

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, COMMUNITY CENTRE, COMMUNITY WAY, CROXLEY GREEN WD3
3PA

ON THURSDAY 30 APRIL 2015 at 8.00pm

Present: Chairman of the Meeting - Cllr Mitchell, David Allison – Clerk to the Council
Chairman of the Parish Council Amanda Taft – Administrative Officer
Peter Goodwin, Architect, Chambers,
Goodwin & Partners

Present – 29 People

AP81/15 The Chairman welcomes members of the press and public

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed members of the public and press to the Annual Parish Meeting. He advised those present on the procedure in the event of fire and asked that mobile phones be switched off.

AP82/15 Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 24 April 2014

The Clerk advised those present that in accordance with good practice, the Minutes of the last Parish Meeting had already been signed off on 26 June 2014 (CC1351/14), that being the first full Council meeting following the preparation of the Minutes after the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting.

AP83/15 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

The Chairman was asked if he could introduce those at the front of the meeting and he introduced himself (Cllr Chris Mitchell), Peter Goodwin the Architect, David Allison The Clerk and Amanda Taft the Administrative Officer.

AP84/15 To receive the Parish Council Chairman's Report

Cllr Mitchell, as Chairman of the Council, delivered the Chairman's Report for the year, see attached.

AP85/15 To receive the following Parish Council Committee Reports

AP85.1/15 Planning & Development Committee

Cllr Jordan, as Chairman of the Committee, should have delivered her report for the year but had sent her apologies. In her absence Cllr Isard-Brown, Vice Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee delivered the report on her behalf, see attached. Following the report a presentation on the Community Plan was delivered by Cllr Mitchell and Peter Goodwin.

AP85.2/15 Environment & Amenity Committee

Cllr Edmunds, as Chairman of the Committee, should have delivered his report for the year but had sent his apologies. In his absence, the Clerk read his report, see attached.

AP85.3/15 Finance & Administration Committee

Cllr Mitchell, as Chairman of the Committee, delivered his report for the year, see attached.

AP86/15 To consider any other interest in the Parish

The Chairman asked if anybody had any matters they wished to raise.

Speaker 1 asked whether the Parish Council would have any input on the proposed school at the horse field at the bottom of Baldwins Lane. The Chairman replied that when a planning application is submitted, the Parish Council have a chance to comment. He added that occasionally a developer will offer to meet to discuss proposals before the planning application stage and the Parish Council would welcome this opportunity. It was pointed out that Hertfordshire County Council can overrule Three Rivers District Council when it comes to planning applications for schools. A District Councillor advised that at this stage it was unclear whether HCC or TRDC would be the ultimate decider but if it should be HCC then TRDC would be consulted. A resident commented that it would be an ideal opportunity to redevelop the area at the shops.

Speaker 2, The Chairman of the Residents' Association pointed out that the Canal and River Trust in association with the Parish Council are having clear up days on 16-17 May 2015.

Speaker 3 asked what the current situation was with the Tesco / Shell petrol station on the Watford Road. The Chairman said that with Tesco's current difficulties, it was likely that the site would not be used for a Tesco's store. The Chairman of the Residents' Association confirmed that the planning permission had been renewed and a Parish Councillor advised that the Tesco site was currently up for sale and the planning application for the Shell petrol station had been withdrawn.

Speaker 4 raised the matter of the telephone mast in Baldwins Lane, stating that he had received a notification in the post that the current mast was to be replaced by a much taller mast. He asked what the Parish Council's views on this were and what powers the Parish Council had regarding this issue. It was clarified that this proposal had not gone to planning yet but the residents were welcome to attend the Parish Council's Planning and Development meeting and also TRDC's Planning meeting to speak in objection to the proposal. A District Councillor stated that the Ward Councillors had written to the company but had not heard back and the resident who raised this matter replied that 8 neighbours had written in objection but the company still planned to go ahead with the larger mast. The Chairman of the Residents' Association offered to put the matter on their next agenda and suggested that all the residents of Baldwins Lane could get together and lobby the press and My Croxley for support.

Speaker 5 suggested that in regard to the Village Plan, the Parish Council should be careful in its aspirations ie with regard to Green Belt and extensions as it would be good to keep Croxley nice but the Plan must be practical and the emphasis should not be on 'not' but on 'how'.

AP87/15

Closure

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.35pm.



Annual Parish Meeting – Thursday 30 April 2015

Chairman's Report

As I have said before, I believe that Croxley Green is a very special place to live, work and play. Why do I say that?

Well it is down to the many organisations and people who make things happen.

The Parish Council support many of these organisations through mainly one off help on projects and also organise events and provide services to improve our village and community.

What we do

- PCSO's to help keep a feeling of security;
- We have two rangers, Phillip and Oliver, who do an excellent job in keeping Croxley Green looking great;
- Community Bus for the elderly, I have been told that it is the often the highlight of the week for many. Now we have a new provider, which is Desi coaches. They are based just north of Harrow Weald. Our officers decided to request quotations and they have given us the best value;
- Annual seaside trip for the elderly. The coach company we are using this year is Lucketts of Watford.
- Neighbourhood Plan - more later.

Events

- Dog show, for the third year
- Fireworks. Still so popular and this year being one of the best!!
- Wassail. Now becoming a tradition!!
- The Revels
- Croxfest
- Barn Dance
- Christmas tree at the Library and the Christmas lights.

Many are free to join in with, and they are open for all. These are the things that contribute towards Croxley Green being a community rather than just a dormitory village.

Maintenance

As already said, we have two excellent rangers who keep the village looking great. They look after The Green, Stones Orchard, the footpaths in Croxley Green, empty many of the litter bins and carry out woodland maintenance in part of Croxley Hall woods.

We also work with Flowers of Croxley, and this brings a lot of colour into the village, and many thanks to them.

Issues that affect us

Croxley Rail Link

- Largest project to affect us for many years;
- Work to start this September, and complete in 2018;

- We have liaised with the team and try to ensure we get a reasonable looking viaduct;
- We will keep in contact with them to help ensure disruption is kept as low as possible, but there will be some;
- TFL have now taken over the lead in this project, so we will need to keep in close touch to ensure we know what is going on.

Neighbourhood Plan.

- Achieved a £6k grant to take it forward;
- We have followed the format of the Chalfont St Peter Neighbourhood Plan;
- It is so important that we get this done, as it gives us more control over what happens in Croxley Green, and also ensures that 35% of the developer payments for infrastructure comes to Croxley Green from the now what is called Community Infrastructure Levy, or CIL;
- Any help on this will be useful, so if you want to please contact us. More later.

Planning issues

- We objected to the TRDC changes to the TRDC allocations plan, and I represented The Parish Council at the Inquiry. Unfortunately the Inspector decided to take out the area for the school from the Greenbelt and also Killingdown Farm;
- I attended a meeting in Luton, of all places, hosted by CPRE concerning building on Green belt. There is a real issue over this, and there is a high risk to the green belt over the next few years.

Charities

Monies raised for charities this last year was just over £2,000 for Peace Hospice Care and the Sea Cadets. The Barn Dance, collections at Croxfest, the Dog Show and the Wassail.

Other issues

I have represented the Parish Council at two meetings concerning the bus service cuts proposed by Herts County Council. One was in Rickmansworth and the other in Stevenage. There is outrage across the county, and at least they then watered down their proposal for yet another round of consultation. In London, you can get buses 24 hours a day, and here they will stop after 7.30pm, and most buses will not run on Sundays. They have listened to our main concerns, i.e. that buses serving hospitals should still be supported and the support will extend to 7.30pm rather than 6.30pm. We have also written again objecting to the current cuts proposed. We consider they should be looked at on a route by route basis rather than blanket cuts.

We have also had a positive meeting with the Library Service from Herts County Council. Our library will remain open for the hours it does now, and they will work with us to see if we can help get a volunteers' group to aid the extension of the hours. We shall see how the details come out.

I have attended two meetings with the other parishes in TRDC, along with our Clerk. This is to see what common issue we have and work together.

One issue in particular is that we believe that some of the land that TRDC own, i.e. The Green, Stones Orchard, and may other plots, should be handed over to us. We are the council closets to the residents, and it should be a simple transfer. Well TRDC kept us at bay for well over 18 months, and now say they are looking at a quick process. We have responded to say that we have elections and it will have to taken forward by the new Council.

We are looking hard at this, and it will be one of the priorities for the new Council to consider how best to take this forward.

I am pleased to say that the Community Centre won a tender process to continue providing the village hall function, and congratulations to them.

Finally, the election.

1. Only 4 people stood in Durrants Ward, for 8 seats;
2. 8 people stood in Dickinson ward for the 8 seats.
3. So we do not need an election.

I think it would have been important to have the residents vote for the people who represent their views on how best to keep Croxley Green special.

Well, that is not going to happen, and you will have the people who have been brave enough to step forward to help carry out the work to be done. We are total volunteers.

The next four years are going to be very interesting. It will to some extent depend on what happens in the General Election, but I do believe that powers will be pushed towards the Parish Councils for many different reasons.

We have four vacancies, and although the outgoing Council will not make the decision on how we will fill them, PLEASE let us know if you would like to be considered as a Councillor. The options we have are a by-election in Durrants Ward, or we can choose to co-opt, which means we will interview people. All of you who have turned up today must have an interest in our fantastic village. So do give it some thought. To register your interest, please write or email the office addressed to the Clerk.

I do believe this is so important to keep Croxley a vibrant and fun place to live.

Thanks to our Clerk, Admin Officer, the rangers and the PCSOs. Also great thanks to the Councillors for their time in attending meetings and making the decisions etc. Special thanks to the Councillors standing down, and I would like to make a special mention to Hazel Seeley who has served on the Council for 18 years. Please remember they are volunteers, and we do not get any allowances for our time. Also, a great thanks to all the volunteers who directly help us deliver our services, and to all of you who do something to help Croxley Green.

Summary

I hope you support the work that we do, and maybe the lack of candidates for Councillors means that you are very satisfied with the work that we do.

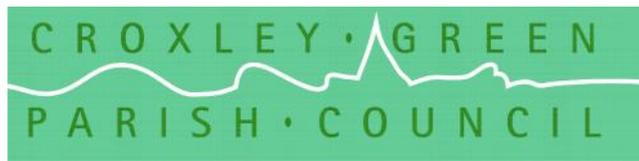
You can see that the Parish Council supports many organisations, and acts as a catalyst, for the benefit of the people of Croxley Green. We also:

- Provide extra services;
- Support events;
- Maintain the village to a high standard.

By doing this and working together with others, we help keep Croxley Green a wonderful place to live, work and play.

Thank you.

Cllr Chris Mitchell
Chairman of the Parish Council



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Planning & Development Committee Report

The P&D committee has met 17 times since last May and it will total 18 by the end of the civic year on 6 May. In 2014 the committee commented on just over 200 applications, 48 of which were for noting as they referred in the main to Certificate's of Lawfulness or Permitted Development. So far this year (2015) we have had 53 applications.

Rather than seven members on the Committee we have only had five this year, Cllrs Baldwin, Isard-Brown, Jordan, Martin and Wynne-Jones. Planning is a technical process and the committee has to work within national and local planning constraints. As a statutory consultee to Three Rivers DC, the Parish Council does not have the final say on applications and sometimes our objections do not go the way we would like, even though we are trying to respect street scenes and discourage over-development. More of this will be covered under the Neighbourhood Plan section of this report.

In addition, the committee has replied to consultations on major planning issues, including the National Inspector's second meeting regarding the removal of land from the green belt. There was disappointing result and not only for Croxley Green, as other areas of Three Rivers also had this status removed. Both Cllr Mitchell and Cllr Jordan attended this meeting to represent Croxley Green's interests.

Another main area of activity has been developing the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Jordan secured £5,880 from the Communities Development Fund in order to engage the expert input needed and we have been very fortunate in securing the services of Peter Goodwin who has given us inspiration, support and (obviously) his technical expertise. This plan has been discussed with Three Rivers DC at various stages of its progress, as it needs to be aligned to the Local development Plan. Just this week the planning officers have given their input so that the plan will reach the level of 'soundness' to proceed to a referendum. Our neighbouring village Chalfont St Peter has just had its plan adopted so we hope to join them soon. Further consultation will be taking place and local businesses will also be targeted to join in. While this may seem a slow process, it needs this level of detail and local support. If it is adopted developers will have to comply. The following presentation reminds us of the aims and objectives and the reason to secure these aims for the village.

Running alongside the Neighbourhood Plan is the Community Plan. The writing up has been delayed by the urgency of getting the work done on the Neighbourhood Plan, as the grant was time bound. We hope to publish the Community Plan shortly. The Community Plan is an important precursor of the Neighbourhood Plan, being community led, much broader in scope and covering more than just planning issues. It had, of course, the benefit of local residents' input in the form of a long questionnaire covering key issues in our community. The resulting action plans will guide the community in achieving its aspirations.

While Herts CC is responsible for roads, Croxley Green has had an active role in liaising with HCC and Cllr Martin has done sterling work in this respect. She has chaired the Road Safety Committee admirably for the last two years. It has now been decided that the work of the Road Safety Committee will be a regular agenda item at the first monthly meeting of the Parish Council's Planning and Development meetings from 6 May. This will enhance its profile and enable residents of Croxley Green to address their concerns directly to the Parish. Please thank Janet and her committee for their work, as a number of them are with us tonight.

In conclusion, all this demonstrates how much the P&D committee has the interest of all those who live in Croxley at its centre. Cllr Wendy Jordan is unable to be with us this evening and has asked me to give her great thanks to all members of the committee for their support and hard work this year.

Cllr Wendy Jordan
Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee

A PowerPoint presentation on the Neighbourhood Plan was then given by Cllr Mitchell and Peter Goodwin.



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Environment & Amenity Committee Report

Looking at my report for last year it seems that some of the issues are still very much with us. The proposed development at the bottom of Baldwins Lane, potential development at Killingdown Farm and the continued threat to our Green Belt protection. I encourage all of you who value the preservation of our Green Belt to make your thoughts and views known to your Parish Councillors, District Councillors and to our MP.

Your Parish Council is still trying to hold discussions with TRDC regarding taking over ownership of the Green and Stones Orchard. Matters are proceeding very slowly although TRDC does now appear to be prepared to re-open discussions. On the subject of Stones Orchard I hope that you will agree it is looking particularly good again. We have some new apple trees, including recognised cider apple varieties and the Rangers have been planting some Cowslips to add to the variety of flora that the Orchard already supports.

We had another highly enjoyable Wassail this year and looking at the amount of blossom on the trees it would seem, once again, to have been successful. Last year there was an absolute profusion of wild flowers in the meadow area and it was gratifying to see the number of people, of all ages, enjoying the sights and sounds of Stones Orchard.

We have the excitement of work on the Croxley Rail Link to look forward to!

Our Rangers, Philip and Oliver, are doing an excellent job keeping Croxley Green as green and as tidy as possible. Generally speaking all is excellent but the increase in litter is noticeable when the weather improves. Please do encourage everyone to bin or take home their litter!

Your Cllrs involve themselves with “green” matters outside of the Parish Council. Cllr Wynne-Jones and I are members of the TRDC Environmental Forum where Cllr Wynne-Jones represents the Parish Council and I represent the CPRE (of which the PC is a member).

I would like to thank the members of the E&A committee for their time and input this last year. I would also like to thank Cllr Peter Getkahn for his excellent work in moving TRDC to do something about renewing posts on the Green and putting in “No Parking” signs and we look forward to the arrival of these before the summer holidays. The majority of residents agree that the Green should not be considered a car park except for special events. Equally, thanks to Cllr Nick Bennett for his Chairmanship of the Land Acquisition Group as this initiative is an integral part of the E&A activity and one that we hope will be much greater when (if?) we obtain ownership.

E&A meetings are open to the public and I encourage you come along and speak on any agenda item that interests and/or concerns you. We really do like to hear your views.

Cllr Dudley Edmunds
Chairman of the Environment and Amenity Committee



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Finance & Administration Committee Report

I can advise that the draft accounts show that our income was £279k, and expenditure is £272k. There is a surplus of about £7k. This will go towards the overall general surplus that is still slightly below recommended levels. However, we are planning to use some of this surplus, around £12k for next year's budget.

The budget for next year is projected to be £286k.

Budgets have been tight, and there is a grant that we get that is reducing that comes via TRDC from central government. It has been even further reduced for next year, from £12.5k to less than £8.5k. We decided that we did not want to cut services, so we have a small increase. It works out at an average of £2.50 per year per household.

There are some risks, one being a charge for TRDC for election costs from 4 years ago. This is heading towards £14k. We had allowed for this but not that much. We are in discussions with TRDC together with all the other Parish Councils in TRDC, but we have to make a provision to pay part of this if we have to.

Our funds do keep Croxley Green looking as it should and provides, in our view, a good local service for all the residents. Thank you for your support.

Cllr Chris Mitchell
Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee