

WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Ninth Annual Parish Meeting held 14 April 2009

Present: Cllr Mrs J Watson (Chair), Cllr N Collingridge, Cllr P Cork, Cllr M Burge, Cllr S Day.

In attendance: Mrs J Pearce (Clerk), Herts County Councillor Mr R Smith, Borough Cllrs S Markiewicz, C Storer. PC Clare Parfitt, PCSO R Taylor, Mrs E Reddish; St. Michaels School, Mrs J Thom; Churchwarden, Mr Arrowsmith; Wickfield Close sheltered accommodation, Mr G Fenton; Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, Three representatives of WHBC Planning Dept., 43 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence: Cllr A Gribble, Borough Cllr Mrs J Cragg.

2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2008: Copies of these Minutes were available.

3. Matters arising from these minutes: None.

4. Chairman's Report: Cllr Mrs J Watson welcomed everyone to the meeting. The takings from hiring out the hall this year were significantly higher than last year and the Chair gave details of the extensive work that had been carried out in the hall over the past year which included the resurfacing of the floor, refurbishment of the curtains and chairs and repairs in the kitchen. Currently remedial work is being carried out to the south window and plans are underway to build a new Childrens' Centre for the area. She thanked the WI for purchasing some new equipment for the hall through a grant from the Community Chest scheme. She congratulated Mr & Mrs Stammers on the opening of the new Village Store and Miss Long for taking over the hairdressers and urged residents to use these facilities.

The Chair informed the meeting that progress is being made on establishing allotments and the erection of footpath map boards in the village.

Two significant planning applications are in progress, an extension to the school and a proposal for a care home on the Petit Forestier site which is going through the appeals process.

Following the success of winning Village of the Year for Hertfordshire two residents are working on the entry for this year's competition and the arrangements for Village Day on 6th June are underway.

5. Report from County Cllr. Richard Smith: Cllr Smith outlined the responsibilities of the County Council and identified that highways issues are of particular interest to Woolmer Green residents. He announced that the new Local Policing Plan will be launched on Monday 20 April 2009 at Campus West at 6.30pm and invited local residents to come along to give their views and ask questions. Officers from Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service will also be present to give a presentation about their Community Safety Plan.

6. A report from village organisations:

a) St. Michael's Church: Churchwarden Mrs J Thom said she had taken over as Churchwarden this year and that a new Deputy Warden, Treasurer and Curate, Rev. D Whittaker, had also been appointed. She gave details of work that had been carried out including marking the lead roof to prevent theft, electrics, repairs to the vestibule and maintenance to the church yard for which she thanked the Parish Council for funding.

She informed the meeting that the Church maintained close links with the school and that a plant sale was planned for 16 May.

b) Wickfield Close sheltered accommodation: Mr P Arrowsmith praised the Wickfield Close Warden who was always available to offer help and advice to residents allowing them to lead independent lives. He expressed concern that the trend was leading to the phasing out of on call Wardens who were vital as they often identified a resident in need of support.

c) St. Michael's School: Governor Mrs E Reddish praised the children of the school and informed the meeting that the recent SATS results were above the national average. The school had refurbished two classrooms last year and offered a Breakfast and Afterschool Club as well as numerous other activities. It also maintained links with the Pre-school. Head Teacher, Mrs M Westley will be leaving at the end of the Summer Term and a new Head will be appointed soon.

d) Neighbourhood Watch: Co-ordinator Mr G Fenton had been disappointed by the response to a leaflet drop intended to encourage residents to become involved in the OWL scheme. He appealed for new members. The Online Watch Link has been demonstrated and approved by the Cabinet Office and taken up by other counties throughout the country.

7. A talk on the Welwyn Hatfield Council Core Strategy Issues & Options Document: Mr P Everard explained that a new Planning Act instructed councils to develop a Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy is to identify issues and invite the public & organisations to comment on possible options. Information was on display. Responses can be made online and the deadline is 1 May.

8. Questions from the Floor: None.

9. Woolmer Green Allotment & Leisure Gardens: Mrs M Earl gave a presentation on the plans for establishing allotments in Woolmer Green on land leased from a local farmer. Site access is still under negotiation. Applications have been completed to apply for funding and it is hoped the land will be available in October. Questions raised included possible access solutions, how water will be provided, cost of leasing an allotment and fencing, as many thought a solid fence unsuitable.

10. B197 Traffic survey: Cllr Mrs J Watson gave a presentation on the analysis of the recent B197 Traffic survey. She informed the meeting that the Parish Council will use the information to produce a Parish Plan focussing on improving the safety of the B197 which is a major concern to residents and the school. Residents at the meeting suggested solutions could incorporate police monitoring, speed humps, elevated sections, upgrading the zebra crossing to a pelican crossing, mini roundabouts and more working speed cameras. They suggested asking Grant Shapps MP for support and organising a protest.

In closing the meeting Cllr Watson informed everyone that a Councillors' Surgery is held on the first Saturday of the month at either Woolmer Green, Oaklands or Digswell.

JRP 15.4.09