

St Michael Parish Council

Minutes of the **Meeting of St Michael Parish Council**
held on Tuesday 17th September 2024
at the School Room, rear of St Mary's Church, Childwick Green, St Albans

Present: Councillor I Hawking Councillor D Meachin
Councillor D Gaskin Councillor J Peet
Councillor G Smedley Councillor R Woodward

Mrs J Reading, Parish Clerk
Ms C Curtis, local resident and potential candidate for casual vacancy
Two other local residents
Mr E Saunders] representing St Albans School
Mr J Martin-King] *up until end of the item*
Mr D Flynn] *minuted at 69/2024*

64/2024 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

65/2024 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

66/2024 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 MAY 2024

Circulated soon after last Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 28 May 2024, the Minutes were unanimously AGREED as a true record to be signed by the Chairman.

67/2023 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2024

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th May 2024 were reviewed and were considered to be a true record. These Minutes will be presented for formal approval at the next Annual Parish Meeting in May 2025.

68/2024 PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES

- i. A budget review at 30 September 2024 had been circulated in advance and was NOTED.
- ii. A bank reconciliation at 31 August 2024 had been prepared and was available for scrutiny.
- iii. Proposed by Cllr Meachin and seconded by Cllr Woodward, it was RESOLVED that the current banking mandate, for both the current and business reserve accounts should show the following changes in signing instructions:
 - The removal of three past-serving Councillors, Elizabeth Rolfe, Elizabeth Rose and Susan Slaughter;
 - The addition of five new Authorised Signatories, Ian Hawking, Jeremy Peet Damian Gaskin, Gee Smedley & Clare Curtis;
 - Retaining current signatories Rod Woodward and David Meachin, and in all other respects the current mandate will continue as amended. .
- iv. The following schedule of payments was RECEIVED and APPROVED unanimously:

Date	Cheque	£	Payee	Covering	
01-Jul-24	000614	£10.00	TBA	SADALC	Confirmed - annual subscription due July
01-Jul-24	000615	£68.00	HAPTC	HAPTC	Confirmed – New councillor training
14-Jun-24	000617	£199.00	J Congdon	J Congdon	Replaces destroyed cheque 000613
14-Jun-24	000618	£100.00	J Reading	J Reading	Advance on q2 expenses
17-Sept-24	000619	£252.00	M Carter	M Carter	2024 season bus shelters (to 31-08-24)
17-Sept-24	000620	£202.52	J Reading	J Reading	Expenses q2 incl. £100 advance
17-Sept-24	000621	£602.56	J Reading	J Reading	salary q2
TBA	000622	£34.00	HAPTC	HAPTC	Pre-authorised new councillor training
TBA	000623	<£200.00	M Carter	M Carter	Pre-authorised to cover remainder season

69/2024 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT WOOLLAM PARK

The Chairman invited representatives of St Albans School and their Woollam Park professional team to give a presentation about their developing masterplan and scoping opinion application to SADC, 5/2024/1257 - Land between Sandridgebury Lane, the railway & Harpenden Road. *NB, this site is close to but not within the St Michael boundary.*

The content of the presentation and subsequent question and answer session is summarised in an appendix to these Minutes.

The Chairman concluded this session by thanking the team from Woollam Park very much for attending and said the insights had been useful. The visitors and two members of the public departed.

70/2024 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- i. 5/2024/1257 It was AGREED unanimously to approve the response sent to SADC before the deadline of 14/08/2024, representing the Members' informally agreed comments on this a proposed development close to but not within St Michael's boundary.
- ii. 5/2024/1306 - Valid From 26/07/2024 & 5/2024/1497 – Valid from 30/08/2024 Barn North Of Shafford Farm Redbourn Road. Prior Approval - Change of use of building on an agricultural unit to residential (Class C3). Members discussed these applications noting they were for the same site but made separately under both new and pre-existing permitted development rules for conversion from agricultural to residential. No formal comment to be made to SADC.
- iii. Details of the following planning applications and decisions dealt with by SADC since the previous Meeting were RECEIVED and NOTED without comment:

5/2024/0942 - Valid From 31/07/2024 Tennis Courts At Batchwood Sports Centre Batchwood Hall Batchwood Drive AL3 5XA. Construction of a padel tennis facility with canopy.	Awaited
5/2022/1847 - Valid From 21/07/2022 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	Appeal Lodged Date 16/05/2024, ref. App/B1930/W/24/3344506 original refused 17/11/2023
5/2024/0483 - Valid From 23/05/2024 Batchwood Hall Batchwood Drive 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	06 Sept 2024 DC3 Conditional Permission SADC's planning committee 02/09/2024
5/2024/0681 - Valid From 17/04/2024 Gorhambury House Gorhambury 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	07 Jun 24 Refused
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	19 Aug 2024 DC3 Conditional Permission

5/2024/1003 - Valid From 11/06/2024 Gorhambury House Gorhambury AL3 6AH Discharge of Condition 13 (building recording) of listed building consent 5/2022/1214LB dated 21/11/22 for Variation of Condition 2 (approved plans) for various internal alterations including alterations to layout, staircases, doors and fireplaces of list	06 Aug 2024 Discharge of Condition - Approved
TP/2024/0238 - Valid From 09/05/2024 Childwickbury Stud Stud Lane Childwickbury 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	03 Jul 24 Tree Works in Conservation Area - Deemed Consent

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

5/2023/2112 – Valid From 17/11/2023. Centurion Club Hemel Hempstead Road, HP3 8LA Provision of 10 additional holes to the existing 18-hole golf course..... <i>The Parish Council commented. To date, SADC has not set a Committee date for a decision.</i>
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... <i>Clerk’s note post meeting: The application was refused 17 September 2024.</i>

71/2024 CASUAL VACANCY AT THE PARISH COUNCIL

It was noted that SADC Electoral Services had confirmed that the casual vacancy arising from the resignation of Cllr Slaughter (see 76/2024) may be filled by co-option.

Ms Clare Curtis confirmed her interest in the role and had submitted a statement which had been circulated. She was asked to step outside the Meeting while her candidacy was considered, and it was unanimously agreed that she be invited to join St Michael Parish Council; RESOLVED after proposal by Cllr Peet, seconded by Cllr Hawking. Ms Curtis accepted and was welcomed as a new Member. The Clerk would arrange a meeting soon to complete the paperwork and commence an induction.

72/2024 POLICY DOCUMENTS REVIEW

In a review of the Parish Council’s policy documents, the following were considered:

- i. Grants and donations, last reviewed January 2025. Members had asked for the Grants and Donations policy to be considered again ahead of its scheduled review date. It was agreed that the content of the clauses and application form did not require amendment, subject to the correction of some evident typing errors. However it was agreed that the monetary limits would be raised, with immediate effect, to allow a maximum grant and donations allocation in any one financial year of £500.00, but retaining £250.00 as the maximum amount payable for each separate application.
- ii. Gifts and Awards policy. New,
 - ii. Gifts and Awards policy. New, September 2024. Further to the previous meeting, the Clerk advised that parish councils commonly had a published policy about awards and gifts, and suggested that one be introduced at St Michael. The draft policy presented by the Clerk was unanimously agreed.

- iii. Finance regulations, last reviewed January 2025. A new national model had recently been published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), intended as a base for councils to develop their own regulations, suitable for the size of the council and the activities it undertakes. Content in bold indicated legal requirements, which a council cannot change or suspend. The Clerk had drawn up a customised draft for the Parish Council's own circumstances, which was deemed by Members to be generally appropriate, although they wished to reflect further on elements such as the authorisation limits included. The Chairman called for a volunteer to study the proposed regulations in greater depth and to report back at the January Meeting for a final decision. Cllr Curtis offered to take on this task.

73/2024 CONSIDERATION OF GRANT APPLICATION(S)

None

74/2024 NOTICE OF CLERK'S RETIREMENT

Members had received prior notice from the Clerk of her intention to retire by May 2025.

The Parish Council recognised that the Clerk's job had become more onerous and time consuming over the last several years, and that the current contract needed to be uplifted.

The Clerk offered to help the Parish Council to develop suitable terms and conditions for a successor, within the national framework for local government employees. Cllr Smedley suggested that the Parish Council accept recommendations based on a job description the Clerk had recently drafted and a detailed summary of work undertaken in the approximate three months since the previous Meeting. It was agreed that the Chairman and Clerk would meet to refine these items and get a recruitment process underway, with a view to making an appointment with an adequate handover period.

It was noted that HAPTC offer free recruitment advertising. The Chairman also confirmed that if the vacancy were to remain unfilled by the next Annual Council Meeting in May 2025, arrangements would be made for a locum Clerk to be appointed.

75/2024 COUNCILLOR RESIGNATION

Members had previously been told of Ms S Slaughter's letter of resignation dated 21st June.

The Chairman wished to record sincere thanks to Ms Slaughter for her unwavering dedication since March 2006, noting also that the Slaughter family's connection with the Parish Council stretched over three generations. It was proposed by Cllr Woodward, seconded by Cllr Hawking and RESOLVED that a gift be chosen and sent to Ms Slaughter as a token of St Michael Parish Council's esteem and gratitude, in line with the recently adopted Gifts and Awards policy.

76/2024 VISIT BY COMMUNITY POLICING REPRESENTATIVE

The visit would be rescheduled as Police Sergeant Simon Totten had to attend at a local incident.

77/2024 ST ALBANS & DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (SADALC)

The minutes of the meeting of SADALC on 1st July 2024 had been made available. The next meeting would be at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 30th September hosted by St Michael. The Clerk would circulate the agenda on behalf of SADALC in due course, and all Members will be welcome to attend.

78/2024 MEMBERS' DISCUSSION TIME

The following items were discussed:

- i. Re 46/2024, CALA Homes - Development r/o Harpenden Road. It was noted that the amount of "s106 monies" mentioned at the previous meeting could not be substantiated at this stage of the development as a number of key factors remained unknown. CALA Homes had promised that the Parish Council would be informed when public engagement would be sought on the upgrades to Harpenden Road, and also if any further events are planned.

- ii. Re: 59/2024
 - The Clerk reported that the inaugural meeting of NALC’s new national network for very small local councils had been attended, with the next due early October. She had given feedback to NALC about the type of topics she would like to see covered.
 - The Chairman and the Clerk had met County Councillor DR Allison Wren and some local residents in July to explore possible traffic calming measures at Potters Crouch. The meeting had been productive, with very recent news from Cllr Dr Wren that new road markings were now scheduled.
- iii. Discussion about advertising for a new Clerk led into how to gain a wider outreach. Cllr Smedley suggested producing a simple flyer for hand-delivery to households. The Chairman said, with all in agreement, that this was an attractive idea with costs expected to be minimal. Cllr Smedley volunteered to co-ordinate suggestions, such as including a Christmas message, and would draft a proof for later agreement of the content by email.
- iv. It was reported that the bus shelter at Childwickbury (A1081 north bound) had been quickly and successfully repaired after vandalism in late July, with thanks due to the regular maintenance contractor. The matter had been reported to the Police.
- v. The Clerk gave a brief explanation of the split of the parish into North and South Wards since SADC’s Community Governance Review took effect in 2023. Councillors appointed to one Ward could not simply swap to represent the other, although a transfer could be achieved if a more complicated statutory process were followed. The Clerk recommended maintaining the status quo until the next election in 2027.
- vi. Members were reminded of SADC’s Remembrance Sunday commemorations, if any were able to attend. Further details available on request.
- vii. Cllr Gaskin had been liaising with SADC about the problems with the playground, toilet and parking facilities at Toulmin Drive, which continued to cause concern to local residents. He contrasted the very few litter and dog waste bins here with, for example, the c. 30 bins provided at Clarence Park.
Cllr Gaskin’s offer to continue to lead the Parish Council’s enquiries in this matter was accepted unanimously.
Progress in SADC’s timetable for the demolition and replacement of the William Bird Pavilion had evidently slipped, and the Clerk was asked to request an update.
- viii. The idea was raised of the Parish Council taking a more active part in the management of, for example, playground facilities. This would be a major departure from the Parish Council’s historic responsibilities, and would require careful research and consideration. It was agreed that in principle the concept may be explored at a later date.

Matters deferred:

- Planning enforcement - Cllr Peet had left the Meeting shortly before this item.
- A local resident who had wanted to tell the Parish Council about a new Climate Ecology Bill had been unable to attend the Meeting.
- A review of new councillor training and re-exploring an on-line banking arrangement were also deferred owing to pressure of time.

79/2024 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

80/2024 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was AGREED that the next Meeting would take place on Tuesday 14th January 2025 at 6.30 p.m.

81/2024 CLOSURE

The Chairman thanked all for attending, and the Meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.

Chairman Date

APPENDIX TO MINUTE 69/2024 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT WOOLLAM PARK

The material presented by the visitors was similar to that displayed in a meeting organised at SADC and attended by Cllr Peet in August, as well as on the Woollam Park's own website <https://woollampark.co.uk/>.

The proposals were for c. 1,000 residential and community buildings, including 40% "affordable" housing, a care home and later living accommodation, adult disability and learning difficulties unit and, they hoped, eventually a 2-form entry primary school. A medical centre was also a possibility but without a hard commitment. Some facilities would be transferred when built to be run by e.g. Hertfordshire County Council.

The site was the larger portion of an area said to have been identified for development by SADC in its emerging Local Plan, with a smaller allocation already having secured outline planning permission from SADC by a separate developer, CALA Homes, under 5/2021/0423.

The Parish Council focussed on the transport and access provisions in the proposed development, noting that there would be a single entrance and exit point from the new estate onto the A1081, and that Sandridgebury Lane would be closed to all traffic beyond St Albans Girls' School, except for emergency vehicles (to be detailed in an eventual full planning application. The bus 653 would be extended into the estate at the start of its circuitous route to Welwyn Garden.

While in agreement with the principle of creating more sustainable travel links, knowing the area as intimately as they did, the Parish Councillors failed to understand how the transport plan would operate effectively. They believed there was zero capacity for extra traffic along the already over-burdened A1081, and invited the visitors to observe this section of road for themselves at peak times. They thought that the transport plan contained insufficient motivation to alter attitudes and behaviours away from private car journeys outside the estate, knowing of parents who in fear of their safety would never allow their families to cycle on local roads.

There was no data about the levels of external traffic coming in, such as for employment or people using the facilities proposed.

Additional notes from Cllr Smedley

Woollam Park team had arranged public consultations, 180 people in total at both events. 101 at New Greens and 79 at St Albans Arena.

Retention of ancient woodland strip at SE edge; green spine (play area/common area) –

No mention of flood issues.

Link to Heartwood. Walking and cycling route; should also link with the Cala Homs development on adjacent site.

Sandridgebury Lane to be repurposed over time; eventually closed after a phased buildout - "long term". Valley Lane to be stopped. Seen as a priority in Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Focus on smaller housing units, 3 rather than 4 beds. Community centre: nursery, community building, shops, discussing a potential for a medical centre with integrated care board (smaller than High Oaks). Suspect, will be 3/4 storeys. Plus downsizing units. 4/5 adults with disability units.

Mobility hub: promote sustainable travel. Out of cars and onto bikes/walking/buses.

Council talking about incentives such as 6 month free bus pass.

The 653 bus service may (will?) reroute. 321 route to stay as is, due to it being seen as a faster service.

Monitor and managing system on roads, to stop rat running issue. But no management of current rat runs. Series of interventions. No space for new roads.

Modal shift: realistic needs to be key driver...work is ongoing. Working above and beyond HCC's multi-modal transport model (COMET) which is unrealistic in its trip expectations.

Having to do a lot of work off site to make sure schemes are deliverable due to the issues with Cala/Sewell Park.

Woollam Park's junction with A1081 will be a controlled junction. I.e traffic lights.