



NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council: Usha Kilich

Northchurch Parish Council

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

13th May 2024 at 7.00 pm at Social Centre, Bell Lane, Northchurch, HP4 3 RD

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michela Capozzi Chair
Mark Somervail
Neil Pocock
Lyndsey Abercromy
Parul Dix
Lara Pringle

ALSO PRESENT: County Councillor Terry
 Douris, and Mrs U Kilich
 Proper Officer. There were
 twenty-two members of the
 public present.

01/24 ELECTION OF CHAIR

To elect a Chair for the ensuing Council year
This item was chaired by the current Vice-Chair, Cllr Somervail.
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Somervail, seconded by Cllr Pringle to appoint Cllr Capozzi as
Chair for the year 2024/25. Unanimously agreed.

02/24 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF CHAIR

The Chair is to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of the Office of the Chair
Cllr Capozzi signed the declaration of acceptance of Office.

03/24 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

To elect a Vice Chair
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Pringle to appoint Cllr Somervail as
Vice Chair for the year 2024/25. Unanimously agreed.

04/24 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF VICE CHAIR

The Vice-Chair to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of the Office of Vice-Chair
Cllr Somervail signed the declaration of acceptance of Office.

05/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies of absence to record.

06/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare an interest linked to any item on the agenda
Cllr Abercromby declared an interest in item number 14/24 Allotment.

07/24 Public Participation is allowed 15 minutes

a. Allotment – those attending the meeting, apart from four members, had an interest in 14/24 Allotment.

Julie Keyes, who is an allotment holder, spoke on behalf of the allotment holders with the following issues:

- The level of policing and the number of inspections being undertaken by NPC on the allotment is “too much”. Jana Skric said the council was running the allotments like ‘communists’ and she should know because she comes from a communist country. The tenants reported that the regular inspections were ‘stressful’ to the plot holder.
Cllr Capozzi responded by stating that when she became Chair in January 2023, the allotments became her responsibility where before she hadn’t been involved, and she was aware of outstanding actions the Council needed to undertake and also no inspections had been done for over a year. On inspection, the upper site was in poor general condition with allotments being used as dumping grounds or not being cultivated, and so action was taken to ask plot holders to improve their plots. More than a year on, there are regular comments on how much better the upper allotment looks. NPC is obliged to ensure the allotments are used for cultivation so inspections are necessary. Also, in the last year, NPC has installed a new section of deer fence, cut back the hedges/trees, installed a new entrance gate, and levelled the car park.
- The potential removal of the hose pipe is being carried out without feedback from allotment holders and the email from NPC to allotment holders on 26th April 2024 was the first they had heard of it. Julie Keyes asked why the ban on hosepipes was being proposed.
Cllr Capozzi responded by stating that the removal of the hose pipe was not going to happen immediately, however, it was to start a dialogue about how and when NPC would move forward with the idea. Cllr Capozzi said she was surprised the email was the first the plot holders had heard of it as the matter had been discussed at 2 meetings held with NAA members on 10th July 2023 with Mr. Coleman, Mr. Houston, and Mrs. Flint being present, and subsequently, a meeting on 25th September 2023 with Mr. Coleman and Mrs. Shovelton. On both occasions NPC was told by Mr Coleman that he would speak to plot holders about this. Mr Coleman said that at the time he had agreed with the proposal but had since changed his mind and no longer supports the proposal. Cllr Capozzi also said that the reason for looking to remove the use of hosepipes was because during inspections and other visits to the allotments, she had regularly found hosepipes with leaking fittings or taps leaking. Cllr Capozzi said the volume of wasted water she witnessed and the lack of protecting our water resources in this area had to be taken seriously.
Julie Keyes replied that there was no water scarcity in this area and Mr Coleman said that if we drill down 400m we’ll have enough water to supply us for years. Cllr Capozzi said she welcomed the plot holders’ involvement in finding solutions to replace hosepipes and forming part of a working party. Cllr Capozzi said she would like to involve SRT as they may have innovative ideas for water collection and irrigation systems.
- Julie Keyes asked Cllr Capozzi for her understanding of what allotments are for and why can’t people grow flowers.
Cllr Capozzi responded that our allotments are for the cultivation of vegetables and other food. Flowers, as decoration around borders, as seen on some plots, are

welcome and are very attractive. Some allotments are designated allotments and leisure gardens but NPC's are not.

- Cllr Dix proposed that allotment holders may wish to discuss the issues amongst themselves, and a meeting with NAA and NPC will be planned.
- Ms Julie Keyes handed the Clerk 34 slips of paper with the names of plot holders objecting to the removal of the hosepipe.

Another member present, Simon Beales alerted council members on the destruction of woodland on top of Pea Lane. Please see below the full report from Councillor Pringle on the subject.

08/24 MINUTES

- a. To approve the minutes of the meeting of the 8th April 2024 Full Council Meeting Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Somervail that these Minutes be agreed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings and be duly signed by the Chair, unanimously agreed.
- b. Matters arising from previous meetings that are not included as agenda items below Cllr Abercromby pointed out that item number 106/23 (a) on the Minutes from 8th April 2024 should read "seconded by Cllr Pocock and not Cllr Pock. The Clerk will make the necessary corrections.

09/24 REPORT FROM BOROUGH/COUNTY COUNCILLORS

To receive a report from Borough/County Councillors

Report from Borough Cllr Pringle

- On a ward level, I have continued to work hard to help residents. Most recently I assisted with the rehousing of a vulnerable elderly couple at risk of homelessness. I have ensured that a safeguarding risk affecting vulnerable residents at Compass Point has been addressed swiftly and the risk contained as quickly as possible.
- There have been repeated calls for improvement to road safety in Northchurch, particularly for a pedestrian crossing opposite Tescos. Elderly residents report feeling that they cannot cross to the shops safely. Some residents support starting a petition to ensure that the 2018 HCC promises to review and improve road safety in Northchurch are fulfilled.
- I have supported the St Mary's garden project and am actively helping them with funding applications.
- In the past week, I have alerted senior officers to the unlawful development at the top of Pea Lane. Residents alerted me to diggers stripping down mature trees in an area of established woodland, adjacent to Dicks Wood on Friday 3 May. This is within the greenbelt. I alerted planning enforcement. It seems that there was no permitted development and a number of planning laws may have been violated. Ancient hedgerow, in which it was likely that there were badger sets, bulldozed into the ground, undoubtedly killing many breeding animals and birds. Mature trees were felled by being pulled limb from limb by diggers, in the middle of the breeding season. The Forestry Commission has been alerted, as well as Natural England. Natural England advised the area may be classed as ancient woodland. I have alerted the most senior officers at DBC who have taken swift action to issue a stop notice, which prevents further groundwork for 56 days. I have heard reports from residents today that the works may be continuing and have alerted DBC enforcement to this. As well as damage to the woodland, a site entrance has been created, apparently without

consulting highways. CCTV has been placed on the public highway, again, apparently without appropriate permissions. I will monitor the situation. Any further activity should be reported directly to DBC enforcement, with me in copy. I will be a strong advocate for enforcement and replanting. Although the woodland is destroyed, and cannot be replaced, there is a

Cllr Pringle to update on defib on the upper allotment site

A report will be available at the next Full Council meeting on 17th June 2024.

Cllr Pringle to update on the pothole in Bell Lane

The pothole was reported to HCC, however, they reported it was the responsibility of the Social Centre.

Cllr Pringle to report on the bridge over the canal on New Road

Bridge over New Road. Cllr Abercrombie has looked into this and believes it to be safe. We need to confirm when last inspected.

- a. Cllr Pringle to report on St Mary's Garden Project
St Mary's Garden project, as per my report, I am currently advising/supporting them on potential funding applications.

Report from County Councillor

Cllr Douris reported the following

- a. A survey will be carried out on Mandelys concerning the parking issues raised by the residents to ascertain what the residents would like;
- b. Concern from residents from Hamberlins in regards to the drain, Cllr Douris will follow up.

10/24 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- a. Cllr Capozzi informed members that the total CiL amount received for 2024/25 is £7,453.63
- b. Cllr Capozzi informed members that a change made on the NPC webpage incurred costs of £100
- c. Cllr Capozzi informed members that an additional data increase was necessary for the NPC email account with a total cost of £45 a year for 50GB
- d. Cllr Capozzi informed members that £25k has been transferred from the Unity Trust Account to NS&I as per NPC's Investment Policy
- e. Agenda and Minutes from Dacorum Environmental Forum. Please [click here](#) for more information.

11/24 CLERKS REPORT

- a. DBC weekly Newsletter (Councillors only)

12/24 ROAD SAFETY

Cllr Capozzi will email Cllr Douris on the development of the crossing at the recreational ground. Cllr Douris will have an informal meeting with Herts Highways to find out if this is feasible before spending any money on carrying out the survey.

13/24 OPEN SPACE

Nothing to report

14/24 ALLOTMENT

Cllr Capozzi reported 3 contractors had provided costs to rebuild the side of the road on the upper allotment and one had quoted a reasonable price .

15/24 Cllr. Capozzi proposes that NPC adopts the policies and governance documents circulated by email to Councillors for 2024/25.

Resolved, proposed by Cllr Somervail, seconded by Cllr Dix to adopt the policies. Unanimously agreed.

- a. Allotment Disputes
- b. Allotment Rules and Regulations
- c. Asset Management Policy
- d. Code of Conduct
- e. Complaints Policy
- f. Dignity at Work Policy
- g. Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
- h. Financial Regulations – An update from NALC on FR which will be updated and will be on on the agenda for approval in June 2024
- i. Freedom of Information Policy
- j. GDPR Policy
- k. Grant and Donation Policy
- l. Grievance Policy
- m. Health & Safety Policy
- n. Investment Policy
- o. Publication Scheme
- p. Press and Media Policy
- q. Recruitment and Selection Policy
- r. Risk Assessment
- s. Standing Orders
- t. Terms of Reference
- u. Virement Policy

16/24 Cllr. Capozzi proposes that the Councillors be appointed to the committees shown in the table below

Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Pocock. Unanimously agreed.

Members for Committees								
Members	Michela Capozzi	Mark Somervail	Neil Pocock	Lara Pringle	Lyndsey Abercromby	Parul Dix	VACANT	VACANT
Committees								
Planning Committee	✓	Chair	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Allotments Committee	Chair	✓	✓			✓		
Finance & General Purposes Committee	Chair	✓			✓			

**17/23 Cllr. Capozzi proposes that NPC appoint representatives from outside groups
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr DiX,**

Representatives on Outside Groups	
Organisation	Councillor
Northchurch United Charities	Cllr Pocock and Cllr Dix
Canal and Bulbourne Liaison	Cllr Pringle
St Mary's School Governor	Cllr Pringle
Ashridge Estate Committee	Cllr Abercromby

18/24 Cllr Capozzi proposes to adopt the Mission Statement for 2024/25

Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Pringle. Unanimously agreed.

19/24 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES

- a. Cllr Capozzi proposes the Approval of the Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24 to be signed by the Chair and Responsible Finance Officer.
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Somervail for the Chair and Clerk/RFO to sign the AGAR 2023/24. Unanimously agreed.
- b. To discuss the Internal Audit Report from Audit Solutions and take action for Year-End 31st March 2024.
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Somervail to accept the Audit Report for 2023/24. Unanimously agreed.
- c. Cllr Capozzi proposes to accept the YTD Summary for 2024/25
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Somervail. Unanimously agreed.
- d. Cllr Capozzi proposes to approve up to £200 to clear Roman Way
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Pocock to approve up to £200 to clear Roman Way.
- e. Cllr Capozzi proposes to approve up to £2,000 for the levelling of plot 77 and the car park.
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Pocock to approve up to £2,000 for the levelling of plot 77 and the car park. Unanimously agreed.
- f. Cllr Capozzi proposes the Post Office forwarding service is not renewed.
Item was withdrawn from further discussion.
- g. Cllr Capozzi proposes to use the CiL receipt of £7,453.63 as a contingency on the playground upgrade.
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi, seconded by Cllr Dix to use the CiL receipt of £7,453.63 toward the upgrade of the playground. Unanimously agreed.

1. **PRECEPT**; Notification of parish funding was confirmed as received on 10th April 2024. The total amount received from DBC £65,389.50.

Precept Demand	£44,000.00
Council Tax Support Grant	£ 0.00
Concurrent Services	£16,099.72
<u>Wardens Grant</u>	<u>£ 5,289.78</u>
<u>Total for 2024/25</u>	<u>£65,389.50</u>

2. General Power of Competence

To agree by resolution that the Parish Council is entitled to use the above power, as set out in the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012. The Parish Council is entitled as it has:

- a. A two thirds electoral mandate
 - b. A qualified Clerk (CiLCA) (Level 4 and 5 of Community Governance completed)
- All in favour.

3. Meeting Dates

Meeting dates and venues for Northchurch Parish Council meetings in 2024/25 has been determined as attached.

4. Future Agenda Items

- a. Planning Schedule to be determined.

20/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 17th June 2024 at 7.00 pm Social Centre Bell Lane Northchurch HP4 3 RD

The meeting concluded at 20.15.