

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF KINGS LANGLEY

15TH APRIL 2021

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 15th April 2021 held virtually via Zoom.

Present: Kings Langley Parish Councillors: Anderson, Angiolini, Button (Chair), Collins, De Silva, Johnson, McLean, Morrish and Rogers

Also present: Mr Paul Dunham, Clerk, Kings Langley Parish Council,
Mrs Beverley Ross, Administrative Assistant, Kings Langley Parish Council
PCSO Ian Martin
County Councillor, Richard Roberts
Mr and Mrs Martin

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 A two-minute silence was observed in recognition of the life and service of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.
- 1.2 Chairman Cllr Howard Button welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 None.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 3.1 It was proposed, seconded and resolved: -
That the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11th April 2019 be adopted as a true record.
- 3.2 The Chair then signed the minutes.

4. Annual Report of the Council

- 4.1 Cllr Button introduced the report and stated that this was the first ever Annual Parish Meeting to be held remotely due to the Coronavirus pandemic and that all papers/reports for the meeting could be viewed on the Parish Council's website.
- 4.2 He then introduced the Councillors and thanked the staff. He reported that a new warden, Paul Hier would be starting in May and thanked Paul Savin the current warden for all his hard work.
- 4.3 Cllr Button explained that local schools had not been invited to the meeting due to being in lockdown.
- 4.4 Many events had had to be cancelled in the past year but it was hoped that if a relaxation of the rules occurs the Council may be able to run some events this year. It was noted that the Carnival was cancelled last year and was unlikely to be held this year due to time restraints.

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF KINGS LANGLEY

15TH APRIL 2021

- 4.5 The Planning & Development group had met regularly to discuss planning applications and in particular the Rectory Farm development. There had also been a lot of public consternation on the proposed service station which came under Three Rivers District Council and to which the Parish Council had strongly objected.
- 4.6 Annual grants had been made to local organisations as listed in the Annual Report.
- 4.7 Cllr Button said he had been very disappointed in the last few months at the state of the verges around the village but acknowledged there was little money in the budget to rectify the problem and urged residents to refrain from parking on the verges especially in wet weather.
- 4.8 Dog litter bags were given out for free by the Parish Council, however, he urged people not to leave them hanging in trees, but dispose of them appropriately in bins.
- 4.9 Community Award: There were no Community Awards issued this year. Cllr Button thanked local shops for continuing to serve residents in difficult times and the Kings Langley Good Neighbours Association for all the good work they had done for vulnerable people and those unable to leave their homes. He also thanked postal workers and refuse collectors operating under very difficult conditions.
- 4.10 Cllr Button asked if there were any questions on the report to which Cllr Johnson explained that the carnival had not been cancelled but postponed and a pared down version will take place on the common on 18th September. Cllr Angiolini said that the Gardens' Competition could probably take place in some form or other at the end of July. Cllr Anderson advised that if it does go ahead, it should be advertised in the Village Newspaper as soon as possible.

5. Financial Report

- 5.1 Accounts for 2020/21
Cllr Anderson displayed the Financial Report on screen and explained that there could be one or two minor changes before the final audit. Notably, the Council was not unduly affected by the pandemic and had saved money through not running events. However, the Christmas lights in the High Street were turned on earlier than usual and the Council had introduced a new competition for the Best Christmas Light Displays on houses in the parish.
- 5.2 Budget/Precept for 2021/22
Cllr Anderson reported that there was a small increase in the precept and explained that the most important reserves were in the Projects Fund which this year had paid for highway safety signs and towards the Neighbourhood Plan and the Transport Study. Various projects in the year to come included, among others, more signage and the replacement of the hitching rail to a more suitable material. However, it was clear from the budget that some projects may not happen. He stated that the council was to install solar panels at Charter Court at a cost of around £12,000, which demonstrated the Council's commitment to combatting climate change. The cost of solar panels had fallen recently making the project viable.
Cllr Rogers asked Cllr Anderson in relation to the investment in the solar panels (which had been decided three months ago, against his wishes) if there was any

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF KINGS LANGLEY 15TH APRIL 2021

further insight into what savings would be made in the future through the £20,000 investment. Cllr Anderson replied that the £20,000 was being spent on replacing the electric fuse board and all the heaters and not just the solar panels. In terms of the return on the investment, it was extremely difficult to put a precise figure on any return but the figures were seen when the Council considered the quotes as part of the tendering process. There would be a small cost in the maintenance of the solar panels, but as our electricity costs had risen recently to £3,100, he was very confident that there would be a big saving. Cllr Button informed Cllr Rogers that this was not the place to discuss the item as it should be raised at a Parish meeting rather than the Annual Parish Meeting. He added that no one could predict the saving, but it did meet our environmental commitment and he was 100% in favour of the panels whether they made a profit or just broke even. Cllr Rogers responded that he was fully aware of that fact but asked if any discussions had begun in relation to the lease which would expire in December and consequently if the lease was not renewed, would we have wasted £20,000. Cllr Anderson replied that the Council has received written assurances from the landlord and the Council was entitled by law to renew the lease, there was no question of us losing it. Cllr Rogers asked him if he would invest £20,000 on a lease that did not fulfil the disability and equality standards that have now come in, to which Cllr Anderson replied that the Council had already discussed this a few times. Cllr Rogers pointed out that this was a public meeting and everyone should be able to hear the responses. Cllr Button then asked the members of the public present if they wished to hear more on the subject and Mrs Martin said she would be very interested to hear more as it seemed a huge investment if it was not absolutely sure the lease was going to be renewed and said that the facilities in the building would need a lot of updating if the offices were going to remain there. She pointed out the dangerous issue of going up and down the stairs and said a number of things need to happen if the lease is being renewed. Cllr Anderson replied firstly, that the lease was going to be renewed and secondly, that there was a budget item to turn the meetings into hybrid meetings for everyone to access from wherever they were, which would resolve the issue of access. There were no further questions.

6. Neighbourhood Plan Update

- 6.1 Cllr Morrish provided a brief update on the Neighbourhood Plan. The process was currently on the second draft awaiting the design codes. The Plan needed to be submitted to an examiner, which would be followed by a referendum. The team had been overwhelmed by the support and positive comments on the plan. He said the consultation was extremely important and there would be another round soon. In regard to postal addresses on the other side of the canal, Cllr Morrish explained that this area had been designated by Abbots Langley Parish Council and could only be in one plan, but the Council consults with them and would continue to do so throughout the process. Information on the plan was available at www.klnp.co.uk. Cllr Morrish asked if anyone had any questions they should email him and urged everyone to vote in the referendum in January. Cllr Anderson said he hoped the plan

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF KINGS LANGLEY 15TH APRIL 2021

could stick to the timetable as in January next year there will be a consultation on the Joint Strategic Plan in West Hertfordshire and if two referendums took place on the same day it would save Dacorum Borough Council a lot of money. Cllr Morrish replied that they had received fabulous support from DBC and that the plan had gone smoothly so far and he hoped it would continue to do so as they approach the finishing line. Cllr Button congratulated him and acknowledged the amount of work that had gone into producing the plan.

7. Transport Plan Update

- 7.1 Cllr McLean, leader of the Transport Group, introduced the report and stated that the group was working closely with the Leisure and Environment groups to avoid any duplication. Over the fourteen years he had been on the Council, he had noted that the issues raised by residents had been the same; namely: speeding, car parking, road safety, congestion and pollution. He said some resolutions had been achieved but it was really nibbling at the edges. Double yellow lines had been implemented in certain areas as well as speed indication devices. He acknowledged that the issue of funding and consultations had slowed things down.
- 7.2 He went on to explain the Village Vision, which was produced with the help of ARUP, a group that has expertise in the re-generation of High Streets. He stated that the full ARUP report was on the website, or soon would be, and feedback and comments would be welcomed. The Transport Group was committed to ensuring that the High Street was the heart and hub of the village going forward. At the moment, vehicles were prioritised over pedestrians and cyclists. Improvements listed in the report included raised tables and a 20mph speed limit through the High Street. The intention was to have a full feasibility study on the viability of implementing the full proposal. The Transport Group was absolutely clear in its objective; it wished to implement the Arup proposal in full. However, there were two key areas: financial - is it achievable and can it be funded, (the group will work with Hertfordshire County Council and Highways), and technical issues given the topography of the High Street with different levels to produce the visibility and commercial opportunities desired. There was an issue with timescale, due to local elections, but in the meantime the group would continue to work on short term issues. Mr Martin said he was particularly interested in the area of Vicarage Lane and The Nap especially now that a new nursery school was being developed, he thought this would have an impact. Cllr McLean replied that what had been noticed on the Vicarage Lane situation was the number of accidents, as seemingly hardly a week goes by without an accident or near miss. He thought the nursery would make it worse in the short term. At the time the Arup proposal was being worked on they weren't aware of the new nursery, however, the proposal for The Nap square having a raised table on the crossing along both side of High Street, up Vicarage Lane, and down The Nap would make vehicles have to slow down before mounting the raised table from any direction and that would be hopefully a key road safety development. The area was to be the absolute number one focus for the Transport Group. Cllr Anderson said that the planning application for the new nursery had been fought, tooth and nail, especially on the issue of three parking

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF KINGS LANGLEY

15TH APRIL 2021

spaces being inadequate. Herts Highways had been supportive of the development and the application had been passed albeit by one casting vote from the chair of the committee.

8. Police Report

8.1 PCSO Ian Martin reported that crime in Kings Langley had declined in the last ten years against the national norm. 2020 saw the lowest crime rate in ten years, no doubt helped by the pandemic, which had reduced crime across the country. He went through the statistics in his report and said crime in Kings Langley was very low even by Hertfordshire standards. Cllr Rogers noted there had been quite a few people charged with drug offences (not necessarily from the village) and asked if there had been any change or trend in the past five years. PCSO Martin replied that there was not a particular drug issue in the village, however, the main route between Watford and Hemel Hempstead was through the middle of the village and people drove between the two towns. The police knew who the dealers were and their vehicles were flagged by ANP cameras. A convenient place to apprehend a flagged vehicle was at the café near Rucklers Lane and it was not unusual, in the middle of the night, to have a police car parked there and people carrying drugs were caught. The problem however was not a Kings Langley problem, but more of a transport problem. Cllr Roberts said he was delighted how crime had dropped but was concerned that as we come out of the pandemic, there might be more violent crime and asked that the police and the PCSO keep an eye on the village. He thought it remarkable that although Kings Langley was between the two towns of Watford and Hemel Hempstead, it was like an oasis and long may it stay that way.

9. Trustees of Kings Langley Charities Report

9.1 Cllr Johnson reported that the Henry Smith charity, founded over 400 years ago, had provided an annual grant for the relief of poverty, sickness and disability in the village and this year there had been an additional top-up grant. The charity had welcomed two new trustees; John Allan and Mary Nobbs. They were very pleased to have been able to provide support to more local people than ever before. A very generous donation of £1000 had been received from the Revue Theatre Company. In addition to the food grants traditionally given over the Christmas period, similar provision had been given to some young families during the summer. Grants had been made to the Baptist Church and the Waterside Centre to address issues raised by the pandemic. The charity was conscious that there was still need in our community and with more grants and donations could do more. They will be looking to the Henry Smith charity for a top-up grant again this year.

10. Borough Council Report

10.1 The report was shown on screen by Cllr Anderson. He said he didn't intend to read the whole report, but thanked the staff of Dacorum Borough Council who had pulled out all the stops through the pandemic.

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF KINGS LANGLEY 15TH APRIL 2021

- 10.2 Cllr Anderson reported that the last twelve months had seen some big planning issues. There had been a consultation on the first draft on the Local Plan, which showed what would happen if the Government's 'crazy' figures for house building were met in the local area. Around 3,500 comments from residents had been received. Cllr Anderson stressed that Dacorum Borough Council were as opposed to the figures as the general public, but a process had to be gone through to collect evidence, if they were to try and persuade the Government to approve a plan for less housing. He thought some sort of compromise would be key.
- 10.3 The other major issue was the Motorway Service area. Cllr Anderson said that a much preferred option was the MSA being proposed between junctions 16 and 17. However, Buckinghamshire Council had failed to determine the application, because they were worried about legal counsel from Chalfont St Peter Parish Council, who complained that they had already had too much development through the building of HS2. Cllr Anderson queried what difference a MSA would make to an area that already looked almost like a Somme battlefield. However, due to non-determination, the decision would now lie with the Secretary of State. It looked as if Three Rivers District Council was set to refuse the MOTO scheme at junction 20, but as the area lies within the Green Belt it had to be referred to the Secretary of State. There were no questions about the report.

11. County Council Report

- 11.1 Cllr Roberts introduced his report acknowledging the huge impact the Covid pandemic had made and thanked everyone who worked in social care and the NHS for the way they had supported residents during this time. He also acknowledged that it had been a very difficult time for those in need. Day services had been reduced and visiting care homes had been difficult for family members. Things were improving now with lower infection rates although there were worrying pockets of increase in some areas. He reported that the vaccination programme had been a huge success although there had been a temporary reduction in supply of vaccines. 660,000 people had been vaccinated across Hertfordshire and West Essex. Cllr Roberts said he had been delighted at how well all organisations and the voluntary sector had worked together. With the Borough Council and the voluntary sector, 40,000 shielded residents (now up to 70,000) had delivered 120,000 food parcels on a daily basis. An exemplary achievement and one of the reasons he was going to put another two million pounds into the voluntary sector in his role of Executive Member for Adult Social Care.
- 11.2 A big issue locally was the rebuilding of Watford hospital that had been given a budget of over 500 million pounds for refurbishment. He thought it a shame that this was happening when the site was on a steep slope and in the centre of Watford and although MP's, Dacorum residents and action groups had campaigned for a new hospital in a better location, they hadn't succeeded. Cllr Roberts repeated what he thought he probably said last year, that he would like to see improvements made to Watford hospital but also keep campaigning for a new hospital.
- 11.3 It had been a good year for highway works, with both roads and pavements being resurfaced. Highlights included Rucklers Lane, London Road, the flooding issue in Watford Road and a big drainage scheme, two years ago, in Common Lane. This year

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF KINGS LANGLEY 15TH APRIL 2021

there would be an extra 10 million pounds to tackle flooding and drainage across the county. Cllr Roberts pointed out that there would be elections taking place on May 6th and the person elected as County Councillor for Kings Langley would have £360,000 of Highways Locality Budget and £40,000 Community Budget available to spend across the villages. He would welcome thinking now about planning for the next four years and said his message was that this would be done together. Cllr Roberts said he was hugely grateful to the Parish Council and the two Borough Councillors for the way they all work together and that this will continue to be the case.

- 11.4 Also in the budget was an additional 7 million pounds to support 20mph schemes. There had been a big demand for these schemes in villages and towns. The High street scheme mentioned by Cllr McLean in his report would need evaluation and would be extremely expensive. It would have to be seen what was affordable with meeting the demands for quieter streets and less pollution. He was mindful that many people live close to our main road and how much residents who live near schools object to humps and bumps. It was a balancing act.
- 11.5 Cllr Roberts said he was indebted to Caroline and Robin and their leadership team for running the library. It was a success and he looked forward to seeing plans come forward for the library to redevelop itself and probably have slightly more accessible space.
- 11.6 In conclusion he said he thought the MOTO scheme would be an utter disaster for the village as it would clog up the whole of our environment. He did not approve of the application and had made representation to the Secretary of State for Transport and he knew Mike Penning had done the same to the Minister of Local Government.
- 11.7 Lastly, there will be a big improvement for junction 20 and the same for Vicarage Lane leading all the way to Chipperfield. Lots was going to happen in the near future and it had been a successful year, despite the horrible pandemic.
- 11.8 Cllr Button thanked him for his report and for all the County had done for the village, which was much appreciated.
- 11.9 Cllr McLean asked if Hertfordshire County Council had any policy that could help local managers with the situation of carers who refused to take the Covid vaccine. Cllr Roberts replied that encouraging staff to get vaccinated, for the wider good, was a sensitive issue and care should be taken so it didn't come across as bullying. Peoples wishes should be respected, but ultimately if care staff are not vaccinated there is a risk of them bringing the infection into care homes and potentially causing illness and death. This had to be recognised. As the Executive Member for Social Care, Cllr Roberts said he was . involved in these conversations on a weekly basis and it was urgently discussed, so the answer was yes. Cllr McLean said that anything documented would be extremely helpful. He explained that he had to face an issue next week of two individuals who refused to be vaccinated and were working with very vulnerable people and he wasn't sure where he stood in terms of telling them they cannot work. He said he accepted everything Cllr Roberts said in how sensitive an issue it was and how it could be seen as an infringement of human rights. Cllr Roberts asked Cllr McLean to write to him and said he would make sure he received the advice he required to help him make a decision.

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF KINGS LANGLEY
15TH APRIL 2021

12. Consideration of any resolutions of which written notice has been given

12.1 None

13. Questions/Any Other Business

13.1 None

Meeting closed at 8.20pm