



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Helsby Parish Council held in the parish office at Helsby Community Sports Club at 7.00pm on Monday 9th September 2024

Present:

Cllr. Chris Ellams – Chair

Cllr. Terry O’Neill

Cllr. Mike Branigan

Cllr. Rob Foreman

Cllr. Sarah Temple

Cllr. Emma Foster

Cllr. Graham Stothard

Claire Jones, Parish Clerk

Marj Thoburn representing Helsby News

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

CW&C Borough Councillor representing Helsby Ward, Chris Copeman

1 member of the public

1. Public Participation – it was announced that a new editor had been found for Helsby News. A member of the public raised concern about the poor upkeep of the village and outlined that he would be campaigning to the borough council to act to clear weeds and overgrown vegetation. Correspondence from Nicola Brown of Helsby Methodist Church raising concerns over rising housing rental costs in Helsby was noted. Details about a forthcoming energy saving workshop at the methodist church were also shared.
2. Apologies were noted from Cllr. Nicklin.
3. Cllr. Temple declared an interest in Item 9.1 as her partner held two allotments.
4. Policing Update - Members noted the contents of PCSO Flanagan’s latest report.
5. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Helsby Parish Council held on 8th July 2024 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – **HPC124/24**.
6. Clerk’s Report – The following was noted:
 - Item 6 – the South Ward noticeboard and the basket swing work had now been completed, however the grass cutting regime on the parish field had become unreliable again;
 - Item 14.2 – correspondence had been sent to CW&C about planning enforcement notices and an update had been provided on the Junoon extension;
 - On safety grounds, it was **RESOLVED to complete some urgent tree work on the parish field at a cost of £760 – HPC125/24**. Frodsham Tree Solutions would complete the work as part of their current tree contract with the council; and
 - The Clerk agreed to look at using Sharepoint to share future meeting papers.

7. Chair's Announcements – the Chair thanked the current editor of Helsby News for finding a new editor to take over following her retirement. It was outlined that Margaret Marsh had resigned from the council and it was noted that she had received a small gift of appreciation in recognition of her service. Members were sought for a team for the annual quiz night at Helsby Community Centre on 1st November.
8. Cheshire West and Chester Council matters – Cllr. Copeman outlined that works to re-open Helsby Quarry tunnel were unlikely to proceed given significant potential costs raised in the initial inspection report. He agreed to bring further details to the next meeting. It was suggested that the parish council should write to the local MP to raise concerns if CW&C resolved to close the tunnel permanently. It was outlined that council officers had met with the landowner in relation to Rake Lane Cottage but no work was yet underway. It was noted that the Helsby Footpath Society had restarted with a view to using CW&C's highways volunteer scheme to clear some local footpaths. Cllr. Foster agreed to speak to a representative from the Community Payback scheme in relation to cutting some overgrown hedges in the village. It was noted that Cllr. Copeman was a member of a CW&C task and finish group to explore the Commonside Tip/PCB issue and a public hearing was expected to take place in October.
9. Cllr. Nicklin presented the minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held on 15th July 2024. The following was noted/agreed:
 - 9.1 It was **RESOLVED to increase allotment rents for a small plot to £30 per year and a large plot to £45 per year from 1st October 2024 – HPC126/24.**

10. Miscellaneous Matters

- 10.1 It was noted that the deadline for an election for the vacancy in South Ward had passed and the council was now able to co-opt for this vacancy.
- 10.2 It was noted that a meeting had been held with the Guide Association on 5th August about the future of the guide hut. Members considered quotes to carry out a survey of the building. It was **RESOLVED for the parish council to cover the full cost of the guide hut building survey and to accept the cheapest quote of £600 – HPC127/24.** It was outlined that the Clerk had prepared a short article for the next edition of Helsby News seeking potential new tenants for the building. It was agreed to meet with the guides again once the survey results were available.
- 10.3 It was noted that Fields in Trust had given retrospective consent for the lease of the scout hut on the parish field. It was **RESOLVED to pay a fee of £400 to Fields in Trust to conclude the matter with the scout hut lease – HPC128/24.** The Clerk agreed to send the certificate from Fields in Trust to the scouts to enable them to register their lease with the Land Registry.
- 10.4 The Clerk outlined that she had met with Ho Ho Helsby on 31st July to discuss plans for Christmas 2024. It was noted that the Ho Ho event would be held on 7th December. It was **RESOLVED approve the following expenditure on Christmas illuminations: 16 x lit spheres from LITE at a cost of £3,223 plus £125 delivery and 5 x pole motifs from Blachere Illumination at a cost of £2,892 plus £190 delivery costs – HPC129/24.**
- 10.5 The results of the accessibility audit of the council's website were considered and it was acknowledged that the website would not meet the accessibility standards that were being introduced from October. Various quotes to create a new fully accessible website

were considered. It was **RESOLVED to appoint Aubergine 262 to create a new WCAG 2.1AA compliant parish council website at a cost of £699 and to authorise them to apply for a £100 grant through Parish Council Domains Helper Service – HPC130/24. It was also RESOLVED to take out an annual subscription with Aubergine 262 from 2025/26 for the council’s webhosting and domain name service at a cost of £399 – HPC131/24.**

10.6 A request from Helsby Community Association for various improvements to Helsby Community Centre was noted. The Clerk outlined that she had contacted CW&C for advice. It was agreed to wait for CW&C to respond before taking any further action.

10.7 It was noted that the Communications Working Group had not met recently to discuss Helsby News, but members were pleased to hear that a new editor had been found. Cllr. Temple asked for volunteers to help with the distribution of future copies of the newsletter. Cllr. Nicklin agreed to arrange the next working group meeting. The clerk suggested that quotes should be sought for the future printing of Helsby News to ensure that the council was still receiving best value for money from the current suppliers.

10.8 It was **RESOLVED to take up Climate Action Frodsham’s offer to host a Warmer Homes Seminar in Helsby – HPC132/24.** The Clerk agreed to make the necessary arrangements and to liaise with Nicola Brown at the methodist church.

10.9 It was **RESOLVED to approve the Clerk’s attendance at the SLCC’s Cheshire Branch annual conference on 26th September at a cost of £35 – HPC133/24.**

10.10 It was **RESOLVED to approve the Clerk’s draft workplan as discussed at her mid-year review held on 29th August subject to revising the hours in the ‘Ongoing Council Business’ section to account for role now being full-time – HPC134/24.**

10.11 It was **RESOLVED to renew the Council’s allotment insurance with Chris Knott Insurance at a cost of £120.01 – HPC135/24.**

10.12 It was **RESOLVED to renew the Council’s annual membership with the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society at a cost of £22.50 – HPC136/24.**

10.13 Members reviewed the terms and conditions forming the contract to provide the council’s payroll services with DM Payroll Services from 1st April 2025. It was **RESOLVED to continue with the payroll services contract with D M Payroll (at a cost of £204 in 2025/26) – HPC137/24.**

10.14 The Clerk outlined that the engineers would install the equipment for the average speed camera project on Chester Road between 16th and 18th September. It was noted that the Clerk had distributed letters to those residents living in close proximity of the cameras to inform them about the project.

10.15 It was **RESOLVED to give retrospective approval for expenditure of £491.11 to enhance IT communications in the parish office (payment made under Standing Order 16(b) Delegation to the Responsible Financial Officer) - HPC138/24.** The Clerk thanked Cllr. Ellams for his work in installing the equipment. Cllr. Ellams agreed to circulate any relevant instruction manuals.

10.16 It was noted that someone had made an enquiry about taking part in the Adopt a Planter scheme. The Clerk agreed to forward details to the volunteer co-ordinator.

11. Cllr. Nicklin outlined that the last surgery had been held at the tearooms on 7th September. A representative from the Community Partnership team (Helsby, Frodsham and Elton) had attended to explain the work of the group (to help co-ordinate the actions of various local community groups with CW&C and local NHS trusts). It was outlined that they were looking to compile a calendar of local community group events, and they could also help groups with grant

funding opportunities. Cllr. Ellams agreed to send some images to the designer for the pull up banner.

12. Outside Body Reports - Cllr. Temple outlined that two local Helsby groups had recently been successful with Protos Community Benefit Fund grants. It was noted that the next Protos Community Forum meeting and AGM would be held on 18th September and the next Cycle North Cheshire meeting would be held on 10th September. The Clerk outlined that CW&C had received several complaints about the cleanliness of the ladies' toilets at Helsby Community Centre and that she was liaising with the Helsby Community Association about the matter.

It was **RESOLVED to continue the meeting beyond a period of two hours in order to complete the remaining items on the agenda - HPC139/24.**

13. Burial grant approvals – no new applications were noted.
14. Allotment tenancies – new tenancies were noted as follows: Hughes (OCR1L), Pritchard (OCR1R), Barber (OCR7L), Pluger (QD3F) and Smith (QD3B).
15. Planning

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

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|---------------------|---|
| 24/01872/FUL | 115 Chester Road Helsby
Alterations to rear single storey to include increased height and replacement roof. Replacement windows and doors throughout with new side window opening and side door. Replacement front porch
No objections - HPC140/24. |
| 24/01935/OUT | Land Off Callender Way Helsby
Outline application for the development of up to seven dwellings and associated works means of access proposed. (Appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for future consideration)
Neither objects or supports - comments sent on obtrusive nature of development and sound proofing - HPC141/24. |
| 24/01713/FUL | 284 Chester Road Helsby
Demolition of out buildings and erection of single storey rear extension
No objections - HPC142/24. |
| 24/01888/FUL | 48 Old Chester Road Helsby
Single storey rear extension
No objections - HPC143/24. |
| 24/02143/LDC | 136B Chester Road Helsby |

Commencement of the building of 17/02135/FUL - New 5 bed detached dwelling

Neither objects nor supports - comments sent mainly to query access arrangements - HPC144/24.

24/02411/FUL

7 Wroxham Close Helsby
Single storey side extension. Widening of existing driveway.
New doors to rear elevation

No objections - HPC145/24.

24/02354/FUL

Land To The Rear of Meadow Farm Lower Rake Lane Helsby
The installation of a gas reduction compound to convert gas from the existing high-pressure gas main to a pressure which is acceptable for use at the Protos stand-by electricity generation plant

Neither objects nor supports – did not have the specialist knowledge on which to comment - HPC146/24.

- 15.2 The latest planning notification report was noted.
- 15.3 Members considered a premises licence application by RMS News and Wines for a new convenience store at 4 Crown Buildings, Latham Avenue, Helsby. It was agreed that the parish council would not make a formal representation. However, as several residents had expressed concerns about the application, the Clerk agreed to inform the case officer.
- 15.4 The Frodsham Solar Phase One Consultation Summary Report and Project Update was noted.
- 15.5 Correspondence from CW&C in relation to updating policy HNP H6 (f) of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan was noted. It was outlined that changing just a single policy would still require the council to go through a formal, and potentially, lengthy consultation process. The Clerk reported that an article would be placed in the next edition of the Helsby News and on Facebook seeking any views/volunteers.
- 15.6 It was agreed that the council would respond to CW&C's Housing Strategy 2025-2035 consultation. Members were requested to forward any comments to the Clerk in advance of the next meeting.
- 15.7 No member reports were received.

16. Financial Matters

- 16.1 It was **RESOLVED** that the bank reconciliation sheet detailing £331,119.39 held in balances as at 31st July 2024 be accepted as accurate – **HPC147/24**.
It was **RESOLVED** that the bank reconciliation sheet detailing £320,593.45 held in balances as at 31st August 2024 be accepted as accurate – **HPC148/24**.
- 16.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the following payments totalling £9,127.58 paid by either standing order, direct debit, bank transfer, cheque or under delegated authority for July be approved and duly noted – **HPC149/24**. The following receipts totalling £248.63 were also noted:

Payments

BT	Phone/broadband	£91.25
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Northwich Town Council	Play inspection fees	£90.00
Helsby Garden Services	General maintenance	£2,059.19
HPC staff	Salaries July 2024	£2,245.15
HMRC	Tax and NI deductions	£966.94
Claire Jones	Expenses	£92.39
Scottish Power	Electricity - community centre	£257.00
Water Plus	Water – community centre	£39.36
N-Power	Bridge lighting	£245.73
First Helsby Scout Group	Electricity costs	£280.67
Grenke Leasing	Photocopier lease	£108.00
SLCC	Training course fees	£36.00
Terry O’Neill	Expenses (mileage)	£14.40
Pro Print Solutions	Photocopier charges	£25.15
Carswell Creative	Helsby News design	£240.00
Above Zero	Cemetery design	£1,196.34
Countrywide GM	Grass cutting	£689.65
SLCC	Training course fees	£36.00
Claire Jones	Expenses (HCC domain name)	£44.38
Fields in Trust	Change request fee	£180.00
Helsby Garden Services	Bedding plants	£189.98

Receipts

Natwest	Interest July 24	£60.13
Baines Memorials	Memorial placement fees	£70.00
Baines Memorials	Memorial placement fees	£30.00
Buckley Memorials	Memorial alteration fees	£70.00
Plotholder OCR7L	Allotment fees	£18.50

It was **RESOLVED** that the following payments totalling **£11,871.75** paid by either standing order, direct debit, bank transfer, cheque or under delegated authority for August be approved and duly noted – **HPC150/24**. The following receipts totalling £1,345.81 were also noted:

Payments

BT	Phone/broadband	£91.25
Northwich Town Council	Play inspection fees	£90.00
Helsby Garden Services	General maintenance	£2,193.91
HPC staff	Salaries July 2024	£2,244.95
HMRC	Tax and NI deductions	£967.14
Claire Jones	Expenses	£37.15
Scottish Power	Electricity - community centre	£257.00
Water Plus	Water – community centre	£39.36
Pro Print Solutions	Photocopier charges	£26.17
Countrywide GM	Grass cutting (August)	£689.65
Countrywide GM	Grass cutting (May/June)	£489.65
F M Landscaping	Sherwood Court work	£1,120.00
PKF Littlejohn	External audit fees	£504.00
NMC Design and Print	Helsby News printing	£1,289.00

Northwich Town Council	Noticeboard installation	£240.00
NEST	Clerk's pension (July)	£674.60
NEST	Clerk's pension (August)	£674.60
ICO	Data Protection fee	£35.00
DM Payroll Services	Payroll administration	£90.00
Chris Ellams	Expenses (IT equipment)	£46.97
Water Plus	Allotment water bill	£1.35
Buckley Memorials	Refund (Duffy memorial fees)	£70.00

Receipts

Natwest	Interest August 24	£0.07
Robert Gleave and Sons	Gas bottle deposit return	£40.00
Memories Memorials	Memorial alteration fees	£70.00
CW&C	S106 funds (QD allotments)	£1,235.74

- 16.3 The Clerk outlined that the external audit to end of 31st March 2024 (Annual Governance & Accountability Return) had been returned with no issues. It was noted that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been published on the website/noticeboard along with the certified AGAR (Sections 1, 2 & 3) before the 30th September deadline.
- 16.4 It was **RESOLVED to approve a payment of £420 for completion of the external audit by PKF Littlejohn Ltd – HPC151/24.**
- 16.5 It was **RESOLVED to approve the transfer of £6,000 from the NatWest current account to the Unity current account, to transfer £20,000 from the Unity savings account to the current account and to transfer £60.20 from the NatWest savings account to the Unity savings account – HPC152/24.**

17. The outstanding actions log was noted.

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

23 rd September	Finance Committee
30 th September	Environment Committee
14 th October	Parish Council meeting

The meeting closed at 9.23pm.

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