sites in new large developments.

I have been involved in my role as Community Engagement Portfolio holder with trying to find better use for Hitchin Town Hall but was unsuccessful in partnership with Hitchin Town Centre Initiative in securing funding from the Community Assets Fund of the Lottery to finance improvements. We are now looking at other ways to find funding. My role also includes community halls across the district, town councils, community safety and various strategies which the Council has to develop and then update from time to time. With Hitchin being on the doorstep of Ickleford I do take a keen interest in everything which happens in the town. The redevelopment of Churchgate remains an ongoing saga although it progresses slowly and the Council is now having to go out to tender through the European system which has added a further 6 months delay to the whole project. I am sure visitors to the town will have noticed that the public lavatories have been refurbished, and although this is a vast improvement, they have not been without their teething troubles.

Finally, I would like to congratulate once again the Parish Councillors for the hard work they put in to keeping Ickleford marching forward to improve the facilities and environment for all who live in the village and also those who pass through”.

151 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR NIGEL BROOK

151.1 Cllr Brook was unable to supply a written report as he had recently broken two ribs. However, he did praise IPC on this new idea for the APM and was pleased to see such a wonderful turnout from the residents of Ickleford. He paid tribute to IPC for all their hard work and thought that the village had deservedly won the West Hertfordshire Village of the Year in 2007. He explained how he had an insight into how well IPC performs as there are a total of eight Parish Councils in his ward.

Cllr Brook explained that the application to change the use of a field to a burial ground was being discussed this evening by the North Herts Planning Committee and that Cllr Thurstance had just left the APM to present at that meeting. Cllr Brook concluded by thanking the community police officers present for all their hard work and stated what a privilege it was to be the County Councillor for Ickleford.

152 REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN – COUNCILLOR PHILIP CROWE

152.1 Cllr Crowe read the following report:-

“Good evening and welcome to this Annual Parish Meeting in a new format that we hope you find both informative and enjoyable.

With the benefit of the presentations and exhibitors available, you will be able to meet the various village representatives who are taking forward projects highlighted in the Parish Plan, and other organisations that contribute so much to the village.

In terms of the Parish Plan, the Traffic & Transport Group are in regular discussions with Hertfordshire Highways looking at ways to improve the safety of the village, particularly in areas such as Chambers Lane and Cadwell Bridge. Speeding traffic we know is a concern, coupled with road and pavement maintenance and these areas continue to figure prominently in the meetings.

The Environmental Group are continuing with their investigations involving North Hertfordshire Homes regarding the area behind Turnpike Lane, and the possibility of converting this into allotments. This area has been of concern to residents for many years, and any improvement will hopefully reduce the vandalism and flytipping.

The Burial Ground project is as we speak before the North Herts Planning Committee awaiting their decision on the ‘Change of Use’ application.

The good news for the village is that we now have a share of a PCSO, Elaine Cuozzo, whom we welcome here tonight, and who will commute between ourselves and Kimpton on a job share basis. This came as a real bonus as our previous applications had been rejected due to insufficient PCSO Numbers, but our now having the funding, the police agreed to our request. This will not effect the present system were we already have an existing PCSO, so in effect our police presence in the village will be strengthened.

We decided against entering the ‘Village of the Year’ competition this year, for whilst we have many ongoing projects, there is nothing specifically new for the judges to see, so we are giving the competition a rest.

One new objective we are trying for is ‘Quality Status’ which will give us further inputs into financial grants and demonstrate the commitment the village has to raising its profile. It has given our parish clerk a great deal of extra work to earn the qualification and we wait with anticipation for the results of Katrina’s efforts which are due in the coming months. We shall also in future be producing an Annual Report of the village’s activities and this will be available on either the website or from our parish clerk.

As I said at the outset the purpose of this change in format is to provide you with the opportunity to see what is happening in the village, meet the organisations, and if you feel you wish to become more involved in any area, then this is the opportunity.

Thank you for coming and please enjoy the evening”.

153 CONCLUSION

153.1 Many residents said what a fantastic evening it was and how interesting it was to see what each organisation does. However, there was a suggestion that in future years there is an opportunity for all residents to have an open discussion with the Councillors as well as the opportunity to have one to one conversations as had been provided this evening. Overall though it was considered to be a successful evening with good support from the organisations and residents.

154 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

154.1 The next Parish Council meeting will be the Annual Meeting to be held on Thursday 1st May at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Signed by Chairman _____ **Date** _____

Print name of Chairman _____