



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 January 2024

Present:

Cllr. Chris Ellams – Chair
Cllr. Rob Nicklin

Cllr. Sarah Temple
Cllr. Graham Stothard

Cllr. Terry O'Neill

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

1. Public Participation - No matters were raised.
2. Apologies were noted from Cllrs. Branigan and Marsh.
3. Cllr. O'Neill declared non-pecuniary interests in matters relating to the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (Item 14).
4. Policing Update. Members noted the contents of PCSO Flanagan's latest report. It was outlined that Community Speed Watch Group training sessions were being offered in February. Those interested in attending were asked to contact PCSO Flanagan at neil.flanagan@cheshire.police.uk. Residents were also encouraged to send comments about policing in general through the Resident's Voice survey on the Cheshire Constabulary website.
5. It was **RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Helsby Parish Council held on 11th December 2023 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – HPC01/24.**
6. Clerk's report – The following was noted:
 - Item 7 – Peter Duffy's family had sent thanks to the council for their donation to Cancer Research in memory of Peter;
 - Item 9.7 – Clerk to chase SLCC in relation to the latest guidance on gender identity;
 - Item 10.1 – Cllr. O'Neill had circulated a report in relation to the short door-to-door survey he had carried out on Helsby News;
 - Item 10.10 – quotes had now been received in relation to the average speed cameras;
 - Clerk and Cllr. Nicklin to advertise the new councillor surgery rota;
 - Correspondence had been received about the poor state of the exterior of Thrifty's. Clerk to contact the property owners about the concerns;
 - Cllr. Temple to respond to a resident's complaint about potholes on Bates Lane;

- Meetings with Frodsham Town Council had been arranged on 31st January and 7th February;
- Councillors would be offered a virtual training course on the new IT and e-mail systems from mid-February;
- CW&C would be hosting a Town and Parish Council conference on 6th March from 5.15pm; and
- NALC had issued a new Model Contract of Employment which would be considered in due course.

7. Chair's Announcements – No matters were raised.
8. Cheshire West and Chester Council matters – Cllr. Copeman outlined that he had expressed concern with CW&C's Planning Committee about the potential carbon emissions of the blue hydrogen plant in Stanlow which had recently been given planning permission. He recommended the 2022 Upton Neighbourhood Plan which required any development proposals to be zero carbon ('Passivhaus' standards). It was noted that his motion in relation to banning single use plastic by the authority had been passed. He also outlined that he would continue to liaise with various representatives about the continued closures of Rake Lane and Helsby Quarry tunnel.
9. The minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 13th December 2023 were noted. The Clerk agreed to arrange a date for the next Climate Change Working Group.
10. The minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held on 13th December 2023 were noted.
11. Cllr. O'Neill presented the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 8th January 2024. The following was noted/agreed:
- 11.1 It was **RESOLVED to approve the proposed Environment and PCA Committee budgets for 2024/25 totalling £76,237 – HPC02/24;**
- 11.2 It was **RESOLVED to approve the proposed Finance Committee budget for 2024/25 totalling £74,883 – HPC03/24;**
- 11.3 It was **RESOLVED to approve the 'Grants and Earmarked Reserves for Identified Projects' table to include a new £20,000 fund for a park masterplan project and an additional £45,000 for average speed cameras – HPC04/24;**
- 11.4 It was stated that the Committee were recommending an increase in the precept amount for 2024/25 given cost of living increases, amounting to an annual cost of £52 for a Band D property, from £49.32 last year. On this basis, it was **RESOLVED to approve a receipts budget totalling £147,255 for 2024/25 and an overall expenditure budget totalling £151,120 and to issue a precept request to Cheshire West and Chester Council for £109,040 based on the above budget calculations for 2024-25 along with the 'Budget Report: Justification of Precept Request 2024/25' – HPC05/24;**
- 11.5 Members noted a report on the clerk's incorrect pension deductions since 2020/21 and details in relation to the repayment of tax to HMRC. It was **RESOLVED to approve that the Council rather than the Clerk covered the interest for late payments to HMRC totalling £47.35 – HPC06/24;**

- 11.6 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the adjustments to the 2021, 2022 and 2023 asset registers showing a deduction in any incorrect VAT (amended total amounts of £196,646.59, £196,052.09 and £222,942.64 respectively) – **HPC07/24**; and
- 11.7 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following new policies: Credit Management, Reserves and Anti-Fraud and Corruption – **HPC08/24**. It was also **RESOLVED** to approve the Community Grant Policy with the following amendments: Section 2.3 remove ‘Due to Local Government funding rules’ and add ‘Individuals or appeals supporting an individual’ as an additional bullet point – **HPC09/24**.

12. Miscellaneous Matters

- 12.1 It was **RESOLVED** to approve payment of the following fees as set by CW&C in relation to the maintenance work at Sherwood Court - a standard legal fee for a licence for alteration at a cost of £358 and a surveyor’s fee at a cost of £455 (total fee £813) – **HPC10/24**. It was agreed that this approval was subject to a parish councillor being present when CW&C’s surveyor was on site to carry out an inspection on completion of the works. It was also **RESOLVED** to move £813 into specified reserves from general reserves to pay for these Sherwood Court fees – **HPC11/24**.
 - 12.2 Arrangements for the 2024 Helsby Grant Show to be held at Helsby Community Sports Club on 27th February between 6.30pm and 8.30pm were noted. It was noted that the Clerk would shortly circulate the application form to local groups and organisations. The Clerk agreed to request a grant monitoring form from all the successful groups from last year’s event. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk would notify any groups who were successful at the 2023 Grant Show that they would not be eligible to receive another grant this year if they could not provide evidence that the previous grant had been spent – **HPC12/24**.
 - 12.3 It was **RESOLVED** to give retrospective approval for a charitable donation of £200 to Cancer Research UK in memory of Cllr. Peter Duffy (payment made under Standing Order 16(b) Delegation to the Responsible Financial Officer) – **HPC13/24**.
 - 12.4 It was **RESOLVED** to purchase a docking station and wireless keyboard and mouse for use of the Council’s laptop in the parish office at a cost of £246.99 – **HPC14/24**.
13. Councillor surgery update. Cllrs. Ellams outlined that one resident had attended the surgery held on 13th January and had raised concerns about the continued closure of Rake Lane. It was noted that the resident had carried out extensive legal research into the issue and had made a point that CW&C had a legal obligation to re-open the road. The Clerk agreed to forward the report and photographs to all members for information as well as to Cllr. Copeman to explore further with relevant officers. It was also agreed to formally write to CW&C’s Chief Executive about the matter.
14. Outside Body Reports - Cllr. Temple noted that a Protos Community Benefit Fund meeting had been held on 12th December (no applications had been received from any Helsby organisations). She also outlined that she had attended a meeting of Cycle North Cheshire on 9th January. It was noted that the Helsby cycleway feasibility study had been broken into small sections which Sustrans would explore individually with CW&C. Cllr. O’Neill gave an update from the latest ChALC Board meeting and outlined that he had been re-elected as Chair.

15. Planning

- 15.1 Planning applications – no outstanding applications were presented for discussion.
- 15.2 Planning notifications – The latest planning notification report was noted. The Clerk outlined that planning officers had requested an extension in relation to the Council’s own application (23/02224/FUL) until 4th March.
- 15.3 Member reports – it was noted that Cllrs. Nicklin and Temple had met with representatives from consultancy, Planit-IE, to discuss the parks masterplan/vision. It was agreed that more detailed feedback would be given at the next PCA Committee meeting.

16. Financial Matters

- 16.1 It was **RESOLVED** that the bank reconciliation sheet detailing **£298,272.50 held in balances as at 31st December 2023 be accepted as accurate – HPC15/24.**
- 16.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the following payments totalling **£7,672.29 paid by either standing order, direct debit, bank transfer, cheque or under delegated authority for December be approved and duly noted – HPC16/24.** The following receipts totalling £1,024.06 were also noted:

Payments

Claire Jones	Expenses	£17.70
BT	Phone and broadband	£83.06
Helsby Garden Services	General maintenance	£1,270.73
HPC staff	Salaries Dec 2023	£1,722.72
HMRC	Tax and NI deductions	£831.34
Pro Print Solutions	Photocopier charges	£12.49
Northwich Town Council	Play inspections	£90.00
NEST	Pension contribution	£625.57
Water Plus	Water - community centre	£35.96
Scottish Power	Electricity - community centre	£257.00
Cancer Research UK	Donation in memory of P. Duffy	£200.00
Mega Electrical	Christmas Tree	£1,888.80
Carswell Creative	Helsby News Design	£240.00
Terry O’Neill	Expenses	£20.70
Water Plus	Allotment water	£11.22
Dave Weaver	Bedding plants	£365.00

Receipts

HCA	Community Centre reclaim	£908.00
Various	Allotment fees	£28.50
Natwest	Interest Dec 23	£87.56

- 16.3 It was **RESOLVED** to purchase a Year End Health Check with Scribe at a cost of **£49 – HPC17/24.**

17. The outstanding actions log was noted. The Clerk outlined that she would organise a date for her annual appraisal shortly.

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

29 th January	Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee
12 th February	Full Council meeting

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

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