



**Minutes of Graveley Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18 December 2018
at Graveley Village Hall, High Street Graveley at 8.00 pm.**

Present: Cllr C Norgan (Chair), Cllr M Griffin, Cllr D Scott (Minute taker)

In attendance: County Cllr S Jarvis, 14 members of the public.

1. To receive and accept Apologies for absence.

Cllr R Millard, District Cllr T Tyler, P.C S.O. Heather Burrows

2. Declarations of interest and dispensations

- a) To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda.
None
- b) To receive written requests for dispensations for declarable interests.
None.
- c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate.
None

3. To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 November 2018

- a) To confirm the Minutes of Graveley Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20 November 2018 as an accurate record of proceedings. Resolved, proposed Cllr Norgan, seconded Cllr Griffin that these Minutes be agreed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings and be duly signed by the Chair. Unanimously agreed.
- b) Minutes of the EGM held on 4 December 2018 not yet available due to illness of Cllr T Tyler, the minute taker.

4. Public Participation- to receive petitions, comments and questions

Members of the public can raise matters of concern.

A question, from an allotment holder, was asked about the Council's intended actions regarding allotments as she stated that she was concerned that her allotment might be taken away from her. She stated that a farmer had already caused damage to it. Explanation was given, that it was believed that no further action was anticipated. On site water had been considered, but costs associated with this facility were believed to be prohibitive. Another allotment holder said that on site water was not necessary.

A question was asked about the amount of Council tax levied by the Police. County Cllr Jarvis explained that under new powers from the Government, the Police and Crime Commissioner can increase the Police's council tax precept by £24 a year for Band D households.

5. To receive reports from District and County Councillors

A report was received from County Cllr Jarvis relating to the Speed Indicator Device. He reported that there had been some challenges over the siting of this in the southern end of the village because of a hedge.

6. Finance

6.1 To receive report on the Council's financial position as of 30 November 2018.

These were received by the Council and found to be satisfactory.

The bank statement dated 30th November 2018 showed balance of £6,362.83.

Expenditure agreed:

Annual Dog Bin Collection: £375.48

Annual CPRE Subscription £36.00

HAPTC Training (Cllr Norgan) £40.00

'Reserve balance' of £5,334.93

The estimated spend to year end (April 2019) is £1,928.00. Leaves £674.16 available for other expenditure to April 2019.

Requested grant towards grass cutting costs of £1250 relating to St Mary's Church Graveley held over to next Meeting to allow circulation to all Councillors before financial resolution made.

6.2 To consider and agree Precept demand for 2019/2020

The present amount of Precept and typical items of expenditure by the parish council on behalf of residents were explained to members of public present. An example was given of a current request for funding received where the organization requesting a grant from GPC had accounts showing a balance over four times larger than Graveley Parish Council's monies.

Parish Clerk role was discussed again. Accepted best practice in Hertfordshire is that a Parish Clerk to a Parish Council should be paid. Graveley Parish Council is the only

Parish Council out of 102 Parish Councils in Hertfordshire which does not pay its Parish Clerk. Historically in Graveley, over the last ten years, the Parish Clerk has performed a voluntary role, only receiving expenses. There was comment by members of the public present that they did not wish the Parish Clerk to Graveley Parish Council to be paid from the Precept. RFO explained the effect paying a Parish Clerk would have on the Precept demand. A suggested honorarium was discussed. One resident had expressed interest in volunteering to take on the role, which members of public present preferred as best option.

Two Parish Councillors, HAPTC and Graveley Parish Council's District Cllr Tyler (Adviser) felt that it was best practice to consider the role of any future Parish Clerk in a Staffing Committee, particularly as the role in almost all Parish Councils differs from Graveley's being normally a combined Responsible Financial Officer and Parish Clerk role. Certain members of the public present plus one Parish Councillor (Cllr M Griffin) commented that a Staffing Committee 'added a layer of bureaucracy.' It was noted that selection of a Parish Clerk by Graveley Parish Council was a confidential matter and would not be taking place in public.

GPC's Chair made the point that a Staffing Committee can be beneficial for good reasons, i.e. for Parish Council to consider and focus on recruitment and selection, HR policies, advertising, interviewing, considering training, mentoring, consideration of pay/expenses, benefits, etc. It might also be advisable where a conflict of interest may arise with any existing Parish Councillors.

It was evident that all members of the public present had certainly been given every opportunity to offer their services to be a Graveley Parish Councillor, some of those present had been specifically encouraged to apply, and yet had declined to be involved. There had been two publically advertised vacancies for the public to apply for followed up in August 2018 by no less than a further three publically advertised vacancies which had resulted in Graveley Parish Council finally become inquorate, ceasing to be able to function and needing intervention from NHDC, the creation of a legal order and notification to the Secretary of State. One Parish Councillor role still existed which was currently attracting no interest.

After a lengthy discussion it was resolved that the Precept demand should not be increased and should remain at its present level for 2019/20. The motion was proposed by Cllr Griffin, seconded by Cllr Norgan. Cllr Scott opposed the motion.

7.To consider Police and Crime Commissioner's Community DriveSafe Petition

The DriveSafe Petition was discussed. The DriveSafe's Volunteer Officer had sent apologies for not being able to attend as a speaker, but had indicated that she would be pleased to address any outstanding queries.

16 volunteers had signed up which was excellent and it was suggested that the Petition should therefore be sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

8. To consider the report on the Playground

Members of public had made comment on a reluctance to use the playground due to a small amount of bird poo which occasionally falls on the equipment. Additional bird spikes have been added to the swings as a deterrent and regular checks take place. The equipment is maintained in as clean a condition as possible, bearing in mind that it is an outdoor play area without the benefit of water on the site. Moss has gathered on a safety surface, due to its shaded position near a hedge, which is being removed, as advised by playground equipment suppliers.

9. Update on overgrown branches/faulty lighting/undergrowth covering 2 drains, at back of garages Turf Lane

Further work had been done to resolve the continuing long term problem over whether it is Herts County Council or Settle who have responsibility for the drains which are the subject of this complaint from a resident. Problem has not been resolved and it has been 6 months since the resident's initial complaint. Settle have agreed to visit the drains but although requested to will not give a definite date when this might happen. Herts County Council have told GPC that the area is definitely Settle's responsibility. Resident has been informed and this matter may be escalated to M.P. County Cllr Jarvis also offered his assistance to resolve the matter. HCC have said it would be helpful if more than one resident in the area notified HCC when lights are faulty. It was noted that there was faulty street lighting in Church Lane near kissing gate.

10. NHDC Local Plan Update

An update on the North Hertfordshire Local Plan was received.

The public consultation will take place from Jan 3rd 2019 – February 14th 2019.

Comment may be made by any member of the public on the main modifications even if an initial representation was not made.

11. Vacancy for new Graveley Parish Councillor

It was agreed that the vacant Parish Councillor vacancy be given publicity in "Graveley Matters" whose deadline was 20th December 2018 and put on the Parish Council Notice board. It was proposed by Cllr Griffin and seconded by Cllr Norgan that permission be sought from the owners of the Noticeboard at Jacks Hill to advertise GPC activities. Notices could also easily be posted in the bus shelter in that area. Cllr Griffin to investigate use of Noticeboard by GPC in Jacks Hill area.

Next meeting

Full Council Meeting – Tuesday 15 January 2019.

Any items for the Agenda to be forwarded to the Chair five working days in advance of the meeting.