

SARRATT PARISH COUNCIL
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Hertfordshire. WD3 6AS



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MINUTES OF THE SARRATT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN SARRATT VILLAGE HALL
TUESDAY 14TH MARCH 2023

Councillors: Flo Garvey
John Gell
Lee Farman
Michael Lowry
John Rugg
Iain Christie
Angela Coakley
Sarah Dobson
Simon Diggins

In attendance: District Councillor Reed
8 members of the public
Lena Mortimer, Clerk to the Council

23/52 APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no apologies.

Cllr Christie formally confirmed he would be stepping down from SPC as he is moving out of the village next month. Cllr Christie had previously notified Councillors via email. SPC expressed its sadness that he was leaving the Council and the Village. He was heartily thanked for his significant contribution to the Council over the last year.

23/53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

23/54 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

23/55 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

To confirm and sign the minutes of the last Council Meeting on 14 February 2023.

There was a point of accuracy to be remedied, before signing, in the Policy and Resources section – the wording of action point 2 from the Internal Audit to be replaced with “Approval of the Risk Register and Policy”. Subject to this amendment it was resolved the Minutes be approved.

Proposed: Cllr Gell; Seconded: Cllr Coakley

Matters arising from the previous minutes - Clerk to write to District Cllr Phillip Hearn to express SPC's thanks for his help with the potential sites in Sarratt identified for the TRDC draft new Local Plan, but now no longer under consideration.

23/56 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES WHO HAVE ATTENDED MEETINGS ON BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL.

Cllr Rugg referred to his report from the recent KGV Management Trustees meeting circulated prior to the meeting. He highlighted the fact the KGV Management Committee would also include improvements to the football pitch at Sarratt Village School in its grant application to The Football Association for the KGV fields and the pavilion renovation work. The poor state of the school field has led to children using the KGV pitches. It was also noted there has been an increase in dog fouling on the KGV pitches. **Clerk Action:** More signage is required.

23/57 CORONATION EVENT UPDATE

Carol Chorley, MBE, addressed the meeting and gave an update on the arrangements for the Coronation Celebration Event being held on the Green on Monday 8 May from noon – 5pm. The event is being coordinated by herself and Roger Dudley. It is planned to use the entire lower Green for a wide range of varied activities in the main arena and around the Green, including falconry, fancy dress, races, BBQ, cakes, bar, etc. There will also be activities and stalls organized by the WI, the Horticultural Society, Community Garden, Mums & Toddlers, Scouts, and the Chess Valley Bridleways Association. Any 'commercial' stalls will be restricted to local people. The Watford Brass Band will play, and there will be a tombola, raffle, and exhibitions by the Historical Society and Art and Crafts groups. Villagers will be encouraged to decorate their homes and to create scarecrows. Whilst most people will walk to the event, there will be some parking available on the upper Green between the Oak Tree and the Pump. A road closure will be implemented from Alexandra Road to the Village Shop.

Clerk Action: Order Sarratt commemorative Coronation mugs to be paid for by the £1,000 donation from SPC to the project. Ensure that posts are put on the Green to prevent parking, but to allow for loading and unloading. The Clerk will try to locate gazebos that could be borrowed from villagers for the event.

It was noted the May Fair that normally comes to Sarratt on the first weekend in May had been advised this would not be possible due to the Coronation Event, and SPC is waiting for them to revert with alternative dates that they could come to Sarratt.

Cllr Flo Garvey asked whether 'No Mow May' was to be adopted after the Fair had left. It was agreed it would.

23/58 CLERK'S ACTIVITIES

The Clerk updated Council on the matters outlined in the Clerk's Activity Report, including:

- TRDC to be contacted about the increase in fly tipping with a request for signage similar to that used by Dacorum at fly tipping hot spots.
- The last 3 black & white replacement fingerposts signs have arrived but repairs are needed before being erected. The supplier has been notified of the sub-standard workmanship and a discount requested before their invoice is paid.
- Invoices have been issued to plot holders for this year's allotment rents
- BT has agreed to repaint the phone box on The Green.
- Awaiting gate repair kits for some of the damaged and broken metal gates in the Parish
- The wooden stile at the bottom of the footpath leading to Bottom Lane by the Goslings has been replaced by HCC Rights of Way team.
- Looking to organize some defibrillator training, following the recent use of the defibrillators in KGV and at the Village Hall.

PLANNING

23/59 LEAD COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The recent consultation on the TRDC draft local plan Regulation 18 and additional potential sites in Sarratt for inclusion was raised. District Cllr Reed confirmed that despite the recent update on the TRDC website not being completely clear the following sites shown in some of the documentation are not being taken forward by TRDC as part of potential sites included in the new draft local plan: NSS11b/NSS11a/NSS7/NSS17. This includes the 2 sites that form part of the Burlington Property Group development. As such there are currently no potential sites included for Sarratt Parish. However, this does not stop individuals or developers submitting development proposals via the normal planning process.

23/60 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- [Non material amendment to planning permission 22/1043/FUL: Erection of front porch, garage conversion and removal of front bay windows.](#)
Hill Brow Bragmans Lane Sarratt Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 4FR. 23/0404/NMA
SPC: No objection. We would like to encourage the applicant to use the opportunity of this change to the building to significantly increase the energy efficiency of the construction beyond the requirements set by building regulations.
- [Certificate of Lawfulness Proposed Development: Loft conversion including dormer window and rooflights](#)
Framptons Commonwood Sarratt Kings Langley Hertfordshire WD4 9BA Ref. No: 23/0358/CLPD
SPC: No objection. We would like to encourage the applicant to use the opportunity of this change to the building to significantly increase the energy efficiency of the construction beyond the requirements set by building regulations.
- [Construction of single storey side and rear extension, two storey rear extension with internal alterations.](#)
Framptons Commonwood Sarratt Kings Langley Hertfordshire WD4 9BA. Ref. No: 23/0359/FUL
SPC: No objection. We would like to encourage the applicant to use the opportunity of this change to the building to significantly increase the energy efficiency of the construction beyond the requirements set by building regulations.
- [Demolition of existing buildings and construction of three, two storey detached dwellings with associated parking and landscaping.](#)
Cottage Farm Redhall Lane Chandlers Cross Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 4LT Ref. No: 23/0336/FUL
SPC: We welcome the intention to redevelop the underutilised and deteriorating existing buildings and the aim to bring biodiversity net gain to this site. As the site is in Green Belt, exceptional circumstances are needed to override policies to allow building of new dwellings. Unfortunately we do not believe that 4/5 bedroom houses match the local needs and as such do not qualify as exceptional circumstances. We would like to also note that it is understood that most of the current vehicle traffic enters the neighbouring site, so the result of this application may lead to an increase in vehicle traffic on the application site.
- [Certificate of Lawfulness Proposed Development: Construction of single storey rear extension and loft conversion including hip to gable roof extension with rear rooflights, side juliet balcony and rear solar panels](#)
Griffins Flaunden Lane Belsize Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 4NS. Ref. No: 23/0355/CLPD

SPC: No objection. We would like to encourage the applicant to use the opportunity of this change to the building to significantly increase the energy efficiency of the construction beyond the requirements set by building regulations. We very much welcome the installation of a sizable solar panel array, and would encourage the applicant to investigate installing battery storage options.

- [Certificate of Lawfulness Proposed Development: Demolition of existing conservatory, single storey rear extension and construction of single storey rear extension](#)
Griffins Flaunden Lane Belsize Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 4NS Ref. No: 23/0399/CLPD

SPC: No objection. We would like to encourage the applicant to use the opportunity of this change to the building to significantly increase the energy efficiency of the construction beyond the requirements set by building regulations.

23/61 PLANNING DECISIONS

- [Alterations to the roof form of single storey rear extension including flat to mono-pitched with associated rooflights](#)

25 Church Lane Sarratt Hertfordshire WD3 6HN. Ref. No: 22/2330/FUL

SPC: No objection

TRDC: Approved

- [Certificate of Lawfulness Proposed Development: Installation of 6 no. solar panels to the rear elevation](#)

6 Myrtle Cottages The Green Sarratt Hertfordshire WD3 6AT. Ref. No: 22/2313/CLPD

SPC: Strongly support this application as it demonstrates how green energy solutions can be applied without detrimental effect in a conservation area. We support the use of plain black panels and use of the rear aspect of the property out of site from the Green.

TRDC: Approved

- [Construction of a polytunnel and an outbuilding](#)

Land To The South Of Mole House Adjoining Penmans Green Sarratt Hertfordshire Ref. No: 22/2298/FUL

SPC: No objections. We support the intention to create a new sustainable business and the objective to reduce environmental impact of cut flower production. However, we are concerned that adding new structures to a green field site could lead to future additional development, so if officers are minded to approve we ask restrictions are added to the permission to restrict the use and purpose of the requested structures, and where possible restrict any further permitted development rights.

TRDC: Approved "...The polytunnel hereby permitted, shall only be used for agricultural purposes. If the polytunnel ceases to be used for more than 12 concurrent calendar months it shall be demolished and wholly removed from the site within a month, with the ground returned to grass in the first possible planting season..."

23/62 APPEALS

An event date of 3 May is now showing for the Burlington Property Development Appeal.

23/63 UPDATE BY FORMER CLLR ANTHONY SOOTHILL ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Former Cllr Anthony Soothill advised SPC that following submission of the final draft of the Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan to TRDC in early December, there were 3 stages that the plan then needed to go through before formal adoption.

1. A TRDC led consultation for a 6-week period

2. Assessment by an External Examiner
3. A Parish referendum

Unfortunately, the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group has recently learned that TRDC have not initiated the 3-step process above and now due to the upcoming local elections and the imminent purdah period, no further progress will be made till after the elections in May. Although they have advised they have secured the availability of an External Examiner. This inaction by TRDC over the last 3 months is extremely disappointing and means it will now be impossible to complete stages 1 and 2 before April. As such it will not be possible for a Parish referendum, to vote on the Neighbourhood Plan, to be incorporated into the local elections taking place on 4 May 2023. This means delaying the referendum till the May 2024 elections or holding a referendum mid-cycle. Whilst the guidelines indicate a mid-cycle referendum should be paid for by TRDC, no precedent has been set for this as Croxley and Chorleywood, who now have adopted Neighbourhood Plans, were able to hold their referendums as part of the May election process in previous years. As such there is also no reference point for how much a referendum outside of the normal election process would cost. Cllr Farman asked District Cllrs Reed and Hearn to enquire about TRDC's position on funding out-of-cycle referendums for Neighbourhood Plans. In the meantime, it was noted that whilst an "Emerging" Neighbourhood Plan does not carry as much weight as a fully adopted Neighbourhood Plan is does carry some weight in TRDC's consideration of planning applications.

ENVIRONMENT

23/64 TO RECEIVE THE LEAD COUNCILLORS REPORT

Cllr Rugg referred to his report circulated prior to the meeting and included below:

Woodlands.

Work undertaken by the Clerk and SPC Chair has re-instated two members of the HCC Countryside Management Team to act as agents for the Parish Council with the Rural Payments Agency. This should provide for the renewal of the authorisation for SPC to apply for, and obtain, the £1K Woodland Management Plan Compilation Grant. This in turn now provides for them to be involved in progressing the re-submission of the 10-year Woodland Management Plan, completed and originally submitted to the Forestry Commission in Jan 2022 (and lost within the system). Once approved this enables the associated Woodland Management grant application to be assessed and determined in order to pay for the planned and phased forestry work in all three woodlands.

Confirmation has been received that the Bottom Lane section of Commonwood has been awarded the status of a protected Wildlife Site by the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust (HMWT) who undertake assessments on behalf of TRDC. It would be prudent to alert/remind TRDC of this fact and request an update of their planning policies to ensure this area of woodland is provided the same level of protection as the other 3 areas of Commonwood. HMWT also confirmed they have reviewed the status of Penman's Green and confirmed its conformity with the requirements for retaining a Wildlife Site status, but express concern about invasive non-native flora that should be removed.

Footpaths.

The new kissing gate has been installed on footpath 49 where it joins the public highway on Bottom Lane. Footpath 36 at Rosehall Farm (downhill to the Chess Valley) is blocked and the HCC Rights of Way Enforcement Team is dealing with the tenant on what is required to reopen it. Also discussing the suggested potential diversion of this route that would need to follow the required procedures and consultation exercise.

King George V Playing Fields

The trench for laying the BT Broadband line to the pavilion has been delayed as it appears BT, having obtained permission to enter KGV to undertake the work, had inadvertently cancelled the order. This is now being reinstated and a revised date is being sought.

The Tennis Club have requested if the weeds and long grass around the edges of the court can be strimmed and be dealt with under the Whitewood's land management contract.

The repairs to the Puzzlewood play equipment have been completed, but there remains an outstanding issue and the suppliers are being chased by the SPC Clerk.

There is an increasing problem with dogs being allowed to run loose on the KGV field, fouling the football pitches, with owners not bothering to clear up after their dogs. A request has been made by the youth football teams for additional appropriate signs to be erected at all entrances including the link from Deadman's Ash and ideally requiring dogs to be kept on a lead.

Complaints have been received about dense smoke from domestic garden bonfires blowing over the football pitches resulting at times with youngsters having to abandon training sessions. A Trustee will visit the householders.

23/65 CIL APPLICATION CRICKETERS POND

The refusal by TRDC of the application for CIL funding that SPC submitted for renovation work to the Cricketer's Pond was discussed. District Cllr Reed advised that this may be reconsidered when brought before the TRDC Policy & Resources Committee which both he and District Cllr Hearn are members of. But due to the upcoming local elections this is not due to meet again until May/June.

It was agreed SPC should therefore seek alternative funding in the meantime. It was agreed grants should be applied for from the River Chess Smarter Water Community Fund – potentially £5,000, together with an application to the National Lottery Community Fund for £10,000 for the same project. Cllrs Diggins and Garvey will craft the application to the Smarter Water Community Fund and the Clerk and former Cllr Thorp will draft the National Lottery application.

SUSTAINABILITY

23/66 TO RECEIVED THE LEAD CONCILLORS REPORT

Cllr Garvey referred to her report circulated prior to the meeting and included below:

Allotments: *Inspection complete. 5/36 plots definitely vacant. 6 in need of attention. Remaining 25 in good order. Lena has billed the plot holders for this coming year, and asked for email addresses so we can communicate more quickly and cheaply in future. Thanks to Andrew Whitewood for pushing up and compacting the communal compost heap.*

Oak at North entrance to village – *planted with stake, guard, and mulch on Rosehall Green. Neighbour was supportive. Thanks to Roger Dudley and Jon Bonwick for their help in this. Also planted some native flowering plants into the grass, provided by Jess Hodges, TRDC biodiversity officer.*

Quickmoor Orchard – *1 plum "Stanley" planted, to join Stephen's Howgate wonder. Snowdrops lifted, split and spread around the site. New trees mulched.*

Land outside 42 and 44 Dawes Lane – *no action as it is being used as a storage site for the gas works, so I have postponed any work. As per last month, any spare snowdrops would be greatly welcomed for the site and would help with keeping it loved by residents!*

Clerk Action – Clerk to write to the unmaintained allotment plot holders requesting they bring their plots back into order or they will be returned to the Council as per the Allotment terms & conditions.

Vacant plots will be allowed to go to grass and mowed as a cheap maintenance option. They can be rotavated back to soil when required. The Community Garden would be happy to take on

additional plots if there is a significant surplus. Splitting plots for those wishing a smaller sized allotment can be accommodated.

HIGHWAYS

23/67 TO RECEIVE THE LEAD COUNCILLORS REPORT

Cllr Diggins asked District Cllr Reed whether TRDC have put together a plan for walking and cycling, in the area, or whether they had joined forces with Watford Council to do this, as he had heard. District Cllr Reed said that he would enquire about this matter.

RESOURCES AND POLICY

23/68 LEAD COUNCILLORS REPORT

Acting upon the recommendations of the Internal Auditor, Cllr Lowry is opening a 90-day deposit/savings account in order to earn more interest on moneys held. £25,000 will be paid into this account from the existing savings account which has a lower rate of interest. Progress has been made on updating the signatories for the reserve funds held in the Santander Bank account to remove the former Clerk Janice Dawes and instate the current Parish Clerk.

Cllr Lowry updated Council on the year end forecast for end March. Actuals are currently at 91% of budget, with the expected overspend being around £10,000. This is a reduction from the previously expected £18,000 thanks to work by Cllr Lowry.

It was noted that the Council Tax Demands for 2023/24 have now been issued to residents. This shows a breakdown of how their Council Tax payments are allocated to HCC, TRDC, SPC, the Police and Social Care. At a first glance SPC stands out as having increased its budget by 10%, whereas the other organisations have applied an increase of between 2-7%. However, this does not reflect the fact that each of these organisations have applied an increase every year for the last few years, while SPC has kept its budget flat.

It was agreed an article would be included in Spotlight to explain this and the reasons why it has been necessary to increase our Precept this year. Cllr Rugg suggested we may wish to note the large cost incurred to SPC due to illegal felling as this has necessitated many of the high tree-working costs to remediate the damage caused.

In future, it may be easier to explain to the Parish if we increase the precept each year as required, despite the Council's best intentions of holding its Precept flat during the pandemic.

23/69 APPROVAL OF BANK TRANSACTIONS FOR FEBRUARY 2023 OF £12,269.88

Cllr Lowry advised this month's transaction were larger than the normal monthly outgoings (which are usually between £6,000 and £8,000) because there were large invoices for tree works (Tree Monkey) and the payment of outstanding invoices to Bell Cornwall for their assistance on the Neighbourhood Plan. It was resolved to approve the transactions.

Proposed: Cllr Rugg; Seconded: Cllr Garvey

23/70 SPC POLICIES FOR REVIEW

Cllr Dobson referred to the 8 (updated) policies put forward for adoption and circulated prior to the meeting:

- **GDPR Policy.** Cllr Dobson will reinstate the reference to EEA/EU as this has been grandfathered despite the UK no longer being part of the EU. A reference will also be added to the General Privacy Notice regarding information SPC holds on members of the public as a result of its interactions with them.

- **Subject Access Request** – no amendments
- **Staff Privacy Notice** – no amendments
- **General Private Notice** – no amendments
- **Data Breach Policy** – no amendments
- **Information and IT Security Policy** – it was agreed to include the suggestion made by Cllr Lowry to the back-ups of our data held in the Cloud
- **Freedom of Information & Publication Schedule** – no amendments
- **Document Retention Policy** – no amendments
- **Document Retention Schedule** – it was agreed this would be updated by Cllr Rugg and the Clerk as part of reviewing the documents held in the Parish Office. Alignment with the NALC LTN 40 on Document Retention would be undertaken at the same time and the SPC Document Retention Schedule brought back to Council in April / May.

Subject to these amendments it was resolved the updates to the above policies be adopted by Council. These would then be uploaded onto the SPC website.

Proposed: Cllr Christie; Seconded: Cllr Farman

23/71 FORTHCOMING LOCAL ELECTIONS

The Clerk handed out copies of the Nomination Forms to each of the Councillors. These should be completed and returned to the Clerk by Tuesday 28 March. The Clerk will then deliver them to TRDC. This is a week before the deadline to enable any errors to be addressed in good time.

Cllr Diggins is currently the only Councillor in Grove Ward. Seconders should live in the ward they are supporting the nominated Councillor for.

Following 28 March, we will hear from the TRDC Returning Officer whether there have been more nominations than Councillor positions available for SPC and therefore whether there needs to be an election for the Sarratt and/or Grove wards, or whether the nominations are uncontested and therefore participation in the 4 May elections is not necessary.

On a more general point about volunteers, Cllr Dobson asked whether the Village should consider another Fresher's Fair in the Autumn in addition to the upcoming village event for the Coronation to recruit more, much needed, volunteers for a number of Sarratt organisations, including SCCF, Sarratt Care and the Scouts, as well as potentially SPC.

23/72 PLAYGROUND CIL APPLICATION

SPC are still waiting to hear the outcome of the application to TRDC for CIL funding for a new playground at KGV. District Cllr Reed advised that due to the upcoming elections and purdah period, we would now probably not hear back until May/June.

23/73 CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

23/74 COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- Cllr Farman noted that there is a For Sale advertisement and CG image of two homes on the land for sale at Dell Cottages. There is no planning application to relate to this.
- Cllr Christie thanked SPC for having allowed him such a good experience with the Council.

23/75 DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND ITEMS REQUESTED TO BE PUT ON THE NEXT AGENDA

The date of the next SPC meeting is Tuesday 11 April 2023. Agenda items for the meeting need to be advised to the Clerk by Wednesday 5 April.

23/76 The Council to resolve to go into private session and to discuss LEGAL MATTERS.

The public and press may be excluded under the provisions of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proposed: Cllr Lowry; Seconded: Cllr Rugg

KGV UPDATE

Cllr Christie outlined the latest position and advice received from Naveen Agnihotri (Barrister) regarding the Deed of Variation (DoV) relating to KGV issued by TRDC.

To recap, Council was reminded the Planning Application submitted to TRDC by Alun Evans on behalf of the KGV Management Trustees for a change of use to the pavilion and for permission to serve alcohol (subject to an alcohol license being issued) and hold 8 special events per annum, was approved by the TRDC Planning Committee in February 2022, conditional on a DoV being signed.

The DoV was then sent to SPC to sign as the Trustees in the belief they were the 'sole' trustees. Not only was this incorrect but SPC disagreed with a number of the clauses contained in the DoV. Unhelpfully the Land Registry for the KGV playing fields had the wrong address for SPC (the address of a previous Clerk) and had SPC listed as simply "Trustees". Lena has since written to the Land Registry asking them to amend the address and record the owners of the KGV playing fields as SPC, Custodian Trustees.

Lena has recently found a great 1-page article in the Clerk's Magazine that simply and clearly outlines the role of a Parish Council as a Custodian Trustee for a parcel of land / asset held under Charitable status, and their responsibilities, which are to hold the Title Deeds and any capital finance, plus ensure the Management Trustees execute their duties regarding the operation and maintenance of the land / asset. As such this extends to the Management Trustees being responsible for the submission of planning applications – not the Custodian Trustees.

In the most recent correspondence with TRDC over the DoV, they are refusing to budge from their view that SPC is the sole Trustee and therefore responsible for signing the DoV. They have said if SPC do not sign the DoV, they may refuse the planning permission that was granted in February 2022, conditional on the DoV being signed.

In Naveen's view, SPC should not sign the DoV as we are not Sole Trustees, but Custodian Trustees, and there are a number of errors in the document. His view is they would find it difficult to uphold withdrawing a planning permission that has effectively been granted over a year ago and is already being acted on (the Football Club is now selling alcohol at the pavilion, although as far as we are aware have not yet held one of the 8 'special events' they were granted per annum).

It was therefore proposed:

- There was no benefit in SPC meeting TRDC at this stage, just to restate our positions, based on the respective legal advice received, given neither party is prepared to change their view
- SPC would instead write to TRDC to reiterate that SPC does not agree with the Deed of Variation, explain why, and as such will not sign it. It was recommended a copy of the article from the Clerk's Magazine and the Clerk's letter to the Land Registry be included.
- SPC would also write to the KGV Management Trustees sending them a copy of the letter and documents sent to TRDC.
- If as a result of SPC's refusal to sign the DoV, TRDC attempt to revoke the (conditional) planning permission granted in February 2022, the Management Trustees should appeal on the basis of the lapse of time (over 12m) and that the uses of the pavilion granted in February 2022 have already been implemented.

- Once retired from SPC, Cllr Rugg in his capacity as a member of the 'panel of three' on the KGV Management Trustee Committee, will recommend to the Management Trustees they should consider including retrospective permission for the various uses of the pavilion in their planning application for the pavilion renovation work and extension.

It was resolved to adopt this proposed way forward.

Proposed: Cllr Diggins; Seconded: Cllr Garvey