

MINUTES OF THE HOGSTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 6th APRIL 2023

Present: Cllrs Les Wildman (Chairman) Chris Rolph, Mary Banks, George Green, Clerk: K Hayes
Also Present District Cllr Graham Williams

The Chairman welcomed all those present.

PUBLIC FORUM

- A member of the public asked why no council members were present at the ELDC offices to hear the planning application for 6 caravans at Mill House Farm which had been called in. There had been over 600 objections from members of the public and it was thought that a council member should have attended to support those members of the public. The Chairman explained that an objection had already been put in and, having spoken to the other councillors, there was no-one able or willing to attend to reiterate what had already been written. He believed there was no point. Members of the public, nevertheless, believed that a member of the Council should have attended. Dist Cllr Williams commented that he was very involved in planning applications and he had made his objections known to the Planning Officer. He explained that even if the Planning Officer has made a decision, this can be over-riden by the Committee but it must be on firm planning application grounds. Cllr Banks would have attended but was otherwise engaged. The Chairman apologised for not going to the meeting but believed it would not have made any difference to the outcome. As predicted, the result of the committee was to pass the application.
- A member of the public complained that nothing was being done about the potholes and state of the footpaths even though this had been reported on several occasions. A further member of the public had also complained to Highways that the pathway outside his premises was in a state of disrepair. He had been told that there was no budget for it and it would not be done. The clerk will look at this again.
- A member asked if an update could be given on the financial irregularities and the position with the former clerk. The Chairman informed them that the situation had been brought to the attention of the police but no charges had yet been laid. He could not comment further.
- A query was raised about the footpath across the field near Charity Farm off Mill Lane which would seem to be blocked off. This would need to be looked into.
- It was also brought to the attention of the council that a broken fence in the churchyard needed fixing. This would be looked into and repaired – clerk to note.

1. APOLOGIES – An apology received from Cllr Ellen Smith was accepted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Cllr Wildman and Cllr Rolph declared an interest in Item 11 as they were allotment plot holders.

3. APPROVAL OF NOTES OF MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the 19th January having been amended were approved as a true record of the proceedings. The Minutes of the 2nd February, having been amended and Minutes of 2nd March were unanimously approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. CLERK'S REPORT

The clerk read out her report which is attached to these Minutes.

5. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

- a) Cllr Banks reported that correspondence would be sent from the Charities Commission to the Clerk with regard to the end of the 15 year lease on the allotments in September 2023.
- b) Dist Cllr Williams advised the footpath styles and gates were the responsibility of the Public Footpath Officer. It was also noted that there is a web site for reporting.
Councillors are now in perdue awaiting elections so no decisions would be taken. He advised that the electorate would now need photographic proof of identity when voting.

Regarding the question from a member of the public re potholes and footpaths – he confirmed that the money provided by Central Government nowhere near covered enough for road or footpath repairs to be carried out and there was no budget.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence to report.

7. ELECTIONS

The closing date for nominations was 4th April. It is now known that Hogsthorpe PC is to be uncontested, there having been only 6 nominations leaving two empty seats. There is, therefore, no need for a costly election process.

8. FINANCIAL MATTERS

- a) Payment of accounts were agreed as per list previously sent to councillors as follows:-
K Hayes (Clerk) £59.99 repayment for annual Microsoft subs, £541.66 for salary and £26 for homeworking allowance, £264 to LALC for interim internal audit fees, £27.47 to L Wildman for copy paper and locks. It was noted that there was an underpayment of £42.30 reported in the March payments to L Wildman. It was also agreed that payment of accounts be made for £21.64 to Sid Dennis and £15 for Hire of Village Hall.
- b) The AGAR Annual Governance Statement was read out by the Clerk, unanimously agreed and signed by the Chairman. The AGAR Accounting Statements for 2022/23 were also unanimously agreed and signed by the Chairman. The relevant information will be posted on the web site and notice board after the internal audit has been completed.
- c) The Financial Statement to the year end 31st March showing a balance of £17604 against a balance for last year of £28983 as previously presented to Councillors was unanimously agreed.
- d) It was unanimously agreed that Mrs Jen Cooper would be retained as the Internal Auditor. Accounts and details would be sent to her as soon as possible.
- e) Barclays Bank who were holders of the Parish Council accounts had been visited by the Chairman and Clerk and the necessary changes in signatories had been verified. Nothing was heard since. After contacting the Business Section of Barclays on the 6th April, it was discovered that there was one form missing to complete the mandate changes. This form was completed and signed by Cllrs Wildman and Banks and would be posted to the Mandate Change team the following day. They had, apparently, sent a letter regarding this but this had not been received and may have been sent to the previous clerk's address.
- f) The Playpark Account is proving very difficult to resolve. A cheque for £1600+ together with a letter from HSBC closing the account had been received by the ex-clerk who resigned in October 2021 at her previous address. This was handed to the Parish Council at the February 2022 meeting. A previous councillor and the clerk took this on to investigate and get another account opened to pay the cheque in. In July 2022, the cheque was re-issued after a visit to HSBC as it was out of date. As far as known, no other bank account was opened but it is thought that Lloyds Bank were approached in January 2023 to open another account but this transaction was not finalised. The Chairman and Clerk visited firstly the Skegness Branch and then Lloyds Business Banking on-line and, it is believed, got the account opened. They stated when contacting them again on the 6th April that a pack had been sent for completion. This has not been received and they are sending the pack again. The HSBC cheque was discovered amongst paperwork handed from the previous clerk which was now, again, out of date. The Chairman and newly appointed interim clerk visited the HSBC Skegness Branch to try and get the cheque re-issued again. They were told that the account had been processed as dormant and the funds given away to Charity. There is to be an appeal sent to Complaints Department at HSBC to try and get this refunded.
- g) VAT – no claim has been made for years ending 2021 and 2022. The Clerk will endeavour to recover this together with a claim for year end 2023. The amount, if allowed to be back-dated, will be in the region of £2400.

9. REPORT ON MEETING WITH LALC

The Chairman and Cllr Rolph had visited LALC at their offices with regard to LALC's concerns with the action taken by the council with regard to the the previous clerk. The two councillors explained that LALC had not been given the correct information and duly informed them of the facts. LALC were now happy that the council acted correctly.

10. CHURCHYARD REPORT

- a) Burial Fees. The fees had not been uplifted since 2013. They had been reviewed in 2017 but not changed. In December 2021 the Council had agreed that fees would be increased by 40% but this had not been implemented. A new fee schedule has been prepared taking this into account and will be published and fees charged accordingly. The clerk also noted that the Exclusive Rights of Burial Certificate also gave permission for 99 years. This was far too long as it was impossible to trace ownership after such a long period of time. The clerk therefore suggested that this be brought down to 30 years which was unanimously accepted.
- b) Churchyard wall. There was a question on who owns the wall – the church or the PC. The council did not have enough in their budget to be able to afford to re-build the wall. It was agreed that in the first instance, the architect recommended by the Church (after having firstly been asked for a quote) should be called in to take a look at it and give recommendations. It may be that the whole wall should be replaced with another boundary line, e.g. a fence. There was also the question of what should be done with the gravestones which were leaning against the wall. The clerk to investigate further with the Architect.

11. ALLOTMENTS

As previously stated, the 15 year lease of land for allotments comes to an end in September. The clerk is awaiting correspondence from the Charity. A cheque has been received for £857.50 for the coming year's plot rentals. Clerk to acknowledge receipt.

12. PLANNING

- a) N/08402405/22 Mill House Farm – 6 static caravans – As stated in the Public Forum, this application had been brought in to committee on 6th April. A decision had been reached by Planning to grant the application.
- b) N/084/00295/23 Changes to approved plan on land adjacent to 16 Mill Lane on the grounds that the original plan did not allow enough room between the caravans. Units have now been made smaller on the plan to accommodate this. No decision taken.
- c) N/125/00345/23 Inglenook Caravan Park application to change of use from holiday lets to all year round occupancy. Objection – clerk to put on Planning Portal.

13. SPEED CAMERA REPORT

Cllr Rolph had now downloaded the data from the speed camera for the period 29th November 2022 to mid March 2023. This data will now be collected each month and made available to Parish Council meetings. 147,000 recordings had been taken of which 48,000 between 30-35 mph, 16,174 36-40 mph, and 7,087 over 40 mph on the High Street camera and 36,972 30-35 mph, 9,576 36-40 mph and 2,688 over 40 mph taken at South End. Cllr Rolph urged all members of the public to attend the police liaison meeting in Chapel on the first Monday in the month.

14. PLAYPARK REPORT

Cllr Smith was not present to give a report. The Chairman noted that car boot events were now being run again every two weeks. An enquiry from the Swift Junior Football club had been received but this would need serious investment in the pitch to take this forward. Grants were being looked into.

15. VILLAGE PROPERTIES

It would appear that the burned-out bungalow was not insured. The unoccupied property had been empty since the owner was taken to prison for dog cruelty some 20 years ago. The current owner was not known – a check could be made on the land registry or the council tax information.

16. CONFIRM DATE OF AGM AND PARISH MEETING

A change of date is necessary from 4th May to 11th May because of elections. The Chairman confirmed that election of PC Chairman and Vice Chairman would take place at the AGM. It is proposed that the times of the meetings be 6 pm for the Playpark Meeting, 6.30 pm for the AGM and 7.00 pm for the Annual Parish Meeting. The clerk re-iterated that the Parish Meeting was open to all members of the public to put forward their ideas and suggestions for taking the parish forward for the following year. Notices would be posted throughout the village giving details of the proceedings.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 11th May 2023 as stated above.

18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reminded those present that the Village Hall meeting would take place at 7pm on the 29th April. Cllr Banks agreed that she would stand again as representative of the Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm