

PITSTONE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 14 May 2019
in the main hall at the Memorial Hall, starting at 7.30pm and concluding at 10pm

PRESENT: Cllr Nicholls (Chairman), Cllr Saintey (Vice Chairman), Cllr Blunt, Cllr Mrs Crutchfield, Cllr Weber, Cllr Hawkins, Cllr Mitra and Cllr Dr Frearson.
Clerk: Laurie Eagling. County Cllr Mrs A Wight. PCSOs M Dean & J Dodson. Plus 32 members of the public.

APOLOGIES: Cllr Mrs Stoddart. District Councillors Mrs S Jenkins and Mr D Town (tendered retrospectively).

AA1/19 **CRIME REPORT FROM THAMES VALLEY POLICE – PCSOs J DODSON & M DEAN**

It was agreed to bring forward the presentation from PCSOs M Dean & J Dodson of the Thames Valley Police Wing Neighbourhood Policing Team, so that they could return to patrols. TVP advised that crime figures were relatively low and down year-on-year. Main areas remained:

- (a) theft from motor vehicles, including theft of tools from vans and thefts from cars parked at beauty spots despite continually publicising that people shouldn't leave valuables in unattended vehicles, and
- (b) Anti-social behaviour including drug related. TVP advised that they were focusing on the drug issue in Pitstone, carrying out operations and patrols, with more planned. They were also working with the families of the offenders, and their housing association landlords, to ensure that they were put on the unacceptable behaviour list and would face eviction if the problems persisted. Residents should report all instances of ASB or drug use to TVP via 101 or the online reporting tool.
- (c) Absolute figures for the last 12 months provided for inclusion in the minutes/publication on the website:
Total offences – 57, only 14 of those occurring in 2019.
Thefts from motor vehicles (tools from vans & valuables from cars at beauty spots) – 12
Criminal damage (eg smashed car windows where nothing was subsequently taken, or damage to vehicles whilst trying to take tools) – 14
Burglary – 13 (6 of which were business, 1 barn, 1 shed)
Theft – 8 (including 2 cars (1 of which was by an employee), 1 phone & 1 garden plant)
Public order – 4
Action fraud – 3
Drug offences - 2
Arson – 1 (barn)

Thames Valley Police accepted questions from members of the public:

- (a) A resident requested that Thames Valley Police include an article in each edition of PPP relating to a current major issue and how residents could help protect themselves eg how to avoid thefts from cars. TVP to investigate. TVP also reminded residents that they could sign up to the Thames Valley Police Alert community messaging system which sends out information on incidents in and around the local area (via app or website) and could subscribe to the TVP Aylesbury Vale Facebook page for messages direct to their news feed.
- (b) A resident raised concerns regarding parking in Castlemead leaving insufficient access, causing blind spots and parking illegally near junctions which results in accidents. TVP advised that whilst the highways within Castlemead were still unadopted, they could attend if any vehicles were parked illegally and speak to the offenders and/or leave advisory notes. The parish clerk requested a copy of the literature so that it could be included within new home welcome packs. County Councillor Anne Wight provided an update on the Taylor Wimpey remedial works and likely timescale before Bucks County Council could adopt the highways.
- (c) Concerns were raised regarding speeding along Westfield Road. TVP repeated that this remained a private road, owned by Taylor Wimpey, and therefore enforcement was more difficult. (i) Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs were discussed, although it was noted that these don't capture any information, just flash a warning to motorists. (ii) Community Speedwatch schemes were discussed as these can provide more concrete evidence for TVP. It was

noted that the parish council had previously tried to set up such a scheme on two occasions and there had been insufficient interest/volunteers come forward. 1 resident stated that they would be willing to volunteer and requested that the parish council consider re-advertising. A similar scheme is working well in Ivinghoe at present.

- (d) A complaint was raised regarding anti-social driving and parking by the entrance to the quarry/Folly Farm/Westfield Road roundabout during the summer caused by illegal leisure use of the quarry. It was confirmed that Pitstone Parish Council, Thames Valley Police and Bucks County Council had met to discuss the site. The landowner was also invited but did not attend. Herts Police had spoken separately with the landowner regarding their need to secure access to their site and provide prohibition signage, but whenever replaced these were repeatedly removed. Trespass is also a civil rather than criminal matter, restricting the ability of the police to evict users. Either Thames Valley and Hertfordshire police (most of the site falls within Hertfordshire) attend when they are made aware of anti-social behaviour or illegal parking, and therefore it was important that residents report any incidents to TVP. The parish council litter picker attends to remove refuse when necessary.
- (e) A resident requested that the parish council write to Taylor Wimpey to make them aware of the issues being caused by non-adoption of the roads.
- (f) It was noted that inconsiderate parking was not just an issue within Castlemead and had also been experienced in Ivinghoe and other parts of the two villages. PCSO M Dean advised that where parking instances escalated to a threat of assault etc that officers could be sent more promptly.
- (g) TVP confirmed that the drugs issue in Pitstone had now escalated to the point of being serious. The drugs squad had been involved in operations and further activity was planned. TVP had been working with the parish council and Pitstone Memorial Hall Charity regarding activity around the hall and car park. Some of the offenders were now seeking out other more remote locations around the village such as in the woodlands or parks. It is important that residents report any witnessed drug use or dealing to Thames Valley Police using telephone number 101 or via the website.

No further questions were tabled. The Chairman thanked PCSOs Dodson and Dean for their attendance and they departed the meeting.

AA2/19 **ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES** - See above. The Chairman officially opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

AA3/19 **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY** held on 15 May 2018

The draft minutes were available on the web site all year. Copies were also available from the clerk and further copies were available at the annual assembly. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes were a true and accurate record and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as such.

AA4/19 **PRESENTATION OF PITSTONE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2019**

The Chairman presented Mr Dave Seaton with the Volunteer of the Year Award, it's 11th recipient. Dave has been a member of the Pitstone & Ivinghoe Entertainments Committee for the past 8 years, more recently as Chairman, and will be stepping down later this year. He has worked tirelessly to bring the Summer Festival and Bonfire/Fireworks events to our community and was nominated by fellow committee members for his hard work, dedication and support.

The Chairman presented Dave with a framed certificate and cheque for £50.00. He will also go forward as the Pitstone nomination into the AVDC Volunteer of the Year Scheme.

The Parish Council runs the Volunteer of the Year scheme to celebrate the unsung heroes within our community. If you know someone who goes that extra mile and provides an outstanding voluntary service to the residents of Pitstone, please submit your nominations to the parish clerk so that they can be taken into consideration for the 2020 award.

AA5/19 **REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR ANNE WIGHT**

Cllr Wight updated those present on a very busy and challenging year with diversions, bridge closures, sewerage works and potholes and thanked everyone for their patience.

She gave an insightful presentation about her work on the Corporate Parenting Panel which looks at the care of children in care along with the associated Christmas present appeal and annual BBQ; the National Paralympic Heritage Trust; the Luton Airport Consultative Committee (capacity set to double, please report any issues to Anne or via "Future Luton"); the use of the Councillor

Leadership Fund to replace play equipment in Dagnall (which had failed safety tests); the Transport for Bucks working group; the Ivinghoe & Pitstone Traffic Calming Safety Scheme and provided an update on plans for the unitary authority. The full transcript of her presentation is attached.

County Councillor Wight took the following questions from the public:

- (a) The difficulties accessing Tring station including parking issues. The parish council Chairman advised that he would provide details of the current work being undertaken with West Midlands Trains during his presentation.
- (b) The lack of public transport to Tring station/other areas. Cllr Wight confirmed that the County Council budgets were extremely tight with the focus needing to be on adult and children's social care. However, she recognised the importance of public transport, especially in the rural areas, and had been able to intervene on occasion. Parish Council Chairman, Dave Nicholls, advised that he would also be able to provide an update on investigations into Community Transport.
- (c) A resident asked Cllr Wight to investigate the possibility of speed cameras being installed in the area as a means of revenue generation for the county council.

No further questions were raised by the public. The Chairman thanked Cllr Wight for her attendance.

AA6/19 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLORS DEREK TOWN AND SANDRA JENKINS

Cllrs were not in attendance, so no report provided. County Councillor Anne Wight offered to try and respond to any queries raised during public question time.

AA7/19 1ST IVINGHOE AND PITSTONE SCOUTS, CHAIR OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, MR CRAIG PONTON

Mr Ponton explained to the members of the public that the existing scout hut was nearing the end of its life, suffering from subsidence and containing asbestos. He described the works that had been undertaken and the need for a new hut. An estimate had been obtained to demolish the existing hut, which was in the region of £50,000, and further substantial funds would be required to build a new hut (either in Pitstone or Ivinghoe).

Mr Ponton talked about the thriving scout group community and appealed for any residents that could help in any way (eg with fundraising, building skills, survey skills etc) to speak to one of the scouting members present. He also encouraged residents to sign up to the Vale Lottery, as the 1st Ivinghoe & Pitstone Scouts are registered as a beneficiary of funds and received 50% of each ticket price – forms available at the event, or residents can sign up online via: <https://www.valelottery.co.uk/>.

AA8/19 TOWN LANDS CHARITY NOTIFICATION RE DONATION

The parish council had been asked to read out an announcement from the Town Lands Charity. Information has already been published on the website, Facebook and Twitter feeds for the parish council. The announcement read: "Richard Cato emailed Gill Lowe, Chair of the Pitstone Town Lands Charity on 1/1/19 stating that the Party in the Park committee made a unanimous decision to donate unspent funds no longer required to the charity as the best place for the good of the community. Due to the cessation of The Party in the Park's further activities, the monies held in abeyance for 2017 & 2018 events which regrettably never came to fruition, have been kindly donated to the Town Lands Charity. At the charity meeting on 21/1/19, treasurer, Kate Smethers, confirmed the donation of £4,011.00 was received into the bank account on 18/1/19. A letter of thanks to the Party in the Park committee, which also stated confirmation of receipt of monies, has been issued to the chair, Richard Cato. The trustees felt that this kind gesture should be recognised, published and announced to the wider community of Pitstone."

AA9/19 PITSTONE PARISH COUNCIL REPORT – COUNCILLOR DAVE NICHOLLS, CHAIRMAN

Cllr Nicholls introduced the members of the parish council and their areas of responsibility. He thanked Gill Arney and Steve Matthey, who had stepped down during the year, for their many years of commitment to the parish and advised those present that the parish council currently had a vacancy for a member (to serve until the election next May) so anyone interested in the position could speak to a member of the council or the clerk.

It was stressed that the Annual Assembly was not a meeting of the parish council and therefore the

council could not make any resolutions at the assembly. It is a meeting about the wider community, which the council is legally obliged to arrange and chair. Any issues which are raised for the parish council to consider will be taken forward to the next parish council meeting on 30/5/19.

The day-to-day parish council activities such as street lighting and care of the open space continued. Cllr Nicholls explained about Devolved Services that the parish operated on behalf of Bucks County Council including some grass verge cutting, siding out and managing permits for roadside banners for charitable events.

Cllr Nicholls explained that for the first time in over 10 years the budgeting process had led to a more significant increase in precept, mainly as a result of (a) previous retained reserves (which had been previously been used to avoid increases) having now been depleted and (b) adjustments by AVDC to the council tax base. The draft report and accounts for the parish council, and its two associated charities, were available to attendees to read.

GDPR had been a big focus at the start of the year and council confirmed that it was now fully compliant with this new legislation.

At the last Annual Assembly the parish council had just announced that it had entered into a contract to purchase the Local Green Space between Marsworth Road and The Crescent. This purchase concluded during the financial year and the parish council made some improvements to this area of open space including the addition of two further benches, the installation of a kissing gate to improve access, daffodil planting and repairs to the fences.

With regard to development, Cllr Nicholls advised that AVDC had granted planning permission for the residential and community facilities around the recreation ground (Pitstone Development Area) just before Christmas. Outline planning permission had already been granted for two commercial areas – one for a public house/restaurant and one for a day nursery. An S106 agreement has been put in place between the developer and AVDC/BCC and the parish council is waiting to hear when work may commence.

The council continues to work on plans to install a new play space (planning granted) and skate park. Land ownership issues are still being worked through but in anticipation of them being resolved shortly, some initial ground works have commenced on the recreation ground. The PDA development will also provide a multi-use ball games court to sit adjacent to these facilities (planning has been granted). Illustrations of the MUGA and play space were available on boards to view.

AVDC has very recently approved planning to improve the sports pavilion site including enhanced changing facilities, a multi-function room, a proper kitchen, ground-keeping storage and parish office/store. Plans were available on boards to view. The parish council had secured a grant of £370k from AVDC's New Homes Bonus and further grant support was being sought.

As it had proved impossible to find volunteers to act as co-ordinator to the Community Car Scheme or run a management committee, the parish council had decided to take this important service under its wing. A new employee, Stephen Davies, had been recruited to operate the scheme (Mr Davies introduced himself to those assembled) but more volunteer drivers were urgently required. Anyone who may be able to spare even a little bit of time to drive someone to their medical appointment was encouraged to speak to Stephen or the council.

As well as the car scheme, Cllr Nicholls explained about (a) the current investigations to see if a Community Bus might be desirable/viable for our villages (and encouraged residents to respond to any forthcoming surveys) and (b) the work with West Midlands Trains and Hertfordshire County Council to consider options for (i) cycle path to Tring station (ii) public/community transport links to the station, being undertaken as part of their Station Travel Planning for Tring & Cheddington stations. West Midlands Trains intend to undertake a survey of users and all members of the public were encouraged to take part as this would provide evidence to support any development works.

There then followed a short refreshment break and opportunity for attendees to speak to members of 1st Ivinghoe & Pitstone Scouts or the parish council and to browse the exhibition celebrating 125 years of the parish council this Christmas.

AA10/19 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Further questions were invited relating to the County/District Councils, before Cllr Wight needed to depart.

- A resident wished to thank Cllr Wight for her efforts on behalf of our community.
- An enquiry was made about how the Hub system, proposed under the new unitary council, would operate and Cllr Wight confirmed that this was still being investigated.
- An enquiry was made about whether there had been an increase in fly-tipping since the new charges were introduced at the recycling centres. Cllr Wight advised that it was felt that the type of person that was inclined to fly-tip was not the same as the person that was diligently taking their refuse to the recycling centre. There were different actions being taken by the District Council to tackle fly-tipping.
- A resident wished to enquire if AVDC/BCC had any plans to offer free compost, like Dacorum council do. Cllr Wight to enquire.
- An attendee asked what the re-election cycle would be once the new Buckinghamshire council was introduced. This is still to be confirmed but may potentially move to a 5-year instead of 4-year cycle.

No further questions for AVDC/BCC were tabled. Cllr Wight was thanked for her assistance and departed the meeting.

Questions were invited for the parish council:

- A resident enquired if the council tax would remain at the new rate in the future. The parish council goes through a budgeting process each year and the precept is duly set following that, so council tax demands would depend upon planning development and projects each year as well as the necessary ongoing activity relating to street lighting, litter & dog fouling etc.
- Two enquiries were raised about the footpath to Marsworth installed the previous year relating to how this had been funded and whether it needed to be resurfaced. It was confirmed that most of the funds had been provided by AVDC's New Homes Bonus with smaller amounts contributed by both Pitstone and Marsworth Parish Councils. The resident felt that it may not have been value for money & had not personally witnessed it being used a great deal, but a show of hands around the room showed that many of those present had utilised the path. It was explained that this was part of an ongoing program to provide greater connectivity from the village to neighbouring parishes including Cheddington (path previously installed), Marsworth (installed last year) and Tring station (still in progress). The consultation process both before and during the Neighbourhood Planning exercise was outlined. It was confirmed that the path did not require resurfacing.
- A resident raised the issue of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the Hever Close playground related to the drugs issue previously discussed by Thames Valley Police. They felt that the kicking goal was the cause. Another resident confirmed that young people had been using the playground late at night long before any goal had been provided. The parish council had conducted a thorough review of the goal provision following a request by a resident at the 2017 Annual Assembly during which Thames Valley Police had confirmed that they had received no official reports of ASB relating to the goal either before or during the review. The parish council has received no complaints relating to the goal since the review. The provision of sports and leisure activities is important to provide healthy lifestyles for people and to engage them in activities that prevent them undertaking ASB.
- The issue of dog fouling in the Local Wildlife Site off Westfield Road was raised. This is private land owned by Taylor Wimpey (TW) however the parish council has been working with TW to install an additional dog waste bin by the maintenance access gate (bins are already provided by Westfield Road, Hever Close and Church Lane) and to review signage. Both should be installed within the next few months.
- A further resident complained about vehicles parking by the maintenance gates to the Local Wildlife Site, on top of the footpath and cycle path. No official parking was provided at this location and bad parking on private land was hard to police. The parish council was asked to raise the issue with Taylor Wimpey whilst writing about the adoption of the highways.
- An enquiry was raised about how people can get matters raised to the parish council and the Chairman confirmed that members of the public could write or email the council at any time, could request items be included on the next agenda (there is a regular section on matters raised by the public), could attend any of our meetings as they are open to the public or could volunteer themselves to become a councillor as there was currently a vacancy.
- A resident felt that Thames Valley Police were so understaffed and busy that they did not want to know about any matters that weren't major. He had already raised the issue with the Police and Crime Commissioner, as had the parish council, but no changes were

anticipated. Members of the public can attend the Thames Valley Police Community Forum meetings and raise matters direct with them.

AA10/19 **CLOSURE OF MEETING**

There being no further questions tabled, the chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their contributions. There being no further business to be transacted, the chairman closed the meeting at 10pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairman

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