

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER
ON THURSDAY 10 APRIL 2008 at 8.00pm

Present: Cllr Norman – In the Chair
David Allison – Clerk to the Council
Amanda Taft – Minute Taker

Cllrs Bains, C Jefford, Seeley, Shafe and Wynne-Jones

Voting Members: 6

In Attendance: Cllrs Brand, Seabourne, Vassiliou and Inspector Holland

No members of the public present

FA411/08 Apologies for Absence

None

FA412/08 Declaration of Interests

The Chairman stated that declarations of interest may be made throughout the meeting if necessary.

FA413/08 Representations from the Public

There were no public present.

FA414/08 Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr Wynne-Jones and seconded by Cllr Seeley that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2008 be approved as correct. The proposal was agreed and the Chairman signed the Minutes.

FA415/08 Matters Arising

FA405/08 (Parish Council Website Development). The Clerk was asked for an update and he informed Members that the day after Council had agreed to this proposal, he had signed the contract with Inco Software for the website development. However, Inco Software will not begin the website until the funds have been received.

FA407/08 (Asset Replacement Policy). The Clerk was asked if any estimates had been received to which he replied that he was looking into vehicle specifications and obtaining prices. The Clerk was then asked for a breakdown of the £2477 for works necessary to repair the current Land Rover but as Council have decided to proceed with the purchase of a new vehicle (subject to obtaining quotes) this was considered retrospective.

FA416/08 Schedule of Payments

The Chairman introduced this item and the Clerk referred Members to the Monthly Management Accounts Report for month 12 (March 2008). The Clerk explained the format of the report in which the first page is a summary and this is followed by the detailed report and then gave an explanation of each expenditure item.

It was asked if this document could be circulated with the Agenda so that Members have time to study it but the Clerk pointed out that the bank statements are not received in time to reconcile the bank account and close the month. The Clerk added that there was no other way of doing it as the necessary information is just not available in time. In response to this, the Clerk was asked if details of payments to be made could accompany the Agenda (as previously occurred) to which he responded that this subject had been discussed and Members had been advised the old system would be changed.

It was proposed by Cllr Wynne-Jones and seconded by Cllr Seeley that the Management Accounts be approved, and the proposal was agreed and duly signed by the Chairman.

Whilst the Chairman signed the Accounts, the Clerk reported to Members that the annual VAT return of £5507.48 for the last 6 months had been submitted and that the Statutory Employers Annual Return (P35) had been sent to the Inland Revenue and the P60's had been prepared ready to be issued to staff on 21 April 2008.

FA417/08 Crime Statistics

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Holland to the meeting and thanked him for attending and referred Members to the supporting document that had been circulated with the Agenda. Inspector Holland had brought with him a more recent version of this document, and he said that Three Rivers had been recognised by the Home Office for effectively reducing crime by 26% and that Three Rivers has the lowest recorded crime rate. Overall, there had been a crime reduction in Croxley Green North of 27.37%, a reduction of 25.94% in Croxley Green South and a reduction of 26.27% in Croxley Green (Central).

FA418/08 Inspector Holland to take pre-submitted questions from Council Members

1 You stated at a meeting at Little Green School that the crime rate for Croxley North Ward, since the introduction of PCSO's had been reduced by 32%. Since then you have quoted a further reduction of 37%, making an overall figure of 69%. Can you please explain how these percentage figures were worked out and show which aspects of crime they relate to, ie burglaries, thefts, thefts from vehicles, vandalism etc?

Answer: Crime reduction had been already discussed in item FA417/08 - Crime Statistics.

2. The continued vandalism to street furniture is still very prevalent in North Ward, especially the area of Baldwins Lane, North and South. Most happens on Friday and Saturday nights. What do you intend to do to alleviate this social problem?

Answer: Inspector Holland emphasised the importance of reporting crime and informed those present that last year in relation to criminal damage there had been an increase of 11 to 13 offences reported for damage to cars but a decrease of 15 to 6 reported for other damage. If any person observes an offence being committed they are strongly encouraged to ring 999, for an immediate police response.

3. Why can't we have 'plain clothes' officers and unmarked vehicles patrol the areas in respect of question 2?

Answer: An unmarked vehicle was recently purchased and is currently patrolling the area of Croxley Green.

4. Why was one of my constituents asked for her age whilst trying to report a crime being committed?

Answer: The Home Office makes it a requirement on the police to ask reporting persons in given circumstances their age/date of birth. This information is used in a range of local, regional and national government statistical information processes.

5. Why does it take so long to get through to a Police Call Centre?

Answer: Statistics show that Hertfordshire Constabularies County Control Room is in the top quartile of Forces in England and Wales in relation to how quickly it answers incoming emergency and non-emergency calls. Hertfordshire Constabulary has a target to answer 90% of emergency calls in 10 seconds. In the Western Area they currently answer 96.2% in 10 seconds.

6. Why does it appear to take so long to respond to a reported incident?

Answer: As above

7. Are you aware of a 'new gang in town' in Croxley?

Answer: No, but if there is a 'new gang' this should be reported. Inspector Holland said that he would speak with the PCSO's about the information provided during the meeting.

8. Are you aware drink and cigarettes are still being sold to underage persons?

Answer: Yes, we are aware and the Licensing Officer, together with your Safer Neighbourhood Team and Trading Standards are undertaking a range of actions to address the problems. Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued to outlets recently in Croxley for selling alcohol to underage persons. There are now a number of outlets in Three Rivers under review as a result of sales to underage persons.

9. Would you prefer the Parish Council to 'sponsor' a Police Officer rather than a PCSO?

Answer: No, Hertfordshire has a relatively low recorded crime and the PCSO's have made an incredible difference across Three Rivers and in Croxley Green. They are not there to be 'crime fighters' but to provide support and understanding and interact with all the community with particular emphasis on the young and more vulnerable members of any given community. Their high visibility patrols provide reassurance to the community of Croxley Green and their interactions with the local youth have helped to reduce the incidents of reported anti-social behaviour and helped in the crime reductions previously reported.

10. What is Hertfordshire Constabulary's policy on people who use their mobile phones whilst driving? How many prosecutions have been made to date?

Answer: Statistics of prosecutions by Hertfordshire Police:

01/01/2006 – 31/12/2006 4,857 fixed penalties were issued

01/01/2007 – 28/02/2007 739 fixed penalties were issued

01/03/2007 – 31/12/2007 3,475 fixed penalties were issued (since 01/03/2007 an endorsement of 3 points was introduced).

FA419/08 Virement of funds for 'Flowers in Croxley Green' Project

The Chairman introduced this item and an update was given to Members on the progress of Flowers in Croxley. It has been decided that the two raised beds at the front of 200-208 Watford Road would be the first site to tackle with other possible sites already decided and still being considered.

It was asked that as the proposed wind turbine had now been removed from the budget and the sum of £1,900 allocated to it now in Reserves, whether some of that money could be apportioned to the Flowers in Croxley project. Members were told that there was already £150 in Reserves which was for the lamppost planters and that a donation of £66.60 had been given by the landowner of the two raised beds in front of the shops on Watford Road. It was proposed by Cllr Bains and seconded by Cllr Shafe that £350 be given to this project and the proposal was agreed.

FA420/08 Closure

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.16pm.