



THE ANNUAL SANDRIDGE PARISH MEETING

Held on Wednesday 10th April 2024 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:	Councillors John Hale, June Reid, Graham Leonard (Chair), Jenny Roberts, Maurice Wells, Mike White, Carol Chalkley
APOLOGIES:	Councillors Raihaanah Ahmed, Mary Ternouth, Debbie Chachulski
OFFICERS:	Simon Thwaites, Parish Clerk, Rebecca Pannese, Project, Amenities & Community Engagement Officer, Stef Hayes, Community Centres Manager
IN ATTENDANCE:	2 members of the public, District Councillors Raj Visram, Sharon Hollingsworth, County Councillor Allison Wren

DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There was none.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th April 2023, having been previously circulated, were taken as a correct record and it was;

Resolved

That the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th April 2023 be signed by the Chair.

Public Participation

The member of the public in attendance thanked The Council for the wildflower beds which, she said, had been very well received.

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Chairman's Report for the Annual Sandridge Parish Meeting.

This is my second report for the Annual Parish meeting following my re-election as Chair of the Council a year ago, a time which has just flown by! Whilst events have not been as momentous as in the previous 12 months, there was an election for your Parish Council and following this and the co-option of some members, a new and enthusiastic council was formed, with 10 new members! As ever, your Council and Councillors (old and new) have been just as busy. I will endeavour to pay tribute to their efforts in this report. So, to begin with I would like to thank the Clerk, Simon Thwaites, Deputy Clerk Emma Hostler, the Projects,

Amenities and Community Engagement Officer, Rebecca Pannese and the Community Centres Manager Stef Hayes for their significant contributions over the past year, provided with enthusiasm and good will.

Open Spaces and Green Initiatives

The council has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Jersey Farm Woodland Park which has been developed from nothing over the past 25 years by volunteers assisted by officers and councillors to produce a leisure area which recently received its 12th consecutive Green Flag award. Maintenance of the woodland park and open space is a year-round activity and our volunteers and councillors have been busy, as evidenced by the award. For example, the Time Capsule site has been cleared and refreshed with a ground cover membrane with a dressing of stones. There are a number of benches dotted around the park and these have been cleaned, after removing overhanging branches which acted as bird perches, with the inevitable result!

The Open Spaces are managed by two of the council's committees, the Jersey Farm Woodland Park Management Committee and the newly constituted Committee for Sustainability and these, like many of our committees, include public members, so if you are interested then please get in touch with the office.

The Parish Council has been very active in promoting green initiatives, such as the rewilding and wild flower planting across our open spaces, particularly with the pollinator initiative (more of which later). You may well have noticed the introduction of a large number of trees in both the open spaces and on the grass verges, and the Parish Council has been very active in this regard. If you find that you have one outside your property, perhaps you might show it some kindness with a drink during the hot weather, which I am sure will be coming!

Playgrounds

The council has several playgrounds in its portfolio, namely: Jersey Farm Adventure Playground, William Bell Open Space, Sherwood Park, Damson Way Open Space, Harness Way Open Space, St. Leonard's Open Space and Spencer Meadow Courts and Outdoor Gym. Throughout the year these areas have all received attention in the form of regular inspections and maintenance under the auspices of the Sports and Recreation Grounds Committee. For example, the skate ramp at Jersey Farm suffered some damage and this was attended to by the original contractors. In addition, a local graffiti artist has painted a spectacular mural on one end of the ramp, which has attracted a lot of admirers, and he is scheduled to return for further work later this year. In the past year we have installed a new outdoor table tennis table at William Bell open space, step poles and stepping pods in the Adventure playground at Jersey Farm, and a basketball hoop and dribble area at Sherwood Park. Significant maintenance has also been carried out at the Damson Way and St Leonard's playgrounds.

A major disappointment for this Committee, after three years of hard work, has been the escalating costs of the proposed bike/pump track for the Jersey Farm Open Space, making its provision impossible for the council to fund. The increase has been the direct result of the insistence of Herts Highways that we carry out extremely costly amendments, albeit mostly temporary, to the existing entrance (which is only for maintenance vehicles). It is with regret that the track will not be available to local residents as originally planned.

Community Centres

The way these two important council assets are managed has been changed, from a committee structure to one where the Centres' Manager reports to the Clerk of the Council routinely and provides bi-annual reports to the full council. This change has proved very successful, and the Centres' Manager (Stef Hayes) has greatly increased the hiring of both halls, thus replacing the significant loss in income when the nursery

closed at Marshalswick. We now have a wide range of activities ongoing at both centres involving a whole range of different groups from across the parish. You can find the schedule of hirers in each copy of the Neighbourhood News produced quarterly on behalf of the council and delivered to your door.

‘Paradise for Pollinators’ Initiative

Many of you will undoubtedly have seen the spectacular shows of wild flowers in beds dotted around the parish, on both council land and in schools, churches and private gardens, and this is one initiative which clearly caught the imagination of our community. Following its success last year, this year’s activities are well under way. As the Projects, Amenities and Community Engagement Officer, Rebecca Pannese has stated, we need these wild flowers to attract and feed our much-needed pollinators, a point made by Rebecca in her recent broadcast interview on Radio station Mix 92.6. The aim last year was to seed at least half an acre with wild flowers, which was exceeded and this year we have added a further five additional wildflower beds in our open spaces. The colour in last year’s beds was principally from the annual seeds contained in the mix, and these should come again, but now they will be augmented by the perennial plants which were mainly “in the green” last year.

Grants

The Council always sets a budget for grants to local groups and organisations, from football clubs to churches to welfare groups. This past year has been no exception and we have supported a wide range of worthy causes such as Sustainable St Albans, Jersey Farm Day Centre, Hornbeam Hedgehog Sanctuary, Sandridge Cricket Club, Friends of Jersey Lane, Sandridge 10k Run, St Mary’s Holiday at Home and St. Leonard’s Cemetery maintenance. I am sure we will continue to support these and other organisations going forward.

Planning and the Neighbourhood Plan

Your council continues to scrutinise all the plans submitted to the District Council which fall within Sandridge Parish. We are mindful of the need that any objections we might wish to make should be based around the planning rules and, in particular, how they comply with the requirements of the Sandridge Neighbourhood Plan. The latter is normally cited when we lodge an objection. The council has an appointed Planning Committee which meets every three weeks throughout the year in order to ensure that we do not miss the closing date for comments on any application. We will continue in our efforts to retain the open character of Sandridge Parish, with particular reference to maintaining the green belt and this is helped by reference to our Local Plan.

The local plan drawn up by the Parish Council, which was the work of a number of councillors and community volunteers, is undergoing a review. This is to ensure that it is working as it should and remains relevant to both current planning laws and the needs of various communities across the parish. This review by councillors should be complete later this year and a revised plan will be forthcoming. It is interesting to note that the Local Plan, which is a formally approved planning document, is often cited as reasons for supporting a planning application. Conversely, it may also provide reasons for objecting when proposals fall foul of its requirements.

Website

One outward facing change for the Parish Council has been in the introduction of an exciting, modern website, embracing many features not possible in the tired version it has replaced. It is much more user friendly and it is now straightforward to find information that you might wish to access. The opening page contains direct links to:

- Latest News and Important Announcements
- Upcoming Meetings
- Information on Councillors, Community Centres and Halls, Open Spaces, Recreation Grounds, Neighbourhood News Magazine and Committees and Meetings.

If you haven't experienced the new website you are greatly encouraged so to do.

Clothing Banks

Some years ago, the decision was taken to remove the clothing banks on parish land, as collections were erratic and fly-tipping resulted as bins overflowed. However, a new initiative from the Salvation Army who, initially, installed two clothing and shoe bins in the parish office car park, has proved to be very popular. With regular collections, the success of these has led to the installation of a further clothing bank at Spencer Meadow playing field and one is also planned for the Sherwood Park car park. The council receives a small income from the Salvation Army based on the amount of clothing/shoes donated and it plans to set this money aside for use on appropriate initiatives as decided by the Committee for Sustainability. Please remember, that in the unlikely event that bin is full when you are delivering donations, please take them home and return at a later date. Thankyou.

Community Garden

I am sure you will have enjoyed the community garden outside the Marshalswick community centre over the past year. Volunteers, councillors and officers have worked hard to create this oasis of calm for everyone to enjoy. It has expanded in scope and now provides a pleasant place for people to relax and enjoy a cup of something, or even just to pass the time of day. As spring has sprung, we hope, the work on the garden will now be stepped up, with clearing and planting top of the gardener's agenda. Two large water storage tanks have been installed to collect the rainwater from the community centre roof so that irrigation of the garden will use water from a responsible source and not the tap. Another improvement has been in the addition of bird feeders which have been very successful, attracting a wide range of species such as goldfinches, blue tits, blackbirds and, of course, robins. This is a community asset and so, if you would like to take part in its development, please contact the Parish Office.

Committee for Sustainability

This new committee was formed in 2023 from the long established PEAP Committee in order to better address environmental and sustainability challenges relating to Parish Council activities. The committee's remit is summarised under four headings;

- Recycling, Reusing, Repurposing, Repairing
- Carbon Reduction and Capture
- Improving the Natural Environment for Residents
- Protecting and Supporting Nature

The committee meets four times a year and as well as councillors has public members from specialist organisations such as the Herts County Council Rights of Way team and Sustainable St. Albans.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention two special forthcoming events hosted by the council. There is the Summer Festival on the woodland park on June 1st in the field adjacent to Woodland house from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m., followed shortly by the Commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings at 8.30 p.m. on June 6th, also on the Woodland Park near the war memorials close to the Chiltern Road entrance. Everyone is welcome to attend these special occasions.

Graham Leonard
Chair, Sandridge Parish Council

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.20pm.

Chair

Date