

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19th MARCH 2024 AT 7.00PM AT HUXLEY VILLAGE HALL

In Attendance: Cllr R Bird (Chairman)
Cllr F Halton
Cllr S Martin
Cllr C Nicholls
Cllr M Pilkington

Cllr M Roscoe
Cllr S Ratledge
Cllr L Sackett
Cllr M Jones
Members of the Public: 1

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr R Jones due to a previous commitment.

DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS

None were received.

PUBLIC SESSION

A resident raised concern about the hedge on the footpath in front of the methodist chapel. The resident explained that as well as contacting Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) and the Parish Council she had also reported it to the Methodist Circuit. She confirmed that the hedge has now been cut back.

MINUTES

RESOLVED 23/056 that the Chairman signs, as a true and correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 16th January 2024 proposed by Cllr Sackett and seconded by Cllr Ratledge.

ACTIONS

Actions not otherwise on the agenda that had been completed:-

- Inform CWaC of new Co-option and provide them copies of the completed Members Interest.
- Update Website and provide Councillors with new email addresses.
- Clerk had contact Deborah Lack, PROW Officer for CWaC
- CIL Money – the Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council had five years to spend their CIL money.
- Down our Way – it was confirmed that an article had been included for all resident to remind them of the dark nights policy that was in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Put information in relation to the Police and Crime Commissioner on the Parish Council website
- Clerk had contacted Vicar with regards to D-Day 80 and asked who to contact with regards to lighting of the beacon.
- Opening of Unity Trust Bank Instant Access Deposit Account and also check the interest rates on the Bank of Scotland. The clerk reported that these had been explored and information had been circulated around the Parish Councillors in between the meeting and it had been agreed not to move forward and open an Instant Access Deposit Account at this time.

Actions not otherwise on the agenda still outstanding:-

- Cllr Ratledge, Martin & Cllr Roscoe undertook to arrange for the relocation of the Beacon when the weather improves.
- Move the Beacon to the other side of the wall so it is less conspicuous.
- Cllr Nicholls has the plaque available to fix when the Beacon has been relocated.

BUSINESS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Footpaths – Cllr Pilkington reported that following the PROW officer confirming that the footpath between Gatesheath and Hatton Hall was not a designated footpath that CWaC maintain, the PROW officer had tried to make contact with the landowner to ask if they would be willing to maintain the stiles.

The PROW officer confirmed that there would be an argument for getting a Public Path Order for this remaining section, if there is evidence of continuous use for 20+ years without any attempt by the landowner to stop people using it. PPO's aren't easy to obtain and there is a list going back many years of PPO's waiting to be progressed. Currently the council are only obliged to process PPO's where rights of way are being affected by planning applications. However, this might be the only option if the landowner does not wish to assist in maintaining the stiles.

ACTION - the Clerk to ask the Mid-Cheshire Footpaths Society if they have any information/history about the footpath between Gatesheath and Hatton Hall and if they would be willing to progress a PPO for this section of footpath.

ACTION: Cllr Pilkington to identify a possible two further stiles for replacement to kissing gates in 2024.

ACTION: Ask residents to nominate stiles that are in need of repair and replacement, providing a photograph and location – include in Down out Way.

Cllr Jones joined the meeting.

Community Litter Picking – The meeting was reminded that the Community Litter Picking Event was scheduled to take place on 13th April 2024 at Huxley and 6th April 2024 at Hargrave between 10.00am - 12.00 noon. This had been advertised in the parish newsletter.

Review of Condition and Safety of Assets – It was reported that the Parish Council Beacon relocation remained outstanding until the weather improved and should remain on the agenda.

Footpaths in Huxley – It was reported that the pavement along the Huxley Lane had been reported to Cheshire West and Chester Council due to its poor condition, however CWaC had confirmed that it does not qualify for maintenance at this stage. Following the Parish Council requesting if there would be any opportunity for the Parish Council to fund the pavement improvement with CWaC. Cllr Mike Jones confirmed that CIL money was not entitled to be used in this way, CIL money was provided to the Parish Council to allow new infrastructure to be put in place, not for repairing or replacing old infrastructure.

ACTION: Cllr Jones to review the condition of the footpath and escalate its repair to CWaC.

Assets of Community Value – it was reported that information in relation to this had been circulated since the last meeting. The Clerk had spoken with an Officer from CWaC with regards to potentially registering items and suggested that a meeting be set up to discuss further with CWaC this opportunity. It was highlighted that the Neighbourhood Plan offered protection from Community Assets against planning, however registering an Asset for Community Value allowed the community the opportunity to purchase the Asset of Community Value should it come up for sale.

ACTION: Clerk to set up a meeting with CWaC.

Broadband – Cllr Bird provided an update with regards to the Broadband services in his area, he confirmed that due to him running a business he had made the decision to have professional broadband installed. It was also noted that telegraph poles had been installed along Long Lane but it was unclear as to why and if this was also to provide fibre to homes in the area.

Withdrawal of Community Bus Services – communication was circulated that had been provided by a resident of Clotton Hoofield in relation to the withdrawal of the Community Bus Services in the area. This was noted.
ACTION: Send information to Cllr Mike Jones as he was not aware that this service had been withdrawn.

Any other correspondence

It was reported that the Parish Council had received the following questions from residents after the agenda had been circulate:-

1. A resident reported that they had experienced a prowler in and around their property on two separate occasions. On one of these, criminal damage occurred to one of their vehicles. This has been duly reported to the Police and a reference number provided.

Following this the resident reported that they had now installed security cameras on the perimeter of their premises.

The resident asked for the Parish Council to seek greater PCSO visibility in and around the Parish. It was confirmed that the Parish Council would be willing to do this.

ACTION: Clerk to contact the PCSO.

ACTION: Suggest that the resident contact the Home Watch (Alan Jones)

2. A resident noted that, following receipt of the Council Tax bill for 2024/25 that the local precept had only risen by 0.9%. Based on research the resident believed that this was the 6th consecutive year that the Precept has risen by significantly less than inflation. The resident had looked through previous meeting minutes and could not see mention of the Precept being discussed or a decision being taken.

The resident felt strongly that this was a missed opportunity for the Parish and one in which they could have identified a project that would have added value to the Community.

It was agreed that the budget and precept had been discussed and set at the January meeting, parish council minutes are not required to be verbatim. Parish Council's are required to set their precept in line with their budget for the year and not allowed to set a higher precept otherwise they may be scrutinised by the auditor. Whilst the Parish Council have identified several projects, they may wish to look to undertake none of those were at the stage where they could be progressed and budgeted for at the time of putting the budget together.

3. The resident noted that the ongoing issues around speeding are not on this month's agenda. Can the Council please provide a timeline for the changes to both Church Lane and Huxley Lane, as agreed last year.

It was agreed that the clerk should respond after checking with CWaC on the timeline for reducing the speed limit on Huxley Lane and the installation of the dragons teeth and roundels on Church Lane.

It was also confirmed that the SID monitor was on loan from CWaC for the next two weeks and any help from those residents who had undertaken the training would be appreciated.

4. Williams Wood Planning – It was reported that William's Wood on Broomheath Lane, was purchased as a wheat field in June 2006; Converted to a public access woodland with many other youth group, education and leisure users; Tarvin Allotments provides plots free of charge to the local community and the owner teaches schools and teachers under the umbrellas of Council for learning outside the classroom and the Institute for Outdoor Learning.

The landowner is looking to involve representatives from the Parish Council in a site visit he is planning to discuss the possibility of submitting a planning application for the site to build two houses on the carpark.

ACTION: The Parish Council confirmed that it would be inappropriate to get involved in discussions as the site was not in their parish and we may not even get consulted on due to it sitting within the Tarvin Parish.

PLANNING

The Planning Register dated 08/03/2024 was accepted and changes to the planning register from last meeting were noted.

It was reported that the following applications had been consulted upon since the last meeting:-

23/03812/FUL – Meadow Cottage, Old Hall Lane, Foulk Stapleford, Chester CH3 7RT – Erection of oak framed log store with hipped slate roof adjoining existing garage (retrospective) – the Parish Council had *no objection* to this application.

24/00014/FUL – Barns at Bridge Cottage, Whitchurch Road, Saighton, Chester CH3 9AU – Demolition of two agricultural buildings, and conversion and extension of a further barn to create a single dwelling – the Parish Council had submitted a *neutral* response to this application but with the following comments/observations:- The application is within greenbelt and although the applicant's planning support statement says that the barn is on previously developed land, it is not the case as it is on agricultural land, and according to the NPPF agricultural land does not count as previously developed land. The fact that the barn is in green belt means that extensions to buildings may also be considered inappropriate.

24/00331/LDC – Long Acre, Mill Lane, Huxley, Chester CH3 7RQ – Lawful Development Certificate for existing use of land as domestic residential garden land – the Parish Council was *not consultation* upon this application.

It was reported that the following applications had been decided since the last meeting:-

23/03264/FUL – Eaton Villa, Hoofield Lane, Huxley CH3 9BR – Proposed construction of detached garage - *approved*.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Cllr Sackett and Cllr Nicholls's reported that they had met, and also attended a recent virtual planning meeting with Rob Charnley where he had mentioned the benefits of design codes. Cllr Sackett and Cllr Nicholl undertook to speak to Catherine Morgetroyd from Cheshire West and Chester to ascertain further information.

ACTION: Provide Cllr Sackett with email address for Catherine Morgetroyd.

Members of the Parish Council and Cllr Jones referred to the meeting with Rob Charnley where it was mentioned that there are not enough bungalows generally for elderly residents to move to and stay in their area, thus allowing their larger homes to be freed up for larger families. The NDP planning policy states that planning is preferred on sites where there are disused brick barns/outbuildings which may not lend itself to these sorts of buildings but it was noted that there are bungalows in Hargrave and also Huxley.

Cllr Bird raised concerns about the lack of the provision for bungalows and suggested that if there were more bungalows in the area this would have an added benefit to first time buyers, as generally speaking the purchase price would be less than a large detached rural dwelling.

Cllr Bird was aware that there are bungalows in the area however his concern was that they do not stay on the market long before they are sold, and would therefore like to see a long-term plan in place to address this issue in a growing and aging society.

FINANCIAL ITEMS

Cashbook and Out-turn Forecast YTD

RESOLVED 23/057 Year to date cashbook and out-turn report dated 08/03/2024 was approved as a true and correct record.

Bank Reconciliation against Cashbook YTD – RESOLVED 23/058 – that Cllr Nicholls signed the Bank Reconciliation and Bank Statements.

Insurance Renewal - RESOLVED 23/058 to pay the annual renewal premium of £459.36 to Gallaghers Insurance Company as per the 3 year binding Long Term Agreement (LTA) which runs until 31/03/2025.

VAT Reclaim for 2023-24 - RESOLVED 23/059 to submit the VAT Rebate Application for 2023-24 of £301.50 in March to allow for payment to be reviewed within the same financial year.

Payroll Provider for 2024-25 - It was RESOLVED 23/060 that Shires Accountants continue to undertake to provide payroll services for the Parish Council for 2024-25.

Clerk's Overtime - It was RESOLVED 23/061 to pay the clerk 8 hours in untaken annual leave and 16 hours in overtime for the period April 2023 – March 2024.

It was requested that the Clerk contact CWAC to find out if there is any support offered by them to any Freedom of Information Requests in the future.

ACTION Clerk to contact CWAC and ask if there is any support that they can give Parish Council re FOI requests in future.

Payments Made & Received since the last meeting:-

Income received since the last meeting:-

£23.39 & £25.43 in Bank Interest

£301.50 in VAT Rebate

£1,682.26 in Churchyard Grant

£8,082.86 in CIL money from Cheshire West and Chester Council

Payments made since the last meeting - for approval

Date	Payable to	Net Amount	VAT	Gross Amount	Comment
12/02/2024	Hargrave PCC	£28.00	£0.00	£28.00	Room Hire
23/03/2024	Mrs T Ryall-Harvey	£288.95	£0.00	£288.95	Salary Tax Month 11
12/02/2024	Mrs T Ryall-Harvey	£68.00	£13.60	£81.60	Clerk's Training & Expenses

Payments not yet made - for approval

Date	Payable to	Net Amount	VAT	Gross Amount	Comment
	Mrs T Ryall-Harvey	£288.95	£0.00	£288.95	Salary Tax Month 12
	Mrs T Ryall-Harvey	£43.54	£4.31	£47.85	Clerk's Expenses
	St Peter's Church	£1,682.26	£0.00	£1,682.26	Churchyard Grant
	Huxley Village Hall	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00	Room Hire
	Gallaghers	£459.36	£0.00	£459.36	Insurance for 2024-25
	Linux	£47.88	£9.58	£57.46	12 Month Cloud Hosting
	CHALC	£25.00	£0.00	£25.00	Members Training

RESOLVED 23/062 to accept the income and payments since the last meeting for approval.



PARISH COUNCIL MATTERS

Local Council Award Scheme

The Clerk proposed the Parish Council move forward and apply for the Foundation Level of the Local Council Award Scheme at a cost of £50 to the Parish Council, this was unanimously **RESOLVED 23/063**. It was therefore also **RESOLVED 23/064** that the Council confirms that it meets all the requirements in the LCAS document circulated prior to the meeting, and that all documentation and information is in place for the Foundation Award.

RESOLVED 23/065 that the Council confirms that it recognises its duties in relation to bio-diversity and crime and disorder, and that it has all the relevant documentation and information in place to meet the criteria to apply for the Foundation level of the Local Council Award Scheme.

Parish Meeting

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had been organised for Thursday 11th April at 7.00pm in Hargrave Village Hall and that Mr Hull from the Sandstone Ridge Project had been invited to speak. The Clerk asked for contacts for all of the Community Group in the area to be provided so she could invite them to attend.

ACTION: Send list of community groups round for email addresses to be provided.

ACTION: Put information in Down Our Way

Risk Assessment for 2024

RESOLVED 23/066 that the Risk Assessment be approved as circulated prior to the meeting and signed outside of the meeting in preparation for the Internal Audit. Proposed - Cllr Ratledge, seconded by Cllr Rosco.

Asset Register for 2024

RESOLVED 23/067 that the Asset Register be approved as circulated prior to the meeting. This was unanimously approved. Proposed - Cllr Bird, seconded by Cllr Sackett subject to slight amendments as discussed at the meeting including amended the location of the Defibrillator in Huxley, removed the reference to Orwell Engineering Solutions and to two Kissing Gates on FP15.

Internal Auditor

RESOLVED 23/068 to instruct Mrs Sue Irlam to undertake the Internal Auditor for 2023-24.

Data Retention Policy

RESOLVED 23/069 to adopt the Data Retention Policy as circulated at the meeting.

Planning Standing Orders

RESOLVED 23/070 to adopt the Planning Standing Orders as circulated at the meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting and will take place on Tuesday 21st May 2024 at 7.00pm in Hargrave Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 20:17

Signed:.... 

Dated:.... 21/5/2024