

PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT OF INITIAL PARISH PLAN MEETING on 18th SEPTEMBER 2008 In the Village Hall

Present: Herbert Dzapata – Community Development Agency for Herts

Parish Council: David Saunders (Chairman)
Diane Bailey
Michael Goddard
Steven Kitchiner
Rodney Marshall
Jennifer Smart (Clerk)

Also present: 25/30 parishioners

The meeting had been arranged by the Parish Council to give residents an opportunity to learn about the process of creating a Parish Plan, which is currently being considered by the Parish Council. Mr Dzapata gave a presentation on Parish Plans generally and also answered questions.

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Mr Dzapata explained that Parish Plans had been introduced five or six years ago to discover which issues cause residents most concern, what they love and hate about the place they live in and their aspirations for the future of their town or village. Parish Councils will usually initiate the process, but a steering group of volunteers should then take over to see the Plan through, with one or two Parish Councillors as part of the steering group. Within the process of obtaining people's views, it is hoped that people would come forward and take responsibility for taking action. Consultation elsewhere had shown that people yearn for Community Spirit and Parish Plans are an excellent forum for involving people in their community because they give everyone a voice.

Once the village has agreed that it would like a Parish Plan, the first step is to form a Steering Group.

CDA could assist with the writing of questionnaires, working with such agencies as District and County Councils to make sure the right questions are asked, and ensure that those agencies help to form an action plan, deciding on high and low priorities and long and short term aims. Consultation with the Community would have to have been carried out for funding to be sought from Local Authorities, so even if the majority of people are not in favour of a Parish Plan, the consultations could still be of use. Once the Plan has been finalised, it can also be used as a memento of village life, and can be updated at intervals. The Parish Council can help, but it is the whole community that should come together to create the Plan, which can take anything from nine months to three years to complete.

Provided there is clear evidence of community involvement, there is funding available to help with costs, but the most important requirement is for volunteer effort.

Mr Dzapata then answered questions. Some residents were under the impression that a Parish Plan would be forced on the village by some outside organisation they had not heard of, but Mr Dzapata made it clear that this is not the case. The Parish Plan would only be created if the majority of residents agree that it should be, and his role would be one of help and support. Mr Dzapata explained that he has no financial interest in the creation of Parish Plans; CDA is a charity that simply offers help and support to rural communities to help them improve their quality of life, however they choose to do so.

Purely as an indicator, the Chairman asked for a show of hands. All but one resident was in favour of the creation of a Parish Plan for Pirton. Mr Dzapata was thanked for attending the meeting.

