

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
ELLESBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 17TH MAY 2021 AT 7.30PM IN THE PARISH HALL**

Present: Councillors:
D Panikkar (Chairman) H Holman
N Gordon D Hares
M McGrail M Glover
M Crouch

Parish Clerk: R Norris

Also in Attendance: Councillor Harriss, Buckinghamshire Council

11 members of the public.

Action

Item 3.1 Chairman. Councillor Panikkar agreed to continue in the post of Chairman. Accordingly, she was proposed and seconded for the position of Chairman for the coming year and was voted in unanimously.

Item 3.2 Chairman's Declarations of Acceptance of Office. The Chairman signed her Declaration of Office which was witnessed by the Clerk and accepted by the meeting.

Item 3.3 Deputy Chairman. Councillor Holman was proposed and seconded for the position of Deputy Chairman for the coming year, agreed to accept the position and was voted in unanimously.

Item 3.4 Vice Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Vice Chairman signed her Declaration of Office which was witnessed by the Clerk and accepted by the meeting.

Item 3.5 Appointments. The Councillors agreed that their responsibilities should be allocated as follows:

1. Planning Comment Co-ordinator – Councillor McGrail.
2. Recreational Facilities (Playground, playing field and allotments) – Councillor Holman.
3. Transport and Road Safety – Councillor Crouch.
4. Village Hall Management Committee – Councillor Glover
5. Footpaths, Rights of Way – Councillor Crouch.
6. Affordable Housing – Councillor Hares.

Councillor Panikkar, in conjunction with the Clerk, will take responsibility for any action required regarding HS2.

Item 3.6 Councillors Declarations of Acceptance of Office. The remaining Councillors signed their Declarations of Office which were witnessed by the Clerk and accepted by the meeting. The Chairman welcomed all the Councillors but reminded them of the need to be polite and respect each other's views.

RN

Item 3.7 Apologies. All Councillors were present at the meeting so no apologies were received.

Item 3.8 Open Forum. The Chairman asked members of the public who wished to bring matters of concern to the attention of the new Council to speak during this item. Much of the discussion centred on the Affordable Housing (AH) project and whether or not a new needs survey should go ahead, was even needed or how it should be worded. Mr Strathon read out a statement about the proposal for a need survey, which examined all aspects surrounding a needs survey. (Clerk's Note: copies of the statement were handed to the Council at the end of the meeting) Councillor Harriss explained about the difference between a local need and the general need. He also pointed out the dangers of having no expansion in the village, because notwithstanding AONB and Greenbelt, this could result in central Government imposing large developments. Some members of the public, whilst agreeing that there might be a need for AH, considered the site chosen as unsuitable. Others considered that the need for AH outweighed the loss of some greenfield land in the village. Moreover, there was some concern that by not going ahead with AH in the village we were not considering the needs of generations to come. There was also concern that other sites had possibly not been looked at hard enough in the early stages of the project. Additionally, there was some discussion about the facilities within the village that are necessary for AH projects.

A comment was made by Ms Robinson about Consultee Comments on an application to fell 2 trees at a property within the village. All Consultee Comments are submitted by the Clerk and normally these are drafted by the responsible Councillor. Unless there is anything contentious, these are normally submitted without formal discussion with the rest of the Council. In this particular case, the Buckinghamshire Council tree specialist had already contacted the applicant to say that he would be coming to visit, so the final decision will be made by an arborist. The comments submitted on behalf of the Council only commented only on the readily visible condition of the trees and made no judgement on their condition. Councillor McGrail offered to withdraw the application if it was felt that the Clerk's comments were inappropriate.

Lastly, there were some comments about the delay in the publishing of the minutes, but these will be addressed by the Clerk under Item 3.10

Item 3.9 Declarations of Interest. Councillor McGrail declared an interest in a planning application that would be dealt with later in the meeting. The Chairman prompted all Councillors to ensure that they made any declarations necessary, but no other declarations were made.

Item 3.10 Minutes. The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2020 were unanimously approved and signed by the Chairman. The clerk will arrange for them to be published. The Clerk also informed the meeting that he had been concerned for some time about the delay in publishing the minutes. The Council had previously decided that they could not be published until they were signed at the next meeting. The Clerk has suggested to Councillors a procedure that would require the draft minutes to be prepared and circulated to all Councillors within 7 calendar days of the meeting. Councillors then have 7 calendar days to respond to the clerk and the other Councillors with any changes they wish to be made. Once this has been done, the minutes become the official true record of the meeting and will be formally signed as such at the next meeting. All the Councillors have accepted this procedure and it will be introduced immediately and formalised with an amendment to the Standing Orders at the next meeting.

RN

Item 3.11 Road Safety Issues. With Councillor Crouch taking on responsibilities for transport and road safety he agreed to look at improving the frequency of Speedwatch activities and looking at the provision of updated speed signs. The problem with Coombe Hill parking and Dunsmore traffic also needs to be addressed. The Clerk has some recent correspondence on these subjects which he will pass onto Councillors Crouch and Gordon.

Item 3.12 Recreational Facilities. The Chairman told the meeting that the repairs to the suspension bridge had been carried out, and that the last 2 allotments had been let. The question of putting matting down on the playing field will be followed up by Councillor Holman.

HH

Item 3.13 Finance. The following payments were approved:

Dunsmore Church Trustees (Wall Repair)	800225	£298.05
BALC (Training – H Holman)	800226	£38.00
Steve Webb (Grass Cutting Mar 21)	800227	£490.42
BALC (Annual Subscription)	800228	£145.77
Steve Webb (Grass Cutting Apr 21)	800229	£490.42
P Clements (Repairs to Bus Shelter)	800230	£565.00
R Norris (Repairs to Suspension Bridge)	800231	£533.60

No further payments were made.

The Clerk informed the meeting that Councillor Panikkar had completed the accounts check that morning and the reconciliation figures for the bank accounts were £14,419.74 for the current account and £35,619.94 for the savings account. The figures for the Annual Return, had been completed and circulated to Councillors and a claim has been made for the refund of £2150 for the VAT paid during the last year.

Item 3.14 Annual Parish Meeting. The meeting is to be held in the Parish Hall on

Thursday the 27th of May 2021 at 8.00pm. The Covid arrangements for the meeting will be similar to this meeting. Councillor McGrail has already submitted his apologies.

Item 3.15 Planning. Councillor McGrail had already circulated a planning report to the Councillors and considered that only 2 items merited discussion. Firstly, the application for an extension at No 94 Chalkshire Road had been withdrawn, but there has been no sight of an application for the new fence and gate. (Clerk's Note: The application has been delayed for validation because further tree reports are required). When this application is received we will be able to comment. The second application concerns the felling of 3 trees at St Peters Cottage. As these are next to the Church, we will approach the Church Warden to seek his views before submitting comment.

Item 3.16 Affordable Housing. The Chairman reminded all about the need to be polite and respectful. Councillor Crouch stated that he thought that AH should not be voted on at this meeting. Councillor Hares summarised the project by stating that the 2017 needs survey found a need to build 6 x2 bedroom homes but for a variety of reasons this was not acceptable to Bucks Council. Ellesborough Parish Council (EPC) had voted not to fund a new need survey, but Hastoe was prepared to fund it and this was acceptable to Bucks Council. He continued by saying that we are now a new PC, with some new councillors, it seems right that we should confirm our support for the new Affordable Housing scheme proposed, or withdraw the support. There has been a lot of information circulated publicly regarding the former AH scheme, and the general principles of AH as outlined in the document Affordable Rural Housing, A Practical Guide for Parish Councils. If EPC decide to support it, the first stage will be distributing the new Needs Survey. This has been drafted by Community First Oxon and its independence of this will be assessed by Bucks Council. Hastoe have consulted with Bucks Council to ensure that this survey will be correct in all respects before distributing it. The needs survey is required to support an application under the rural exception policy. If there is no proven need, this project will not proceed.

There have been some objections to the scheme within the parish for a variety of reasons. And these objections have all been circulated amongst councillors. There have also been some voices of support for equally understandable reasons. Some have suggested there aren't the amenities to support a small development. Councillor Hares continued saying that he didn't see the development of 6 x 2 bedroom homes a huge population increase. We have a church, a pub, a brewery, a golf club and a farm shop to share. The bus service to the crossroads has been reduced in recent years, but the main route from Terrick is not a huge walk from the proposed site. The previous parish council also spearheaded the provision of the Risborough Area Community Bus which services the area.

Councillor Hares appreciated the concerns that this could be the thin end of the wedge. However, the proposal can be permitted through the 'rural housing exception scheme'. Any other site, and any other development proposal within the parish would continue to be assessed by the local authority under all existing planning regulations. I am satisfied that these concerns are unfounded. We are all aware of the value of our AONB, and parishioners are right to

question whether any development is justified. However, he did not consider half an acre of agricultural land, as was proposed in the previous scheme design, as being significant enough to be warranted as a grave destruction of AONB land.

Part of the reason the previous PC supported this scheme was because the properties will be held in perpetuity for residents of Ellesborough. The members of our community...our neighbours. The enforcement of this policy is overseen by Hastoe, and future EPC'S would remain as a statutory consultee of this process. This is a process that works and has been evidenced at the site developed in Kimble some years ago.

We have just concluded a year in which historically low-paid workers have been elevated from being described as low-skilled to frontline, or key workers, some even heroes. Do we really want to be the parish that applauds this section of society, but then makes the statement that we're not willing to find any room here to live affordably? It must be remembered to that this is not just a scheme to benefit young professionals trying to get on the housing ladder. All generations in our community can have a genuine need and a possibility to benefit from the provision of an affordable home here.

Councillor Hares, continued the he has listened and given thought to the voices of objection to this scheme. However, on reflection, he disagreed with some, and had found no basis to uphold others. He also could not ignore the letters of support that have been received and he would like to thank those members of our community who have taken time to express these in a balanced and considered fashion. For a broad assessment of parishioner feeling regarding this scheme, the recent elections were a perfect opportunity. 6 of the 7 new councillors here put their name to a document which specifically states that they believe in the need for a new needs survey. This fact has been the dominant one in my decision-making process regarding this topic. He asked that the other Councillors should continue to support this scheme at this stage.

The Chairman then proposed that a vote be taken on a proposal that the newly elected Council should be prepared in principle to go ahead with an affordable housing project. The proposal was seconded and agreed unanimously.

A second proposal was put forward that a housing needs survey should be carried out on the specific proposed site. This was also seconded and passed with a vote of 6 for and one against. A third proposal that Hastoe should fund the needs survey was discussed as there was concern about impartiality, independence and fairness. This proposal was also seconded and passed with a vote of 5 for, 1 against and 1 abstention. Councillor Hares will follow this up with Hastoe. Lastly, a proposal was put forward that a working party should be established including Councillor Hares and Mr Strathon to determine the terms of reference for the needs survey. This proposal was not seconded and so no vote was taken. The council agreed that although not a formal Parish Council Meeting, this subject may be discussed with parishioners at the Annual Parish Meeting to be held on May 27.

Item 3.17 Clerks report and Correspondence, Circulars and Consultation Documents.

The Clerk reported that a letter, which had been circulated to Councillors, had been received

from the Ellesborough Guide Centre asking for a grant of £1000 towards the cost of refurbishing their building. Discussing the request, the Council noted that the majority of the users of the Guide Centre came from outside the parish. However, we know it is of great benefit to the larger community and hence the Council proposed and agreed unanimously to a grant of £500. Mr Nicholson, the Chairman of Ellesborough Relief in Need also noted the request and took away a copy of the letter. The Clerk will pass this onto the Guide Centre.

RN

Item 3.18 Covid 19. The Chairman reported that whilst overall numbers in the area continue to fall, a greater percentage are now of the Indian variant. However, as the evidence of Covid in Ellesborough now appears to be negligible this does not need to be monitored further.

Item 3.19 Dunsmore. Councillor Gordon reported that he had been given a brief by his predecessor on 4 items. First was the cost of the defibrillator and whether or not a grant could be obtained. The Clerk will investigate. Following on from a meeting which his predecessor had taken part in, we need to follow up on the proposals being made by Buckinghamshire Council. Next was the access to Well Cottage. The new occupants had indicated that they would be prepared to contribute towards the cost of matting to protect the grass on the common. The Clerk is to approach Steve Webb to see if he would quote for doing the work. Someone has dumped a load of wood next to the pond and this may well cause problems as it is very close to the road. The Clerk is to contact TfB to see if they will take action to remove it. A house in Dunsmore that is actually in Wendover Parish has been causing problems because of HGVs depositing mud on the roads in Ellesborough Parish. However, now there is a pile of spoil placed up against a fence and it is likely that the fence will collapse and the spoil will then block the road. The Clerk is to raise the matter with the Wendover Clerk. Finally, there is the matter of possible unauthorised building work going on at Green Meadow. However, Councillor Harriss has already raised this with the enforcement team.

RN

Item 3.20 HS2. HS2 continues to cause us problems but we are hoping to get some funds from them to provide footpaths/cycleways on the A4010 between the filling station and the nursing home and on Nash Lee Road from the Chiltern Brewery to the old part of Nash Lee. We have a further meeting arranged with HS2 where we will be raising these matters again.

RN

Item 3.21 Meeting Day. Following on from the problems of accommodating this meeting, Councillor Glover said that at the moment the main hall was free on Tuesdays and Thursdays. After a short discussion and party because previously meetings has been held on Tuesdays it was proposed and unanimously agreed to move the meetings to Tuesday evenings in the future.

Item 3.22 Matters of Report. Regarding communications, the meeting agreed that the Councillors should have individual email address for Council work. Councillor Glover had been looking at costs and they were minimal. The meeting gave him authority to arrange for this. Councillor Glover also reported that it was hoped that there would be a Wi-fi connection in the hall within the next 2 to 3 weeks. Further improvements being considered were night

storage heaters and the installation of an insulated roof in the main hall, sanding and resealing the floor and remodelling the toilets. Councillor Holman briefed the meeting on proposals for an anti-litter poster competition and a pumpkin carving and biggest pumpkin competitions which will be advertised in the next issue of the village magazine.

RN

Item 3.23 Next Meeting. The next Parish Council Meeting will be on Tuesday 20 July 2021 at 7.30pm the Parish Hall.

The meeting closed at 21.59 hrs.

Signed

Councillor Debra Panikkar
Chairman
Ellesborough Parish Council