

PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

The **Annual Parish Meeting** of
Pirton Parish Council was held on
Thursday 10th May 2012 at Pirton Village Hall.

Present:

Mrs D Bailey
Mr S Davies (clerk)
Mr R Easterbrook
Mr T Gammell
Mr J Hayes
Mr R Marshall
Mrs E Wallace
Mrs P Waters

Also Present: County Councillor Nigel Brook

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Received from Mr A Scott, Mr D Saunders, District Councillor Mrs C Strong and PC Matt Jenkins

MINUTES OF THE 2011 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

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

CHAIRMANS REPORT

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

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr S Davies, Responsible Financial Officer to the Parish Council, had prepared and circulated a report relating to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012, which is attached to these minutes, together with a copy of the Income and Expenditure account.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Mrs Strong had not submitted a report.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Mr Brook presented a verbal report, a transcript of which is attached to these minutes. Mr Brook was thanked for the valuable support he provides to the Parish Council.

POLICE REPORT

Although PC Jenkins had prepared a written report, it was not delivered to the Clerk until after the meeting had taken place. However, his report has been circulated and is attached to these minutes.

There were no other reports and the meeting closed at 7.50pm

Pirton Parish Council – Chairman’s Report May 2012

A new beginning

This report covers the period from May 2011 to April 2012 being the first of a new four year term with a fresh Parish Council.

Only seven parishioners offered themselves for election, this means there was no election as such and it was necessary to co-opt two further members. Also during this period we have had a change of Clerk; Jenny Smart found, for personal reasons that she needed to resign from this most important position. We must take this opportunity to formally thank Jenny for her excellent work over the last seven years or so. Her replacement is Sam Davies who lives in the village is retired and has all the required attributes, he seems to be learning fast and should become a most valuable and successful officer. Consequently we have four “old stagers” and six new (or relatively new) members in the 10 person team.

One of the first acts of the Council was to hold a special meeting in order to determine our priorities and aims which we hope to achieve over the ensuing four years. The outcome of this discussion resulted in 10 main points which are as follows:-

- The main aim should be to re-generate and produce the Parish Plan, this is most important to the village as, when produced, it will supply information and statistics on which to base future decisions. It will also lend credibility when applying for grants or discussing matters with the authorities.
- To improve our communications by increased use of newsletters and enhanced “electronic means”
- The formation of a youth council and further improved dialogue with the youth of the village.
- To support the new clubhouse project; having invested some £10,000 in “up front costs” the council are unable to contribute further funds at this stage but would continue to support and promote the project in any other way it could during these times of financial constraint.
- It was decided not to pursue the previous goal of *quality council status*; whilst this is admirable as an aim regarding standards the qualifications are too stringent and the rewards insufficiently tangible to warrant the time and effort involved.
- We should continue to strive to be more effective in and have a better understanding of the planning process. To this end we will have further meetings with NHDC planning department.
- Efforts should be made to secure an improved broadband connection for the village.
- The areas of responsibility and the licensing of the clubhouse and recreation ground should be reviewed, particularly with a view to covering the various and complex insurance requirements.
- The Council should investigate the possibility of introducing some community awards to the village.
- In general the council should “be green” and bear the environment in mind when making decisions.

Whilst the above are all realistic and laudable aims they are all, to some extent, dependent on a successful outcome of the first; i.e. the Parish Plan.

However subsequently we have already:-

1. Progressed the Parish plan; a working group has been established and questionnaires are currently with parishioners for completion.
2. Introduced a new *Face-book page* which appears to be working in that there is some interaction with the more "switched on" members of the community.
3. Changed and enhanced the Parish Council web site which is now much more attractive and user friendly.
4. Formed and are actively communicating with a group of youngsters, this is effectively a youth council in all but name. Other developments on the youth front are that the new zip wire has been installed at the recreation ground also investigations are being made with regard to renovating the Methodist Hall behind the Chapel for use as a youth club amongst other things.
5. Formed a sub committee which is currently reviewing the use and licensing of the club house and recreation ground facilities.
6. Introduced the mechanism for the introduction of village community awards with the expectation of a function in February; however there was insufficient response to be viable on this occasion. Again this subject is being further explored in the parish plan questionnaire.
7. Published two newsletters.

The above rather lengthy pre-amble has covered much of the Council activity, but other matters have also happened or progressed; so (in no particular order):-

The allotments are now fully commissioned, have their own water supply are completely tenanted and well used. We are now seeking a second site for some further plots.

The Bury Trust has two new Parish council appointees and is now being run in an efficient and constructive way in accordance with the original intentions.

A village orchard has been established on Middle green with plans for a further plantation at the recreation ground well under way.

Village of the year; We were fortunate (or excellent) enough to win this competition in 2011. After many years of participation our true quality and community spirit has been recognised; we are judged against larger communities with greater resources, and as such our achievements usually tend to be diminished. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Dick Woodward who has overseen our entry and made the presentation on our behalf for some time. We hope and expect he will again spearhead our entry for 2012.

The telecommunications mast at the recreation ground is still operational, albeit its' future is uncertain. We have secured a new rental agreement which should safeguard this important revenue stream at least for the short term future.

The budget meeting which determines the bulk of our income was held as usual in November. Costs are rising and the prevailing creed is "austerity" but there is a possibility that we will need to take on extra maintenance of footpaths with less funds being available from P3 / Groundwork Hertfordshire.

Following much debate the Council decided not to compromise village maintenance and raise the precept by a mere 3% to £27,500.

This is particularly important to us as it is our only income other than that generated by the aforementioned telecommunications mast.

Parish networking; we are represented at and attending meetings with other local communities with a view to discussing sharing and solving common problems.

Housing and planning are always contentious issues; we are consulted as a right on all planning applications most of which we comment on and after comparing with the *village design statement* waive through with little objection. However, major or new developments require careful consideration, we must balance public opinion with the needs and requirements of the village.

There is a proven need for some smaller or “affordable housing” within the village, and we are actively pursuing this objective; also there is currently a proposal for some units which are not commensurate with current policy and some public opinion.....we have a dilemma! Hopefully the ubiquitous parish plan will guide us. Having said this, there is a feeling that our views are only selectively considered and final decisions are taken by the planning authorities.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the above is a complete and fair reflection of the Councils’ activities over the past 12 months. 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 Clair Strong who are both of great assistance to us, 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 “Hertfordshire village of the year 2012”.

(similar to previous closing remarks but none the less valid for that)



PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Statement – 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012

An Income and Expenditure Account for the 2011/2012 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 set the following year's finances. The Council keeps a close check on expenditure at its monthly meetings and controls the budget carefully. At the budget meeting in November 2011, Councillors agreed that they wished to keep any increase in the precept as low as possible, as the District Council would again have to make cuts to its expenditure in the coming year. However, the Parish Council felt it had a duty to support certain village organisations with grants, provide some support for the Pirton Youth Council, and to finance the upkeep of the village in terms of grass cutting around the village, and grass cutting and Groundsman's work at the recreation ground. Councillors therefore felt that some increase would be necessary to help towards the costs of providing these. Following some discussion, it was resolved to increase the precept by 3% to £27,500, which in theory will result in a slight excess in income over expenditure for the year of £113.00. This modest increase in the precept, should also allow the Parish Council to meet its regular commitments during the coming year, as well as making grants to certain village organisations that has requested financial assistance. It was also decided to set aside a sum of money for the production of a new Parish Plan, as this was going to be an important document for determining residents' views on the development of the village. Funds were also set aside towards the production costs of regular newsletters.

Parish Council finances showed a loss during the year 2011 / 2012 amounting to £7,384. The two main reasons for this were:

1. A payment made to Veolia Water of £6,078 to cover the supply of water to the allotments. A lottery grant of £6,000 had been awarded to the Parish Council to cover this cost, however, the grant had been paid and taken into the accounts for 2010 / 2011.
2. A payment of £6,936 was made during 2011 / 2012 to cover the supply of the zipwire at the recreation ground, however a grant of £2,250 towards the cost had been received and taken into the 2010 / 2011 accounts.

A new contract has been negotiated with Everything Everywhere (Orange Mast at the recreation ground) and they are now paying a rent of £2,750

PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL - 2011/2012 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	2011/12	2010/11	
Balance b/f		37,177	31,031
<u>Income</u>			
Precept	26,700	26,180	
Grants	7,412	10,952	
VAT recovered	4,375	1,662	
Bank Interest	15	12	
Allotment rental	200	-	
Postcards	-	15	
Orange rent	2,440	2,725	
Parish Paths grant		974	
Donations	539	2,461	
Insurance Claims		-	
Sub-committees		2,334	
Miscellaneous	579	23	
Bonfire Night	2,699		
		<u>44,958</u>	<u>47,338</u>
		82,135	78,369
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Allotments	11,062	2,370	
Clerk's Salary & Office Expenses (1)	8,733	7,511	
Chairman's & Council Expenses (2)	3,589	1,056	
Village Maintenance (3)	7,644	10,412	
Insurance	2,991	2,750	
Audits	517	510	
Subscriptions and Donations (4)	767	882	
PWLB - loan on The Bury	693	693	
PSSC/Recreation Ground (5)	12,137	5,363	
Newsletters	-	292	
Notice Boards	-	17	
P Plan/Village directory		720	
Summer Fair		3,784	
Parish Paths	-	-	
Fireworks	3,199	2,327	
Grants			
St Mary's grasscutting	600	850	
Joycare	360	500	
Football Casuals	50	-	
Toddlers	-	80	
Playgroup	-	80	
Village Hall	-	200	
Methodist Church	-	500	
Youth		295	
		<u>52,343</u>	<u>41,192</u>
BALANCE c/d		29,793	37,177
less Reserve Account		8,747	8,742
less amounts set aside for projects		8,452	7,775
Working Capital		12,593	20,660

Please see reverse for breakdown of 1,2,3,4 & 5

2011/12

2010/11

Clerk's Salary and Office Expenses (1)

Salary	6,205	6203
Retiring Clerks Gratuity	1,392	0
Training	240	150
Office Expenses	360	469
Telephone	240	240
Postage	62	40
Stationery	235	409
	8,733	7511

Council Expenses (2)

Chairman's Expenses	77	125
Council Expenses	227	591
Room Hire	165	222
S137	17	33
Employers N I	0	85
Agents Fees (Orange Mast)	3,102	0
	3,589	1056

Village Maintenance (3)

Grasscutting	3,640	4435
Dog bins & emptying	756	1007
Street Cleaner and litter pickers	2,017	1934
Clock Maintenance	0	543
Clock Winding	0	50
Tree Warden	100	200
Parish Paths	558	558
War Memorial	0	0
Spring bulbs	326	100
Gt Green Bollards	247	-
Pond improvements	-	1230
Footpath clearance	0	355
	7,643	10412

Subscriptions and Donations (4)

HAPTC	567	567
CPRE	29	29
SLCC		106
Chiltern Society	25	25
Icknield Way		5
CDA (Herts)	30	30
NSALG		65
Pro-Action Youth	50	48
North Herts CVS		7
Nat. Society Allotment & Leisure	66	
	767	882

PSSC/Recreation Ground (5)

RoSPA inspection	158	155
Pest/Rabbit Control	0	75
Groundsman	2,398	3878
MUGA	647	610
Cricket nets	0	0
Seating	0	0
Litter clearance	0	0
Existing clubhouse	612	0
New Clubhouse project	0	0
Car park	0	0
Ditch clearance	0	395
Access road repair	0	250
Zipwire	8,323	
	12,137	5363

PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – Mr Nigel Brook

First and foremost I would like to thank and congratulate the Parish Council for all their hard work and achievements – sometimes I wonder if people realise how much the Council does.

Certainly from my point of view they are my eyes and ears and I know how much I rely on them as I have eight such Councils in my County Council electoral division.

From a County perspective we have continued to identify areas where financial improvements can be made. Needing to make savings of some £200 million pounds over four years, approximately £160 million has been identified and the last part will undoubtedly be achieved I believe, and I trust that Council tax will be unchanged for the fourth year running.

I have been able to contribute from my locality budget to Pirton through the Parish Council, and while £10,000 to cover eight parishes and Oughton does not go far, I hope every little helps in these difficult times.

The same comments apply also to the introduction of a new Highways locality budget of £90,000 which started in April 2012.

Finally, thank you to you all for your help and consideration as we continue our efforts to do the best we can for all.

Offa and Hoo Ward Police Report for 2011 – 2012

From :- PC Matt Jenkins

Please accept my apologies for not being able to attend the Pirton Parish Council AGM as I am not on duty this evening.

Crime figures for reporting period 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012 for both the OFFA and HOO wards once again show a marked reduction in crime to previous years . There was a massive 44% reduction in reported crime in the OFFA ward with Pirton playing a major part in the crime reduction figures . In Pirton there has been a reduction from 34 recorded crimes to 21 for the same recording period from last year to this which equates to a 38 % reduction in crime in Pirton. I hope you agree this is fantastic news.

Last year I had to report that there had been an increase in Burglaries and Thefts both in the North Herts towns and rural areas. Thankfully this trend has reversed with Burglaries and Thefts falling from 59 to 36 across OFFA ward and specifically from 20 to 11 for Pirton, which is a 45% reduction on last year.

Following the initial launch of the property marking scheme called SelectaDNA in the Kings Walden Parish the project was extended to the wider rural community. Warning signs stating that properties in the area are protected by SelectaDNA have been positioned about HOO and OFFA wards and I am sure this has contributed to the decrease in Thefts and Burglaries across the wards.

The Rural Intelligence Gathering System (RIGS pager system) is still in operation in North Hertfordshire. For a trial period subscribers are currently having the messages sent directly to their own mobile phones instead of the pager devices. If this proves to be a more successful way of transmitting messages it will mean far more people can be invited to join the scheme as we won't have the constraints of limited numbers of pagers to distribute.

On 22nd March a 'Barn Meeting' was held at Maydencroft Manor in Gosmore. Members of the North Herts Rural Policing Team were in attendance and our new Chief Constable, Andy Bliss came along to speak about rural issues and answer any questions put to him. There were representatives from Herts County Council, North Herts District Council and Fire Brigade as well as invited speakers who gave presentations on property marking crime / incident reporting. The event proved to be very well received and I intend to organize further similar events later this year and in the future.

Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to another year of working within the rural community.

Regards

Matt Jenkins