

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Annual Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 5 May 2021, 7:00pm.
This meeting was held remotely held under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 Using Zoom.

Present: Cllr D Bonny
Cllr N Elborn
Cllr R Guinea
Cllr A Skinner
Cllr P Boothman
Cllr B Gilmour
Cllr D Keane
Cllr C Spearing

Staff present: Lois Dale, Parish Clerk, Lane Thompson, Timebank Co-ordinator
There were 23 members of the public present

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Baxendale.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED: Cllr C Spearing be elected as Chairman of Houghton & Wyton Parish Council.

Proposed: Cllr Boothman; Seconded: Cllr Skinner. All in favour

Cllr Spearing thanked the outgoing chair, Cllr Baxendale, praising his leadership and highlighting several of his many achievements. Cllr. Spearing said he was honoured to accept the responsibility of the position but confirmed that for personal reasons it was his intention to be in the post for just one year.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

It was agreed that the position of Vice-Chair will not be appointed at the moment. The Parish Council reserves the right to appoint to this position in the future if it is considered necessary.

4. VOLUNTARY POSTS AND REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES

Mr Sweet and Mr Fisher are happy to remain as Tree Wardens for the coming year. It was agreed that was no need for an official appointment to the Memorial Hall committee.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Boothman declared an interest in item 13.3 as he is a neighbour.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

One resident stated that he had been in negotiation with the National Trust at Houghton Mill to place a Memorial bench near the river frontage. He believes that there were plans to change the use of this area to a more natural setting for some time and that two benches were including in this plan. The COVID situation had overtaken the implementation of this plan. The Parish Council agreed to speak to the National Trust about installation of this bench. **Action: Cllr Spearing**

The majority of the public's comments related to the National Trust site at Houghton Mill. The Chair of the Feast Week committee identified two issues: 1) The blocking of the official route of part of footpath 3 and access to the river and the fact that footpath 2 runs through the current car park. 2) Feast Week have asked to use areas of the NT site during the 2021 event, but could not run these events under the restrictions required by the National Trust (NT).

Eleven other members of the public expressed their concern and disappointment with the recent NT land management at Houghton Mill and Waterside Meadows and the organisation's lack of communication of their plans to the parish. Many were concerned about restricted access to the river, changes to the parking policy leading to more parking in the village and river safety.

The Chair thanked the public for attending and articulating their views so clearly to the NT.

In response to a specific question to the Parish Council about the minutes of the December 2020 Parish Council meeting Cllr Boothman replied: prior to the meeting there had been a lot of anti-social behaviour in the area of Houghton Mill and around Houghton Lock. The PC's main concern was that with no custodian on site there would be no one to monitor the activity in this area and this would affect the entire community. The PC was told about the proposal to offer guided tours to improve visitor experience and the run the mill more often. The issues with littering and swimming near the mill were discussed but there was no consensus on how these should be tackled or mention of changes to land management.

7. MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of 7 April 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

Proposed: Cllr Skinner; Seconded: Cllr Bonny. All in favour

8. MATTERS ARISING

Asset Risk Assessments will be carried out. **Action: Clerk and Cllr Skinner**

Invoices for the Sports Clubs annual charge will be prepared along with explanations before the meeting in June. **Action: Clerk and Cllr Baxendale**

A Biennial report will be prepared for issue later in the year. **Action: Cllrs Baxendale and Bonny**

9. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT.

D Cllr Keane apologised on behalf of D Cllr Dew who was attending the Hemingford Grey Parish Council meeting.

HDC is working to open up town centres and leisure facilities as the COVID restrictions are gradually eased. There is financial support from central government.

Although offices will be reopening, many district Council services can be readily accessed online, via their website www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

In response to a question, D Cllr Keane agreed to see if local archives were open again.

Action: D Cllr Keane

10. CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICERS REPORT

10.1. To authorise payments due

RESOLVED: The payments be approved and paid. **Action: Clerk**

Proposed: Cllr Elborn, Seconded: Cllr Boothman. All in favour.

10.2. Pavilion Caretaker

The Clerk reported that the Housekeeper has resigned. The post will be advertised as soon as possible. **Action: Clerk**

10.3. CAPALC Internal Audit Service

The costs of this service will be investigated and compared to other alternatives. **Action: Clerk**

10.4. Future meetings while under COVID restrictions.

COVID regulations are still in force until at least 21 June 2021. The legislation to allow remote meetings of Parish Councils expires on 6 May. Therefore, the June meeting must be held in person with social distancing and potentially allow for some form of public attendance. Following a trial meeting in the Pavilion it was agreed that this would be feasible. The Clerk will also investigate the availability of the St Mary's Centre and the Memorial Hall. **Action: Clerk**

11. NATIONAL TRUST, HOUGHTON MILL

Sarah Smith, Regional Manager for the National Trust (NT), responded to the public comments made earlier in the meeting.

Over the past few years visitor numbers to Houghton Mill have increased leading to issues. During the Covid pandemic the NT has less staff and lower budgets for all areas nationally.

Car Park – It has never been an intention that the ridge and furrow field would be a full-time car park. The Neighbourhood Plan lists this field as green space and it is intended to manage this as such and as part of the village character. In early 2020 plans were being made to improve the parking, but that had to stop and now funds for this work are limited. Therefore, they are now trialling a limited parking time so that more visitors can come to the site over a day. Volunteers are helping people to park in a way to maximise the capacity.

Footpath 3 – The County Council Rights of Way team are working with the NT to establish the route of this footpath.

Riverside – This area was roped off in 2020 to facilitate social distancing. As a consequence, more plant species were seen here, there were more birds and more otter sightings; the NT want to encourage this. Therefore, it was decided to continue restricting access to this area. Broadly, visitors' comments have been positive and the use of the field allows more people to picnic safely and abide by social distance rules. It is hoped this will reduce the overcrowding which has been an issue by the river.

Swimming – The river is the Environment Agency responsibility. The NT does not encourage swimming here as the mill is operational, there are automatic sluice gates and the area is not monitored. The lifebelt is for those that get into trouble in the deep and often turbulent water, it does not indicate this is an area for swimming. This is an issue that has been ongoing and the EA and NT have shared this message for many years. The NT hope to improve boat access to the river via a slipway, but this needs to be cleared as time and funds allow. There are other areas along the river for access. The NT welcomes community events, but currently needs to restrict and manage numbers on all its land due to government regulations, its own policies and within its own funds. There are very few events on their land nationally. They hope that as restrictions ease more events can take place.

The NT acknowledges that it can improve its engagement with the community and is trying to do that. Visitors and residents were encouraged to talk to the staff and volunteers to understand any changes.

The Chair confirmed that the Parish Council would engage with the Rights of Way officers and the NT to resolve that issue. All comments and the differences between the landowners and some residents will be considered and the requirements of Feast Week need to be understood. If necessary, a meeting will be organised and progress will be reported upon. **Action: Clerk**

12. COMMUNITY FLOOD ACTION GROUP

The Group has continued to meet and move forward with its mission. The group will be looking for more people to get involved as the Flood Action Plan is rolled out. There will be a need for volunteers to help with practical issues when needed.

Plans and mapping are in progress as is the full Flood Action Plan. The next meeting will be on 17 May.

The CFAG has arranged a meeting with Anglian Water on 18 May to discuss water management that they have responsibility for. It is hoped that a meeting will be arranged with the Environment Agency.

The team were thanked for all their hard work to date.

13. PLANNING MATTERS

- 13.1. [New brick built garage following demolition of the existing garage.](#)** 31 Hill Estate Houghton Huntingdon PE28 2BU Ref. No: 21/00645/HHFUL

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend this application be **APPROVED** for the following reasons:

This new garage will be on the same footings as the existing, only slightly longer.

This is not in nor has any impact on the Conservation Area.

This will enhance the dwelling.

Proposed: Cllr Guinea; Seconded: Cllr Bonny. All in favour.

13.2. Proposed garden office. The Former Coach House St Ives Road Houghton Huntingdon PE28 2BJ Ref. No: 21/00672/HHFUL

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend this application be **APPROVED** for the following reasons:

This is at a modern property within the Conservation Area

No parking will be lost.

Although the building will be visible from the street, it will be screened.

The office will be used for working from home and business use – H&W NP Policy 15.

The office directly abuts a neighbour's fence, but they have no objection. They would like the materials used to be fireproof at this point.

Proposed: Cllr Gilmour; Seconded: Cllr Skinner. All in favour.

13.3. Work to 18 Trees. The Millers House Thicket Road Houghton Huntingdon PE28 2BQ Ref. No: 21/00811/TREE

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend this application be **APPROVED** for the following reasons:

This will increase light to the house

Removal of deadwood

Increase vehicle clearance on Thicket Road

Proposed: Cllr Gilmour; Seconded: Cllr Bonny. All in favour.

13.4. Houghton Grange Phase 2

13.4.1. Consultation - actions taken / next steps

The Parish Council has responded to the pre-application consultation. This incorporated many of the comments received from residents and summarised the response from the over 200 'postcard' consultations that were returned to the Parish Council. Everyone is thanked for their interest and responses, and encouraged to continue to be engaged in the proposals for this area. The Parish Council hopes to meet with Homes England again to discuss their findings and bring forward a design that can be supported by the local community and neighbours.

A freedom of Information request was submitted to release information on the value of the land at Houghton Grange.

13.4.2. Community Land Trust – actions taken and next steps

People have responded positively to the leaflet giving information about this and if anyone else is interested they are encouraged to get in touch with the Parish Council. It is hoped to hold a meeting for those that are interested in this initiative at which Emily Mulvaney from the Combined Authority will give further information. A date for this will be announced as soon as possible. In response to a public question about the provision of allotments, it was agreed that this could come under the remit of a CLT.

13.4.3. HDC response

It is hoped that if a positive meeting can be held with Homes England that HDC officers will be more communicative with the Parish Council.

13.5. Houghton Grange Phase 1 – construction start / status

The Grange building is still awaiting approval for conversion to five apartments.

Construction on the site has started. The Parish Council needs to get details of the build-out program and the restrictions on traffic, noise, lighting etc. **ACTION: Cllr Boothman**

If the CLT wants to have any involvement in the affordable housing on this site it will need to liaise with Morris Homes.

13.6. The siting of a caravan for an incidental/ancillary use The Russetts Thicket Road Houghton Huntingdon PE28 2DB Ref. No: 21/00488/CLPD – the Parish Council response

The Parish Council has objected to this application for a Certificate for Lawful Development which would allow the caravan to remain on site. The caravan was originally only for temporary accommodation while the house was refurbished. This site is in the Conservation Area, next to a listed building and within a Neighbourhood Plan Character Area. Residents are urged to submit comments.

13.7. Other Planning Matters

It is noted that St Marys Church has submitted an application to fell two ash trees in Wyton Cemetery. This is within the Conservation Area, but they are not covered by Tree Protection Orders. The Church will apply for a faculty from the Diocese as they have not had a response from HDC within the permitted time frame. The HDC Tree Officer has been alerted to this and was unaware of the application. They have been asked to contact the land owner and this will be followed up and the situation monitored. A sycamore was felled in this cemetery a few months ago and has left an obvious gap in tree cover, despite having permission from HDC who commented that as it was a long way from the road it would have no impact on the Conservation Area. **Action: Cllr Elborn & Clerk**

14. PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE

14.1. Land West of Houghton Cemetery – report

The Parish Council has submitted a needs case in support of the community benefit provided by this potential development. The Parish Council has not predetermined this potential application and will comment as appropriate if the full application comes forward.

14.2. A1123 Speed reduction initiative – LHI 2022/23 and appointment of SLR Consulting

RESOLVED: This project to reduce the speed limit on the A1123 consistent 40mph on its entire length through the parish will be resubmitted for the next round of LHI funding and SLR Consulting will be asked to work with us to support the application. Funds that were allocated to this project in previous years will be carried forward into the 2021-22 budget.

Proposed: Cllr Keane; Seconded: Cllr Boothman. All in favour. **Action: Cllr Keane**

14.3. HDC CIL application for Pedestrian Cycle way A1123 – next steps

It was agreed that this project should be resubmitted for CIL funding when possible. Other bodies have offered support and this will be investigated further. It was hoped that applying for this in conjunction with the speed reduction on the A1123 would strengthen both cases.

Action: Cllr Keane

14.4. Lych Gate replacement - update

The uprights for the gate have been installed. The roof has been delayed, but should be installed in the next two weeks. The contractors will be asked to make good any damage caused to the path. **Action: Cllrs Spearing, Gilmour & Clerk**

15. CORRESPONDENCE

Elm on the Playing Field: Councillors were encouraged to look at this tree which is causing a nuisance to residents. In the past HDC has only permitted limited work to this tree, as it is the Conservation Area and covered by a blanket TPO. The Parish Council

could apply for further work, including felling the tree. It was felt that felling a mature tree, that seems to be resistant to Dutch Elm disease, was probably the last step. Gathering seed to replace this or increase the population was agreed to be a good idea before any drastic decision was made. This will be discussed when all councillors have viewed the tree. **Action: All Cllrs**

Parking outside the Old Post Office: A resident is concerned about the dangers posed to pedestrians when cars are parked outside this house. It is on a blind and dangerous bend and pedestrians are often forced to walk into the road if cars are parked here. The resident has been advised to contact the County Council and the police as the Parish Council has no authority here. It was agreed that a holistic view to parking in the area was needed and the Parish Council can work on that with the County Council.

Anti-social behaviour on Thicket footpath: Following a report of this behaviour to the Parish Council it is felt that a general notice can be issued to state that the Thicket is a footpath only and that all users need to show respect and common sense when using it. There is permitted vehicle access to the properties and land off this path. **Action: Clerk**

Parking on Thicket Road verges and Love Lane footpath: Parking at the above area has increased during the past year. The verges opposite The Elms are now flattened and denuded of vegetation, the entrance to Love Lane is similar and rutted. This is not helped by the neighbouring landowner's actions to cut back and spray the vegetation in this area. It is believed that the verges are under the management of CCC Highways. Highways and Rights of Way officers have been made aware and the Parish Council will monitor the situation. **Action: Cllr Boothman and Clerk**

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that the restrictions on parking at the National Trust site may lead to more parking and traffic problems in Mill Street which is narrow and has limited capacity. This should be borne in mind when the project to improve parking here is undertaken. An invoice has been received for legal advice on the original situation on Houghton Grange phase 2.

Councillors were asked if they wanted to attend a seminar on involving young people in local councils as Cllr Boothman can no longer attend.

It was reported that there have been instances of vandalism at the new Berman Park in St Ives; concern was expressed that this could spread to other areas along the Thicket and the Houghton Grange sites as they are developed and public access permitted. The Annual Parish Meeting is planned for Wed 23 June when it is hoped that public can attend in person.

The Clerk and Tree Wardens will progress procuring a tree in memory of Molly Gilbert.

Action: Clerk

The registration of the Common Land will be progressed. **Action: Clerk**

A request was made that the Parish Council meeting scheduled for 1 September be moved to 8 September. This will be decided at the next meeting.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council, will be on Wednesday 2 June 2021, 7:00pm. Location will be announced.

Signed:..... Date: