



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 15th April 2024

Present:

Cllr. Mike Branigan – Chair
Cllr. Chris Ellams

Cllr. Terry O’Neill
Cllr. Rob Nicklin

Cllr. Margaret Marsh
Cllr. Sarah Temple

Claire Jones, Parish Clerk

Cllr. Rob Foreman (virtual attendance – no voting rights)

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

Nicola Brown representing Helsby Methodist Church

CW&C Borough Councillor representing Helsby Ward, Chris Copeman

1. Public Participation – Nicola Brown gave members an update on the latest activity at Helsby Methodist Church.
2. Apologies were noted from Cllrs. Stothard and Atkinson.
3. Cllr. O’Neill declared non-pecuniary interests in matters relating to the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (Items 10.3 and 12).
4. Policing Update. Members noted the contents of PCSO Flanagan’s latest report. It was noted that ward walks had been held on 3rd April (Central), 13th April (North) and 15th April (South). PCSO Flanagan and Cllr. Copeman agreed to attend occasional parish councillor surgeries.
5. It was **RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Helsby Parish Council held on 11th March 2024 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – HPC41/24.**
6. Clerk’s Report – The following was noted:
 - Item 6 – the council’s solicitor had now been paid the fee requested by CW&C’s Legal Department in relation to work at Sherwood Court;
 - Item 10.6 – several councillors had attended Cloudy IT’s training session on 21st March. The Clerk agreed to arrange another session if any remaining councillors wished to attend;
 - Item 13 – the Clerk had circulated information about NALC’s Local Council Award Scheme. It was agreed that a report would be circulated at the next meeting for further consideration, including an estimate of the Clerk’s hours required; and
 - Various upcoming meeting dates were outlined.
7. Chair’s Announcements – Council members remembered a previous parish councillor, Pat Holder, who had died recently. The details of her funeral were noted.

8. Cheshire West and Chester Council matters – Cllr. Copeman outlined the following:
- he had written to CW&C’s Head of Planning on two matters: applying higher levels of building standards in the Local Plan; and to object to a proposal by Protos to remove their obligation to create a rail link at their waste recovery park;
 - he was investigating local levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), including the potential contamination of Foxhill Brook in Alvanley from the Commons side tip;
 - he continued to report locations where potholes had been identified;
 - he offered to carry out thermal imaging surveys for residents and to investigate whether the local community would be interested in an update to the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan in relation to higher energy efficiency standards for new homes;
 - he continued to seek progress reports on Rake Lane Cottage and reported that a scheme of works had been produced; and
 - CW&C had admitted responsibility for the closed quarry tunnel and would seek quotes to carry out the works dependent on resources.

He also agreed to investigate a planning enforcement notice at a property on Kings Drive.

9. Cllr. O’Neill presented the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 8th April 2024. The following was noted/agreed:

- 9.1 It was **RESOLVED to approve the ‘Reserves Balance’ table denoting a balance of £171,315.08 as at 31st March 2024 and to allocate £5,000 from general reserves to earmarked resources for the construction phase of the cemetery extension area design project – HPC42/24;**
- 9.2 It was **RESOLVED to accept the Bank Reconciliation, Budget Report and Financial Report for the Year Ending 31st March 2024 – HPC43/24;**
- 9.3 It was **RESOLVED to accept the existing Financial Regulations with no amendments – HPC44/24;**
- 9.4 It was **RESOLVED to accept the Asset Register detailing £221,826 being the total value of assets held as at 31st March 2024 – HPC45/24;**
- 9.5 It was **RESOLVED to accept the Council’s current insurance schedule (pending a review of the replacement costs of the council’s assets and the removal/addition of several assets in the ‘Additional Items’ section) – HPC46/24;**
- 9.6 It was **RESOLVED to accept the proposed amendments to the General Risk Assessment – HPC47/24;**
- 9.7 The S106 funds available to the council for Helsby projects were noted as well as any expiry dates.
- 9.8 The annual renewal of the insurance policy for Helsby Community Centre with Community First at a cost of £540.25 was noted.
- 9.9 It was **RESOLVED to accept the Council’s investment programmes – HPC48/24;**
- 9.10 The dates for the internal and external auditing of the Council’s 2023/24 accounts were noted. It was **RESOLVED to accept the appointment of JDH Business Services to carry out the council’s internal audit for submission by Friday 19th April – HPC49/24.** It was also noted that the council had been selected for an intermediate review by PKF Littlejohn for the 2023/24 reporting year; and
- 9.11 It was **RESOLVED to continue paying regular payments by Direct Debit as an efficient and acceptable method of payment – HPC50/24.**

10. Miscellaneous Matters

- 10.1 It was **RESOLVED to approve the meeting date schedule for 2024/25 – HPC51/24.**
- 10.2 A payment to the council of £182.78 from Helsby News representatives was noted and it was **RESOLVED to allocate these funds into ‘earmarked reserves’ for any Helsby News website costs following the closure of their own bank account – HPC52/24.**
- 10.3 It was **RESOLVED to renew the Council’s membership with ChALC for 2024/25 at a cost of £1,551.66 – HPC53/24.**
- 10.4 It was **RESOLVED to renew the Council’s annual membership with the Mid-Cheshire Footpath Society at a cost of £8 – HPC54/24.**
- 10.5 It was **RESOLVED to renew the Council’s annual membership with the Wirral Transport Users Association at a cost of £10 – HPC55/24.**

11. Councillor surgery update. It was noted that the April surgery had been cancelled. It was suggested that the best way to hold surgeries in the future would be to always hold them in the same place and at the same time. Cllr. Nicklin agreed to progress an order for a pull up banner to advertise sessions, to revisit the schedule and to arrange the May surgery at Tesco.

12. Outside Body Reports – Cllr. O’Neill summarised discussions from the last Climate Change Working Group. He also outlined that ChALC had set up a Cheshire-wide Net Zero Working Group and were currently developing terms of reference for the group. It was suggested that individual local councils would need to take forward any proposed actions as ChALC did not have the resources to do this. Cllr. Temple agreed to circulate the latest minutes from the Cycle North Cheshire meeting.

13. Planning

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

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 24/00592/LDC | 12 Foxhill Grove Helsby
Lawful development certificate for existing use of replacement of rear flat roofs to pitched with skylights, new side window and replacement rear sun room
No objections – HPC56/24. |
| 24/00637/FUL | 23 Hornsmill Way Helsby
Amendments and alterations to existing conservatory
No objections – HPC57/24. |
| 24/00828/TPO | Land At Mill Rise Helsby
Removal of leaning Pine
No objections – HPC58/24. |
| 24/00761/PDG | 209 – 211 Chester Road Helsby
Change of use of part of the ground floor from commercial to mixed use to include residential |

Does not object to or support the application but has the following comments: it is difficult to comment without further clarity on the commercial element of the premises – HPC59/24.

24/00607/FUL

54 Bates Lane Helsby

Demolition of existing conservatory, erection of single storey rear extension

No objections – HPC60/24.

13.2 Planning notifications – the latest planning notification report was noted.

13.3 Member reports – no matters were raised.

14. Financial Matters

14.1 It was **RESOLVED** that the bank reconciliation sheet detailing £249,192.31 held in balances as at 31st March 2024 be accepted as accurate – **HPC61/24.**

14.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the following payments totalling £35,451.07 paid by either standing order, direct debit, bank transfer, cheque or under delegated authority for March be approved and duly noted – **HPC62/24.** The following receipts totalling £6,171.27 were also noted:

Payments

Claire Jones	Expenses	£42.09
ChALC	GDPR training course	£90.00
Helsby Methodist Church	Room hire	£60.00
BT	Phone and broadband	£83.06
Helsby Garden Services	General maintenance	£1,265.88
HPC staff	Salaries Mar 2024	£1,765.45
HMRC	Tax and NI deductions	£796.59
Pro Print Solutions	Photocopier charges	£12.00
Scottish Power	Electricity – community centre	£257.00
Northwich Town Council	Play inspections	£90.00
NEST	Pension contribution	£625.57
Helsby Community Sports Club	Grant show award	£1,000.00
Horn's Mill Primary School	Grant show award	£1,000.00
Hillside Primary School	Grant show award	£1,000.00
Helsby Concert Band	Grant show award	£1,000.00
Helsby Players	Grant show award	£1,000.00
Spirit of the Horse Sanctuary	Grant show award	£1,000.00
Ho Ho Helsby	Grant show award	£1,000.00
St Paul's Parish Church	Grant show award	£1,000.00
Helsby Methodist Church	Grant show award	£1,000.00
KDE Ltd	PAT testing in office	£96.00
FM Landscaping	Sherwood Court work	£12,794.00
M Thoburn	Planter stickers	£78.00
Frodsham Tree Solutions	Tree reduction work	£480.00
Cloudy IT	E-mail migration	£102.00

Frodsham Tree Solutions	Tree surveys	£576.00
HAGS-SMP LTD	Rocker spring	£241.20
Amberol Limited	10 x planters	£5,235.84
Community First Trading	HCC Insurance	£540.25
Water Plus	Allotment water	£19.60
Shaw and Sons Ltd	Interment fees receipt book	£27.54
DTM Legal	Sherwood Cout legal fees	£813.00
Cheshire Surveys	Cemetery landscaping work	£360.00

Receipts

Natwest	Interest Mar 24	£41.94
Monmouthshire BS	Interest 2023/24	£1,078.92
Burial fees	J C Clarke	£960.00
Burial fees	Jacqueline Wilson FD	£480.00
Burial fees	Co-Operative Funeralcare	£1,850.00
EROB fees	S Gomm	£70.00
Memorial stone fees	Blackwell's Stonecraft	£100.00
Memorial stone fees	Blackwell's Stonecraft	£70.00
Memorial stone fees	Buckley Memorials	£70.00
Helsby Community Association	Electricity reclaim fees	£1,450.41

14.3 It was noted that a precept payment for 2024/25 of £109,040 had been paid into the council's current account by CW&C. It was **RESOLVED to approve a bank transfer of £80,000 from the Natwest Current Account to the Natwest Business Reserve Account to benefit from higher levels of interest rates – HPC63/24.**

15. The outstanding actions log was noted.

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

22 nd April 2024	Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting
25 th April 2024	Annual Parish Meeting (Electorate)
13 th May 2024	Parish Council Annual Meeting

Confidential Matters - Exclusion of the Press and Public and the Parish Clerk

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, it was **RESOLVED that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and the press as well as the Clerk leave the meeting during consideration of the following: To review and recommend any changes to the Clerk's salary and hours of work – HPC64/24.**

17. It was **RESOLVED to award the Clerk an additional increment on top of her automatic annual increase (i.e. to progress from SCP29 to SCP31) due to exceptional performance in 2023/24 effective from 1st April 2024 – HPC65/24.** It was also **RESOLVED to increase the Clerk's working hours from 33 hours to 37 hours per week (a move to full-time employment) effective from 1st April 2024 – HPC66/24.** It was agreed that her contract would need to be amended to reflect these changes.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

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