

PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

The **Annual Parish Meeting** of
Pirton Parish Council was held on
Thursday 14th May 2009 at Pirton Village Hall.

Present:

Mrs D Bailey
Mr M Goddard
Mrs R Hamilton McLeod
Mrs M Johnson
Mr S Kitchiner
Mr R Marshall
Mr D Saunders (Chairman)
Mr J Vaughan
Mrs P Waters (vice-Chairman)
Mrs J Smart (Clerk)

Also Present:

PC Matt Jenkins and a PCSO
Mrs McConellogue and Mrs Goodman – Pirton Playgroup

Two residents:
Mrs J Colegrove
Mr A Smart

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence

MINUTES OF THE 2008 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

These were agreed to be a true record and were duly signed.

CHAIRMANS REPORT

Chairman Mr D Saunders had prepared and circulated a report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mrs J Smart, Responsible Financial Officer to the Parish Council, had prepared and circulated a report relating to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2009, which is attached to these minutes, together with a copy of the Income and Expenditure account.

POLICE REPORT

PC Jenkins reported that Pirton has seen a small reduction in crime over the past year, as had the whole County, although there had been an increase in the theft of high value items from farms and outbuildings. The police now had some new equipment to detect speeding and were concentrating its use in areas where speeding was known to be a problem. PC Jenkins hoped to hold regular locality meetings for residents to bring their problems to the police, but was finding it difficult as the police did not wish to pay hire charges for halls.

Mr Saunders thanked PC Jenkins for attending the meeting

Mrs Johnson arrived

A Parishioner was attending the meeting to voice concern about weed-killer having been sprayed around the corner of Crabtree Lane and High Street by the Notice boards, where children regularly pass on their way to and from school and from where they are known to pick leaves. Councillors agreed that the spraying was unnecessary and inappropriate, and Mrs Hamilton McLeod would speak to the resident who was known to have carried out the spraying.

PIRTON PLAYGROUP

The Playgroup representatives were attending the meeting to inform Councillors that they had been successful in obtaining the funding required to enable the building of a purpose built Foundation Unit within the school grounds. Playgroup hoped that they would have support from the Parish Council and from the village as a whole, and that the unavoidable disruption during the building works would not cause problems for residents.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Mrs Strong had not provided a report

There were no other reports

Pirton Parish Council – Chairman’s Report, May 2009

A year of gentle progress and consolidation.

This report covers the period May 2008 – May 2009; it is the second year of the current four year term of this Parish Council. The following is a rambling discourse, partly chronological and partly categorised.

As was expected a year ago the threat of a proposed travellers site adjacent to the village was finally laid to rest at a District Council meeting in June.

We were preparing to “gird our loins” for a further battle on another matter, but happily we received news that our local Post Office was no longer under threat of closure.

GENERAL MATTERS

We have continued with the ongoing business of the Council; planning matters, various consultations, parish paths, highways etc.

There has been nothing particularly controversial on the planning front; there was one application for bungalows on land behind Shillington Road which may have been contentious but the application was withdrawn. We continue to monitor special sites such as the Tithe Barn and School Craft House. The handing over of the recreation area (Middle Green) at Coleman’s Close is *still* awaiting completion but we are hopeful of finalisation in the near future.

Highways seem, as usual, to be a low priority within the County Council budget, but the Hitchin Road has been resurfaced (and the white line re-instated). The situation regarding Holwell Road is less clear, improvements and resurfacing have been promised since January but we still await completion. The condition of the right of way (over private land) to the playing field is the cause of some concern but we are not in a position to effect improvements, consequently we are arranging for signs at each end indemnifying the Council against possible litigation

Councillor and Clerk training continues, this is proving both informative and useful for councillors and may well positively improve our performance. The clerk has achieved her CILCA certificate of competence, this *certainly does* demonstrate improved capability and performance, it is a notable and worthy achievement – well done Jenny.

We have found it necessary to increase the Clerk’s contracted hours which reflects the increased amount of business transacted by the council and the complexity of some of the issues involved.

We are slowly moving forward regarding procedures, systems and communications, this all with a view to achieving our aim of attaining “Quality Parish Council” status.

We are concerned, along with other area and local councils, at the proposals to build a further 83,000 homes in North Herts., also the intentions of Luton to expand in our direction; however, we have little influence in these matters and can only join with others as a pressure group.

The Parish emergency plan has been updated to reflect changing situations within the village and we were pleased to take part in another “Welcome to Pirton” evening in November.

The plan to replace the existing clubhouse and changing facilities continues under the guidance of Owain Lister (my predecessor) and Steve Smith (P.S.S.C. Chairman). Funding is problematical and an ever moving target; on the debit side BIFFA, WREN and PACIF grants seem now to be closed doors. However, Sport England and the Football Foundation are

currently offering much more hope of support. It is hoped that we shall be in a position to produce final proposals and actual plans in the near future; we will then be in a much better position to move the project forward.

At the budget meeting we were faced with some hard decisions but with some common sense and judicious prioritisation were able to limit the increase in precept to 4%, bringing our community income to £25,420.

The local crime figures seem to be holding steady, whilst we may perceive there is a problem we are particularly fortunate in this regard, particularly when compared to some other villages and urban areas.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Actual progress has been made in some significant areas.

Three Parish newsletters have been produced to date (less than the aim of a quarterly publication) and have been generally well received and are a useful communication tool.

The Parish Council website is now functioning and contains some useful information; we are always endeavouring to improve and enhance this information and it is hoped that parishioners find it useful and interesting, and will increasingly refer to it. But be aware that all important communications will continue to be made via leaflet or newsletter delivery.

The formulation of a Parish Plan has now been implemented and is currently being worked on by a group of dedicated and conscientious parishioners. Whilst not directly influenced by or run by the Parish Council it is being promoted and fully supported by them. We will ultimately be responsible for facilitating its proposals and recommendations to the best of our ability.

In October and April, we held two most successful and worthwhile clean-up days in the village. This is a rewarding exercise with obvious benefits which we intend will become a regular twice yearly event.

Once again our entry into the Village of the Year competition yielded an award, this time in the environment category. Our thanks must be extended to Dick Woodward (another previous Chairman) who masterminds the village effort to great effect. We are entering again in 2009 and hope for continued success.

NEW PLANS

Whilst progressing ongoing business as outlined above, new projects and ideas are formulated, and this year we have five such initiatives which we are progressing.

Affordable housing: Whilst not strictly a new plan we are actively seeking ways of providing such accommodation in the village. This with a view to housing *existing Pirton residents*, either those who have grown up in the village and wish to remain, or those who would like to retire in surroundings in which they have spent most of their adult life.

Allotments: The need for allotments has been identified with some dozen or so villagers expressing a desire for such facilities. We are in the early stages of identifying and procuring some suitable land for this purpose.

Youth: As part of our aim to relate to and provide for village youngsters, we are seeking to re-open the village youth club, albeit that a suitably qualified youth leader is proving hard to find. Basketball coaching starts this month on the MUGA after much strife and negotiation.

We are looking into appointing an official youth representative to liaise with, and possibly sit with, the Parish Council. We have also subsidised a trip to Thorpe Park for village teenagers as some recompense for the lack of proper youth facilities.

Recreation Ground: In addition to the new clubhouse initiative, the council are looking to provide an alternative storage facility at the Rec, which will enable the old pavilion to be demolished and thus provide much needed extra parking facilities.

Insurance: This has become an increasing headache due to the extent and nature of Parish Council commitments. It has been decided that we should obtain insurance services through a specialist broker. This will relieve the clerk of an incredible amount of work communicating with (less than co-operative) insurance companies.

The above projects are in the process of evolution or in early stages of development, it is hoped that next year we will be in a position to report positive progress on all of them.

CONCLUSION (at last!)

Here ends a somewhat incoherent report of the year's Parish Council activities. Sincere apologies for any omissions or thanks not extended. We are greatly indebted to many friends and parishioners who are helpful and supportive beyond the normal terms of public spirit. We are especially grateful to County Councillor Nigel Brook and District Councillor Claire Strong who are both of great assistance to us, and between them they attend and advise at most of our meetings.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors and the Clerk for their efforts, there really is much unseen work that goes on behind the scenes. We here in Pirton have a good and dedicated team, all of us are readily approachable and will do the best we can for the benefit of "the best village in Hertfordshire".

David Saunders

Chairman – Pirton Parish Council



PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Statement – 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009

An income and Expenditure Account for the 2008/2009 financial year is attached. Amounts in some of the headings are broken down in detail on the reverse and represent the day-to-day running costs of the Council, including village maintenance and ongoing responsibilities.

Towards the end of each year the Council holds a Budget Meeting to review the following year's finances. The Council keeps a close check on expenditure at its monthly meetings and controls the budget carefully. In November of 2007, after much discussion, the Parish Council agreed an increase of 4% in its precept for the year 2008 to 2009. Councillors recognised that this was a larger than usual increase, but felt that it was necessary to enable the Parish Council to meet its various commitments, such as engaging with youth, issuing regular newsletters and commencing a Parish Plan, as well as making a number of grants and setting aside monies towards the new Clubhouse project. This year, the Parish Council was pleased to be able to make grants to Joycare, grass-cutting in the Churchyard, the Brownie and Rainbow Packs, Playgroup and the Toddler Group.

A number of grant applications from the Parish Council had been successful, and Pirton had won another prize in the Village of the Year competition. One unexpected expense had been the necessary purchase of a new printer/copier, while planned expenses had included the costs of setting up the Parish Council website and the instigation of a regular newsletter.