

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 2 July 2025, 7:00pm.

Present: Cllr P Boothman - Chair
Cllr Gilmour
Cllr D Keane
Cllr A Skinner
Cllr Baxendale
Cllr R Guinea
Cllr N Rowe
Cllr R Southworth

There were four members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There was an apology from Cllr Jacquetta Rodgers.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

A representative of the Houghton Playgroup addressed the Council with an urgent appeal for financial support to help sustain the group, which is currently facing severe financial difficulties. The playgroup, which operates once a week at the Memorial Hall, is experiencing a drop in attendance and is no longer covering its rental costs. Attendees are charged £3 per session. The Memorial Hall Committee declined a recent request to reduce the rental fee. Concerns were raised that without immediate support, the playgroup may be forced to close, which would be a significant loss to the village and could further discourage young families from settling in the area. Comparisons were made to neighbouring villages such as Wyton-on-the-Hill, where similar groups are thriving due to community and financial support.

The representative requested that the Parish Council consider covering the rental costs for the playgroup for a period of one year (estimated at approximately £1,000) to allow the group time to rebuild attendance and financial stability.

The Council acknowledged the importance of the playgroup and expressed willingness to support the request in principle. Further information was requested to confirm:

- The exact rental rate and hours booked.
- Reasons behind the Memorial Hall Committee's decision not to reduce the rental fee.
- The group was also encouraged to fill in an application for a grant from the Houghton and Wyton Community Fund. A form will be provided. **ACTION:**

Asst. Clerk

Once this information is received, the Council will consider a formal grant or subsidy at the next meeting.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: Following the correction of minor typing errors, the minutes of 4 June were approved as a correct record.

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

5. MATTERS ARISING

- The new football goal mouths have been re-seeded and rolled. The Football Club are watering the areas regularly.
- The Jesse Anderson plaque is due to be refurbished by the end of the week.
- The list of open jobs to be completed by the Transport Office at HDC will be circulated. **ACTION: Cllr Keane**

- Cllr Boothman, the Clerk and Assistant Clerk attended the Annual Town and Parish Forum on 19 June. This was a useful event with Cllr Boothman holding conversations with the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leader of HDC. The focus of the day was on Local Government Reorganisation.
- A meeting will be arranged with the Primary School Headteacher to discuss junior football coaching being held in the school playing field. **ACTION: Asst. Clerk**

6. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORTS

- The recent Planning Committee Meeting discussed waste extraction for schools and visited the new Warboys Recycling Site. There has been an increase in the amount of lorries entering and leaving the Waste Management site in Whittlesey.
- The Handyperson Service provides support such as installing grab rails and other minor home adaptations. Delays in securing Occupational Therapy visits are limiting the effectiveness and accessibility of the service.
- A new adult weight management service has been recommissioned. This is now available via the HDC website.
- **Local Government Reorganisation:** The County Council is the only authority that would be dissolved under any of the proposed reorganisation options. Other councils (e.g. Cambridge City, South Cambs) would remain as building blocks of any new unitary authority. A deep analysis is underway to assess demographic needs and financial implications across regions. Three options are currently being explored. There is no consensus among councils. No group is currently advocating for a single county-wide unitary authority, though it remains a theoretical possibility. The Secretary of State will ultimately decide which option proceeds.

The public are encouraged to fill out the survey by 20 July to give their views.

<https://can-campaigns.co.uk/local-councils-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-are-changing/>

- A 250-year lease has been finalised for the old Shire Hall.
- A transparency report on highways has been submitted to secure funding. A link has been circulated amongst councillors.
- Residents should be aware of legitimate voter registration emails (canvas emails) being sent by the District Council—these are not spam.
- The Great Ouse Valley Trust is endorsing a new protected landscape initiative in collaboration with HDC which aims to preserve the visual and environmental quality of the area.

7. PLANNING MATTERS

7.1. Houghton Grange Phase 1

- Several infrastructure elements promised under the original agreement have not yet been delivered, including noticeboards, heritage boards and a pathway to the Thicket. Residents are currently using an informal route, which may involve trespassing.

Relevant information in planning documents and a suitable location for the noticeboard will be identified, in liaison with Christine Philpotts of the St Ives Civic Society. The PC have agreed to fund or make a contribution to the noticeboard(s). **ACTION: Cllr Rowe**

7.2. Houghton Grange Phase 2

- Following a history of delays and planning revisions, the council has submitted a letter to the CEO of HDC requesting clarification on why the Development Management Committee (DMC) hearing has been delayed. It is expected that the PC will hear by 6th July whether Houghton Grange will be discussed at the July DMC, which is considered very late in the process.
- A conference call is scheduled for 8th July with the solicitor to update arguments and prepare for a potential hearing. The council remains within its legal budget allocation for this matter.
- There is concern that the PC's most recent planning comments may have been misfiled or mixed with submissions for other applications. These comments should be clearly separated and labelled on the system to ensure they are properly considered. **ACTION: Clerk**

7.3 Potential Developments Surrounding the Parish

- There are no updates on the Bellway proposal or RAF Wyton development. There are concerns that road safety will be compromised if further developments go ahead. A car accident recently occurred at the top of Houghton Hill.

7.4. Other planning matters

- A planning issue relating to Holme Cottage has arisen due to a tree protected by a temporary Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Although all other aspects of the proposed development (including proximity to a listed building) were deemed acceptable, the location of the tree and its root protection area (RPA) is now preventing the build from proceeding. The TPO was issued for a six-month period, and once that expires, the application may be resubmitted.

8. REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Traffic and Highway Issues

8.1.1 Local Highways Initiative 2025/26

The Clerk and Cllr Baxendale will attend the meeting on 4 July to discuss the upgrade or relocation of the bus stop at Hartford Marina. The emphasis will be on relocating the infrastructure rather than investing in upgrades to the current setup.

8.1.2. Emergency Vehicle Access – Huntingdon Road

During the Summer School Fair on Saturday 2 June, a Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue vehicle became stuck for approximately 30 minutes outside the Three Jolly Butchers pub. The fire engine was attending as part of the event, not for an emergency. The blockage was caused by legally parked vehicles—not on double yellow lines—but the road was too narrow due to cars parked on both sides. The incident highlights a critical access issue for emergency services, especially during busy periods like school events or weekends.

- Ongoing issues with illegal or inconsiderate parking on Mill Street were also raised. Emails and photographic evidence have been submitted to the enforcement team. Although a police officer was reportedly sent to Mill Street, it was too late in the evening to observe the problem. Concerns were raised about the focus of enforcement being primarily on market towns, with limited coverage in villages—especially during evenings, weekends, and bank holidays.
- A suggestion was made to explore whether the Parish Council could contract a parking officer. Further inquiries will be made. **Action: Cllr Keane**

- The National Trust property is drawing large crowds, especially to the riverside and meadow areas, leading to overflow parking throughout the village and potential for aggressive driver behaviour. Unregulated activities such as wild swimming, paddleboarding, and jumping from bridges are taking place with no lifeguard presence or safety enforcement. National Trust volunteers and staff are not present during peak times to witness or manage the issues. The lack of enforcement from police and other authorities is contributing to a sense of lawlessness and frustration among residents.

Potential actions for further consideration:

- Launch a petition to gather signatures from residents, to be submitted to The National Trust, The Police & Crime Commissioner and relevant Local Authorities.
- Seek legal counsel to clarify responsibilities regarding access rights and public liability.
- Organise a community meeting to present evidence, share concerns, and demand coordinated action. Aim to strike a balance between tourism and liveability for residents.
- Revisit the plan to install a solar-powered digital sign at the village entrance to display real-time messages such as “Car Park Full” or “No River Access”.

ACTION: Cllr Keane

- Schedule a meeting with the National Trust to discuss the above. **ACTION: Clerk**

Other highway issues

- An Asset Data Strategy map has been circulated which shows the Ouse Valley Way as a Priority C route in some sections. It is proposed that the entire Ouse Valley Way should be to Priority B to reflect its importance as a nationally recognised long-distance footpath. It was also proposed that the riverside path be upgraded to Priority C, as it is more commonly used by residents and visitors, including campers. **ACTION: Cllr Boothman**
- Multiple informal paths have been created along the Thicket by users breaking through hedgerows and fences, particularly near Berman Park. It was suggested that physical deterrents (e.g. tree logs or fencing) be considered to prevent further erosion and preserve the countryside feel.

8.2 Playing Field and Sports Clubs

8.2.1 Regular hire of Playing Field and Pavilion - A former professional footballer has begun running regular coaching sessions for children on the village playing field. He is currently paying £5 per hour. He is liaising with the school to potentially move sessions there in the future. He has also enquired about running a holiday football club on the playing field, with use of the Pavilion for snacks, drinks and shade on hot days. The council are keen to support community-led or trial initiatives which may warrant reduced rates, whereas commercial or permanent ventures (e.g. fitness classes) should be charged at a standardised rate.

8.2.2 The hire rates for the Pavilion and Playing Field will be reviewed and a proposal put forward at the next meeting. Public liability insurance, risk assessment and DBS (where appropriate) will also be requested from all regular users. **ACTION: Asst. Clerk**

8.2.3 CCTV over compound and playing field - A site meeting was held with a representative from HDC who is putting together a detailed CCTV proposal. The system would include coverage of the compound via radio link and additional cameras positioned to monitor key areas around the pavilion and playing field. There

is also potential for integration with HDC's central monitoring system. It was suggested that sports clubs may be able to access grant funding to contribute to the initial installation costs. The Parish Council may also consider charging compound users a small annual fee to help cover ongoing maintenance and insurance. Once received, the quote will be reviewed and compared with other quotes obtained.

ACTION: Clerk

8.2.4 Play Area Maintenance - Online Playgrounds recently carried out a free inspection of the play area. The report has not yet been received. They also assessed the lifting rubber surfacing and recommended monitoring the area. It is felt that this should be repaired before damage gets worse.

Quotes will also be sought for the re-setting of loose Trim Trail posts and wooden Treehouse platform. The inspection report will be requested. **ACTION: Asst. Clerk**

8.3 Annual Parish Meeting - the event was generally well received, with positive feedback from attendees and the 11 clubs and organisations that attended. It is suggested that a morning slot or different venue (e.g. the pavilion) might attract a different audience. A more structured theme or objective might improve engagement in future. Thanks were extended to the Assistant Clerk for her efforts in organising the event.

20mph Zone Feedback – there were 17 responses to the survey, with 6 being positive, 8 negative and 3 undecided. A reminder on social media was suggested to keep awareness high. **ACTION: Asst. Clerk**

8.4. Local Government Reorganisation Consultation - The deadline to respond to the survey is 20 July. Cllr Boothman provided an overview of the options under consideration. The survey includes questions on investment priorities, preferred size of local government units patterns of travel and Community identity and service access.

There was general agreement that the Cambridge and South Cambs alignment (Option 3) feels most natural for the area, due to strong transport and communication links and increasing economic, education and cultural ties with Cambridge. It was also recognised that South Cambs is a similar geographical rural community to Huntingdon.

Concerns were raised about the fragmentation of Huntingdonshire if split, the lack of alignment with areas like Peterborough or Fenland and the potential loss of local identity in larger unitary structures.

Cllr Keane reported that the District Councils are building the business case for Option 3 (Cambridge/South Cambs). The County Council is backing Option 1 (a split including North and East Cambs). A third group is supporting the "horseshoe" model, with Cambridge City and South Cambs at the centre and the remaining districts forming a larger outer unit.

RESOLVED: The Parish Council agreed to formally support Option 3 (Cambridge and South Cambs alignment), but also expressed openness to a fourth option. - that of having just one total combined Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unitary authority-provided it is viable and beneficial across the region. A formal response will be submitted before the deadline.

Proposed: Cllr Southworth, Seconded: Cllr Skinner. In favour: 7, Abstentions: 1 (Cllr Keane).

8.5. Meeting with HDC Chief Executive – 6th August

There was consensus that the meeting should be structured as a Meeting of the Parish Councillors, but with a specific agenda focused on key local issues. The

meeting will not be open to the public, to allow for a more focused, productive discussion. Key topics will include:

- Houghton Grange planning and enforcement
- Local plan and housing numbers concerns
- Infrastructure and service pressures
- Community safety and anti-social behaviour

The format of the meeting will be confirmed with the Chief Executive and an agenda circulated. **ACTION: Clerk**

8.6. Fete Day Parish Council Stall

It was decided that due to lack of availability of Councillors the Parish Council would instead have surveys and leaflets available on the Flood Group stall.

8.7. Bus shelter at Manor Close and benches at Manor Close and Houghton Lock

Concerns have been raised by local residents regarding the disused bus stop at the end of Manor Close. Issues include accumulation of rubbish, vandalism and offensive materials being displayed. There is concern that the shelter could potentially encourage anti-social behaviour.

Historical emails suggest the bus stop may have been installed by the District Council around 2010. The Combined Authority now holds responsibility for bus services, but it is unclear if they manage unused stops. Legal ownership will be established before proceeding with removal. If bus services return, a new shelter more in keeping with village aesthetics will be considered. **ACTION: Clerk**

The benches at Manor Close and Houghton Lock will be inspected and quotations for repair or replacement sought. **ACTION: Asst. Clerk**

9. PROJECTS

9.1. St Mary's Centre Improvements – CIL Application

Cllr Baxendale will contact the treasurer of the PCC to discuss the application. The deadline is 15 August. **ACTION: Cllr Baxendale**

9.2. Clock Tower Phase 2 – an update will be sought from the Transport Officer, with the aim of securing the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order by the Autumn.

ACTION: Cllr Keane

9.3. Cemetery Extension – there are no updates to report.

10 CLERK, ASSISTANT CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

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

Payee	Description	Amount (inc vat)
MH Goals Ltd	Sports Equipment	£3,048
J & S Gardening & Handyman Services	Playing Field Maintenance	£40.50
Mark Bird Electrical Services	Pavilion Maintenance	£270
Huntingdonshire District Council	Playing Field Maintenance	£1,068
Neil Craig	Parish Maintenance	£40
Cambs County Council	Highway Improvement Fee	£337.90
Richard Buxton LLP	Legal Fees	£2,458.80
Huntingdonshire District Council	Playing Field Bin	£226.85
Huntingdonshire District Council	Playing Field Bin	£29.58
Red Shoes Accounting Services	Payroll	£261.00
Viking	Consumables	£37.31

RESOLVED: Payments now due are authorised.

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

10.2. To discuss and approve updated Standing Orders

A meeting will be held on Tuesday 15th July to produce the final draft for approval at the meeting in August.

10.3. Monthly Budget Forecast – This will be prepared for presentation at the meeting in August. **ACTION: Clerk**

10.4. Assets of Community Value

The application process for listing the community shop as an Asset of Community Value is underway. An outline of how the community would respond if the shop were put up for sale was suggested, based on advice from similar cases (e.g. Hemingford Grey). This would strengthen the application and demonstrate readiness and community support.

Clerk to follow up with HDC and provide the requested details. **Action: Clerk**

11. CORRESPONDENCE

- Cambs ACRE is holding a Rural Housing event in Fen Drayton on Wednesday, 10 July, from 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Cllr Baxendale and the Assistant Clerk will attend.
- A recent article submitted by the Parish Council for publication in the Parish Magazine was partially omitted. The magazine team has since provided a written explanation outlining their editorial process and rationale. In summary, the magazine does not take responsibility for the factual accuracy of articles; this lies with the named organisation or author. The team maintains a long-standing policy of not publishing party political content, though they agreed the omitted content did not breach that policy. The decision to omit was based on the fact that not all councillors had seen the email prior to submission. Cllr Keane was asked to declare an interest (for being a member of the Conservative Party and being a promoter of the MP about whom the article referenced).

Councillors noted that the email content was discussed at the April meeting, and the minutes reflect that it was endorsed by the Parish Council. The email was circulated to councillors four weeks prior to submission, with no objections raised. The rest of the article, which had not been reviewed by all councillors, was published—highlighting an inconsistency in the editorial decision. It was noted that similar content was published in December without issue. Given the article was in Parishioners interests to read, there was shared disappointment that the opportunity to raise awareness on a timely issue was missed.

12. DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The next Parish Council meeting will be Wednesday 6 August 2025 at 7pm.

Signature Date.....