

**MINUTES FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
ICKLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN ICKLEFORD VILLAGE HALL BETWEEN
7.00 PM AND 9.00 PM ON THURSDAY 26TH MARCH 2009**

Present: Councillors Philip J Crowe (Chairman), Miles Maxwell, Colin R Thurstance, Kathy, Goldie, Glenys Palmer and Tim Stephenson.

Officer present: Katrina Henshaw (Parish Clerk).

Also present for part or all of the meeting:

District Cllr Patricia Gibbs

Inspector Simon Tabert, PC Katie Hull and PCSO Sarah Jeffery

Dr Michael Willoughby – Parish Plan Steering Group

Mr Alex Goldie, Mr Paul Thompson and Mrs Val Thompson - Three Parishes Barn Owl Project

Reverend Margaret Holford

Mrs Patricia Salmon - Headteacher, Ickleford Primary School

Mrs Naomi Smith - Chairperson, Ickleford Pre-School Committee

Mrs Stephanie Woodhead – Secretary, Ickleford Pre-School

Mr Geoff Robinson - Ickleford Sports and Recreation Club

Mr Keith Hooton – Ickleford Squash Club

Ms Valerie Smith and Mrs Hannah Warne, Ickle Drama

Mrs Sally Thompsett – The Hitchin School of Russian Ballet

Ms Victoria Izzard – Music with Mummy

Mr Nick Jones – Ickleford Stores

Mrs Claire Adams – Posh Plates & Posies

Mrs Katherine Bridge – Posh Plates & Posies

Mr Clifford Rowe and the St Katharine Singers

47 residents + children from Ickle Drama, Ickleford School, St Katharine Church Choir

138 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

138.1 Apologies were received from Cllr David Chapallaz (hospital), Cllr James Carlyle (family commitment), County Cllr Nigel Brook (HCC Chairman's engagement), PCSO Nikki Williams, Canon John Payne Cook and Common Holder – Mr Basil Plews.

139 SUMMARY OF THE FORMAT

139.1 Around the hall there were table top displays from Three Parishes Barn Owl Project, Ickleford Sports and Recreation Club, The Hitchin School of Russian Ballet and Music with Mummy. Residents were encouraged to ask Councillors, Police and representatives of the organisations any questions they wished. Before the formal reports were given, there were performances from Ickle Drama and the School Choir. Refreshments were provided by Mrs Claire Adams and Mrs Katherine Bridge from Posh Plates and Posies.

139.2 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.

139.3 The Parish Council invited residents to write down comments or suggestions about Ickleford or Ickleford Parish Council. No comments or suggestions were written.

139.4 Details about Network Rail's plans to improve the railway between London, Hitchin and Cambridge were available for residents to look at. These included the project proposals, construction and access, the environmental constraints and the key dates. Network Rail has invited everyone to have their say at their exhibitions on Thursday 2nd April (10 am – 8 pm), Friday 3rd April (10 am – 6 pm) and Saturday 4th April (10 am – 2 pm).

140 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR PATRICIA GIBBS

140.1 Cllr Gibbs read the following report:-

“Good evening, as usual I would like to thank the Parish Council for all the hard work and thought they put in to making Ickleford a better place to live.

I thought I would start off this report by updating you with issues to the District Council and then go onto more specific matters relating to Ickleford.

I am sure you have all picked up in the press the effect of the recession relating to the drop in interest rates and the effect this has had on the budget of the District Council.

The District Council has approximately £60 million capital invested, fortunately none in Icelandic banks, a substantial portion of which was accrued from the sale of the housing stock. Very wisely, or so we thought at the time, we did not spend this money but invested it to help keep council tax to reasonable increases. The current drop in interest rates has created a shortfall of £1/2 million in the council budget.

This coupled with contract inflation, nationally agreed staff pay awards and the Government directed Gershon efficiencies has meant many very long and hard deliberations over our budget setting for 2009/10, resulting in a 3.9% increase for the District Council. We have been forced to make some minor cuts in revenue spending and we have planned some further cuts. But times are tough as we all know.

Now for Ickleford. There have been some minor grants to the Parish Council from the District Council, and there is money in the Southern Rural committee budget for help for highways issues arising from the Parish Plan findings. There is also money for speed reduction signs. The pre-school has benefited as did the village hall last year with the PACIF money for improvements which were much needed.

The Parish Council has been awarded £50,000 from PACIF money towards the establishing a new burial ground, the land having kindly been given by a resident of the village. This has been just granted and allows the Parish Council to press ahead with their plans.

The District Council has NOT cut its Southern Rural Area Committee Discretionary Budget, but the PACIF money has just about been spent. So, of course, I hope those organisations that need new money for new projects for the benefit of the village will not be shy in asking. We have a very helpful Community Development Officer at the Council, Garry Gover and he would be able to advise applicants. Or I can help put you in touch with the right people.

However, as the landfill site is due to close soon, BIFFA has announced that their grants have ceased, so unfortunately, that stream of funding which has been very useful for a good number of years has come to an end.

I understand that there is a meeting with the relevant District Council Officers, the Parish Council and members of the working group to try and progress the provision of allotments and improvements to ‘Little Park’. Let’s hope this can progress quicker than it has done so far.

That’s it, if anyone would like to ask any questions I will endeavour to answer them or find the answers”.

140.2 The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions. No questions were asked.

141 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR NIGEL BROOK

141.1 As Cllr Brook was unable to attend the meeting, he supplied the following written report that Cllr Maxwell read out:-

“Mr Chairman, Councillors, Ladies and Gentleman it is with very deep regret that I give my apologies for my absence tonight as I don't think I have missed this meeting before. However, I must confess to being caught out by the earlier date this year. Firstly I would like to extend my thanks to Philip Crowe and his colleagues for their very gracious understanding of how my duties as Chairman of the County Council have coincided with some of the Parish Council meetings such that my attendance has been interrupted on occasions. Once again I have found it an enormous pleasure and privilege to work with the Parish Council who have had a very full year of activities - the road safety consultation was to be admired and hopefully the plans will be put into fruition around June or July

Then there has been the activity regarding the new burial ground which, after about five years, seems finally to be close to realisation. This has required an enormous amount of work with all kinds of requirements needed which at the outset in all probability would not have been thought of - well done chairman and all your helpers.

Ickleford Primary School under the wonderful guidance of Pat Salmon has yet again achieved brilliant results in their Ofsted inspection and also great plaudits from the Diocese as a Church of England school

I must not forget the refurbishment of the Village Hall with great thanks to all the parties who helped with finance together with those who saw the project through - in so many directions Ickleford is thriving and long may it continue

Furthermore I must congratulate Katrina for achieving all her clerk's higher qualifications, well done indeed; I know what a good job she does.

I am so pleased to hear that David Chapallaz is making progress to better health after his very serious illness, it has been a desperate year for David.

I must make reference to the dreaded Council tax which has gone up as you will know by 3.5% at County level. The increased funding from government was more than cancelled out by the bigger increase in Landfill tax that we were obliged to pay. This plus the level of inflation current at the time both had an impact on our budgets. However, I'm pleased to say that we have managed to preserve the County services.

I offer you my good wishes for a successful meeting and again I state my thanks to all on the Parish Council for all that you do. I hope to be able to continue serving you all in Ickleford in the future - every best wish Nigel Brook”.

141.2 The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions. No questions were asked.

142 REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN – COUNCILLOR PHILIP CROWE

142.1 Cllr Crowe read the following report:-

“Every quarter I detail in the St Katharine's Wheel updates on the various projects being undertaken by the Parish Council and given every household receives a copy I shall avoid repeating what is now history and concentrate on where we are going in the coming year.

We have received confirmation from NHDC planning for the change of use of the field off Chambers Lane into the burial ground, and upon completion of a few more formalities

involving further trenching to satisfy the County Archaeologist work can commence in the coming months. We were also fortunate enough to obtain a grant of £50,000 from NHDC and a further £8,000 from WREN which will go a long way to covering the works to be undertaken. It is proposed at the early stage to only take forward 25% of the total area, principally from a cost point of view, but the entire area of 4.398 acres will be fenced off and have hedging planted to ensure the areas development is started from Day 1 and provide the privacy required for future users of the burial ground as well as the neighbours and users of the sports ground. The area not utilised initially will be maintained as a meadow. The lower car park, by the play area is to be totally resurfaced to provide not only parking for the cemetery visitors, but also users to the sports ground, and be a much better surface than at present. As I say the project will start taking shape in the coming months and hopefully be available for use by next year.

Little Park as it is known behind Turnpike Lane and where we have been trying to have completely tidied up with areas for allotments remains the subject of further discussions with NHDC and NHH. We have a meeting for next Tuesday 31st March when we hope for a decision from the two authorities, as to date they keep meeting us but seem unable to make up their minds if we can take the area over. We have asked before assuming responsibility that the garages in situ are replaced and the overall area resurfaced, and in line with Allotment conditions, running water and toilet facilities provided - so watch this space.

Hertfordshire Highways have confirmed that they have the budget to take forward the proposed traffic calming measures discussed last year, and here again we have a meeting scheduled for 2nd April for their final details. They did promise a leaflet would be available for all residents, but despite our chasing this it has not been produced so we hope to get this shortly explaining their plans.

Cadwell Bridge, our continual problem does not figure in their current plans but they have promised a feasibility study of the area. They have researched the area but the costs to any suggestion made by us for safety improvements appear to be prohibitive, and we are back to the old argument, that whilst there continue to be near misses, and in some views it is an accident waiting to happen, fortunately accidents don't happen. So we await their next study.

We are again giving the 'Village of the Year' competition a miss as it was felt whilst we have ongoing projects perhaps next year we shall have something positive to show for our efforts.

You will probably have had a flyer pushed through your door today which outlines Networks Rails plans to improve the Cambridge and Peterborough lines via a loop north of Hitchin. We do have a map here showing the details. I would however encourage all of you to visit the exhibition next week because we will be giving feedback as we always do to Network Rail and obviously any additional comments you may have will be useful to hear. If you do write with any comments we should appreciate you copying them to us.

I am pleased to be able to introduce Inspector Simon Tabert who is accompanied by PC Katie Hull and PCSO Sarah Jeffery who both cover Ickleford. Katie and Sarah will be holding monthly surgeries in VR Jennings so I would encourage you to attend these if possible. The first one will be on Tuesday 7th April between 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm.

Earlier this evening, I was pleased to hear a fine example of how we work together as a community. During the snow, when meals on wheels were unable to supply meals, Ickleford Stores stepped in and offered a choice of ready meals. These were then offered to the meals on wheels customers who were delighted still to be able to enjoy a hot meal. So thanks go to Nick and everyone at Ickleford Stores as well as to the meals on wheels volunteers who delivered them.

Finally, as always my thanks to my fellow Councillors, Patricia Gibbs, Nigel Brooks and of course our parish clerk Katrina Henshaw for their support during the year. I would also add my thanks to many of you who also help with the village in keeping it tidy, reporting problems, and for all your assistance and support which continues to make us a successful village.

- 142.2 The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 142.3 One resident asked for an outline of the traffic plans. Cllr Stephenson was invited to answer this question and explained the 4 schemes:-
- **Arlesey Road:** A humped zebra crossing near the school and speed cushions along the road.
 - **Turnpike Lane:** Speed cushions along the road.
 - **Bedford Road:** A vehicle activated speed sign at the southbound entrance to the village. A dropped kerb crossing point with tactile paving to the south of Ryder Avenue. Footway improvements and an additional bus stop on the east side of the road and to the north of Turnpike Lane.
 - **Chambers Lane:** Improvements to the footpath from the sports ground behind Arnolds Farm and the footpath by Raymond Cottages.
- 142.4 The resident then asked if the lollipop lady would remain and was delighted to hear that she would as she does an excellent job.
- 142.5 Another resident asked why there wouldn't be a crossing outside Ickleford Stores. Cllr Crowe reported that this had been looked into but wasn't practical as parking was required outside Ickleford Stores and outside the Church.
- 142.6 Another resident asked what speed cars and caravans can travel over the proposed speed cushions. Cllr Stephenson responded by stating that Hertfordshire Highways had advised that the cushions have been designed so that cars can travel over them at 29 mph. He was unable to offer an answer about caravans but agreed to ask Hertfordshire Highways for their advice.
- 142.7 Another resident asked if the barrier would remain across the lower car park at the sports ground when the burial ground was created. Cllr Crowe said they would need to look into how the area is managed to ensure the area is accessible at the correct times but also prevent any antisocial behaviour that has happened in the past.

143 **REPORT FROM INSPECTOR SIMON TABERT**

- 143.1 Inspector Tabert thanked everyone for the warm welcome and introduced himself and explained that he had been policing in Hertfordshire for 17 years and was made Inspector 4 years ago. He has been in his current role, Neighbourhood Inspector, for the past 8 months.

He was pleased to report that Ickleford had an active parish council and he had regular dialogue with the members. He has had ad hoc meetings with Cllr Maxwell and Cllr Stephenson and after the few major incidents in the village has always briefed the parish clerk so she can make residents aware of what is happening as quickly as possible.

Over the past year there has been a reduction in crime in Hertfordshire and statistics suggest that Ickleford is a very safe place to live. Crime figures for both burglaries to dwellings and criminal damage were down this year. However, he sympathised with anyone who had been a victim of crime. He acknowledged that there had been a body found in Ickleford last year but as neither the victim nor the murderers had come from locally, it would appear that Ickleford had been picked due to the close proximity to the industrial estate via fields. The case is currently in court.

He was pleased to introduce PC Katie Hull who replaces PC Matt Jenkins as the ward constable due to the changes in areas covered by each constable. PC Matt Jenkins did an excellent job but his area was too large and too spread out. PC Katie Hull will be looking after Westmill, Ickleford and Holwell which is a smaller and more manageable area. PCSO Sarah Jeffery (who IPC part fund) spends 50% of her time in Ickleford and 50% of her time in Kimpton. PCSO Nikki Williams continues to look after Ickleford with her other areas.

Inspector Tabert encouraged residents to attend the new police surgeries that will be held monthly in Ickleford. The next one will be held on Tuesday 7th April between 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm in VR Jennings, who has kindly offered to provide tea and coffee as well as a private room if anyone wants to discuss a confidential matter. He suggested residents go and tell PC Hull and PCSO Jeffery what they want from the community police as this information will then be fed back to the locality panel meeting which sets the police priorities for the coming quarter. Everything decided at these meetings will be scrutinised and then audited.

Finally, Inspector Tabert made residents aware of their website www.herts.police.uk which has lots of useful information on it as well as phone and email contact details for all the community team.

- 143.2 The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 143.3 One resident asked if OWL could also send messages detailing when crimes have been solved. Inspector Tabert agreed to report this back but said that it was not always possible as they always had to respect the victim's wishes on what they wanted released to the public. Additionally, until someone is proven guilty of a crime they cannot link them to it so they have to be careful over announcing crimes being solved too prematurely.
- 143.4 Another resident had heard of the security checks that the police offered and wondered how he could arrange to have one done. PCSO Jeffery collected his details at the end of the meeting and agreed to arrange a mutually agreeable date.

144 FINALE

- 144.1 The evening came to an end with three of the St Katharine's Church Choir singing 'Tears in Heaven' followed by two songs from the St Katharine's Singers.

145 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

- 145.1 The next Parish Council meeting will be the held on Thursday 2nd April at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Signed by Chairman _____ **Date** _____

Print name of Chairman _____