

Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting and Draft Minutes of Annual Parish Council

Meeting held on Thursday 6 May 2021

The meeting was held via Zoom and commenced at 7.00 pm.

Those present were the outgoing Chairman, Cllr T Deffley, the outgoing Vice-Chairman, Cllr M Rist and Cllrs C Nudds and M James. Cllr Overall did not attend. Two members of the public also attended the meeting.

The Chairman gave his report of events over the past year. This will be posted on the Walkern Parish Council website.

Election of Chairman/Vice-Chairman for 2021/22

Cllr Deffley agreed to stand as Chairman for the forthcoming year on the proposal of Cllr James and this was seconded by Cllr Nudds. All agreed.

Cllr Rist agreed to stand as Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year on the proposal of Cllr Deffley and this was seconded by Cllr James. All agreed.

Approval of the Minutes from the previous Meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting, having been circulated, were agreed on the proposal of Cllr Deffley and seconded by Cllr Nudds.

Matters Arising from the Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The Clerk has sent pictures to etrees with suggestions for two areas that would benefit from additional tree planting in Walkern, namely the bottom of the Recreation Ground and the proposed picnic space at WSCC. The Clerk has asked if supplied native trees also includes fruit trees.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Public Forum

No matters were raised from members of the public.

Update on Policies for the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan

Historic England is asking for Neighbourhood Plans to include the following, regarding non-designated sites:

Old telephone boxes/bollards/post boxes/street lighting/bridges.

Old historic properties.

It seems highly unlikely that Walkern could be recategorized as a group VILL2 village from group VILL1 status, meaning small scale developments only. Many other villages have lost amenities over the years and if all reapplied, EHDC would not have enough room for larger new developments and the current Hierarchy system would fail. Walkern Parish Council would still like to proceed with this application though, which would curtail any more large scale developments, such as that in Froghall

Lane/Aubries, for the future. It was suggested by Jacqueline Veater that Box Wood be listed as a Local Green Space. Cllr Rist will look into that. The Conservation Assessment Report will also be revisited to source any new relative information for Walkern's NP. The Parish Council is hopeful of a further grant of up to £10,000 towards the cost of updating its Neighbourhood Plan. **Action: Cllr Rist**

Walkern Sports & Community Centre

The last of the three fire doors has now been installed. Cllr Deffley is continuing to liaise with Nigel Bennett, Chairman of WSCC, regarding the new commercial lease agreement. WSCC is currently negotiating for a football veterans' team to use the sportsfield facility. Nigel and Jo and members of the Walkern Parish Council will meet to discuss with the home football teams. The outside event on Sunday 2 May was well organised and many attended, with Covid guidelines fully adhered to. WSCC provided the Parish Council with a Risk Assessment to cover all eventualities. Cllr Nudds organised a showcase of our fitness trail project so that village residents could see what the Parish Council is arranging to do in the near future. WSCC is being used as a local polling station today.

Fitness Trail at Sportsfield

The equipment has been ordered so hopefully this will be installed by July this year.

Community Project at WSCC/Edible space

The area having been previously cleared is ready for stage 2. There is still rubbish to be cleared which will be done shortly. Top soil and grass seeding can then go ahead. The Clerk will contact Tim Sharpe at the Mears development to ask if any of the soil they are currently removing from site could be brought to WSCC for our project. Native tree and fruit tree planting can then go ahead also, if these can be supplied by etrees. **Action: The Clerk**

Box Wood – Proposal to add Footpaths to the Definitive Map

To date there has been no further information regarding this process. Cllr Deffley will contact Cllr Tom Wren at Hertfordshire County Council to ask if there has been any progress. The police have visited over the two previous weekends, following reports of quad bikes in the wood. They spoke to people on bikes in the wood and chased off a quad biker. They also carried out patrols between Walkern and Weston, arresting a person for driving without insurance. They intend to carry on regular visits. **Action: Cllr Deffley**

Finance

Payments made since the last meeting:

Staff costs -	£1342.69
The School Grounds Company Ltd - maintenance of sportsfield	£ 647.00
Parish Council Websites - maintenance of Walkern Parish Council website	£ 72.00
HAPTC - annual subscription	£ 697.96
Tax Assist Accountants - annual payroll services	£ 288.00

The above payments were ratified by the Parish Council and the following agreed:

Window Care Herts - new fire door at WSCC (2 nd half payment)	£ 742.50
Timeless Gardens Ltd - maintenance of Recreation Ground	£ 384.00

Payments received since the last meeting:

EHDC - half year precept payment £14,618.50

It was decided by the Parish Council that grants to our two churches this year would be as follows:

St Mary's Church is to receive £1500 and the United Reformed Church £500, to be donated from the Recreation Ground Charity Account.

Planning

Planning applications received since the last meeting:

Old Walkern Nursery, Froghall Lane, Walkern	3/21/0903/FUL Extension and conversion of an existing residential outbuilding to form a new 4 bed-roomed dwelling and associated parking.
28 Froghall Lane, Walkern	Demolition of conservatory. Erection of single storey rear extension with roof lantern, alternations of roof at rear from pitched to flat roof with roof lantern.

Planning applications refused since the last meeting:

6 Totts Lane, Walkern	Erection of outbuilding for use as a shed/workshop and studio.
Land at White Hill, Walkern	Erection of agricultural storage shed.

For any Parish Council comments/reasons for refusal please go the EHDC planning portal at: <https://publicaccess.eastherts.gov.uk>

Correspondence

Correspondence has been received via email regarding the following:

Dog waste on the pavements around the village: This is an ongoing issue and dog owners are again reminded to bag up their dog's waste and either put it in one of the dog waste bins dotted around the village or take it home. Please think of other footpath users and especially children. If you are caught you will be reported to EHDC and could face a hefty fine.

Parking in Moors Ley/Aubries: Parking is a major problem in these areas, especially for the disabled. Residents are reminded to contact Clarion Housing with any parking issues concerning neighbours, who will hopefully offer solutions or liaise with Hertfordshire County Council. Unfortunately this is an ongoing issue with more cars than parking spaces nowadays.

Driving issues along Stevenage Road: Highways were asked if a mirror could be provided for cars existing the lane by Boxbury Cottage but unfortunately have said no, as these mirrors can lead to distortion of speed awareness/distance of vehicles, leading to further accidents.

Schedule of Outstanding Items

The RoSPA annual playground safety inspections are due. The Clerk has booked these with East Herts Council.

The Walkern Parish Council's annual insurance policy is due for renewal at the beginning of June. The Clerk will arrange this. **Action: The Clerk**

Any Other Business

Flooding is continuing at the back of houses behind Stevenage Road between Aubries and Moors Ley. Both Affinity Water and Thames Water are working on the cause of this.

The London Luton Airport Authority is continuing with its expansion plans to rival Stansted and Gatwick Airports in the future, although their application for additional passenger and night flights is still to be determined. Any further information will be announced in due course.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 24 June 2021 at Walkern Sports & Community Centre in public.

Please see the Parish Council website, Walkern Journal and village notice board for new meeting dates for the remainder of the year.