

DATCHWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

24TH APRIL 2018

At 8.00pm IN DATCHWORTH VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT:

Chairman – Mr C Wilkins

Councillors – Mr T Charles, Mr F Pearman, Mrs S Miller, Mr T Stowe,
Mr M Quarmby, Mrs J. Boakes, Mr M. Tebbutt, Mrs V. Marshall

In Attendance Mrs T Hassan (Clerk) & 14 local residents

1. **Apologies for absence** - None
2. **Introduction** - The Chairman opened the meeting and thanked residents for attending.
3. **Chairman's Report** –

The Plough Car Park

Greene King sold the Plough Pub in 2014. But seeing an opportunity they retained the western half of the car park across the road for development and subsequently obtained planning permission to build a house there (which DPC opposed). They then offered this development site for sale and over the next few months there were more than forty enquiries from hopeful purchasers. In each case DPC informed them that there was no access to the site without DPC's consent as to do so required crossing the Village Green for which we had the freehold. DPC opposed using the land for an additional house as this would worsen the existing parking issues adjacent to the village crossroads.

Anthony Hamilton then purchased the site speculatively and eventually approached DPC about access. When we met him we explored an option other than that of squeezing a house onto the site with the attendant parking issues that would create. We suggested DPC purchase the site from him and explained the plan we had in mind to which he was agreeable.

A very generous local resident had offered to finance the purchase of the car park land for DPC provided he could build a garage to house two cars there for his lifetime, after which the garage would revert to DPC's use - we envisage this being to store fete equipment or the like.

Our vision included teaming up with the owners of The Plough so that the whole site could be used for a well planned and constructed community car park. We first had to be sure we would get planning permission. Plans were submitted and neighbours consulted. We had originally thought to use the entire site for parking, but those adjacent to the northern end were not happy about this. Consequently we amended the scheme and deleted the spaces at the far end and moved the garage to the front of the site. East Herts Council approved this amended scheme with conditions in January of this year.

Following the grant of planning permission the donor passed the necessary funds to DPC and these were subsequently paid to Anthony Hamilton leaving the western side of the plot in DPC's ownership. The purchase was completed at the beginning of March this year.

The eastern side which is owned by the owners of The Plough will be leased to us at a peppercorn rent. Thus the two halves can be used in the scheme together. The owners of The

Plough have also generously agreed to share the costs of constructing the car park with our donor and to share the ongoing running costs of the car park with DPC for as long as it supports their businesses near the crossroads.

There is still much to do but the end result will have very good benefits. The Pub and Tea Shop (the latter shortly to reopen as “Datchworth Coffee”) will have off road spaces available for patrons, as will Bala’s shop on the corner. There will be a disabled user parking space with a pedestrian entrance in the south east corner of the car park nearest to Bala’s shop. During the rugby season at weekend daytime the car park will free up some parking on our roads, providing the equivalent of over 100m of kerbside parking. Secure bike parking will be provided and this could well become a good spot for cyclists to take a break and visit “Datchworth Coffee” and the other local facilities.

The above is no more than a quick summary of protracted negotiations over many months. A full report could easily fill four or five pages, but that would not be a very interesting read. So this is judged to be the salient points, enough for you raise questions, which we will be happy to answer.

Plough Car Park Plan



Local Plan

Little to report here while the inspector goes over the proposal made by East Herts to meet the government's house building requirements. Tony Charles and myself attended the most recent meeting where progress was presented to us. Datchworth is a group 2 village which means that only some infill would be permitted. Larger group 1 villages are required to accommodate more houses.

Neighbourhood Plans were also discussed, but were of greater importance to group 1 villages. The main benefit of a plan for us would be to determine the character of any given area and require any new build there to conform accordingly. The Parish Council has decided not to work on a plan at this time due to the resources it takes and the marginal benefit it would give for a group 2 village.

Nutcroft Play Area

Last autumn East Herts Council noticed that this area had no formal documentation showing ownership or responsibilities. However, there is no dispute that East Herts hold the freehold while we look after the site and the play equipment. They proposed a long lease of 40 years at a peppercorn rent. We have agreed to that and are currently waiting for details before signing.

While this formality does not change what we do, it has established this area as an open space with a future as opposed to infill development.

High Speed Broadband

Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, is delivering superfast broadband and local full fibre networks to the nation. But so far not for the 150 properties to be supplied via cabinet 7 in Datchworth. This has proved to be the most bureaucratic and frustrating of initiatives I have come across.

The cost of £21,597 to get all in place and working has been down to us to organise. By us I mean Wendy and she has put a great deal of time and energy into researching and getting it all sorted. Half the cost is being met by a schools grant and the remaining £10,798 by the BDUK Voucher Scheme. This is the bit that saps the will the live. Each household with a less than 2mb/s download speed is entitled to a £350 voucher to put towards the cost. Wendy has established that we have 41 such households totalling £14,350 which is more than enough.

The cabinet was erected in October, but there were delays getting a power supply to it. Then it was discovered that about 1.5km of the fibre pipe was blocked and broken. The engineers managed to clear some of the blockages, but a road closure was necessary to enable them to clear other blockages and replace broken pipes. However, the road could not be closed due to the redirection of traffic from the A602 works. Given how long these works are taking and will take we turned to our county councillor Ken Crofton to bring some bearing on Highways. To our thinking there is no rationale that links the 602 to the B197 and into New Road. So far Highways have not complied.

Sports Club

We meet with the club to discuss topics of mutual interest. Rugby parking usually features and this year had a few more red days than ideal. But having said that they do have an excellent scheduling system that can for example trigger an away game rather than home when needed.

The access road to the club was the topic in April. This of interest to the residents who also use the road. The Club announced that they would take on the total cost of maintaining the

road. Potholes would be repaired to a safe and reasonable standard as needed, but a complete resurfacing would not be made until four years from now.

The pond next to the club house was also discussed as it had fallen into a poor state. The Club were to clear it out and two adjacent sheds would be moved into the field on the other side of the track giving the pond greater prominence.

Access across Burnham Green

All our Greens have to be watched for unwanted intrusions or uses. As the freehold for Burnham Green is held by Herts County Council we have a close working relationship with their Estates officers for exchanges of information.

Lodge Farm

Two requests have been made:

- From the old house onto Harmer Green Lane. This one should not have too much impact as the length is short and the route is over a quiet corner of the green. The access has been limited to only the house and not the rest of the farm.
- From the field on the south east corner onto Orchard Road. This is to divert farm and commercial vehicles currently using the access from the crossroads. East Herts Planning have been alerted and planning permission will now be required.

White Horse Farm

The planning application has been approved and work has started on clearing the site for the four houses to be built there. The access across the green in this case was for a change of use to residential. A query has been raised on an additional access which may or may not be for 8, White Horse Lane. This is being looked into.

15, Orchard Road

In this case a new (second) gravel driveway appeared without any permissions. The owner asserted that there was an existing access within the last twenty years. Local knowledge said otherwise. The new driveway has now grassed over and the problem has gone away, but we have taken the precaution of getting a Statutory Declaration on the history here in case there is a recurrence.

Tina Hassan

I am pleased to welcome Tina as our new Clerk. She has a very hard act to follow, but she has made a good start and we wish her all the very best.

Wendy Prowle

After ten years of excellent service to the Parish Council as our clerk Wendy and her husband Martin have decided to move to Spain. We are sorry to see her go as she has made herself almost indispensable. Not only that, but she and Jane Walker's work on their book 'A History of Datchworth' was amazing. Very professional and well researched. She will be missed. Thank you Wendy.

The report was handed out to everybody present and the Chairman gave the opportunity for residents to read this through and ask questions if they wished. No questions were raised on the report, apart from those relating to the Plough Car Park, (see item 6).

4. **Financial Report** - 2 sheets were circulated to residents; one being the Bank Summary and the other a spreadsheet for the year end taken from the Budget 2017/18. The Clerk gave a verbal but brief explanation of each column. These are shown below:- No questions were raised.

DATCHWORTH PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS

01.04.17 TO 31.03.18

CASH BOOK/BANK SUMMARY

DATE	DETAILS	TOTAL
	Brought Forward Audit Account 2016/17	15,455.72
	Plus Total Income 2017/18	345,437.07
	Balance	360,892.79
	Less Total Expenditure 2017/18	308,233.73
	TOTAL BANK BALANCE CASHBOOK	52,659.06

BANK BALANCE

	TOTAL BANK BALANCE CASHBOOK	52,659.06
	UNPRESENTED INCOME	
	TOTAL ADJUSTED CASH IN BANK	52,659.06
	UNPRESENTED EXPENDITURE	
	ACTUAL CASH IN BANKS	52,659.06

CASH AT BANK

CURRENT ACCOUNT	6,671.27
SAVINGS ACCOUNT	45,987.79
	<u>52,659.06</u>

INCOME		Brought Forward	Budget 2017 - 2018	Total Available	Income To Date 31.3.18	Difference To Date	Comments
Items							
Carried Forward							
1	B/f - Trees & orchard	2,115		2,115	2,115		
2	B/f - Play Areas	3,583		3,583	3,583		
3	B/f - Parish Paths	59		59	59		
4	B/f - PAYE Tax/NIPension	34		34	34		
5	B/f - History Book sales/Xmas Tree	43		43	43		
6	B/f - Neighbourhood Plan	6,576		6,576	6,576		
7	B/f - Legal & Professional	1,306		1,306	1,306		
8	B/f - Contingencies	1,760		1,760	1,760		
9		15,450	-	15,450	15,450	-	
10	Bank interest		10	10	45	35	
11	EHDC Litter (Salary)		1,754	1,754	1,797	43	
12	HCC Grass		1,126	1,126	1,137	11	
13	EHDC Grass		1,748	1,748	1,772	24	
14	Welwyn PC - Burnham Green.		1,180	1,180	836	- 344	grass/trees/dog bin
15	Leisure Plots		300	300	255	- 45	
16	Leased Land		195	195	195	-	
17	Grants		750	750	750	-	NHB grant allocated to Neighbourhood Plan
18	Village Hall Excl VAT		-	-	2,246	2,246	
19	VAT Reclaimed		-	-	4,160	4,160	
20	Misc Income (water, roads, Wagtrams, refreshable deposits)		250	250	306,022	305,772	£500 to be allocated to legal fees below & £270k funds rec'd for purchase of Plough car park
		15,450	7,313	22,763	334,664	311,901	
21	Precept		26,223	26,223	26,223	-	
22	TOTALS FOR INCOME	15,450	33,536	8888	360,887	311,901	
EXPENDITURE		Brought Forward	Budget 2017 - 2018	Total Available	Expenditure To Date	Difference	Comments
Items							
23	Grass (Kirkham & Sports Club)		8,200	8,200	8,256	56	
24	Maintenance - Burnham Green		2,200	2,200	1,671	- 529	grass & trees, WPC to reimburse 50%
25	Maintenance-Litter		1,720	1,720	1,703	- 17	
26	Maintenance - Trees & Orchard	2,115	500	2,615	1,990	- 625	
27	Maintenance - Play Areas	3,583	500	4,083	170	- 3,913	
28	Maintenance - General		500	500	1,096	596	Village sign repairs
29	Maintenance - Dog Bins		800	800	950	150	Includes purchase of new dog bin
30	Clerk's salary + Exps		7,100	7,100	7,472	372	excess due to changeover of clerk during the year
31	Misc. Admin (data, servers, bank charges)		350	350	467	117	
32	PAYE Tax/NIPension	34	670	764	741	- 23	
33	Legal & Professional	1,306	3,483	4,789	6,925	2,136	£500 to be allocated from misc income above
34	Audit fees		450	450	350	- 100	
35	Insurance		1,140	1,140	1,151	11	
36	Village Hall Grant		2,500	2,500	2,500	-	
37	Village Hall Repairs (Excl. VAT)		-	-	2,246	2,246	reimbursed above
38	Elections		-	-	-	-	
39	VAT Costs		-	-	4,993	4,993	also £1006 to be reclaimed from 2017/18
40	Parish Path's	59	-	59	-	- 59	Incl. Income from map sales & grants
41	Neighbourhood Plan	6,576	750	7,326	-	- 7,326	
42	Plough Car Park		-	-	264,495	264,495	Purchase of Plough car park from funds rec'd above
43	Xmas Tree	43	-	43	176	219	
44	Misc. Costs		500	500	880	380	incl. contribution to defibrillator at Burnham Green
45	Contingencies	1,760	2,173	3,933	-	- 3,933	
46	TOTALS FOR EXPENDITURE	15,450	33,536	8888	308,232	259,246	
47	INCOME LESS EXPENDITURE	-	-	-	52,655	52,655	

5. **The East Herts District Plan** - Cllr. T. Stowe reported that this would be signed off mid June/July

6. **The Plough Car Park** - (RQ = residents' question) (CA = Councillors' Answer – Cllr. T. Charles)

Cllr. T. Charles opened the discussion by reiterating that the Plough Car Park has 2 ownerships; the left hand side is the Parish Council's and the right hand side is the owner of the Plough. He also reported that the Pub will have use of these car park spaces during pub hours. He explained that the bottom 4 bays are for restricted usage and posts will be in situ from 8pm-8am. Cllr. T. Charles said, subject to agreement, byelaws would be put in place to help control the management of the car park and also talked about a Car Park Management Plan to be realised, to take into account some parking

when rugby was on. However, it was felt that the employment of staff was not a necessary measure to control this. He clarified that the car park includes a garage and 8 spaces for bicycles.

- RQ:** What will the back space be used for? **CA:** Garden & planting.
RQ: Will the lighting be down lighting? **CA:** Yes and no more than 6ft high.
RQ: How will the car park be controlled at night? **CA:** Either a chain or gate to close at night
RQ: How about abandoned vehicles being left? **CA:** The DPC would monitor this closely
RQ: What is the timescale of this project and when will it be finished?
CA: As soon as time permitted, tenders will be sought and it is anticipated that the work will be completed by April 2019.

Cllr. S. Miller did highlight the point that it would be better for the Car Park to be open at night, if it Meant that residents would leave their car parked instead of driving home after a drink.

AOB: Open floor for public discussion and questions (RQ = residents' question)

RQ 1: What will be done about the large pothole in the Village Car Park which has arisen due to the joining of the new cottage manhole to the existing cottages' manholes but not made good. It also appears that the builder has not sought permission to do this.

ACTION Chairman: Will follow this up

RQ 2: How can we stop the footpaths getting boggy and muddy by the end of Green End Barn?

CA: Cllr. T. Stowe reported that there used to be a pond there previously, hence this could be a reason for being boggy, especially after rain. **ACTION Chairman: To bring up at a Parish Meeting**

RQ 3: Flooding within the village was raised, including Watton Road pond where the flooding issues have now been sorted but severe damage has been caused to the barrier between the pond and highway. Cllr. T. Stowe encouraged everybody to report potholes/flooding on the Highways Fault Reporting website, obtain a reference and this can then be escalated by Ken Crofton.

ACTION Cllr.T. Stowe to report Watton Road barrier to Highways.

Question raised via email to Cllr.T.Stowe – a resident of Raffin Green was concerned at the poor state of some of the play equipment at the Turkey Farm recreation ground and felt it needed a serious revamp.

ACTION: Review of Play Area at Turkey Farm to be brought up at a Parish Meeting

Meeting closed at 8.30pm

The Chairman formally thanked Wendy Prowle, previous Clerk, for her dedication and hard work for the last 10 years to the Parish and community and presented her with a special edition hardback copy of the Datchworth History Book, which she and Jane Walker worked on and also a book, with comments from the Village residents.

The Chairman had written an 'ode' for Wendy which he recited

Both residents and Councillors applauded Wendy and greeted her afterwards