

St Michael Parish Council

Minutes of the **Meeting of St Michael Parish Council**

held on Tuesday 16th January 2024

at the School Room, rear of St Mary's Church, Childwick Green, St Albans

Present: Councillor D Meachin, Chairman
Councillor E Rolfe, Vice Chairman
Councillors E Rose, S Slaughter and R Woodward
Mrs J Reading, Parish Clerk

In attendance Councillor D Mitchell, Redbourn Ward District Councillor
Mr Ian Hawking and Mr Jeremy Peet, local residents and prospective candidates for co-option to St Michael Parish Council
Mr Malcom Hull, Chair of the Hertfordshire & Middlesex Branch of Butterfly Conservation

01/2024 WELCOME

Councillor Meachin opened the Meeting with a welcome to all and he introduced the guests. He suggested taking the Planning Applications item of the agenda at the Residents' Forum, and all were in agreement.

02/2024 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

03/2024 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

04/2024 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 12th September 2023, as previously circulated but with two non-material changes (made manually) were unanimously AGREED as a true record, and were signed by the Chairman. Proposed Cllr Rolfe and seconded by Cllr Slaughter.

05/2024 PUBLIC FORUM

- i. Mr Hull had attended the Meeting in order to offer his views on some of the ecological impact of planning application 5/2023/2112, for which the Parish Council Members were very grateful. See below for the Minute for this item, with the other planning applications at 09/2024.
- ii. Mr Hawking informed the Parish Council that he had spoken to a rough sleeper in the south bound bus shelter on the Harpenden Road. That person's presence had been noted in previous Minutes in March 2022 & Jan 2023, and he had recently returned. He spends the night there, leaving no belongings in the shelter when he departs, and he is friendly. Mr Hawking had advised Streetlink, and a Safer Streets Outreach Worker from the St Albans charity Outdoor had responded with assurances that they are aware of this individual and his sleep location, and that he was being offered support by them.

06/2024 POLICY DOCUMENTS REVIEW

In the rolling schedule of review of the Parish Council's policy documents, the following were considered:

- i. Finance regulations
- ii. Freedom of information
- iii. Grants and donations

Proposed by Cllr Meachin, seconded by Cllr Slaughter and unanimously AGREED, amendments to these policies were currently considered unnecessary. For the avoidance of doubt, the maximum amount that may be paid as a single grant or donation, would remain at £250.00 until the next review in January 2025. The maximum overall amount available was not set as there was no experience of demand.

07/2024 CLERK'S SALARY

- i. It was noted that in November 2023 the National Association of Local Councils had published details of the national pay award for the sector, to be backdated to 1 April 2023. It was AGREED that the Clerk's pay from that date would be adjusted in accordance with the award, and the new rates would continue to apply until such time as the 1 April 2024 pay award was settled.
- ii. It was AGREED that the Clerk's pay point detailed in the contract of employment remained appropriate and no change to it had been suggested.

Unanimously APPROVED after proposal from Cllr Meachin, seconded by Cllr Rose.

08/2024 FINANCES & CHEQUE PAYMENTS

- i. The following schedule of payments was RECEIVED and APPROVED, following proposal by Cllr Meachin seconded by Cllr Rolfe:

Date	Cheque	£	Payee	Covering
16-Jan-24	000598	£ 216.00	D Bray	Bus shelter report
16-Jan-24	000599	£ 110.00	M Carter	Sept/Oct maintenance
16-Jan-24	000600	£ 663.27	J Reading	Clerk salary Q3
16-Jan-24	000601	£ 147.68	J Reading	Clerk expenses Q3

- ii. The Chairman agreed to scrutinise at a later date the bank reconciliation prepared by the Clerk.
- iii. A table showing actual expenditure to 31 December 2023 and projected figures to 31 March 2024, alongside a budget forecast for 2024/25, had been circulated before the Meeting and was RECEIVED. There were no queries.
- iv. The estimated income and expenditure under all headings for the year commencing 1 April 2024, as attached to these Minutes, was APPROVED unanimously.
- v. Proposed by Cllr Meachin and seconded by Cllr Rolfe, it was RESOLVED that the Clerk be instructed to submit a Precept request to SADC in the sum of £4346.00 for the year commencing 1 April 2024, an increase of 5%. The difference between the Precept request and the estimated expenditure for 2024/25 would be met from the Parish Council's reserve funds.
- vi. The re-appointment of Mr Alex Sage as the Internal Auditor for the purpose of the Annual Governance and Accountability Review due at 31 March 2024 was APPROVED unanimously, having been proposed by Cllr Slaughter and seconded by Cllr Rose.

09/2024 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- i. **5/2023/2112 , Centurion Club** Hemel Hempstead Road, HP3 8LA - Provision of 10 additional holes to the existing 18-hole golf course.

SADC had authorised an extension of the deadline for comments should the Parish Council wish to make a submission on this application.

It was noted that Verulam District Councillor Edgar Hill had called in the application, which showed the intended felling of some 1,600 trees to build an extension to the course. A date for consideration by SADC's Planning Committee had not been set.

Over 700 comments had been made to SADC. While a number of these were in support, the perceived majority were objections, among them representations from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the Ramblers' Association, and Butterfly Conservation – Herts & Middx Branch (BC).

Mr Hull, representing BC, spoke about the woodland wildlife found in Potters Crouch Plantation, among them the White Admiral (*Limenitis Camilla*) butterfly. On the GB Red List, it is classified as Vulnerable, and is listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, so should be afforded a high degree of protection. BC's view was that the removal of many trees in this key breeding area, one of only two in Herts, would effectively remove most or all of the habitat which sustains this population of White Admiral.

Members had seen a document dated 23 September 2023, prepared by an architectural practice, on behalf of a development firm with Centurion Golf Club, "to support their representations to the St Albans Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18), seeking an allocation for a retirement village at the Centurion Club". It is the Parish Council's understanding that the purpose-built facility described would involve the loss of an area of playable course roughly equal to the extension currently being applied for.

It was also noted that the Tree Officer for St Albans had stated that no site visit had been made, and had written the opinion: "The nature of the site is that it is heavily managed and manicured, while there is a significant amount of trees being removed they are only seen from within the site and not subject to any statutory protection. No objection to the proposals".

After considerable deliberation, it was proposed by Cllr Rolfe, seconded by Cllr Woodward and unanimously AGREED that the Chairman would write a letter of objection to SADC, primarily based around the ecological and wildlife concerns.

ii. New applications made to SADC since September 2023

The following planning applications and decisions were RECEIVED, and NOTED without comment

SADC Ref.	Application
5/2023/1928 Valid From 10/10/2023	The Walled Garden Gorhambury St Albans Listed Building consent – Repair and stabilization works including re-pointing, replacement of defective brickwork, replacement of concrete copings and finials, removal of iron fixings and re-building of buttress piers
5/2023/2373 Valid from 07/12/2023	1-4 Childwick Green Childwickbury St Albans AL3 6JJ. Replacement windows
TP/2023/0660 Valid From 13/12/2023	11 Shafford Cottages Redbourn Road AL3 6LB Rear garden trees T1 – Silver Birch – Remove to ground level as the tree is dead/dying. T2 – Oak – Reduce by 33% to maintain its health, stop it growing too large for its environment and to allow more light to enter the garden and house.
TP/2023/0663 Valid From 08/12/2023	9 Childwick Green Childwickbury AL3 6JJ Grid ref: TL14308 10889 Grid ref : TL143108 See plan Oak 921-Reduce crown by a maximum of 4m. Oak 922-Fell Dead tree exempt Oak 923-Monolith at 6m leaving lower growth Ash A-Fell See covering letter
5/2024/0018 Valid From 08/01/2024	Childwickbury Manor Childwickbury AL3 6JX Certificate of Lawfulness (proposed) works to a Listed Building – The NW corner of the Grade II listed walled garden has been cracking and moving for many years and was fitted with a timber prop some 20 years ago due to safety concerns.

iii. SADC Planning decisions since September 2023

SADC Reference	Application	Decision and date
5/2023/1387 – Valid From 10/07/2023	Shafford Barn Redbourn Road St Albans AL3 6LB Single storey rear extension	5/1/24 DC3 Conditional Permission
5/2022/1517 Valid From 16/06/2022 <i>NB, no longer in St Michael Parish</i>	Land Between 84-108 Ragged Hall Lane Chiswell Green St Albans Construction of seven detached dwellings with new access, boundary treatments and associated works	October 2023 – appeal dismissed. Appeal ref App/B1930/W/23/3320280 Original decision 27/01/2023, DC4 Refusal
5/2022/1847 Valid From 22/07/2022	Land At Appspound Lane St Albans Change of use of land to Class B8 (open storage) to create 9 open storage compounds, retention of access control cabin, construction of toilet block, installation of fencing and gates, vehicle parking, refuse storage and associated works	17/11/2023 DC4 Refusal
5/2022/2077 Valid From 15/08/2022	Land Adj 1 Pimlico Bedmond Road Pimlico Hemel Hempstead Consultation only – Outline application: Construction of 1 detached two-storey, three-bedroom dwelling including formation of new access to Bedmond Road (appearance, landscaping and scale as reserved matters)	NB, missed previously - Particulars show “no decision on file” as at 13 January 2023
5/2022/2209 Valid From 10/10/2022	Land Adj 1 Pimlico Bedmond Road Pimlico Hemel Hempstead Outline application (access and layout sought) – Construction of detached two storey, three bedroom dwelling including new access to Bedmond Road	13/11/2023 DC4 Refusal
5/2022/2479 Valid From 09/11/2022	Shafford Fields Redbourn Road St Albans Installation of six time-restricted manege lights (retrospective)	01/12/2023 DC3 Conditional Permission
TP/2023/0449 Valid From 05/09/2023	Whitehedge Redbourn Road St Albans AL3 6LB Separate documentation for works to be carried out and report. Work schedule summary: T1 Oak lift to 5m and shorten heavy lateral limbs. T2 Hawthorn lift to 5m & reduce crown by 40%. T3 Hazel. Coppice. T4 Field Maple lift to 5m and cut clear of building	Tree Works in Conservation Area – Deemed Consent 16/10/2023
TP/2023/0596 Valid From 08/11/2023	Childwick Green House Childwickbury AL3 6JJ T1 Lime (extensive decay in stem) – Fell.	20/12/2023 Tree Works in Conservation Area – Deemed Consent

iv. Older applications made to SADC still outstanding (noted at previous meeting(s))

SADC Reference	Application	Decision & date
5/2023/1094 – Valid From 30/05/2023	1- 2 Beesonend Cottages Beesonend Lane Harpenden AL5 2AA Part two storey part single storey rear and side extensions, demolition of existing garage and conversion of existing outbuilding into habitable room (resubmission following refusal of 5/2022/2464)	Awaited
5/2023/1505 – Valid from 14/07/2023	Childwickbury Manor Childwickbury St Albans AL3 6JX Certificate of Lawfulness (proposed) – The careful dismantling of the wall and salvaging of bricks to the offending corner only. Casting of a new structurally appropriate foundation. Re-building of the wall using the same lime mortar (following analysis	Awaited

10/2024 ST ALBANS & DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (SADALC)

The minutes of SADALC's October meeting had been made available before the Meeting, and the January minutes had only that day been published. The Clerk had brought paper copies of both meetings for perusal this evening, and, with Cllr Mitchell, also gave a brief summary of the proceedings on 8th January. The Clerk hoped that a representative from St Michael would come forward to attend the next meeting, to be held on 8th April 2024 and hosted by Redbourn Parish Council.

11/2024 MEMBERS' DISCUSSION TIME

i. Matters arising from previous minutes:

Re 78/2023 Littering The Chairman reported that the purchase of litter-picking accessories had been delayed while he had been in discussions with his contact who organised collections at Toulmin Drive open spaces. The need was in fact for trollies and the Chairman proposed that he pass on a suggestion that a grant application be made, for consideration at a future Meeting. This was agreed unanimously

Re: 78/2023 Bus Shelters Report The Clerk had recently received the report about the condition of the three bus shelters, and passed on its recommendation that a preservative treatment be applied to the interior. There were also some minor maintenance suggestions, and Cllr Woodward pointed out that he believed he had seen evidence of some recent woodworm activity. The budget already made provision for work of this nature to be carried out, and the contractor would now be asked to add the jobs to his schedule.

Re 78/2023 Toulmin Drive sports field The Chairman asked for an amendment to be made to this Minute to describe the condemned building correctly as the William Bird Pavilion rather than "small hut".

The Clerk reported that no reply had been received from the enquiry to Green Spaces at SADC about plans for the demolition of the Pavilion. Further enquiry to SADC's contractor John O'Conner, revealed that they also awaited instructions from SADC.

Concerns were expressed about the vulnerability of such buildings to vandalism. This item would be followed up before the March Meeting.

- ii. **Re Parish Council archive** Cllr Rose reported that she had been given a sizeable quantity of papers by the family of former councillor and Chairman, Peter Limebear, whose sad death was recorded in May 2023. She hoped that the Clerk might help in sifting through the papers for anything of note for the Parish Council to preserve. The Clerk said she guessed that the bulk would be duplicates of papers already in the Council's possession, but that she was willing to have an initial look to make an estimate of the time this might take overall, and the storage space needed.
- iii. **Re A1081 cycle path** Cllr Meachin was happy that the long-overdue upgrade to the cycle path had taken place, but was puzzled that the section between the two entrances to Childwickbury remained unimproved. The Clerk would try to find out why.
- iv. **Re A5183 road safety**, In a discussion about road safety, Cllr Mitchell mentioned that a 50 mph speed limit was being trialled between the roundabouts north of Batchwood and south of Redbourn High Street. While welcomed in itself, Members expressed disappointment that average speed cameras had not been included in the trial.
- v. **Re Harpenden Rural division County Councillor** Cllr Mitchell suggested that Cllr Dr Allison Wren, who had been elected in the Harpenden Rural District By-election on 7 December 2023, might be approached by the Parish Council to lend weight to a campaign for further road safety measures. It was agreed that Cllr Wren should be invited to the March Meeting.

12/2024 CASUAL VACANCIES FOR MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

There were two vacancies for co-option to St Michael Parish Council. Two candidates, Mr Ian Hawking and Mr Jeremy Peet, had provided statements of their interest prior to the Meeting, and were eligible by their listing in SADC’s Register of Electors. Each confirmed that he was willing to continue, and the Chairman thanked them for their applications. The candidates left the room while the appointments were considered, with Cllr Meachin proposing and Cllr Rose seconding that both Mr Hawking and Mr Peet be co-opted to the Parish Council. This was agreed unanimously and RESOLVED. Upon returning to the meeting, Mr Hawking and Mr Peet both accepted and were warmly welcomed by the Chairman and other Members. Acceptance of office forms were signed and received by the Clerk, and declaration of interests forms were promised to be returned in due course.

The Clerk would advise the new Members about training resources available.

13/2024 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

14/2024 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Clerk’s note: This point was not covered at the Meeting itself, but it had been minuted in September 2023 that the March date would be Tuesday 19th March 2024, at 6.30 p.m., at St Mary’s Schoolroom.

15/2024 CLOSURE

The Chairman thanked all for attending. The Meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.

Chairman Date