



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Helsby Parish Council held in the Upper Hall at Helsby Methodist Church at 7.00pm on Monday 11th September 2023

Present:

Cllr. Mike Branigan – Chair

Cllr. Sarah Temple

Cllr. Terry O’Neill

Cllr. Chris Ellams

Cllr. Rob Foreman

Cllr. Rob Nicklin

Cllr. Mark Atkinson

Claire Jones, Parish Clerk

Neil Flanagan, Police Community Support Officer (Item 4 only)

Marj Thoburn representing Helsby News

CW&C Borough Councillor representing Helsby Ward, Chris Copeman

4 members of the public

1. Public Participation. Two members of the public spoke to inform the Council of the work of the Frodsham, Helsby and Elton Memory Café. It was noted that this free café was held at Main Street Community Church in Frodsham every Wednesday between 10.30am and 2.30pm to support people with memory difficulties and their carers. Two other members of the public raised concerns about the parish field in relation to the length of the grass and dog fouling and asked for the goal posts be reinstated. It was agreed that these concerns would be addressed at the next Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee on 30th October.
2. Apologies were noted from Cllrs. Duffy, Marsh and Stothard.
3. Cllr. O’Neill declared non-pecuniary interests in matters relating to the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (Item 13) and Helsby High School (Item 15).
4. Policing Update. Members noted the contents of PCSO Parry’s latest report. It was noted that he had now left his role to take up the role of police constable. PCSO Flanagan outlined that he would be covering Helsby for the time being. Members noted that the police were looking to tackle increasing issues with scrambler bikes locally. PCSO Flanagan agreed to post the dates of his next few surgeries on Facebook.
5. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Helsby Parish Council held on 10th July 2023 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – **HPC140/23**. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Helsby Parish Council held on 7th August 2023 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – **HPC141/23**.
6. Clerks’ report – The following was noted: a Mere’s Edge update meeting would be arranged shortly; a meeting with Ho Ho Helsby had been arranged on 20th September; the basket swing in the play area had been vandalised and would probably need to be removed and

replaced; Cllr. Nicklin agreed to look into video conferencing facilities for the next meeting; and the Clerk would attend the SLCC branch conference on 28th September.

7. Chair's Announcements – It was reported that Cllr. Gardner had resigned from the Council. It was agreed that he would be sent a letter to accept his resignation along with a thank you card and small token of appreciation. The Clerk outlined that CW&C had been informed of the latest councillor vacancy in North Ward.
8. Cheshire West and Chester Council matters – It was noted that CW&C would be tackling some pothole and flooding issues in the village over the next few days. Cllr. Copeman agreed to continue to pursue the Old Chester Road closure at Rake Lane Cottage and the closure of the quarry tunnel. It was also agreed that the Clerk would write to the Highways team in relation to Rake Lane Cottage. It was suggested that Cllr. Copeman could invite the new Chief Executive to visit the village to look at various issues. Cllr. Copeman expressed interest in joining a Helsby climate change working group. Frustration was expressed about further temporary traffic lights on Chester Road.
9. The minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held on 7th August 2023 were noted.
10. Cllr. Temple presented the minutes of the Policy and Procedures Committee meeting held on 4th September 2022. The following was noted/agreed:
 - 10.1 It was noted that the Clerk would circulate Request for Dispensations forms to members in relation to setting the precept over the next 4 years;
 - 10.2 It was **RESOLVED to approve the amended Standing Orders, subject to further amendments to the delegated functions of the PCA and Environment Committees which would be considered at the next Policy and Procedures Committee meeting in November – HPC142/23;**
 - 10.3 It was **RESOLVED to approve the Retention and Disposal Policy – HPC143/23.** The Clerk confirmed that Cheshire Record Office had agreed to continue to archive previous minutes; and
 - 10.4 It was **RESOLVED to approve the Appraisal Policy for Council Staff – HPC144/23.** It was agreed that a new training and development policy/statement would be considered at the next Policy and Procedures meeting.
11. Miscellaneous Matters
 - 11.1 It was noted that the May 2023 Elections Recharge Fee would be £591.00.
 - 11.2 Members felt it was an appropriate time to consider a new council communication strategy. Cllr. Nicklin agreed to chair a working group to look at options, supported by Cllrs. Branigan, O'Neill, Ellams and Foreman. The editor of Helsby News also agreed to attend.
 - 11.3 It was **RESOLVED to approve Cllr. Branigan's attendance at an online training course 'A short briefing on Planning for Councillors' on 3rd October at a cost of £30 - HPC145/23.**
 - 11.4 Members agreed for the Clerk to arrange a defibrillator awareness session with the Community Heartbeat Trust.

- 11.5 It was **RESOLVED to submit ‘no objections’ to CW&C in relation to the proposed removal of a BT telephone box at the junction of Britannia Road and Chester Road - HPC146/23.**
- 11.6 It was noted that Nicola Brown of Helsby Methodist Church had requested to amend an inaccurate statement in the 2023 Chair’s Address which suggested that she had introduced a Warm Spaces initiative at the church. Members noted that the whole volunteer team should have been acknowledged in the statement.
- 11.7 It was **RESOLVED to give retrospective approval for the Clerk’s attendance at a play area inspection training course held in Huntington on 30th August at a cost of £55 - HPC147/23.**
- 11.8 Cllr. Temple outlined the possibility of developing an information board showing what local facilities were within a 10-minute walking and cycling range of Helsby station. It was noted that the council might need to offer some funding and councillor support if this was taken forward. It was **RESOLVED that Cllrs. Nicklin and Copeman would work with Cllr. Temple in seeking further details on the information board from the North Cheshire Community Rail Partnership to bring back to a future meeting for consideration - HPC148/23.**
- 11.9 It was **RESOLVED to offer the work to company C for repairs to the cemetery garage and renewal of its roof at a cost of £1,920 inclusive of VAT - HPC149/23.**
- 11.10 It was **RESOLVED to approve the Clerk’s draft workplan as discussed at her informal review held on 4th September - HPC150/23.** Cllr. Branigan noted that he had asked the Clerk to set out her weekly working hours over the next 4 weeks to evaluate whether her hours commonly exceed that of her 33-hour contract to determine if this should be adjusted to 35 hours per week. It was also noted that some additional hours may be required for the Clerk to sort and clear all the historical files in the office.
- 11.11 It was **RESOLVED to approve renewal of the Council’s allotment insurance with Chris Knott Insurance at a cost of £134.98 - HPC151/23.**
- 11.12 It was **RESOLVED to approve a payment of £85.50 (£102.60 incl VAT) for the supply of Council ID badges - HPC152/23.**
- 11.13 It was noted that Cllr. O’Neill would be attending an online engagement session on CW&C’s new strategic plan for the borough from 2024-2028 being held on 27th September. It was agreed that members of the Finance Committee would convene 15 minutes early at their meeting on 25th September to prepare any comments.
12. Councillor surgery update – It was noted that a surgery had not been held in August. Cllrs. Nicklin and Foreman agreed to hold a surgery on 16th September at the Old Tearooms. It was agreed that the future of council surgeries would be discussed by the working group looking at parish council communication.
13. Outside Body Reports – Cllr. Ellams noted that Liverpool Airport had been voted the best airport in the country by Which and the one-hourly rail service to Liverpool would be reintroduced in December. Cllr. Temple outlined that the next Protos Community Benefit Fund meeting would be held on 12th September. Cllr. O’Neill stated that ChALC’s AGM would be held at Helsby Community Sports Club on 12th October and there would be a presentation by the Sandstone Ridge Trust on the proposed Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Cllr. Branigan expressed frustration that CW&C continually failed to address issues raised by the parish council in relation to Helsby Community Centre (e.g. meter readings, maintenance).

Cllr. Copeman agreed to request a meeting with an appropriate officer dealing with CW&C properties or QWEST.

It was **RESOLVED** to continue the meeting beyond a period of two hours in order to complete the remaining items on the agenda - **HPC153/23**.

14. Burial grant approvals - It was **RESOLVED** to grant applications for the Exclusive Rights of Burial for a term of 75 years for plot C15 received from Mrs Turner of Helsby and plot C14 from Mrs Crompton of Helsby in Helsby Public Cemetery, Old Chester Road – **HPC154/23**.

15. Planning

15.1 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the responses as below in relation to the following planning applications:

23/02596/FUL 19 Sandringham Avenue Helsby
First floor rear extension, alteration to rear first floor window to french doors with glazed balustrade
No objections (but comments in relation to seeking any permissions for access from relevant landowners) – HPC155/23.

23/02757/TPO Oaklands Alvanley Road Helsby
Sycamore (T1) - Fell - tree in decline
No objections – HPC156/23.

23/02658/FUL Helsby High School Chester Road
Erection of single storey classroom extensions
No objections – HPC157/23.

15.2 Planning notifications – The Clerk presented for information a report of the current status of all applications made since 2022.

15.3 NALC’s Briefing: ‘DLUHC Consultation on Local Plans’ was noted.

15.4 Member reports – no matters were raised.

16. Financial Matters

16.1 It was **RESOLVED** that the bank reconciliation sheet detailing **£336,401.82** held in balances as at **31st July 2023** be accepted as accurate – **HPC158/23**.

It was **RESOLVED** that the bank reconciliation sheet detailing **£333,404.74** held in balances as at **31st August 2023** be accepted as accurate – **HPC159/23**.

16.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the following payments totalling **£9,116.45** paid by either standing order, direct debit, bank transfer, cheque or under delegated authority for July be approved and duly noted – **HPC160/23**. The following receipts totalling **£6,950.40** were also noted:

Payments

BT line rental	British Telecommunications	£83.06
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Claire Jones	Expenses	£71.38
Helsby Garden Services	General maintenance	£1,866.38
HPC staff	Salaries July 2023	£1,624.62
HMRC	Tax and NI deductions	£765.08
NEST	Pension contribution	£611.12
Pro Print Solutions	Printing costs	£12.00
Npower	Bridge lighting	£168.22
Terry O'Neill	Mileage	£12.60
NMC Design and Print	Chair's insert	£487.00
NMC Design and Print	Helsby News printing	£765.00
Countrywide	Grass cutting	£503.83
Information Commissioner	Registration fee	£35.00
Water Plus	Water - community centre	£35.96
Scottish Power	Electricity - community centre	£298.00
Countrywide	Tree work	£1,669.20
Grenke Leasing	Photocopier lease	£108.00

Receipts

RSK	Rent for Eccies	£4,329.72
Helsby Community Association	Electricity/water reclaim	£2,435.71
Blackwell's Stonecraft	Memorial stone fees	£100.00
Natwest	Interest July 23	£84.97

It was **RESOLVED** that the following payments totalling **£6,007.12** paid by either **standing order, direct debit, bank transfer, cheque or under delegated authority for August be approved and duly noted – HPC161/23**. The following receipts totalling **£3,010.04** were also noted:

Payments

BT line rental	British Telecommunications	£83.06
Claire Jones	Expenses	£56.95
Helsby Garden Services	General maintenance	£1,471.69
HPC staff	Salaries August 2023	£1,624.62
HMRC	Tax and NI deductions	£765.08
Countrywide	Grass cutting	£503.83
Frodsham Tree Solutions	Tree removal	£576.00
DM Payroll Services	Payroll support	£120.00
Water Plus	Allotment water fees	£111.93
Cheshire Boiler & Electrical Services	Guide Hut boiler repairs	£360.00
Water Plus	Water - community centre	£35.96
Scottish Power	Electricity - community centre	£298.00

Receipts

J C Clarke Funeral Directors	Burial fees	£180.00
J C Clarke Funeral Directors	Burial fees	£960.00
J C Clarke Funeral Directors	Burial fees	£960.00
J C Clarke Funeral Directors	Burial fees	£550.00
Buckley Memorials	Memorial stone fees	£100.00

Blackwell's Stonecraft	Memorial stone fees	£170.00
Natwest	Interest August 23	£90.04

16.3 It was noted that the external audit report 31st March 2023 (Annual Governance & Accountability Return) had been returned with the same comments that had been highlighted by the internal auditor. The Clerk outlined various corrections had been made to the asset register and the figures in Box 9 had been adjusted accordingly. It was also noted that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been published on the Council's website and noticeboard along with the certified AGAR (Sections 1, 2 & 3) on 8th September.

16.4 It was **RESOLVED to approve a payment of £504 for the completion of the external audit by PKF Littlejohn Ltd – HPC162/23.**

17. The outstanding actions log was noted.

18. The dates of the next Council meetings were noted as follows:

25 th September	Finance Committee
26 th September	Environment Committee
9 th October	Parish Council meeting

The meeting closed at 9.25pm

Chair's signature..... Dated.....