

St Michael Parish Council

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

held on Tuesday 28^h May 2024

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

Present: Councillor I Hawking
Councillor D Meachin
Councillor J Peet
Councillor S Slaughter
Councillor R Woodward
Mrs J Reading, Parish Clerk
Mr D Gaskin, local resident
Mr A Cowley, Account Director, Meeting Place] *for item minuted*
Mr D Wilson, Planning Manager, Cala Homes] *at 46/2024 only*

38/2024 TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE ENSUING COUNCIL YEAR AND RECEIVE A DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE

The first business being to elect a chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing Council year, Cllr Meachin (Chair in the previous year) called for any nominations for this office. He proposed Cllr Hawking who said he would be pleased to accept, hoping that his previous experience as a Borough Councillor, including sitting on planning committees and navigating his way around local authorities would be of benefit to the Parish Council. Seconded by Cllr Woodward, the appointment was unanimously APPROVED. Cllr Hawking signed the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

39/2024 TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE ENSUING COUNCIL YEAR AND RECEIVE A DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE

The new Chairman called for nominations for the office of Vice Chairman, for which Cllr Meachin volunteered. Seconded by Cllr Peet, the appointment was unanimously APPROVED. Cllr Meachin signed the Vice Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Hawking thanked Cllr Meachin for his hard work & dedication as Chairman, and for his leadership skills which he would do his best to emulate.

40/2024 TO APPOINT ANY REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

- i. Cllr Hawking expressed his willingness to attend meetings of the St Albans & District Assoc. of Local Councils (SADALC), subject to other commitments;
- ii. Cllr Hawking volunteered to be nominated for Hertfordshire Association of Parish & Town Council's (HAPTC's) consideration, in June, for a place on its Executive Board;
- iii. After some discussion it was agreed that a representative would be appointed to attend St Albans District Council's (SADC's) Planning Committees on a case by case basis, but with this role falling to the Chairman if no other Parish Councillor were nominated.

These appointments were unanimously APPROVED.

Cllr Hawking took the opportunity to remind Councillors that any external representation is to be on the agreed viewpoint of the Parish Council, and only one Councillor will be appointed to represent those views on any given occasion. However a Parish Councillor may still comment, or address a committee, in a personal capacity.

41/2024 TO CONSIDER ANY SUBSCRIPTIONS FALLING TO BE PAID ANNUALLY

The Parish Council formally APPROVED in principle the following payments arising annually, which had also previously been included in the annual budgeting process:

- Subscription to HAPTC – cheque raised at March Meeting, ref. minute 26/2024
- Public Liability etc. insurance premium (June 2024)
- Subscription - St Albans & District Assoc. of Local Councils (SADC) (July 2024)
- Registration fee - Office of the Information Commissioner (March 2025)

42/2024 TO INSPECT ANY DEEDS AND TRUST INVESTMENTS IN THE CUSTODY OF THE COUNCIL AS REQUIRED

None.

43/2024 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

44/2024 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Cllr Hawking said he would declare an interest in the later planning applications item.

The Clerk distributed forms to Members to renew their declarations of pecuniary interests.

Cllr Hawking advised he had clarified with the SADC Solicitor that if Parish Councillors wished to withhold their address from the public record, they may do so by noting 'address within the district' or words to that effect.

45/2024 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2024

Circulated soon after last Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 19 March 2024, its Minutes were unanimously agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

46/2024 PUBLIC SESSION WITH CALA HOMES

CALA Homes was represented by their Planning Manager, accompanied by a public relations adviser, and had been invited to visit after the presentation given at the previous Meeting by the local campaign group CLASH. The Chairman allowed a period of questioning by Members and one local resident present.

The representatives spoke principally about the housing development of a Metropolitan Green Belt (GB) site east of the A1081, just outside the Parish Council boundary, which had received conditional planning consent in 2022 despite strong local opposition.

CALA Homes was keen to emphasise that their current intention was to build fewer units than the maximum number permitted under the consent. However it was confirmed that this site forms part of a much larger potential development, albeit on land not in their ownership.

CALA Homes agreed that the affordable housing price range was dependent on the local market and that in the St Albans area the threshold was very high. They also confirmed that their proposed allocation of affordable housing, 40%, would be split between shared ownership and affordable rent through housing associations, but without any social rent units.

CALA Homes had secured development rights for this site and as such implied that it was irrelevant to consider the wider impact of piecemeal erosion of the GB.

Members asked about the viability of some of the large number of the reserved matters, and conditions attached to the consent, particularly on traffic capacity and flow. CALA Homes appeared to remain confident that they would all be fulfilled.

It was stated that CALA Homes would make a payment of ~£1.8million towards the provision of local infrastructure.

Upon questioning, it was revealed that CALA Homes' claim of a biodiversity 10% net gain would not necessarily be bound to the development site, but measures could in practice be devolved to other parts of the St Albans district through financial settlements by the developer.

CALA indicated at the meeting that they will conduct a second public consultation, on the proposed changes to the A1081 to facilitate the delivery of the circa 1km cycle lane.

The Chairman thanked the CALA Homes representatives for their attendance. They said they had been grateful for the opportunity to visit, and would be pleased to answer any subsequent questions

47/2024 ACCOUNTING PROCESSES FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024

The year-end accounts had been circulated to Members some weeks in advance of this Meeting, and an opportunity to inspect the set of forms for the 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) had been given at the Annual Parish Meeting.

The report of the Internal Auditor, Mr A Sage, was RECEIVED.

With Cllr Hawking proposing, seconded by Cllr Slaughter, it was agreed unanimously and RESOLVED:

- i. To note that the Internal Auditor's report confirmed that the financial processes and controls had been in order throughout the year
- i. To approve the accounts pack for the year ending 31 March 2024 and to have its items signed by the Chairman.

48/2024 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024

The Annual Governance Statement was considered. Cllr Woodward proposed, seconded by Cllr Slaughter, to approve the statement, dated 28 May 2024, and have it signed, having recorded an affirmative response to all sections. This was agreed unanimously and was RESOLVED.

49/2024 ANNUAL ACCOUNTING STATEMENT YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2024

The Annual Accounting Statement was considered; it was noted that the figures from the year-end accounts had been correctly entered. Cllr Woodward proposed, seconded by Cllr Slaughter, agreed unanimously: it was RESOLVED to approve the statement, dated 28 May 2024, and have it signed.

50/2024 CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION FROM A LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW

It was noted that the gross income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024 qualified the Parish Council for exemption from a limited assurance review under section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015.

Cllr Woodward proposed, seconded by Cllr Slaughter and agreed unanimously: it was RESOLVED to authorise the signing of an exemption certificate for the year, dated 28 May 2024, to be returned to the appointed External Auditor.

51/2024 PUBLIC RIGHTS PERIOD 2024

It was agreed that the statutory annual period in which electors and interested persons may exercise rights to inspect the financial records would be set to run from Monday 3rd June to Friday 12th July 2023 inclusive.

52/2024 PUBLICATION OF AGAR DOCUMENTS

It was agreed that the annual accounts and all AGAR documents as approved above would be published on the Parish Council's website.

53/2024 CONSIDERATION OF GRANT APPLICATION(S)

Some weeks prior to the Meeting the Clerk had circulated an application on behalf of a local litter-picking initiative, "Saturday Pickers". The group was represented at the Meeting by Mr D Gaskin, its lead volunteer, who expanded on the application.

The project was commended unanimously and it was RESOLVED, with Cllr Meachin proposing and Cllr Woodward seconding to approve a grant of £199.00, for purchase of a metal storage cage to hold the collected rubbish awaiting its removal. As this purpose differed from the original application, a replacement form would be required. The payment was added to the cheque list below for authorisation.

54/2024 REVIEW OF INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Clerk advised that the current tied five-year contract with Aviva would expire on 31st May, which gave an opportunity to obtain other quotations. At present the quoted Aviva premium remained competitive and the recommendation was to renew, but on a standard 1 year policy at £349.33. The payment was added to the cheque list below for authorisation. It was noted that a further review would be conducted in May 2025.

55/2024 CHEQUE PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was RECEIVED and APPROVED:

Date	Cheque	£	Payee	Covering
10-Apr-24	000607	£284.30	HAPTC	2024/25 subscription
28-May-24	000608	£180.00	G Reading	Website upgrade
28-May-24	000609	£150.00	M Carter	On account 2024 season bus shelters
28-May-24	000610	£30.00	HAPTC	Finance training Cllr Hawking
28-May-24	000611	£153.97	J Reading	Expenses Q1
28-May-24	000612	£602.56	J Reading	salary Q1 (post-dated to end June)1
28-May-24	000613	£199.00	J Mallinson	Grant application
TBA	000614	~£10.00 TBA	SADALC	Expected - annual subscription due July
TBA	000615	TBA	HAPTC	Expected – further councillor training
28-May-24	000616	£349.33	Clear Insurance Management Ltd	Annual premium

56/2024 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- i. Details of the following planning applications and decisions dealt with by SADC since the previous Meeting were RECEIVED and noted without comment unless otherwise stated. Cllr Hawking refrained from commenting during this item.

<p>TP/2024/0238 - Valid From 10/05/2024 Childwickbury Stud, Stud Lane AL3 6JA T1 - Horse chestnut - Reduce limb at 9.5 m height south overhanging stables by approximately 4 m to suitable growing point just after fork. Remove the main leader of scaffold limb at 9 m height southwest and reduce to suitable secondary branches in line w</p>	
<p>5/2024/0722 – Valid from 29/04/2024 4 Beesonend Cottages Beesonend Lane Harpenden AL5 2AA Single storey side extension with three rooflights and raising of roof height to match existing rear extension. Four new rooflights to rear.</p>	
<p>5/2024/0681 - Valid From 18/04/2024 Gorhambury House Gorhambury St Albans Hertfordshire AL3 6AH Discharge of Condition 13 (copy of building recording) of 5/2022/1214 dated 21/11/2022 for listed building consent of Variation of Condition 2 (approved plans) for various internal alterations including alterations to layout, staircases, doors and firepla...</p>	
<p>5/2024/0483 - Valid From 19/03/2024 Batchwood Hall Batchwood Drive St Albans AL3 5XA Change of use of Batchwood Hall from nightclub (sui generis) to restaurant, bar, hotel, wedding and function venue (sui generis), including internal and external refurbishment, creation of dining terrace, garden, rationalisation of plant areas and associa..... <i>Members saw this as a positive development and found it pleasing that this historic venue had attracted investors willing to take on its restoration.</i></p>	
<p>5/2023/2373 – Valid from 07/12/2023 1-4 Childwick Green Childwickbury St Albans AL3 6JJ. Replacement windows <i>There was general support for this decision. It was hoped that any re-application for the replacement windows would propose the use of more sympathetic materials.</i></p>	<p>Refused, 03 May</p>

<p>5/2024/0018 – Valid From 08/01/2024</p> <p>Childwickbury Manor Childwickbury AL3 6JX</p> <p>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....</p>	<p>Approved 21 May</p>
<p>5/2024/0699 - Valid From 23/04/2024</p> <p>Gorhambury House Gorhambury AL3 6AH</p> <p>Discharge of Condition 5 (parking provision) of planning permission 5/2020/0420 dated 28/08/20 for Conversion to three dwellings, conservation and restoration of interior and exterior.</p>	<p>Approved 22 May</p>

- ii. It was noted that the following cases had previously been reviewed by the Parish Council, but still awaited decisions by SADC:

<p>5/2023/2112 – Valid From 17/11/2023</p> <p>Centurion Club Hemel Hempstead Road Hemel Hempstead HP3 8LA</p> <p>Provision of 10 additional holes to the existing 18-hole golf course.....</p> <p><i>The Parish Council commented. To date, SADC has not set a Committee date for a decision.</i></p>
<p>5/2023/1505 – Valid from 14/07/2023</p> <p>Childwickbury Manor Childwickbury St Albans AL3 6JX</p> <p>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....</p>

57/2024 ST ALBANS & DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (SADALC)

The minutes of the meeting of SADALC on 8th April 2024 had been made available. The next meeting would be in July, and the Clerk would circulate the agenda on behalf of SADALC in due course.

58/2024 COUNCILLOR RESIGNATION

Members had previously been told of Mrs E Rose’s letter of resignation dated 19th April, now read aloud. It was noted that the Clerk had reported the resignation to Electoral Services at St Albans District Council (SADC), and the statutory notice period of the casual vacancy had expired, opening a second vacancy to be filled by co-option.

The Chairman wished to record sincere thanks to Mrs Rose for her support and dedication to the Parish Council since 2011. It was proposed by Cllr Woodward, seconded by Cllr Hawking and RESOLVED that a gift be chosen and sent to Mrs Rose as a token of St Michael Parish Council’s esteem and gratitude, with an amount agreed of £50.00.

59/2024 MEMBERS’ DISCUSSION TIME

The following updates and matters of interest were discussed informally:

- i. Planning enforcement – it was reported that SADC had told an equestrian facility in the Shafford area that its installation of manege lighting requires a retrospective planning application. At a different site, manege lighting appeared to be used outside the hours stipulated by the conditions of the retrospective consent granted. These sites would be monitored.
- ii. A1081 cycle path – Members noted with gratitude that Cllr Dr Allison Wren had facilitated the approval of funding to continue the upgrade. A commencement date had not yet been agreed.
- iii. Community engagement – the Clerk had created a facebook page for the Parish Council, and would arrange for administrator access to be given to Cllrs Hawking and Peet.

- iv. The Clerk passed on news that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has introduced a new national network for very small local councils, and St Michael's interest in participating had been registered.
- v. It had been observed that files downloaded from SADC's planning portal often appeared to be in image format, and thus not searchable unless text recognition software was available. The Clerk would ask SADC about its policies in this regard, including for accessibility.
- vi. Policy reviews - work on these documents would be carried out over the summer, for consideration at the September Meeting:
 - Following the recent publication by the NALC of a new model version of Finance regulations, the Clerk would be recommending a review of the current document.
 - Members also expressed a wish to review the parameters and limits of the Grants and Donations policy;
 - It was noted that the Clerk had suggested the introduction of a Gifts and Honours policy. The initial reaction was that this would be unnecessary, although some research would be conducted for the next Meeting.

60/2024 APPOINTMENT TO CASUAL VACANCIES AT THE PARISH COUNCIL

It was noted that SADC Electoral Services had confirmed that both of the casual vacancies recently created at St Michael may be filled by co-option.

Ms Gee Smedley had submitted a statement prior to the Meeting, and although unable to be present, she confirmed by telephone during the Meeting that she was willing to stand.

Mr Damian Gaskin also confirmed his interest in the role and answered questions from Members.

Both candidates were asked to step outside the Meeting; it was then unanimously agreed that they be invited to join St Michael Parish Council; RESOLVED after proposal by Cllr Meachin, seconded by Cllr Peet. Ms Smedley (by telephone) and Mr Gaskin (in person) both accepted and were welcomed as new Members. The Clerk would arrange with them soon to complete the paperwork and commence an induction.

Members were made aware of a potential third candidate, who was not present at the Meeting and had not yet made any type of application to date. Members were keen to encourage this person to come forward at a future date.

61/2024 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

62/2024 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next Meeting would be set for Tuesday 17th September 2024, at 6.30 p.m. The Chairman did note the possibility of an extraordinary Meeting being called before then, should any significant planning application matter arise over the summer.

63/2024 CLOSURE

The Chairman thanked all for attending, and the Meeting closed at approx. 8.55 p.m.

Chairman Date