



Anstey Parish Council

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, ANSTEY ON MONDAY 9TH MARCH 2015 COMMENCING AT 7.30 PM

Councillors Present:	Simon Bagnall (SB) Andrew Marchant (AM) Stephen Whyllie (SW)	David Oxley (DO) Jan Pledger (JP)
Others Present:	Ann Grimsdale, Peter Sapsed, Gus and Jenny Goymour, Peter Sapsed, Colin Smith, Rod Hart, S Greenhill, P Cresswell, Ann Grimsdale and Kate Hurst, Maddy Bradshaw and Zoe Bossey & 5 other members of the public	
Officers Present:	Caroline Jones (clerk)	

ACTION

The chairman welcomed all those present and thanked them for attending this meeting which commenced at 7.30pm. He informed those attending that this was a standard Parish Council meeting with a few formalities and standard items to run through first but the Skateboard Item had been brought forward on the Agenda.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Parker, PCSO Amanda Higham and District Cllr Rose Cheswright.

2. **Declarations of Interest** – none

3. **Approval of Minutes 19th January 2015**

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting had been previously circulated and were reviewed and accepted as accurate. **It was Resolved** that the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 19th January 2015 were correct and were duly signed as correct by the chairman.

4. **Police Adjournment**

PCSO Higham sent her apologies and a report; since the last Parish Council Meeting, there have been no recorded crime in the village. There have been 2 burglaries in neighbouring villages so asks the Parish Council to remind residents to remain vigilant and report anything suspicious by ringing 101. The Chairman reiterated that residents should remain cautious after a recent break in at Hare Street.

5. **Public Adjournment**

The Chairman ran through some points. The Parish Council were committed to requesting a very small precept of £3800 to cut grass, provide and maintain the playing field and pay the legal and financial costs to run the Parish Council. Council Tax Contributions are kept to a minimum. Three years ago the Government decided that to encourage local authorities to grant applications, a new grant would be available to councils called the New Homes Bonus. Following new properties built in Anstey, the Parish Council are in receipt of the New Homes Bonus totalling a few thousand pounds. It is the belief of the Parish Council that the money should be spent on infrastructure or village expenditure.

A Questionnaire was put in the newsletter and the few responses received were for new items at the playing field – zip wires, rough terrain cycling, with a skate ramp for the teenagers the most favoured item. A grant for 50% of the cost was applied for and granted. A few concerns were raised; noise and cost (was the money being spent wisely) and the cost of insurance. The Parish Council want to proceed with this item unless there were any different views tonight.

Q1 I didn't receive a questionnaire in the newsletter.

A1: It was confirmed that it wasn't a questionnaire but a news item in the newsletter.

The chairman stated that the Parish Council were allocating funds that have been given to the council. The roads are the Herts Highways responsibility so it cannot be spent on road improvements. One of the responsibilities is to provide and maintain the playing field.



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- Q2: What children have been in discussions regarding the item?
A2: 16 under 10 to mid teens confirmed that they are interested in using a skate ramp.
- Q3: Barkway Park contains a lot of play equipment – have you looked at these facilities? Can more pieces of play equipment be put in at Anstey rather than all the money on the ramp?
A3: We have this money to spend and if you want different items, please put them forward.
- Q4: What about the Village Hall?
A4: There has been no request for any money – it has funds of £10K
It is a standalone situation and runs itself. They haven't requested any funds.
- Q5: I have concerns on the safety of young people, if they don't wear hats and crash helmets and protective clothing.
A5: There will be the necessary notices stating that helmets and protection should be worn. There is a report stating that there are more skateboard accidents on roads or where other ramps / surfaces are utilised, a smooth surface ramp is best. It is suitable for all ages, even tots can go up and down the ramp.
- Q6: What is the height of the ramp?
A6: 1.2m with a protective rail fitted around the top so there are no fall risks.
- Q7: What about larger swings?
A7: The existing swings were upgraded this year and new ropes have been ordered for the train. We are providing two more picnic tables.
- It was noted that teenagers don't want swings.
One parishioner stated that she had a teenager and has to run him to and from ramps in Stevenage and Buntingford. They all wear a helmet as it is fashionable.
- The chairman confirmed that there was constant maintenance on the existing play items, new ropes for the train have been purchased. The skateboard kit is guaranteed for 30 years with a 7 year paint warranty. He understands that this is different to the traditional play equipment but it is good to provide something for the teenagers.
- The funding was confirmed that it would use the grant and £7079 and the remaining is from the New Homes Bonus.
- Q8: One parishioner asked for the councillors to state their views on the planned expenditure.
JP: I've spoken to some of the teenagers and younger children. I've brought up children here and once they got to age 7-8 there wasn't anything here for them to do, I had to take them out of the village. We did a survey and a skateboard ramp was the most popular suggestion. This will save them having to leave the village, when they come home they can take their boards or BMX's and play safely in the park. I would rather see them safe in the playing field than on go on the road. I'm very keen on this project.
- SW: I am very much in favour of doing something for the teenagers. The initial estimate of £500 has changed since the first thoughts of providing this facility. I queried if the total amount should be spent on an item – was it being spent wisely. But after it being published in the newsletter and there was no other suggestion, I'm happy with the principle of it.
- SB My son dragged me all over the place for skate ramps – he would have enjoyed a facility in the village. My grandson will want to use it when he's older.
- DO: When we brainstormed ideas, I had a biased view of young grandchildren and had my own ideas. Jan has done a lot of work – there was a lot of interest and money raised at the fayre. I want to respond to this interest. Jan has researched the suitability of the equipment to get the best fit for our village. The grant we have now received, if we don't use it, we lose it. With regards to the Village Hall – feedback from the survey will be provided at the Annual Parish Meeting and a way forward will be presented. Rest assured it is good hands.



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Q9: What about attention from undesirables – what can be put in place to stop this?

A9: This has been brought up before about skateboard ramps, large sites may suffer from this but it's unlikely to occur here. They are more likely to go to Barkway or Stevenage as we are so rural. Brent Pelham and Meesden people will be encouraged to visit the ramp.

Q10: Will the Parish Council deal with any behaviour issues at the Playing Field if they arise?

A10: The chairman confirmed that the PC will deal with anything that comes up.

Jan added that the kids she has met at other parks have almost policed their own ramps and seem very generous with the younger children and look after them. Any undesirables will have to be driven here if they did come.

It is unlikely to attract any teenagers that are of driving age.

The ramp is coated to reduce noise so there shouldn't been much noise from the skating.

The chairman stated that the local children will have some ownership of getting the ramp in and they will certainly notify the Parish Council if there are any problems.

Q11: Some concerns had been e-mailed to the chairman, for instance skateboard ramps covered in graffiti.

A11: The chairman confirmed that the ramp was black so unlikely to sustain any graffiti. There had been none in the village before. If it occurred, it would be dealt with.

Q12: What about if no-one uses the ramp?

A12: It may be sold, the chairman confirmed that it is a bolt down item and that it should be possible to sell it. Urban ramps have sold second hand ones. As it is 50% grant funded, some money could be claimed back.

The Chair of School PTA confirmed that the parents have been talking about it and are really excited about the ramp – they are using the playing field all the time and they are really keen.

The chairman stated that without the New Homes Bonus Grant, this item would not be purchased. There are no other firm ideas to spend the money on. It would be a different situation if money was being taken from the precept, but this isn't happening. He apologised for not giving more information about the funding via the newsletter.

Q13: Where is the proposed siting?

A13: 30 yards from the gate, slightly off centre adjacent to the brook. Not too close to the smaller children's area or where the picnic tables are going. They'll be a fence between the ramp and the brook. It's fully enclosed you can't get underneath it. It will be visible from the road.

The chairman asked if anyone felt very strongly against this, strongly enough for it not to go forward?

2 parishioners stated that had concerns over funding but now they understand the money is coming from grants, they both agreed that the kids needed something.

One parishioner stated that it was good to hear how much enthusiasm there was for a ramp.

The Chairman resolved to move to item 9. He thanked those leaving the meeting for attending.

9. Brought forward item - Water Lincoln Hill / Snow End and Highway Issues

Five members of the public were concerned about the water and the lump (now a double lump) in the road. It starts at the top of the hill. Highways have been up the road, they patched a pothole. It is rainwater but it's affecting the road. A pipe was put into the field as it used to flood there. It's coming from the other side and coming up out of the road opposite Highbank.



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The Chairman confirmed the Parish Council have written to Herts Highways and emailed them. Many faults have been logged the Parish Council would continue to chase Highways.

It was resolved to move back to item 6.

6. Skateboard Ramp

The Chairman asked for approval of the Skateboard Ramp. Vote: all councillors in favour and all agreed. **It was resolved** to continue with the purchase of the ramp.

7. Planning No new planning applications or decision notices had been received.

7.1 Appeal APP/J1915/A/15/2225149 Land at Holly House dismissed on the grounds of sustainability, loss of trees and the effect on both the local and Conservation Area

7.2 3/14/2304/OP Outline Planning for 350-400 Homes off Luyes Rise Clerk opposed the plans, decision pending.

8. Finance

8.1 An update on finances together with the summary of funds available was accepted. The Chairman stated that it was tight to manage the finances for skateboard ramp. The next play inspection was due in July – it may need bringing forward.

8.2 The payments for March / April were approved and cheques were signed at end of meeting.

8.3 The Parish Council would be extremely grateful if Mr Thompson would undertake the internal audit again this year.

8.4 The correspondence backup was passed to chairman

9. Election

The clerk provided timescales for the election. Both Stephen and Mandy have requested to depart. The clerk to put up notices and put a piece in the newsletter / e-mail circular.

10. Correspondence Sent / Received

The latest correspondence report was circulated to all councillors for information.

11. AOB

It was asked if David Moule can do the gullies – check them for leaves and debris and clear them. Clerk to request he takes a spade out, opposite the playing field is worst area.

SW had Broadband problems to the office and following a discussion with the engineer it was understood that some villages are getting improved speeds and it was those that shouted loudest to Open Reach were getting noticed. Barkway is due an upgrade. Clerk to research.

Blind Fiddler – it was understood from Digger that when the new water pipe was laid through the village, the drain across the road was cut through. Water is currently running into the cellar. There's a blocked drain at Castle Cottages, it runs down the ditch and down the road to the drain across the other side, in front of Waysides. Wayside drain is taking water. Used to be an open ditch on both sides before. It doesn't now go down the road but seeps into the cellar. It has asked if there is anything the PC can do. Clerk to request unblocking of the drain and digging out the ditch.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting is the AGM on 20th April.

The meeting was closed at 8.30pm.