ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meetings
held in the Jubilee Hall on Monday 17th May 2021 at 6.30pm

Present: Councillors R Fisken, C Butler, R Butler, A Keeley and G Light

In attendance: Paul Thompson (Clerk)

Meeting Chair: Councillor Roger Fisken

1. **Apologies**: Councillor A Dick

2. **Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting:**
The Clerk advised that no meeting was held in 2020 due to the pandemic. The Chairman's Report for the year to 31st March 2020 was, however, published in The Leaflet and also on the notice board.

3. **Chairman's Report:**
Due to the covid pandemic this has been a difficult year for all, although in many respects it has brought communities closer together. I should therefore firstly like to thank all those residents who have helped with support groups or provided help to those in need.

The Councillors and the Clerk have become used to the new 'zoom' technology which has enabled us to meet ten times during the year to 31st March 2021, including four extraordinary meetings to discuss planning applications.

As in previous years, certain councillors agreed to take lead roles for specific matters. Alex Dick undertook police matters, Colin Butler undertook footpaths and highways, Tony Keeley took the lead on planning matters, Rita Butler manages the Village website, Graham Light is the representative on ART and I manage the defibrillator.

The Council was asked to make observations on a total of eight planning applications over the last year, including two as an adjacent parish. Seven have been granted permission by West Berkshire Council and one refused.

The Clerk continues to report potholes and other highway issues to West Berkshire Council on a regular basis. The Council is also now responsible for providing salt bins and maintaining the level of salt. Consequently I must ask residents to ensure that the salt is only used on the hills for which the bins are provided. Whilst the Clerk does check salt levels periodically on those at Pykes Hill, Palmers Hill and Noakes Hill, if you believe that they are too low, please report the matter to him at clerk.ashampstead@gmail.com. Similarly overflowing litter bins should be reported to him or WBC on the 'report a problem' section of their website.

Following complaints, the Council is hoping to improve the lay-by at The Green. The Estate have offered to provide scalpings that a work party will lay when the weather is suitable. It is important that this lay-by is only used by visitors as it is also required for passing vehicles.

There have also been complaints regarding speeding through the village. We have a volunteer to attend SID training once courses resume.

The Council continues to monitor footpaths and byways, reporting problems to either the landowners or West Berkshire Council. We continue to cut the grass on the recreation ground and The Green. We have also allowed sums in the budget to meet the cost of tree surgery and essential playground repairs on behalf of ART. The Council has agreed to meet these costs until a regular hirer of the hall is found, although ART is expected to carry out works on the recreation ground that could be carried out by work parties. There were in fact no such costs falling on the Council this year. The only maintenance costs incurred during the year were in respect of the removal of the salt bin and salt for its replacement, the cost of the salt bin being met from CIL monies held. The underspend from the maintenance budget will be carried forward as a specific reserve since significant work usually needs to be carried out every two to three years. Further inspections of both the trees and the playground will be carried out by ART during the current year.

At this point I would also like to thank those residents who took part in the successful litter pick last October. We had planned to carry one out in the Spring this year but this had to be deferred due to the lockdown.

Councillor Alex Dick continues to update us on police matters both at meetings and also through his whats app messaging service which provides speedy information about possible criminal activity in the area. One can join by contacting Alex at add@culdenfawltd.com.

The Council have continued to liaise with ART regarding suitable qualifying expenditure for the CIL monies held of £4,496.50, having spent £282.46 on the salt bin during the year. I am pleased to advise that, since the year end we have purchased a new bench and an outdoor table tennis table.

Councillor Rita Butler is happy that the village website at www.ashampstead.net is working well. The site provides useful information about the village and its events as well as Parish Council matters. Any difficulties in viewing the website should initially be reported to the Clerk.

As regards finances, the Council received a precept of £6,640 for 2020/21 and the VAT repayment of £450 for the previous year. In addition, we received a 'member's bid' of £215 from WBC, thanks to our District Councillor, which was used to provide sanitiser and dispensers at the village hall.
Income was spent on the following items, excluding VAT:
Clerk's salary £1,680; Administrative costs £564; Grass cutting £2,025; Maintenance £404 including the sanitiser and dispensers; Dog and other waste collection £83; Donations to local charities £545, the library contribution to WBC £375, election contribution of £75 and the CIL

expenditure of £282; VAT paid on these items totalling £558 will be recovered in 2021/22. This resulted in a surplus for the year of £714 against a budgeted deficit of £7,560. The difference is largely due to underspends of £4,497 on the CIL budget and £3,805 on the maintenance budget.

The Council's retained funds of £16,399 at 31st March 2021 include an election reserve of £400, the CIL reserve of £4,497 and the maintenance reserve of £3,805.

The precept for the current year is £6,775. This includes donations of £250 towards grass cutting of the churchyard as the councillors agreed this regular contribution as the church is a special feature of the village and footpath 23 passes through the churchyard and £375 to WBC's library service which is conditional on the continuance of the mobile library. Please use this service as otherwise it may cease.

Finally, I would like to thank our District Councillor, Alan Law, for the information and advice that he has given the Council. I would also like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support over the last year and also Paul Thompson, the Clerk.

If you have any questions regarding the above or other matters concerning the parish please contact the Clerk.

4. Parishioners Questions:
The Clerk confirmed that none had been received.

5. Any Other Business:
There was none and the meeting closed at 6.40pm