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Councillors Email:

Cllr. Ken Langley (Chair) - langley@reedparishcouncil.co.uk
Cllr. Edwin Kilby - kilby@reedparishcouncil.co.uk
Cllr. Barbara Blower - blower@reedparishcouncil.co.uk
Cllr. Nick Payne - payne@reedparishcouncil.co.uk
Cllr. Simon Aries - aries@reedparishcouncil.co.uk

Minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2025 at 7.30pm held at Reed Village Hall.

**Present Cllrs: K Langley (Chair), E Kilby, N Payne and S. Aries.
In attendance the Clerk Catharine Toms, Dist. Cllr. M Prescott,
County Cllr. F Hill, and nineteen members of the public.**

This meeting would be recorded for the purpose of the minutes.

- 1.01.25 **Attendance.** As listed above.
- 2.01.25 **To receive apologies for absence.** Cllr. Blower (on holiday). Apologies accepted.
- 3.01.25 **To receive Members Declarations of Interest and note dispensation granted.** None received. Cllr. Kilby, for his period of office, a dispensation granted allowing him full participation at meetings in issues arising concerning The Cabinet public house including, but not limited to, planning matters.
- 4.01.25 **To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 6th November 2024 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them as a true record.** It was noted that the name of the Enforcement Officer had been spelt incorrectly. It was proposed, seconded and all voted in favour (subject to correction of spelling) to approve the minutes. Resolved. Approved minutes to be posted on the website. **Action: Clerk/Webmaster**

Standing Orders were suspended.

5.01.25 **To invite Members of the Public to address the meeting** – a member of the public wished to query what was being proposed for the site adjacent to the Turney Trust RD1 site. There had been recent tree felling and clearance activity on the site. He was informed that the Parish Council had received no official notifications regarding that site, but North Herts Council (NHC) had been alerted to the land clearance work. This was not a site included in the NHC Local Plan for development and activity there would be monitored, however it was impossible to be pro-active in advance of anything happening there.

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Members of the public were present regarding items 10.01.25 & 11.01.25. The Chair agreed to suspend Standing Orders further at those points during the meeting should members of the public wish to contribute to the discussion.

Standing Orders were resumed.

6.01.25 To receive Chair's Report – (See Appendix A).

In addition, earlier in the day the Chair had received communication from a legal representative of the party that had shown an interest in purchasing The Cabinet. They indicated that they would be amenable to interacting with the Parish Council on matters regarding The Cabinet.

Standing Orders were suspended.

7.01.25 To receive report from District Councillor – District Cllr. Prescott reported that NHC were in the process of re-negotiating contracts with Leisure Centres. The running of these centres would be outsourced to agents and it was anticipated that savings could be made of £270k per annum. There was a change of arrangements regarding VAT with HMRC whereby VAT would no longer be charged on membership fees but VAT could still be reclaimed on purchases. As a member of the NHC Scrutiny Panel, Cllr. Prescott was questioning whether the removal of VAT on membership fees would be passed on to the customers or whether this was where the savings to NHC would be made where membership fees would be kept at the same level.

A Local Democracy White Paper had been published where there was a consultation on a proposal to shelve the current District and County Councils and instead have a Unitary Authority, where enormous savings could be made by providing joint services, all to the benefit of the tax payer. It was understood that the District Councillors were generally not in favour, although County Council were more in favour of the proposal.

8.01.25 To receive report from County Councillor – County Cllr. Hill gave the following report:

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)

The Integrated Plan process is currently taking place at Hertfordshire County Council with scrutinies being held in January and the budget going to Council in February.

The HAPpy Programme took place again during the Christmas school holiday.

The Winter Reading Challenge in Royston Library continues until the end of January.

HCC is collaborating with partners to improve bus services and is committed to continuing with HertsLynx. Recruitment of additional drivers is taking place.

The additional funding into SEND is starting to make an impact.

The NHS (Acute hospitals and the Ambulance Service) is under severe winter pressure.

Public Health/Adult Care

The new care home in Royston is now open.

Small Acts of Kindness has supplied bags for use in the community and these are available at Royston Fire Station.

Armed Forces Covenant

Would it be possible for Reed Parish Council to consider again signing up to the Covenant?

The Christmas Card Competition was judged and the winning entry circulated.

Highways Locality Budget

Full details of all schemes can be accessed on the HCC website.

Winter Programme

Well underway with regular grit runs and free salt for use in the community available.

Events/Consultations

The Councillors' Surgery in Royston Market will take place on Saturday, 11th January. The Ermine Ward Surgery was held on Saturday, 4th January in the Woodman, Nuthampstead. The Business Breakfast took place on Friday, 3rd January in the Woodman.

Planning Application 21/00765/OP – Land off Barkway Road and North of Flint Hall, Barkway Road, Royston, Hertfordshire – details on the North Herts (District) Council Planning portal.

Proposed Parking Tariff Increases for 2025/26 – comments to transport@north-herts.gov.uk

Consultation on the proposal to lower the age range of children in Barley and Barkway First Schools Federation.

Government White Paper – Devolution.

Cllrs. Prescott and Hill were thanked for their reports.

Standing Orders were resumed.

It was agreed that Cllr. Langley, under delegated authority, would respond to the consultation on the revised Outline Application for 280 proposed new dwellings on land off Barkway Road, Royston – Case Ref No: 21/00765/OP – **Action: KL**

9.01.25 To review action points from meeting on 6th November 2024 – (see Appendix B).

Standing Orders were suspended.

10.01.25 To receive report from Save The Cabinet Action Group (SCAG) – Cllr. Kilby had been in correspondence with the Enforcement Officer at NHC. It was totally unsatisfactory that planning permission could be applied for retrospectively and then if refused, appeals were taking months as the Planning Inspectorate was so under resourced. In the case of The Cabinet, the owner was currently making unauthorised use of the outbuilding and there were 3 undetermined enforcement appeals dating back to Nov 2023.

Dist. Cllr. Prescott agreed to put pressure on NHC to find out why this prolonged situation had been allowed and Cllr. Kilby and other members of SCAG were due to meet the new MP for North Herts Mr Hinchliff to make him aware of matters.

On 13th December NHC notified the Council that the owner of the Cabinet wished to sell the entire building or lease it for over 25 years. Under the Asset of Community Value legislation this triggered a 6 week initial moratorium allowing the Community to consider putting together a bid to purchase The Cabinet. If this

was invoked then it would generate a 2nd moratorium period of 6 months which would give the Community opportunity to bid. The owner would not have to accept the bid but would not be allowed to sell to anyone else, other than a Community bidder, within that period.

It was understood that there was an interested 3rd party bidder for The Cabinet. If this was a genuine bidder, wanting to return the building back to a pub, then it would not make sense to stand in their way by invoking the 6 month moratorium period. There was a lack of information forthcoming from the Agents marketing the property, including what the asking price was. It was proposed and agreed that Cllr. Langley would contact the interested party's Solicitors and obtain a Heads of Terms in advance of the initial moratorium deadline of 24th Jan. This would prompt a decision by the Parish Council as to whether to invoke the 2nd moratorium. **Action:KL**

Members of the public present were thanked for their interest and contributions. Standing orders were resumed.

11.01.25 To consider and decide on whether to invoke the 6 month moratorium to put together a community bid to purchase The Cabinet – (also see item 10.01.25) After lengthy discussion it was proposed, seconded and agreed by all that no final decision would be made by the Parish Council to invoke the 2nd moratorium, as there was still 2 weeks to go until the deadline of 24th January. In the meantime, the Parish Council would take into consideration any further information that might come to light which could influence the decision. Resolved.

12.01.25 To ratify response submitted to North Herts Council on planning application:

Full Planning permission : Siting of solar panel array 30 x 500kw panels (six rows)

Glebe House, Church Lane, Reed, Hertfordshire, SG8 8AL

Case Ref No: 24/02317/FP

The Parish Council had no objection in principle to this application with the proposed landscape enhancement scheme of additional hedging. However, this is provided that going forward, the solar array and associated equipment are managed to ensure that there is no noise nuisance to neighbours.

Proposed, seconded and agreed by all. Resolved.

13.01.25 To consider and make comment on planning application:

Full Permission Householder : Installation of 2 no. free-standing air source heat pumps on side elevation and batteries on front elevation following removal of existing oil tank

Glebe House, Church Lane, Royston, Hertfordshire, SG8 8AL

Case Ref No: 24/02582/FPH

After consideration of this application, it was proposed, seconded and agreed by all that there was no objection. Resolved. The Clerk to respond to NHC. **Action: Clerk**

14.01.25 To receive update from the Turney Trust regarding site RD1 – A Pre-Application had been submitted to NHC and returned, with the Planners requesting more detail. A second Pre-Application was due to be submitted by the Trust with the aim to try and now obtain planning permission. There was some concern by the Trust over new ownership of land to the north of the site and they had instructed agents to ensure that all boundaries were clearly marked.

15.01.25 To receive update on Wisbridge Reservoir Project – This was continuing to be built and the appearance beginning to resemble a reservoir. Archaeologists had apparently unearthed some interesting finds.

16.01.25 To receive report from the Clerk on current financial position

A list of monies received and payments to be authorised had been previously circulated to all Cllrs. Accounts showed a bank balance of £47,211.93 of which, £9,839.35 was Push Energy Community Contribution (ring-fenced for special projects), £2,947.23 was Bonfire Night reserves, £690.75 was P3 grant balance, S106 Sustainable Transport Reserve was £651.87, Play Park Reserve was £25,149.61, Election Reserve was £500.00, leaving general reserves at £7,433.12.

17.01.25 To agree accounts for payment – Payments made since the last meeting were £25,356.32 to Playdale Playgrounds as a 50% deposit for the new play equipment and £525.00 to Mr Edwards for grass cutting in the Play Area in 2024. Payments to be authorised at the meeting were Clerk's salary and PAYE. Proposed, seconded and approved by all.

18.01.25 To consider and agree budget for 2025/26 and associated Precept Application – The draft budget had been previously circulated to Councillors. As there had been no additional dwellings built in Reed over the past year it was not thought it appropriate to increase the amount of Precept requested. It was therefore proposed, seconded and agreed by all to approve the budget for 2025/26 and apply for the same Precept as the previous year of £8,418.00. Resolved.

The Clerk to submit Precept application to North Herts Council. **Action: Clerk**

19.01.25 To receive update on Highways Matters – (see item 8.01.25)

20.01.25 To receive bi-monthly Parish Council play area inspection report and agree any action required – An inspection had not been carried out by Cllr. Langley as the new play area equipment installation was commencing very shortly.

21.01.25 To receive and consider report from Annual North Herts Council Play Area Inspection and agree any action required – (see item 20.01.25)

22.01.25 To receive update from Play Area Working Party on progress re: Installation of new play equipment – Installation work was due to start. It had been agreed with the Village Hall that contractors would be able to use their toilets. The working area would be cordoned off and signage needed to be put in place to notify users that the play area would be closed for a period of 4 weeks during the construction period. Cllr. Langley to organise the notices, announce on Community WhatsApp and advise the School of the temporary Play Area closure.

Action: KL

The Clerk to contact the insurers to obtain temporary insurance cover for the palletted equipment pending installation. **Action: Clerk**

Signage would also be needed to acknowledge the sources of grant funding for the project. Item to be on the agenda for the March meeting. **Action: Clerk**

23.01.25 To receive update on availability of Safeguarding Courses – matter ongoing. **Action: BB**

24.01.25 To receive matters for report or referral to next agenda. (Information only) Ponds Protection Project, Wisbridge Reservoir, Projects for Community Payback work, Play Area Project, Community Noticeboard, Turney Trust and Site RD1, Plan for renovation of Parish Council benches, Safeguarding courses, What's On in Reed Publication, Signage for Play Area

25.01.25 To note correspondence received. (Information only) – nothing not covered elsewhere in the meeting.

26.01.25 To agree date of next meeting. Wednesday 5th March 2025. Agreed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.22pm



Reed Parish Council

Chair's Report January 2025

The following to report since the November 2024 Reed Parish Council meeting:

1. Parish Councillors met informally in late November to discuss various matters and, with the Parish Clerk, to prepare a budget for the financial year 2025-26.
2. The order for new playground equipment having been submitted, I have liaised with Playdale over the date of installation. Also with utility providers over preparation of the site for the installation works. I had a site meeting with the Playdale Installation Manager in December and am due a meeting with the Contract Manager on January 8th. Installation of the new equipment is scheduled to begin on January 23rd. In the meantime the wooden junior climbing Frame has been removed in order to ready the site. The play frame, with the agreement of its donor, Hazel Hewitt, has been dismantled and passed on to a village household, where we trust it will continue to be enjoyed by children for many more years.
3. Having been notified in December by North Herts. that the owner of The Cabinet is proposing to dispose of the property, I consulted with colleagues on the implications of this, given the The Cabinet's status as an Asset of Community Value. The Parish Council being a Community Organisation with relevant interest in the AoCV, I contacted the solicitors of the owner to request information about the scope of the sale and the asking price. They declined to divulge the asking price, but confirmed it was the whole property that was for sale. Further, that there was a party called Bespoke Hotels Group, actively interested in a purchase of The Cabinet for use as a public house/restaurant, with accommodation. In further correspondence with the solicitor on January 2nd I requested he forward to the potential buyers an invitation to contact Reed Parish Council before the Council makes a decision on whether or not to invoke the six month sale-moratorium associated with AoCV status. Mr Newman's solicitor reported he had passed on the message. To date I have heard nothing from Bespoke

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Hotels Group or their representative. More on all this at items 10.01 and 11.01 below.

That completes the Chair's report for this period.