

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 08 November 2023, 7:00pm.

Present: Cllr P Boothman - Chair
Cllr R Guinea
Cllr D Keane
Cllr Baxendale
Cllr Z Hunter
Cllr A Skinner

There were five members of the public. D & C Cllr Dew could not attend.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllr Gilmour.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of 11 October 2023 were approved as a correct record.

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

5. MATTERS ARISING

- The Football and Cricket Clubs will be consulted on the Grass cutting specification before looking for contractors. **CLERK**
- The Fire Service will carry out a fire inspection at the Pavilion on Mon 27th Nov. **CLERK/PB**
- A small group of councillors will work with the Clerk/Assistant Clerk to look at work needed at the Play Area. **CLERK, PB, SS & RG**
- The MVAS sign has been installed near Hill Estate on the A1123. This needs to be calibrated to the correct speed. Thanks were expressed to Andrew Taylor and Steve Munro for their help

6. CO-OPTION OF NEW PARISH COUNCILLORS

RESOLVED: Ruth Southworth and Jacquetta Rodgers be co-opted onto Houghton & Wyton Parish Council.

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

An induction meeting will be arranged to suit all parties. Training for Councillors will be arranged.

7. FLOOD GROUP PRESENTATION

Nigel Swaby of the Houghton & Wyton Flood Action Group gave a presentation on the work of the Group – see attached.

He also mentioned that the Environment Agency are planning a review of the floodbanks, which has not been done for about 20 years. This will look at the heights and condition of the banks.

Anglian Water carried out a survey of the village sewers after the 2020 flooding problems. No results have yet been published or made available.

The need for more trained flood wardens was stressed. The training is minimal and would allow more people to be fully prepared to help in the event of a flood. It was agreed that a training session would be organised for Parish Councillors.

A vote of thanks was proposed to Nigel for his presentation and the Flood Group for their work on behalf of the village.

8. DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS

D Cllr Keane reported:

- There is a change in postal voting from 31 October 2023 electors can apply for a postal vote via a new government online service. Electors are required to provide their National Insurance number when applying for a postal vote online or via a paper application form. <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/elections/how-to-vote/>
- The Local Highway Initiative Scheme window for applications is open and closes on Friday 12th January at 5pm

- HDC is looking at the polling districts and polling stations. A survey at [Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2023 - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/polling-districts-and-polling-places-review-2023) finishes on 28th November.
- There is the active health programme with a free 90 day use of one leisure if eligibility criteria are met. Please see [Active for Health - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/active-for-health) for more information.
- HDC is looking to ensure the electoral register is up to date and they will be contacting people directly, or you can update your information online [Welcome to the household update service \(householdresponse.com\)](https://www.householdresponse.com)
- Information on the new charge for green bins can be found at [Garden Waste Subscription Service - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/garden-waste-subscription-service)
- HDC are also looking to make sure those who are eligible for help are getting support [Offering a Helping Hand – Make Your Money Go Further - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/offering-a-helping-hand)

9. CLERK & RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICERS REPORT

9.1. To authorise payments due and paid and note financial reports and bank balances

RESOLVED: Payments now due are authorised:

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

The budget report and bank balances were noted.

9.2. Budget and Precept request 2024/25

Councillors met to discuss the budget and precept for 2024/25. A balanced draft budget has been produced and HDC have been asked if a final precept request can be made in January once the Tax Base is known and there is more knowledge about occupation at Houghton Grange.

9.3. Clerk's Assistant recruitment.

Following interviews of five good candidates an appointment has been made. It is proposed the Assistant will start in December and initially shadow the Clerk to gain a feel for the role and how they can fit into this.

9.4. To approve Cemetery Fees increase from January 2024

RESOLVED: Cemetery Fees for Houghton Cemetery be increased by an average of 7% from January 2024.

Proposed: Cllr Guinea, Seconded: Cllr Hunter. All in favour.

The Clerk will publish and circulate the new fees as appropriate. **CLERK**

9.5. Insurance for Timebank

An increased premium has been requested to cover Timebank members while they are engaged in activities for Timebank. This will be paid to ensure cover is available, but a full review of cover provided will be carried out next year.

10. REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. Bus Stop at Hartford Marina

A resident at Hartford Marina has asked the Parish Council if they can help in improving the safety and comfort of people waiting for a bus at Hartford Marina. The stop is on a small grassed area right on the A1123 at the entrance to the Marina.

The Council accepts this is both dangerous and unpleasant for users. It was agreed that this should be brought to the attention of the County Council, Stagecoach (the bus operators) and Tingdene (marina owners and residents' landlords). **CLERK & RB**

10.2. Parking in the Village

A resident had complained to the Parish Council about vehicles parked on St Ives Road by the Playing Field fence. This causes a narrowing of the road and can make access to his property difficult.

The Parish Council recognise that parking in the village can be a problem at times and has increased in recent years, but also that the village has no extra capacity to provide parking for visitors. The Council has recently met with the managers of the National Trust Houghton Mill and discussed parking, among other issues. The National Trust changed their parking regime to encourage shorter stays and more through-put, and do not have plans to increase the parking

area. It is noted that many visitors to the National Trust site are not visiting the Mill itself, but along with other visitors to the village are making use of the wider countryside and river. It is the access points and method of travel that may need to be addressed, making use of the river itself along with more active travel options and bus routes to reach the village.

Solutions to be further explored include:

- Interactive signage at St Ives Road entrance to the village to display the number of parking spaces available at Houghton Mill. Highways will be asked for advice on this.
- Double yellow lines along part of St Ives Road to reduce the 'pinch-point' that can be created and ensure safer access and movement along here. Highways will be asked for advice on this.
- Publicising the lack of parking and problems it causes and providing information on alternative methods of transport.

10.3. LHI 2024-25

Suggestions for applications for this funding were discussed:

Hard surfaced footpath from the bus stop on the north of the A1123 to Houghton Cemetery.

CLERK & RG

Hartford Marina bus stop. (see above)

10.4. Policy statement on use of Parish Council assets

RESOLVED: A policy for the use of Parish Council Assets by village groups and businesses is agreed.

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

This will be finalised and published. A booking system will be implemented and insurance issues investigated. **CLERK**

10.5. Replacement Fence at Playing Field Car Park

RESOLVED: The fencing at the entrance to the car park be replaced at a cost of £798.

Proposed: Cllr Baxendale, Seconded: Cllr Skinner. All in favour. **CLERK**

11. PLANNING MATTERS

11.1. Enforcement actions – updates on any actions from HDC. To receive notification of any potential enforcement issues.

There are no updates to report

11.2. Houghton Grange phase 2 update

Cllrs Baxendale Boothman and Keane met with Cllr Conboy, leader of HDC, about progress with this application and she has agreed to talk to the Head of the Planning Team. It is hoped this will open positive dialogue.

The Parish Council also need to consider projects for S106 monies from the potential development and talk to HDC about this.

It was agreed to delay any further discussions with our appointed solicitors and barrister to keep costs to a minimum.

11.3. Other Planning Matters, including planning applications received after the agenda was published

An update on the Definitive Map Modification Order that the Council submitted to correct the width of the Thicket footpath was requested. This has been placed with the consultant who is also looking at the DMMO from the British Horse Society to register the footpath as a bridleway. This way they can be considered together for a more coherent solution and it will speed up the processing of our application.

11.4. HDC Development Management Training

This was attending in person by Cllrs Boothman and Skinner and the Clerk attended online. Slides will be circulated to all councillors. It was reported that they been able to tackle a backlog, particularly in tree work applications, and there seems to be a willingness to engage with parishes where needed. They are no longer accepting amendments to submitted applications and are promoting the use of their pre-application process instead. They are also advising withdrawal if an application is likely to be refused. They plan to offer further training sessions.

It was suggested that the new CEO of HDC be invited to a suitable event.

12. PROJECTS

12.1. Clock Tower phase 2

Feedback on the proposed layouts was given to the architect and an amended proposal will be produced for consultation with residents.

12.2. Playing Field Lease

It is hoped that landowners will be happy to sign the lease produced by solicitors based on comments from them.

12.3. 20mph speed limit initiative

The initial plans from CCC have been requested to be able to consult further with residents.

12.4. Playing Field storage shed

The shed has been erected and storage and shelving will be installed. **CLERK**

13. CORRESPONDENCE

There is no correspondence to report.

14. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS, DELEGATED ACTION OR FOR INFORMATION ONLY

It was suggested that the Parish Council could change its name to update and more fully reflect the aspirations of the area. It is hoped that consultation can be arranged to include this with the Clock Tower and 20mph zone.

Cllr Keane agreed to lay a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council at the Remembrance Day service on 12 Nov.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Parish Council meeting will be **Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 7pm in the St Mary's Centre.**

Signature Date.....

APPENDIX

Houghton & Wyton Community Flood Action group

Report to Parish Council – November 2023

What we have done

- The Flood Action Plan has been in place since its approval by the Environment Agency in September 2021.
- That is the key because it lists the six types of flood risk the village faces and tells us broadly how to respond to them.
- Having an approved plan has meant that we have had equipment grants from the Environment Agency and the County Council. We topped that up with some more items paid for by the Parish Council last year.
- We always leave some of our budget unspent until the end of the financial year in case we have a flood event and need to replace any of our consumables, such as flood sacks or PPE.
- Last month the County Council provided a metal shed for us to store the equipment.
- We have written a manual to guide the way we will implement the Flood Action Plan.
- The Group meets by Zoom call every month.
- We promote awareness of flood issues and community resilience at every opportunity.
- We gave a talk and put up a display at a village History Society meeting last autumn.
- Nigel was invited by the District Council to explain the value of Flood Action Groups at a Zoom event for Parish Councils last December.
- In March we arranged a walk around the village watercourses with an officer from the County Council's Community Flood Action Programme Team. This was to identify any problems and points to watch. We plan to repeat it twice a year.
- We had our usual stall at the Feast Week Fete Day, which was again well attended.
- We had a display about the local effects of climate change at the summer Eco Pop-Up event.
- On the same day we arranged a visit to the village by the Floodmobile, which demonstrates products that make homes more resistant or resilient to flooding.
- Two members attended the Cambridgeshire Flood Action Groups conference in September.
- David arranged for the Conservative parliamentary candidate to be made aware of flooding concerns when he visited the village last month.
- We have written an article in every village magazine for the last two years. This has all been part of our strategy of making people aware of the flood risks, giving them the information they need to make decisions about what they want to do and enabling them to take Action.
- We have contacted the Environment Agency's Duty Officer when there have been Flood Alerts throughout the year to get up to date information that we have passed on to the community by email and Facebook.

What we are doing

- We send round the Group and copy to the Parish Clerk a weekly weather and flood risk briefing with information taken from official sources. We do this to be as well informed as possible about imminent flood risks.
- We are learning more about flood risk all the time but we're not experts. We make a point of only using information from official sources.
- We carry out periodic inspections of village watercourses to check their condition, and hopefully spot any problems early. Making sure that the watercourses and flood defences are in good condition has to be the starting point.
- We have three main issues on our radar:
 - First, about two years ago the Environment Agency commissioned a study of Back Brook and its catchment. The work has been carried out by their consultants. It has, as far as we know, not yet been

checked as to its fitness for purpose to enable it to be moved forward. So, we don't know what the report says.

We do know that one of the issues is the pump in Back Brook pumping station which doesn't work and, we understand, can't be repaired. In December 2020, the Environment Agency had to bring in a mobile pump. We understand that any expenditure will be subject to cost benefit analysis and that, as far as the pump is concerned, all options are on the table including not replacing the pump and continuing to rely on mobile pumps.

- Second, we understand that a review of the condition of the village flood banks is planned. We're told that they have had an annual visual check, but they have not had a comprehensive review for about twenty years. The bank top levels need to be checked to make sure they are still at the design height and that have not settled or been compressed at traffic crossing points. The bank sides need to be checked to make sure they have not been compromised, eroded or damaged, for example by trees or animals.
- Third, we are working with Lois to scrutinise the results of Anglian Water's CCTV survey of the village's foul sewers. You will recall there was quite bad sewer flooding during and after the flooding from the river in the winter of 2020/21. This led to a number of houses not being able to flush their toilets, in some cases for several weeks. The foul sewers became inundated, and the pumps were overwhelmed. Possible reasons for this could have included unauthorised connection of surface water pipes into the foul water system or ingress of groundwater into the sewers. We want to understand the future level of risk.

In the event of another Flood Warning, we are ready to set up a control centre, to have a small number of trained Flood Wardens around the village so that we can report to and get information from the Environment Agency and the emergency services. If necessary, we would be able to help man cordons or assist with an evacuation.

What we want to do

- The flood group was formed at the request of the Parish Council after the widespread flooding in December 2020 and early 2021.
- That was a concern for the village for several reasons:
 - The village had its first ever 'Flood Warning', meaning flooding is expected and imminent action is required.
 - The river level at Houghton Lock was the highest ever recorded.
 - The emergency services and flood management authorities were over stretched.
 - In a future river flood event, we are not likely to be the first community affected, nor the worst. We know the emergency services have to prioritise their responses.
 - Global warming is demonstrably causing climate change which is increasing the risk from all types of flooding in terms of frequency, severity and variety.
- We are therefore working to make the village as resilient to flooding as possible.
- We want to bring together all our knowledge into a flood risk handbook for distribution to all residents. We believe the best time to do this will be when the three issues have been resolved, or at least we have fewer uncertainties.
- We are a very small group. We would very much like to have more trained flood wardens.
- We know there is a great community spirit in the village, and we are confident that people will come forward in an emergency so we will be putting plans in place to use those 'spontaneous volunteers' safely and effectively.