

Colney Heath Parish Council



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**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
THE COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL
& CELEBRATION OF THE DIAMOND JUBILEE 60TH YEAR
THE SPECIAL DEDICATION OF THE TYTTENHANGER GREEN
HERALDIC VILLAGE SIGN
HELD AT THE CHARLES MORRIS HALL TYTTENHANGER
ON THURSDAY 19TH APRIL 2007 AT 6.30pm**

Present;- Cllr's Reeves Chair-Cllr Rump 60th Anniversary Organiser –
Cllr J Day Cllr D Crump-Cllr J Henschley-Cllr D Horner

District Councillor- Cllr J Day (also a Parish Councillor's CHPC)

St Albans City;- The Worshipful Cllr Alison Steer (and dedication of sign)

Member of Parliament;- Anne Main MP (St Albans Constituency)

St Marks Church; - Reverend James Spanner (and blessing of sign)

Clerk & Assistant Clerk;- Mr J E Dean & Mrs Kim Parker-Mead

Public Attendance- 38 members of the Parish attended the meeting and a total of
118 attended the buffet supper quiz and celebrations after
40 Attended the dedication of the Tyttenhanger Sign

Table Top Displays & information provided by the following organisations;-

Treasure Tots Pre School:-Carolyn/Debbie/Karen- Pre School education-2.5/3.5 yrs
Lafarge Aggregates :-Static Display and visual on Gravel Extraction and workings
Colney Heath W.I :-Mrs Nancy Taffs & Mrs Stoker
Cllr J Day & Cllr Rump:- Photo Archives of "Old Colney Heath"
CMS St Albans :- Rachael Kean-Cattle Grazing show at Furze Field C/Heath
Twinning-Boissy St Yon:- Patsy Howard
Earthworks :-Anne de Bock

APOLOGIES

Mr J Ely Highfield Trust, Mrs Margaret Corley past Chair, Cllr Brian Lee County
Councillor "the Colneys." St Stephens PC- London Colney PC.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed the worshipful Mayor Cllr Alison Steer and opened the meeting
He reminded everyone to take a moment to view the information and displays from
all the various local groups and other organisations set out in the hall.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2006

Copies of the 2006 minutes were available to each person attending, the Chairman summarised these were then approved as correct;-

Proposed By Cllr Day

Seconded by Mr Peter Scott

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising

3. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN Cllr P Reeves

My thanks go out to all who have attended this special occasion. The Worshipful Mayor Cllr Alison Steer, and her consort The MP Anne Main-fellow District and Parish Councillors fellow parishioners ladies and gentlemen and other members or local organisations present to day. This is a very significant occasion it is our 60th Anniversary and we are both pleased and proud to mark the occasion. Our thanks also to Cllr Rump for organising a few surprises we have yet to enjoy, so I hope you will all join me after this speech when the worshipful Mayor will dedicate our new sign on the green followed with a blessing from the reverend James Spanner.

I became Chairman in February and may possibly be the shortest serving Chair of Colney Heath as due to elections my serving the council will only last until May. However continuing the work by Cllr Rump from 2005-6 the new elected chairman in 2006-7 was Cllr Corley who took office in the May that year and served this parish for nearly 9 months before moving away to be nearer to her big family at Redbourne. As a result of that the Parish Council elected me as Chair in February and until May.

During this year we have also lost another member Cllr Hall who acted as a liaison between the football Club and council and also gave invaluable advice about the opens spaces and other community projects in the village. May I add my personal thanks and that of the Council as both members served this Parish well.

We do owe a great deal to Cllr Corley the past Chairman, one of the main organisers of the Village Plan, back in 2004. Her work as Chair of the Treasure Tots Pre School, the Community Friday shopping bus and a stalwart of St Marks Church congregation A very positive and community spirited lady. Who once elected quickly set about getting some grants for the play areas that were so desperately needed. She seized every opportunity to get grants or raise money for the children's benefit. As a result of her efforts the play area in Roestock Park has had a BIFFA Award grant of £14,000 with another £7,000 added by the parish council to refurbish and replace the old equipment for more energetic and safer play. We will be continuing the work on Roestock Park. As it is our intention to make a disabled access with new style DDA gates at each end of footpath to Roestock Lane with a new crushed concrete path to allow less able persons to access the open space from the Roestock Lane end without the need to go all the way round via Hall Gardens and Fellows lane. We know this is a popular park often with grandparents joining or taking their family children into play on the swings or enjoy the open space.

During Cllr Corley's year as Chair, I am reporting to you about other more serious matters and the removal of the commons trespass issue which cost this council a great deal of money. It had to be pursued it was not an option and the lesson learned is that we will not tolerate any violation of our common land. The illegal caravans were removed and finally disposed in December last after the statutory legal period we had to store them having remained unclaimed. We now hope the matter is closed This area of the common is a flood plain and it is not suitable for residential use or mobile homes or caravans. Subsequent planning applications have failed and we will oppose any further plans, we wish to see the land revert back to an open space and

water meadow. Foot path 17 should also be restored by Rights of Way soon as it had become contaminated by illegal waste from the site. Whilst on the subject this council consider we have quite enough Gypsy sites in this area and the controversial reports such as Scott Wilson must take account of that fact with any new proposals by the East of England Regional assembly, or other Government bodies. District Councillor Brazier who has continued to fight hard on this has public ally stated we have 42% of the Hertfordshire Gypsies living in or around the St Albans district, no more please!

Many organisations like our 60th also celebrate significant anniversaries, The Boissy Twinning with 25 years. The Scouts and Guides in their 30th year and the Football Club a has this year a very significant centenary. Next year the Village Hall will be 70 years since it was built in 1938 by voluntary labour. May we wish all of these local groups many more happy and very successful years? We also have to extend thanks to Cllr Rump and the office staff for putting together this evening plus the many willing helpers with the catering and food preparations. Whilst on the subject don't forget you can buy a commemorative mug or crystal glass engraved tumbler on the table top displays. Sorry but Cllr Rump said I had to put that in as a plug.

We see a great deal of pressure on this area to build new homes and it has made a great deal of local people extremely concerned. Figures of up to 5000 new homes by 2021 and very little in the way of supportive infrastructure. This is a subject we are continuing to campaign on and we know support is given by our MP Anne Main in the House of Commons. Anne incidentally is with us to night. Every planner and minister at all levels has had a very strong and clear message delivered opposing this level of new build here. Also at District level our Portfolio Holder and local Parish and District Councillor Chris Brazier has kept up the pressure for a clearer plan with emphasis on provision of Roads, Schools and Hospitals first. Less new homes in our district and retention of the Green Belt. Sites such as BAE and Radio Nurseries, plus Glinwells all a threat to link St Albans with Hatfield, which Cllr Brazier has fought a very strong campaign against at district level. He has the full support of the parish council on this.

Highways and the poor state of our roads has been another issue that we have been seeking better attention at County level. In October 2006 we invited the Highways Partnership to come to our meeting where we presented them with pictorial evidence of the problems from un-cleared ditches, flooding, pot holes and worse. We continue to put pressure on improvements to the A414 which figures very low unfortunately in the Hertfordshire list of priority stands at 124. We want this brought forward as we feel this is a major trunk route cross linking to the A1M it deserves a high priority to get an-over-or-underpass. Cllr Brazier has sought to get the school crossing to the JMI improved and we are of the understanding that a sum of £70,000 is to be spent on improvements. The re-surfacing of the High Street and traffic calming measures are priorities for HHWP we consider extremely important.

Whilst on the negative and nuisance subjects we have seen a slight lessening of the fly tip problem in hot spots of Barley Mow Lane, Highfield Lane and Warren Track. We have been putting immense pressure on the police and district council to take more positive action by catching offenders on CCTV or by vehicle search. New Acts of Parliament the Clean Neighbourhoods Act 2005 is a new piece of legislation can give them the powers to prosecute the offenders, the fines are very heavy if caught and a prison sentence possible. We want some stop and search as well to catch the offenders plying their trade of offering getting rid of rubbish to householders for cash. Evidence sometimes found from the fly tip suggests out of district addresses and we feel the householder should receive an equal fine to stop this offensive practise. He added that we had requested this at the Community action group meetings

Community and Public Safety

During this year we have instigated frequent meetings with the local police and established the community or neighbourhood action groups known as C/NAG. We are fortunate that Colney Heath is a relatively crime free area save for the recent but one unfortunate and very frightening incident at the local post office which was a targeted gang crime from persons who came from outside the area.

Last year the council funded a summer holiday youth project "Sports in the Park" where for an hour one afternoon children could play various games and encouraging exercise. We used a portion of our Youth Budget to fund this project. This proved popular and we have asked for a repeat next year if the district continue the scheme. We are also hopeful that a Youth Club can be started again with involvement from the YMCA at Highfield. A "Larks in the Parks" arts festival is promised for 1st July in Roestock Park aimed at families, all free, a part of St Aibans Art & Music Festival.

This area has also been focused by the district council in order to improve facilities and housing provision by partnering the housing associations.

In April 2006 we started a part time graveyard keeper to look after the area with grass mowing and general tidying, by increasing hours and providing new equipment. I am sure all will agree we have seen a significant improvement in there. It should be also noted St Marks have generously contributed a sum towards the employee costs.

We consider our budgets carefully each November in order to prepare our costs and expenses expectation for the forthcoming parish year. This helps to set the parish precept and give us guidance on the level of services and facilities we can provide. The Clerk will give you all a short presentation after and explain the provisions we have made in the forthcoming parish year 2007-8.

The community Pre School is very popular with local parents and we have good staff to run this facility, we are very proud of the success it is now entering its fourth year. With the aid of Government funding for all three year old children your parish council consider this as important for both social and educational benefit to local parents and children. We have every intention to continue supporting this community provision.

When I became Chairman in February this year, one of the first matters we debated was the 60th Anniversary of the Parish Council and this evening is the result of some of the events we planned in 2007-8. We hope the colour addition to the Chronicle has met with approval, our idea being that with many local associations and committees having significant anniversaries too it gives more opportunity to have some photos printed of the various yearly events. We thank our Editor Dave Rodway for his ideas and help in putting this together. It is intended to have all four issues in colour and higher quality paper throughout this 60th year. So make sure you keep the editor fully informed of the events that are going on in the village and get them published. We are also planning to re-vamp the Web Site during this forthcoming parish year and Dave Rodway will be helping us here, we intend to create an interesting site that has links to other information points, as doctor's opening times, transport, and events. The parish council meetings current and past agenda's and minutes will all be made available to view. Your comments will be invited good or not so good, the parish council are very democratic, welcome all points of view, with open and transparent opportunities for all.

This past year along with the BIFFA Award we managed to get further grants to fund the work at Community Park, you have no doubt all seen the hedge layering. This should look very neat and will mature by the summer as the hawthorn grows dense.

Countryside Management and District Council all contributed £2000 each- we also matched the sum from the reserves spending £6000 in all. A celebration will be held on 6th June as "TEDDY BEARS PICNIC" starting at 12 noon for two hours and aimed at the local schools and children to have a picnic in the grounds.

We have also opened up the river banks of the "Ver" to allow improved regeneration of the river bed by letting in more light. Willow and other trees had badly encroached the bank and past maintenance and coppicing had not been done as regularly as it should have been. This is an area we hope can be used for school walks and picnics in the summer or a place to relax and take families to with safety. It has some very interesting flora and fauna identified by CMS who drew up a management plan and helped us get the £4,000 from the total £6,000 cost. A new field gate and disable access gate will be installed shortly and hopefully in time for 6th June picnic.

We have continued our work plan on the common where we have adopted a five year plan again assisted by CMS to coppice and thin some trees. Also to clear the fern and other species that would soon take over if not controlled. We have plans to graze on the Furze Field or Warren as some of you may know it as. The DEFRA plans are well underway and each year we receive a small grant under the rural payments scheme that go towards the work each year. Only last Sunday if any of you came along, we have had a display with cows and an information tent by CMS, the details of which you can see again on the table top presentations in the hall. If you have any comments to make about this there is a form you can fill in. What we intend is grazing from May to October in that part of the common which is about 7 acres, a part of Hertfordshire quite unique in it's SSI (special scientific interest) by getting a local farmer to use the land. That way we can help the proliferation of the gorse and heather whilst eradicating the weed and sapling growth that is spreading. Control now is essential otherwise it will completely take over and destroy the amenity.

Now on to the Tyttenhanger Sign, we are very grateful to welcome the Mayor Allison Steer who is to perform the dedication and Reverend James Spanner a blessing after this meeting. I hope you will all walk across the road to join in the celebration. The sign was commissioned by the parish council and dare I say it from a design that I won so I had better declare an interest! We think it enhances the entrance to the village and Tyttenhanger Green, I am sure you will all agree.

Finally may I thank my fellow councillors, for their hard work in this council which this May comes to an end with the impending District and Parish Council Election? Strangely we already know the result as we have an uncontested election this time and six councillors will remain plus one new co-opted member Cllr Dennis Horner. This will leave two more vacancies for co-option after the May elections. So if you think you would like to serve on the council then please advise the Clerk. May I also thank Cllr Clarke who has decided to step down as both a parish and district councillor after four years service with Colney Heath Parish- At district level his place was taken up last year by Cllr Jamie Day who we are pleased to see continue with us as a Parish Councillor as well-a very hard working one at that!

I must also not forget the keen staff that look after our parish gardens, mow the grass and commons collect the litter keep the graveyards clean and well kept. Also our administration staff back at the office who keep us informed of all the legislation and various orders we have to comply with. Codes of conduct play an important part of council life and standards we all have to diligently take responsibility for. They have a very shrewd eye and keep us all on the straight and narrow with a careful operation.

Thank you all for listening, I hope that we have delivered the services you expect, we have represented your views, and we have maintained your village within the limited powers and finances that we have at our disposal. I thank you very much.
So I will hand over to the Clerk John Dean to tell us more about the finances and how it all works for the parish and the community.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2006-7 Clerk to the Council John Dean

Good evening to Worshipful Mayor Cllr Allison Steer, MP Anne Main, members of the Council, the parishioners, electors and guests invited to this 60th year. I found a copy of the past minutes of the 40th Anniversary; the Clerk at that time was the late Dudley Woods a formidable gentleman with a wealth of local history and intrinsic knowledge. He fell to an unfortunate circumstance whilst walking in Madeira and never was seen again. I understand he had already served 30 years in local authority work by 1987 the time of the 40th anniversary, a man of some long experience in public service. It is interesting to note that the precept at that time in March 1987 was set at just under £37,000.00 with a payroll of £12,000 for the part time staff. To day just for the comparison very different twenty years on at £135,000 precept, a combined turnover with grants incomes plus the business of Treasure Tots of gives us around £220,000 to manage with 15 staff and a payroll approaching £85,000. It is also worth noting that Dudley had fought a battle at the county offices that on 29th January 1987 the question of ownership of Tyttenhanger Green had a judicial review. Dudley was there to prove that under the 1906 open spaces act and the 1965 commons registration act the small parcel of land-216/U/82 should be ours. It is amazing to think twenty years after that time we are here to celebrate this day with the fine new sign and the dedication and blessing. For me never knowing or meeting the man I am sure he would approve and be grateful of the efforts of Cllr Reeves and others on the council in what they have achieved to mark this significant day. It is also worth noting that the same March 1987 issue of the Chronicle where I gathered information it mentions the gypsies, the high court putting pressure on the local authority to provide sites in this area. The expansion of the Barley Mow sites as well as Park Street and Red bourn. It all seems very familiar to me; it is true- history does repeat itself.

Now let me turn to the matters of finance;-

I can report to you confidently that the parish council finances are in good shape for this past year 2006-7 and for the forthcoming year 2007-8 as well.

As the responsible financial officer along with the duties as your Clerk I can further add that the model of financial control that was implemented when I started here as a consultant in 2003 has proven reliable. We have over the following years since put in a degree of fine tuning and adjustments and I am satisfied we have a system that is running well and produces the correct results.

Your council budgeted in the parish year 2006-7 to spend £140,000.00 you can see clearly from the results that I will read out to you we actually finished up spending a sum of £157,000.00 after we closed the books on 31st March 2007- the end of that particular financial year. The additional spend of revenue can easily be explained as it is not a deficient. Can I just add that figures at this stage are provisional as we are to have an internal audit in June to verify the sums for end of the financial year?

The reason for the increased spending is easily explained that the Chairman spoke about the refurbishment of Roestock Park, which we received a grant from Biffa but which still has to go through the books and when we budgeted it was not considered. You recall again in the Chair speech that Cllr Corley went out and got this arranged. The parish council contributed over the grant sum of £14,750.00 and in all £27,000 was spent on the play area and new disabled access paths. So this should help to explain the additional £17,000.00 spent. We also had a backlash of legal issues and

the disposal of caravans illegally parked on the common by trespass of gypsies. The costs relating to the disposal of the illegal parking of caravans, bailiff and court fees added to our non budgeted costs. Regrettably I have to inform you that they have returned again to a pitch at Roestock Lane but this time they are on the highway and the problem of the county council the powers of removal rest with them. The issue has been reported to the authorities at County Hall and I expect the stay will be short lived after county have checked any statutory rights and welfare conditions.

Since I have been your Clerk I have instigated a twice yearly audit check to ensure that all of our systems are correct, it is good practise and essential with the sums of public monies we handle. I have to say it is robust and would clear any scrutiny. We more that comply with the regulations for medium size councils. This year we set our precept at £135,000.00 we considered fair in order to provide the local services you have come to expect. This is an increase of just under 4.7% on last year. A typical band D property can expect to pay an extra £54.00 on last year for the parish. It is my feeling that we can expect to see that interest rates will increase rates along with higher than target inflation figures over the next year from the present government. This reflects on costs and services that we engage and hits our budgets as well.

Grant Aid

In this financial year we will award just over £17,000 to your local organisations to help with maintaining finances or improvements either to buildings or other costs as part of our community involvement. Some of which are council owned assets and need some financial help from this council. The Charles Morris Hall is one such organisation and we can see how the building improvements are being spent. We have no issue with assisting the projects that benefit the wider community and are easily identified as worthwhile. Any application to receive Grant Aid is asked to provide details of the project in advance and breakdown of the costs supported by a financial statement and copies of accounts. Other grants were to Twinning in their 25th year and The Old Friends Club also Treasure Tots Community Pre School, this year with all 26 places taken and a strong waiting list for September.

Special grants

We gave generously to the Colney Heat Football Club in their 100th year, awarding a grant of one years free rental (Building owned CHPC) and underwriting the building Insurance paid for by the council for one year. Saving the club nearly £6000.00 in this forthcoming financial year. This year the lease is up for its renewal after 15 years on the Pavilion building which is a council asset. We have agreed to postpone the new lease renewal until next April 2008 in order to give some time for the management committee to look at how they are going to fund the new lease costs for 2008 and beyond. As an asset council are expected to procure a commercial value from a lease letting revenue that reflects the true situation. Your council are discussing the options of renewal with the club whilst considering other solutions to achieving rent.

Future Commitments

It is clear to your council that we have to spend more money on play areas, as a high priority. With the costs of new equipment much higher than before it is clear we will have to seek more grants to go alongside our own. District Council have no funds for play equipment and any replacements will require external funding such as grants and awards. Little money is available from section 106 a new build levy from developers that in the past was used, but now goes towards other community schemes such as affordable housing. This year your council have pledged to reserve £10,000 to add to any additional grant funding we can get from land fill tax or waste tax concessions.

In May 2006 we found after the annual ROSPA inspection severe rot in some of the wooden type play equipment at Sleafshyde play area. This was considered unsafe and we removed it immediately.

We are committed to give Sleafshyde Play area firstly priority to any grants and add our reserves as soon as this can be funded. So you can see your council strives to be fair to all community issues and if you take is that the grants equal some 16% of the annual fiscal values of the council budget and precept.

Other works to be completed this forthcoming year are the replacement of DDA style kissing gates in Roestock Park and DDA gate to Community Park at St Marks Close. We need landowner's approval for some of these works but once that is in place we will go ahead as quickly as we can. We have purchased the new gates at a discount so we have them in stock. Highfield Park benefited from two DDA gates on Footpath 16/18 this year, we paid for the installation costs and gates. Each gate costs £380. The security on Furze Field off Warren Track needs improving and we will shortly be putting two galvanised field gates to close off the easy access that might be use by the unauthorised, gypsies or itinerants

As you have heard the Parish Council Elections will not be taking place, for the first time for quite some while, this means the present seven members will come back as nominated. Three have stood down for various reasons and one new member joined recently. This makes two vacancies one of which has been applied for already, but more importantly it has saved us £4,300. Fees which we would have had to pay for the general costs of the whole election process.

So let me give you some idea how the council spent the monies in 2006-7, and how we run a simple payments and receipts system taking account of the 13 simple cost headings for channelling our money and reviewing our costs at each council meeting.

At this point the Clerk gave an overview of the expenditure and income for 2006-7.

Investments

During the past year we have moved our reserves around seeking the best deals on the balances in our bank accounts. By consolidating the cash and accounts we play the money markets for safe treasury reserves, by predicting and balancing our cash flow requirements. Thus have some high cash sums to invest. I am pleased to report that we are up on last year by nearly £1000; this is in effect free money and helps to fund a celebration like this for our 60th year. As mentioned earlier with rates on the increase I intend to better last year and hope to report at this meeting next year we have done even better.

Are there any questions on the finances you wish to ask?

Then I hope that we can take it that you approve the way your council spends your money!

Finally my thanks particularly to Assistant Clerk-Kim Parker-Mead for her daily help support and team work back at the office; Kim is also Secretary of the Treasure Tots Pre School and keeps the books in good shape. Handles all the fees and keeps track of the monies, obtaining the government grants, editing the prospectus and helps me with the staff payroll each month. We are both very honoured to be responsible for the administration in the very significant 60th year.

Also through the Chair may I thank the members of this council for their integrity diligence and enthusiasm in the very important smooth and cohesive running of this parish council with policies that are clear fair transparent to all in the community.

The Chair thanked the Clerk for the overview of the finances and said he would invite questions from the public.

OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO THE PARISH & PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Cllr J Henchley had two issues to put forward from the floor,

The matter of continued fly tipping in Barley Mow Lane and the reluctance of the District Council to install CCTV to try and catch offenders

The ditches and gully's in Smailford Lane, Station Road that he has constantly requested be cleaned by the Highways Authority and to date have not been done.


The Chair thanked him for bringing this to our attention,

The Chair also thanked all those attending, he said that hew was closing the meeting but inviting everyone to cross over now to Tyttenhanger Green to take part in the dedication. After which we return to the hall and enjoy the buffet supper and jazz evening to send off our 60th Diamond Jubilee for the parish. All were welcome and the evening food and drink was free. He also thanked Councillor Rump for the all the arrangements and organisation. Not forgetting the landlord of the local well known hostelry the "Plough Public House" at Tyttenhanger for the magnificent and generous donation a barrel of London Pride Ale to which we will all enjoy after the dedication.

To the other local businesses and pubs for donating various raffle prizes, whilst adding that he had given a bottle of champagne for the winner of the quiz that we will run later. Cllr Jamie Day will be the quiz master on local events and places.

This evening for every ones entertainment the parish council have hired a jazz band "Georgie G" to play for us from 8pm. The Chair Cllr Peter Reeves wished all to enjoy the evening. He also announced the quiz will start at 8.30pm during the band interval and with just 30 questions there were good prizes to win.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm


John Dean
Clerk to the Council