

WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Twentieth Annual Parish Meeting 25 May 2021

Present: Cllrs A Gribble (Chairman), T Dix, S Hall & R Horton.

In attendance: J Pearce (Clerk). Herts County Councillor A Kingsbury, members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence: P Corke (Vice Chairman).

2. To approve minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2019: The minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. To receive the Annual Report: The Annual Report is available on the Parish Council's website and no questions were raised. The Chairman thanked all the Parish Councillors and the Clerk for their sterling work during a difficult year.

4. Questions from the public:

An item in a recent Parish Council minutes referred to a pond water sample being taken and a resident asked what this was about. The Council explained a company had asked to carry out an eDNA test to ascertain if the pond contained great crested newts. The test concluded they are present. The Council had asked the company if they could reveal who commissioned the investigation and to forward it a copy of the eDNA Report. The company said the report was related to a proposed development in Woolmer Green but could not provide further details or supply the report as it belonged to their client.

A resident asked about maintenance of the Jolly Garden. The Council reported it is mown monthly and will monitor this.

A resident said vegetation was overgrown in front of Mayshade House and in some gardens in Mardleybury Court. The Council stated that overgrown vegetation that restricted access on the footpaths can be reported to Highways online. The Parish Council will investigate the issue.

An item in the Parish Council minutes referred to wildflower areas and a resident wanted to know where they would be located. The Council replied that the Borough Council have a scheme whereby certain areas are mown less often to encourage wildflowers, and the Parish Council had asked if areas in villages could be considered. The Council stated that, so far, there is no progress on this.

A resident expressed concern over flooding that is a serious problem in the village and that the proposed development, rear of the former Marshalls site, could worsen the situation in New Road. The Council agreed that flooding is a major concern, and this has been raised many times in the Council's representations on the Local Plan.

A resident asked why their Parish portion of the Council Tax has increased by over 3% when the Council is getting extra money from the new housing development and received a Covid grant. The Council explained the precept was increased by 5% owing to an uncertain future due to the pandemic. The precept is a set figure which must be agreed and notified to the Borough Council by the end of January. Any new dwellings becoming occupied does not result in further payments to the Parish Council. The Covid grant was received in March, after the budget was agreed. However, this did not compensate for the loss of income. If the situation improves and hall bookings return to normal this would be taken into account when setting next year's budget.

A resident asked if there was any work planned on the pond as it is overgrown. They also had safety concerns for children. The Council said that the native plants are beneficial to wildlife, and that it receives expert advice on the pond from the HCC Countryside Management Service which recommends the pond is left undisturbed. There is also the added problem due to crassula helmsii,

an invasive species, being present in the pond. There is lots of information about the pond on the Parish Council website.

A resident said that the pipework from the roadside drains into the pond are blocked and that even if Highways clear them, it will not resolve the flooding issue in New Road. The Council replied that Highways are aware of the issue and have the expertise to deal the situation.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

JRP 26.5.21