

SARRATT PARISH COUNCIL

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DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 22nd APRIL 2025 IN THE REAR HALL, SARRATT VILLAGE HALL

Councillors Present: Sarah Dobson, Lead Councillor
Angela Coakley, Vice Chair
Michael Lowry, Policy & Resources
James Alder, Deputy Planning (absent)
Simon Diggins, Highways
David Zerny, Deputy Highways
Flo Garvey Environment (absent)

In Attendance: District Councillor Ciaran Reed
Mrs Lena Mortimer, Clerk to the Council
Approximately 35 members of the public.

25/658 APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENT

Cllr Deputy Planning Cllr James Alder gave his apologies.
Environment Cllr Flo Garvey gave her apologies.

25/659 TO MOVE THAT THE CHAIR SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 30TH APRIL 2024

Proposed; Cllr Diggins; Seconded: Cllr Coakley

25/660 MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES

There were none

25/662 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF SARRATT PARISH COUNCIL CLLR SARAH DOBSON

Councillor Dobson said that the past year had seen both challenges and positives. The latter, including the granting of outline permission for an 84 house development on (what has become known as) Burlington Field, after an Appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. The ongoing slow progress made by TRDC on the Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan, has been a constant cause of hard work and frustration, as the completion and adoption of this would assist SPC in countering proposed planning applications.

On a more positive note, the Woodland Management Plan implementation has been commenced. Jo Deacon has joined the workforce as a contractor in charge of the project to assist Cllr Garvey, whose remit is too large for one person to cover. As Jo is experienced in this field, she is well placed to know about, and apply for, grants and has already successfully secured £3,500, so that SPC has some help with the large costs of the woodland maintenance.

Lead Cllr Dobson extended her thanks to all her fellow Councillors for their hard work this year as volunteers and to Lena Mortimer as the Parish Clerk.

She also thanked Former Cllr Anthony Soothill for the huge amount of work and time he has put into the Neighbourhood Plan; Former Cllr John Rugg for his knowledge and support to the KGV committee; Mike Edmund for IT support on the SPC website and email system; Nick Mortimer for heading up the very effective Litter Group volunteers and for helping with KGV / village security matters and Andrew Whitewood as SPC's ground works contractor. District Cllr Ciaran Reed is a great supporter of the Parish and thanks go to him for his assistance on many fronts.

25/662

TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM LEAD COUNCILLORS:

A SUMMARY OF THEIR FULL REPORTS FROM THE ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2025.

- **LENA MORTIMER – PARISH CLERK**

The Parish Clerk spoke to encourage all Parishioners to join the SPC Email Service. As many people feel that they are not in the information loop, where the Parish Council is concerned, this is the way to access fast, accurate and targeted news. All that is required is to send your email address to: clerk@sarrattparishcouncil.gov.uk.

She also asked that Parishioners are pro-active in asking people to stop parking on The Green, as they are committing trespass, and to record details of vehicles and report them to the Clerk.

She thanked Lead Cllr Dobson; David Zerny for becoming the new Deputy Highways Councillor; Cllr Garvey for inspiring the village to grow food, and ensuring the Allotment Gardens are thriving; Cllr Lowry for keeping SPC solvent, loan and debt free; the Litter Groups, whose volunteers do a fantastic job of maintaining high standards of cleanliness and respect for our environment; Jo Deacon in bringing her knowledge to environmental grant applications; and a wide range of people for their help and support during an increasingly busy year!

- **COUNCILLOR MICHAEL LOWRY – POLICY AND RESOURCES**

Councillor Lowry presented his summary of the past financial year and talked the meeting through the charts and graphs. The overall expenditure for the year was less than expected owing to the unusually wet weather over the summer which reduced ground maintenance activities. This was further supported by other income received, mainly for CIL receipts. The Council has performed well against its budget for the year, generating a net contribution of £16,000 to reserves, which will be used to fund the large cost of the woodland work in the forthcoming year. Expenditure, like previous years sees Administration, Grants, and the various Environment budgets accounting for the largest areas of spend. SPC is distributing Grants to the value of £15,883 to various Parish organisations for the benefit of the residents. During the financial year, the Council was able to complete the regeneration of the playground at KGV. This was funded by the generous award of £184k from TRDC using its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Further purchases of bins and benches was achieved using the contribution from Sarratt and Chipperfield Community Foundation (SCCF).

This year's budget continues to align with SPC's strategic five-year forecast. Increases in our precept continue to be aligned and maintained against the Bank of England's predicted inflation rates.

Cllr Lowry thanked the Chair and other Councillors and the Clerk for their continued support.

- **COUNCILLOR LEE FARMAN – PLANNING**

Cllr Farman explained that SPC receive a great many planning applications every month and that we try to make these known through Spotlight, the Meeting Minutes and the SPC Email Service. He asked Parishioners to please join this Service as it is a great way of notifying many people of applications that may not have been notified to them by TRDC.

Neighbourhood Plan is still being worked on – many thanks to Anthony Soothill for his tireless work on this – and it is now in the final stages. We have had many rounds with the Independent Examiner on correspondence and feedback. Hopefully this will be signed off shortly and go to a referendum later this year. If a majority are in support, it will come into effect and help our case with future applications.

Over 100 houses have received outline planning in Sarratt, but they remain to go through the extended process. SPC has limited resources and will do our best to reinforce Sarratt's views in these matters.

Although Parishioners can contact SPC, via the Clerk, for assistance regarding planning issues, SPC has no direct planning powers and very limited resources. So, parishioners should be aware that the most common response they receive from SPC will be to guide them to the relevant local planning authorities to provide formal and legally informed responses to their enquiries.

Cllr Farman advised that making comments on planning applications is very important – the larger the number of people responding, the more weight is added to their point of view.

- **COUNCILLOR SIMON DIGGINS (also speaking for CLLR DAVID ZERNY) - HIGHWAYS**

The basic system of reporting issues to Herts County Council works – in part. Please repeat reports of poor road conditions!

Over the Autumn, Councillors took time to craft a sensible and balanced letter to HCC Highways team, illustrating that Sarratt roads carry too many vehicles, too quickly, on roads that were never designed for this purpose. We are a rural area with urban levels of traffic and these things do not mix well. SPC acknowledges that these matters cannot be changed overnight but that over an extended period of time, explicit things need to happen. Eventually, our County Councillor arranged meetings three times only for them all to be cancelled. As he is standing down, we hope that the new incumbent is more enthused to help. A major change is necessary, and an injection of funding is required to ameliorate the shocking state of the roads.

- **COUNCILLOR FLORA GARVEY – ENVIRONMENT**

Cllr Gavey provided a report as she could not attend.

The 10-year Woodland Management Plan implementation has started with the felling of a large stand of dead and diseased Ash, and the dead wooding of potentially dangerous dead limbs from some roadside oaks.

The Wildlife Volunteers have done sterling work opening-up swathes of woodland to bluebells, foxgloves and Herb Robert in Commonwood.

The Allotment Garden is in good order and more popular this year. The Community Garden Plots are thriving and attracting many volunteers.

Thanks go to Andrew Whitewood – our land management contractor for his constant hard work and skill. Thanks also go to Nick Mortimer and the Little Picking group, who pick up a horrifying amount of litter (between 4 and 15 black bags each session).

Thanks to Jo Deacon, a recent addition to the team as the Woodland Contractor, for her knowledge and management skills. Lastly, thanks to the Clerk for her support.

PRESENTATION OF GRANT AWARDS TO RECIPIENTS:**SARRATT CARE – Jackie Creed**

Jackie described how the SPC Grant they receive helps to pay for their rent of the Village Hall for their events. All the workers are voluntary, and the food is subsidised, so no profit is made. She expressed her thanks to SPC for making this possible. In future, Sarratt Care would like ideas for other areas of support within the Village rather than just a service for the older generation.

SARRATT DAYS ALMSHOUSES CHARITY – Carol Chorley

The Days Charity, set up by the Days and whose descendant is Joanna Stauton, carries on their wishes by supplying the cheapest social housing in the area. The Charity only spends money that is absolutely vital in order to keep the rents as low as possible. The Charity also gives vouchers to the over 80s to be spent in the Village Shop and privately will support any residents who need help. She expressed her thanks to SPC

HOLY CROSS CHURCH – Sue Clark

The grant money is used for the maintenance of the graveyard at the Church. In the last year there have been 42 burials; many people are not regular church goers, but whose last wishes were to be buried at the Church. It is a very important resource for the Village and Parishioners. It is always very busy at the weekends with people tending graves and visiting the grounds. She expressed her thanks to SPC.

KGV – PAUL GOVIER

Paul noted there have been many developments over the past year on the playing fields, including a huge amount of work undertaken by SPC and especially Lead Cllr Dobson, to bring the new playground to fruition. A mainly volunteer force keeps the playing fields in good order and the KGV Committee tries, as best they can, to cover the costs by gathering membership fees from the clubs using KGV, but without the SPC grant they would not achieve their aims. A further grant has been secured from Three Rivers CIL funds for the refurbishment of the KGV pavilion, and the project hopes to be breaking ground on the restoration next year. It is hoped that everyone who uses KGV enjoys it. He expressed his thanks to SPC.

FESTIVAL OF MUSIC – Jane Faulkner

Jane said the society could not believe they had celebrated 25 years of the festival last year! Their mission is to bring an international standard of music to Sarratt, with four evenings of recitals, as well as going into Sarratt School – which is a very important part of the festival. The children have a daylong workshop and are always very inspired. It is expensive booking world class musicians, so the SPC grant is a huge help. The volunteers who work on the project are also helped by the goodwill of the village. She expressed her thanks to SPC.

SPOTLIGHT PARISH MAGAZINE – Colin Plummer

Colin thanked the many volunteers who make producing the magazine possible. The editors and printers; the people who photocopy the text; and John Guy who co-ordinates the delivery of the magazine through volunteer distributors. Without these generous people, the magazine could not be produced. He expressed his thanks to SPC.

SARRATT COMMUNITY SHOP – Janice Alder

As the newest director of the Shop as well as a volunteer, Janice said how she was always struck by the huge importance of the Village Shop. It is a community centre; it is a social support; so much of the produce is grown and distributed through it and this donation will go towards a new refrigerated unit to ensure that the produce is kept

at optimum conditions. Janice hopes that the Village continues to support the shop. She expressed her thanks to SPC.

MOTHERS AND TODDLERS – Daphne Tyler was unable to attend.

In Daphne's absence, Lead Cllr Dobson spoke about the grant for the Mums & Toddlers group. Daphne runs the Mums & Toddlers group from the KGV pavilion on Monday mornings during term time. The grant money covers the rental of the Pavilion. She charges a nominal amount for refreshments and provides a lifeline for new mothers within the Village to meet and chat.

SARRATT DUCKLINGS – School representative Jenny Roberts was unable to attend.

The grant will be used to provide storage space for the large amount of equipment used at the pre-school while building works are carried out.

25/664 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

25/665 OPEN FORUM

Lead Cllr Sarah Dobson commented that within this room, the sense of community within the Parish was amazing. There are around 38 groups within the village all staffed by volunteers. She also thanked Jennifer Haynes from the **Horticultural Society** for attending the Annual Meeting. The "Horti" is an institution in the parish and draws many people into the Village for its twice annual shows.

Carol Chorley MBE thanked the Councillors for their hard work.

Steven Morrill asked for comments on the application for planning permission on a field in Buck's Hill upon which there is an injunction. Cllr Farman noted this would be looked at when the planning application came before SPC.

There was also a comment and question on why our road repairs are so patchy, incomplete, and short lived. Cllr Diggins advised a large proportion of the Highways budget is disaggregated to the County Councillors; the difficulty is getting access to the funds allocated to our part of Herts before they are distributed to other areas. Cllr Dobson commented that the works priorities appear to be ill conceived – for example the recent works on Dawes / Moor Lane and Plough Lane, whilst appreciated are not as important as the work needed to the disintegrating North Hill road.

Former Councillor John Gell commented on the bank at the Chipperfield and Sarratt boundary, which has now been filled in but was still causing problems. Cllr Diggins expressed his concern about this matter.

VE Day – Cllr Diggins. The Village activities will comprise a service at 09:00am at the flagpole, taken by Vice Chair Angela Coakley and a family picnic from 17:30 on The Green or in the Village Hall (in case of rain) and will be accompanied by the lighting of the beacon.

The meeting ended at 21:00 and refreshments were taken

