

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 7 December 2022, 7:00pm.

Present: Cllr P Boothman - Chair
Cllr B Gilmour
Cllr T Goodger
Cllr A Skinner
Cllr R Baxendale
Cllr R Guinea
Cllr D Keane
Cllr N Elborn

Staff present: Lois Dale, Parish Clerk.

There were also 4 members of the public present, including C & D Cllr D Dew.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllr Hunter.

2. DECLARATIONS

Cllr Elborn declared an interest in item 7.4 as her spouse works in the financial industry.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

A member of the public suggested that trees should be planted in memory of the late Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh. They were assured that this was in hand. It was confirmed that extra copies of the Village Directory, that has been produced and funded by the Village magazine, can be made available at a reasonable cost. Those involved in the production of this resource were thanked.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: Following minor corrections, the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 2 November 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

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

5. MATTERS ARISING

Following a discussion at the October meeting, a letter has been sent to the Bowls Club and acknowledged.

There has been no response from the Scout Hut Committee to the proposed Heads of Agreement. It was agreed that as the Parish Council has approved this the document can be signed if approved by the Scout Hut Committee.

There are some trees available for planting; the Tree Wardens will be asked to progress this matter.

Quotes are being prepared for the work needed to trees the Parish Council is responsible for.

Only two quotes have been received for an ecological assessment of the cemetery extension. It was agreed to accept the quote from Arbtech and this is within the budget already allocated. This work will be progressed.

6. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT.

C & D Cllr Dew reported that the County Council is preparing its budget for 2023-24. Highways are looking at replacing bulbs with LED lights as an environmental and cost saving measure.

The Combined Authority has replaced, improved and refranchised some bus routes that were scrapped by Stagecoach recently. The subsidies paid to Stagecoach following the turndown in use after covid have left a deficit in the CA budget. The Parish Council was encouraged to ask residents to write to the CA with their views on the bus services and record their problems and experiences. **Action: Clerk**

Funding for the Warm Hubs is still available through HDC; CCC are channelling their funding through HDC also.

The procedure for having planning applications heard at the Development Management Committee is still not clear. The Parish Council has recently commented on some controversial applications and would like to be sure that they are able to

contact the right people in Planning at HDC to ensure the everyone is following the correct procedure. Both District Councillors will work on this.

There is still no progress on the missing and faded white road lining on Houghton Hill. This will be reported again through the Highways website.

The consultation on the reduction of the speed limit on Houghton Hill is in progress. Requests for 20mph zones has been taken out of the LHI programme and is now dealt with separately. Funds are available from the CA and applications are open.

In addition to the above, D Cllr Keane reported that HDC has planted several plum trees at Oxmoor Lane, Huntingdon.

The Health Inequalities project is in full swing and roadshows are being held across the region.

7. CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICERS REPORT

7.1. To authorise payments due

RESOLVED: The payments be approved and paid. **(LD)**

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

The budget report to date and bank balances were noted.

7.2. To approve budget for 2023-24

RESOLVED: The proposed budget for 2023-24 was approved. This will be circulated and posted on the website.

Proposed: Cllr Baxendale, Seconded: Cllr Keane. All in favour

7.3. To approve precept request for 2023-24

RESOLVED: Following discussion it was agreed that a precept of £87,200 (increase of 9% on 2022-23) be requested for 2023-24.

Proposed: Cllr Skinner, seconded: Cllr Guinea. All in favour

ACTION: Clerk.

7.4. Investment/Savings Accounts for reserves

Cllr Elborn declared an interest in this item and abstained from voting.

Cllrs Boothman and Elborn met with the clerk. Former Parish Councillor Mr Bonny attended to advise.

The Parish Council financial status was examined and with the receipt of over £190,000 in CIL monies this year, it was concluded that it would be prudent to invest at least some of this money in longer term account to attempt to maintain the value of the funds until they are needed. Any institutions and accounts used must be government backed (up to £85K), have an ethical investment policy and be easy to manage. They must also accept investment from Parish Councils. Funds will not be invested for more than one year at a time.

RESOLVED: Investments/Accounts will be sought to maximise the returns on £50,000 in an up to 95 day notice account and £100,000 in one year fixed rate accounts, bonds or similar. This does not preclude the future investment of further funds in other accounts.

With the current fluctuating rates and availability of accounts the decision on the actual vehicles used is delegated to Cllrs Elborn and Boothman with the RFO.

Proposed: Cllr Baxendale, Seconded: Cllr Guinea. For: 7, Abstentions: 1

7.5. Support for Community Fund

The Houghton & Wyton Community Fund is looking for donations to continue to cover the expected requests for funding. The Community Shop has informed the Fund that it can no longer provide them with funding hence they have asked the Parish Council is they would 'match fund' donations from residents up to a set amount.

RESOLVED: The Parish Council will match fund donations to the Community Fund up to a maximum of £5,000 during 2022-23. The fund will be asked to confirm if they claim Gift Aid on all eligible donations.

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

8. REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Playing Field

8.1.1. Field maintenance

Thanks were expressed to John Wells of the Cricket Club for his comprehensive maintenance strategy for the Playing Field. It was agreed this work will be started at the end of the football home games this season, therefore quotes and a funding plan for this work need to be agreed as soon as possible. **PB & RG**

It was noted that volunteers have been manually scarifying the football pitch, although talks have been raised about hiring a small scarifying machine for this purpose. They are thanked for the work they are doing.

8.1.2. Field Lease

Negotiations to buy the currently leased eastern part of the Playing Field have been unsuccessful, so it is now proposed that the Parish Council buy out the current lease (this has 16 years remaining) and start a 99 or 125 year lease. This seems more acceptable to the owners and would allow the Parish Council to obtain grants and carry out work to allow facilities to be improved. Valuations and negotiations of terms need to be initiated. Legal advice indicates that the S106 funding from Houghton Grange allocated for the acquisition of the Playing Field should be able to be used towards this.

RESOLVED: £8,000 be allocated to cover professional fees for the acquisition of the Playing Field.

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

8.2. Cemetery Hedge and ditch maintenance

RESOLVED: up to £1,500 be allocated to cut back the hedge at the front of the cemetery and clear the ditch.

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

Quotes will be chased. **Clerk & TG**

8.3. Investigate Local Green Space designation for The Thicket footpath and Houghton School Playing Field.

Local Green Space designation can provide strong protection for land that could be vulnerable to development, or of losing its character. The designation is tied to Development Plan Policy, so this would be most appropriate when the Neighbourhood Plan is renewed or updated.

9. PLANNING MATTERS

9.1. Houghton Grange

This item is closely tied to item 9.2. See below

9.2. Community Land Trust and Housing Needs Survey

Cllrs Boothman and Baxendale met with a representative of CambsACRE to discuss formation of a CLT and carrying out a Housing Needs Survey.

It is noted that HDC have not yet informed the Parish Council who if appointed as the Housing Association for the social housing at Houghton Grange.

IT was agreed that CambsACRE would liaise with HDC to determine an appropriate area to be covered for the Needs survey and the costs involved. ACRE could carry out all work for the survey and produce a report.

ACRE also provide education on social/affordable housing and CLTs to local councils.

They will provide details of costs etc to provide this for HDC officers and councillors.

Contact will be made with Morris Homes to ask for funding towards this work and if they can provide a tour of the site to Parish Councillors.

9.3. Enforcement Actions

Planning permission has been granted to the application for work at Four Winds on

Houghton Hill. It is noted that work has started at the site of The Oaks and that their driveways are still conjoined.

In response to enforcement complaints, HDC have requested the owners of The How to submit a planning application for work carried out or planned, but not applied for. This will include the trees removed from the riverbank, fencing erected and proposal to install a mooring. D Cllr Keane will ask HDC planning officers for further information, especially in regard to land ownership and safety concerns about a fenced off area of riverbank.

It was noted that there are buildings in the front garden of 6 Hill Estate and 6 Manor Close. HDC enforcement will be asked to investigate these. **LD**

9.4. Other Planning Matters

Construction of a dwelling with associated garage and workshop Houghton Hill House Ref. No: 22/02068/FUL – The agents have responded to the consultation comments submitted by the Parish Council. This is published on the Planning website and was not sent to the Parish Council. D Cllr Keane is requesting that this application and that for Eagle Mill be taken to the Development Management Committee if the officers recommendation is at odds with that of the Parish Council.

10. PROJECTS

10.1. Playing Field Compound Extension

This has been booked with the contractor and a start date is awaited.

10.2. New Housing Welcome packs

Cllr Skinner showed the meeting a sample of a custom printed A4 card folder and potential inserts for this pack. Several organisations have agreed to produce content for the folder.

10.3. LHI – Mill Street

This is still in progress.

10.4. LHI – A1123

An agreement for the installation, re-siting and maintenance of the Vehicle Activated signs has been signed. CCC have started a consultation on the proposed speed reduction.

10.5. Vision Workshop – plan for next actions

Work to assimilate and progress feedback from the October workshop has been carried out. Further and continued consultation and engagement with residents is planned. Exhibition type events will be planned for 2023.

10.6. Coronation celebrations 2023

The Parish Council will consider granting a sum of money to voluntary groups to organise a village celebration

10.7. Clock Tower re-thatching

RESOLVED: £20,000 be allocated from CIL funding received to rethatch the Clock Tower at The Green and repaint and/or repair the clock housing. Cllr Baxendale will arrange to meet the thatchers who have quoted to decide on the contract.

Proposed: Cllr Baxendale; Seconded: Cllr Keane. All in favour

11. CORRESPONDENCE

Request from Feast Week for the Parish Council to hold funds allocated for a Petanque Court.

RESOLVED: The Parish Council agree to hold £2,500 on behalf of the Feast Week Committee; this money is ring-fenced for the construction of a Petanque Court to be sited on Parish Council land.

The funds will be returned to the Feast Week Committee:

- to fund the construction of the court, or

- If approval and necessary permissions cannot be obtained, or
- If no decision is made by 31 May 2024..

By agreeing to hold the money the Parish Council is not agreeing to the siting of the facility on its land, nor to any physical or financial liabilities in regard to such a facility. Proposed: Cllr Boothman, Seconded: Cllr Gilmour. All in favour

Complaint about notice displayed on public noticeboards

A complaint was received about posters on public noticeboards in the village. The complainant claimed there was a conflict of interest with the notice being displayed on public noticeboards that had been provided by the Parish Council, as some people were aware that the matter concerned an individual who is also a Parish Councillor. They also felt that the notice was not suitable for the public notice board as it was mainly aimed at members of a particular organisation. Following consultation with Parish Councillors the Clerk responded. The complainant was informed that the Parish Clerk and councillors could see no conflict of interest, that the matter was of interest to a relatively large number of people within the village who could not be contacted in any other way and that the notice was not considered political, commercial or offensive. The complainant responded to say they did not agree with the conclusion reached and also referred to another poster that could not be identified.

The Clerk contacted the individual who posted the notice and they have confirmed that there were two notices, both written by them and with no connection to the Parish Council.

The councillors agreed that they stood by the initial response to the complainant and had no further comments on the correspondence received. The Clerk will respond to the complainant and will amend the 'Noticeboard Rules' to make it clear the open boards are for public use and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Parish Council.

Other Correspondence

A former Councillor attended a meeting organised by the police about respect for public servants. He will be asked to share his insights and knowledge with the Council. It might also be useful to be able to raise awareness of the role of the Parish Councillor. Cllr Skinner agreed to represent the Parish Council by doing a reading at the Lessons and Carols church service on 18 December.

The Council had asked the Parochial Church Council to consider a pragmatic solution to the poor state of the gate on the churchyard. No official response has been received yet, but it has been suggested that it might be possible to remove the gates entirely and monitor the situation, especially with regard to the riding of cycles or similar through the churchyard.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Parish Council is **Wednesday 11 January 2023**, 7pm in the St Mary's Centre.

Signed:..... Date: