

Highnam Parish Council

Highnam ~ Linton ~ Over ~ Lassington



Minutes of a Highnam Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2023

Present: Cllr Charlie Coats Chair
Cllr Bill Badham
Cllr Nick Cook
Cllr Rees Keene
Cllr Bill Nicol
Cllr Jill Smith
Cllr Michael Welsh

In Attendance: 9 Members of the Public
Wendy Barnard Parish Council Clerk/RFO

Public Questions:

A member of public thanked the Council for the hard work that has been done with the Planning appeal.

A member of the public made comment regarding several matters of accuracy in the minutes from the last meeting.

A member of public asked if the workmen that are working on the old school could not park in the disabled spaces outside Gambier Parry Hall. *The Chair would remind the builders not to.*

Has there been any progress on the missing footpath link 9 Maidenhall. *This is ongoing and will be chased.*

Member of public asked why EWG had cut the grass on the triangle of private land after they were directed not to by the Chair at the last meeting.

Why are the Parish Council now paying contributions to HMRC.

EWG should not be cutting grass and then putting under hedge and up against fences.

Why is salt being used to kill weeds when it is not good for the environment and can stay in the ground for years.

1. To receive apologies for absence

No apologies were received – Cllr Jill Smith advised she would be late due to another meeting with TBC.

2. To approve minutes of meeting held on 17th October 2023

Council agreed to approve the Minutes without amendments, the Minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

3. **Members of the council are invited to declare any interest they may have in the business set out below.**

Cllr Bill Badham – advised that his grandchildren use the Baby & Toddler group (item 17)

4. **To consider and agree any dispensations.**

There were none.

5. **To receive the following reports:**

a. **County Councillor report.** No report received.

b. **Borough Councillor report.** Cllr Jill Smith was not present for this part of the meeting so her report below was not read out.

“Tewkesbury Garden Town engagement seminars are being held for the Borough Officers, Councillors, Parish Councils, and the community to gauge views and opinions, to shape the future shape of the development. The town is to go ahead with as much input from locals as is possible to see a town all can be proud of.

Three housing enquiries resulting from planning committee refusals will continue without TBCs involvement. Three appeals were lost recently, due to TBC not having a 5-year land supply for housing. They had to pick up the costs. TBC have therefore withdrawn their support to the next three inquiries as they can't afford to lose anymore. The Parish Council will pursue these alone with little notice to get professional help to support any arguments.

An Interim housing position statement has been agreed upon at the Executive committee, to clarify TBC's position. It offers advice going forward for planning applications. It is not a planning policy, but a statement of best practice. Parish Councils were invited to a seminar to explain in more detail last week, and Councillors this week.

Cheltenham, Gloucester, and Tewkesbury strategic and local plan (SLP) were given the green light to proceed to a public consultation to look into future development areas. This is to replace the Joint Core Strategy. The community are to be consulted in what they would like to see, where, in the future, bearing in mind, building needs to occur in many places. Details to follow.

Covid cases are rising in the County and people are to be encouraged to protect themselves and others from infection.”

c. **Chair's report.** The Council Chair gave the following report:

“It would be somewhat of an understatement to say this month has been rather full on as the following clearly illustrates:

Land North and South Newent Road Planning Inquiry: *Held over two days on 14 and 15 November at TBC offices. Due to TBC's very late decision to withdraw their opposition to the appeal this left me having to do a great deal of work to*

substantially rewrite my Proof of Evidence to strengthen our opposition to the scheme. My thanks in particular to Nick Cook and Jill Smith for all their practical and moral support. We now await the Inspector's decision, not expected until the New Year.

HCCT: *The refurbishment of the Old School is now substantially complete and will be available for new bookings from the New Year. An Official Reopening Ceremony will be held in the building @ 11.30 am Saturday 9 December with "ribbon cutting" undertaken by Peter Dole, Parish Council Chairman at the time the building was purchased by the community in 1983. All current Parish Councillors are cordially invited to attend. This will be followed by "open house" so all residents can take the opportunity to look round.*

The Trust AGM will take place @ 7.30 pm on Thursday 7 December. At that meeting three current trustees, Messrs Ridge, Train, and Watkins, will step down. I am delighted to say that following a call for new trustees in last month's Village Link three volunteers have put their names down for co-option.

The current Bookings Clerk, Jo Badham, has decided to resign from this position once a successor has been appointed. Trustees have taken this opportunity to revert to the previous practice of having a Halls Manager to provide a more comprehensive oversight of the whole complex. At the time of writing a candidate have come forward for consideration, and it is hoped an early appointment can be made.

With a new Board of Trustees in place this will provide the opportunity for the Parish Council to forge a new partnership relationship with the Trust and to play a more proactive role in determining the future use and management of the whole complex.

Lassington Wood Playing Field Improvement Scheme: *- Work on this continues, albeit somewhat frustratingly at a slow pace. Have a look when next in the vicinity. It is hoped this will be fully completed by Christmas. It represents the last financial outlay from the Parish Plan/Lassington Reach Sec 106 monies.*

Community Cameras: *Regrettably, due to other recent competing pressures little progress has been made finalising the various documents required to enable the Council to acquire these units. I hope to get back to this shortly and will provide an update report for the January meeting.*

Parish Councillors: *- Disappointingly to date, despite a call in last month's Village Link for two new councillors, no interest has been received. The positions will now be formally advertised in the normal way by TBC. In the meantime, can I encourage all councillors to see if they can identify any suitable candidates to help us with our work.*

Wood Burners: *- Concerns have been expressed to me about non seasoned wood being burnt in these burners, resulting in excess, noxious smoke e missions around the village. Cllrs are invited to consider whether it would be appropriate to issue guidance in this matter."*

6. **Finances:**

a. **To approve invoices for payment as per the Payment Schedule**

The following payments were unanimously agreed for payment: A question was asked as to why there is now a HMRC contribution – Clerk has investigated.

The PC pay the tax & NI on the employees' behalf, so the salary figure paid to the employees is NET. The previous clerks tax code was implemented against HMRC, and as a result she did not attract tax and her earnings were below the LEL (lower earnings level) to pay NI. The clerk at present has a temp tax code until HMRC decide to change it.

Accounts for payment November 2023				
Payee	Payment Method	Amount	Reason	Statutory Power
Salaries	BACS	£ 1,098.22	Salaries	LGA 1972 s.112(2)
Currys	DD	£ 7.20	Laptop Insurance	LGA 1972 s.111
HCCT	BACS	£ 45.00	Hall Hire	LGA 1972 s.134(4)
Fasthosts	DD	£ 28.89	emails addresses	LGA 1972 s.142
GiffGaff	DD	£ 6.00	Mobile	LG(FP)A1963s.5
C Coats	BACS	£ 26.60	Photocopy	LGA 1972 s.111
R Balgobin	BACS	£ 400.00	Mentoring training	LGA 1972 s.111
HMRC	BACS	£ 212.79	Tax/NIS	LGA 1972 s.112(2)
The Benefice Press	BACS	£ 100.00	Article	LGA 1972 s.142
PKF	BACS	£ 426.00	Audit Charges	LGA 1972 s.111
	Total	£ 2,350.70		

7. **To appoint a VICE CHAIR**

There were no nominations made.

8. **To appoint and consider a further councillor to serve on the Finance Committee**

There were no nominations made.

9. **Appoint a council member to undertake the role of Internal Financial Checker**

Cllr Mike Welch agreed to take up this role and was unanimously agreed.

10. **To consider and agree to incorporate an Environmental Element into the planning Committee and renaming it Planning & Environment Committee**

The council unanimously agreed.

11. **To note the requirement for the council to adopt a Biodiversity policy and agree that the Planning & Environment Committee will draft the policy for consideration by the council.**

The council noted the requirement to adopt a Biodiversity Policy and a draft Policy will be considered by the Planning & Environment Committee.

12. To Consider Planning Applications

- a. **23/0090/FUL – Removal of existing UPVC Conservatory and replace with a single storey rear extension – 11 Woodleigh Field Highnam Gloucester Gloucestershire GL2 8LP.**

The Council unanimously agreed to make no comments.

13. To receive an update report on the Planning Appeal APP/G1630/W/22/3312539 - Land North and South of Newent Road, Highnam and to confirm and approve the fee for the Highways Consultant.

Council agreed to pay the Highways Consultant, Patrick Moss, a fee of no more than an estimated £1,300.00.

Cllr Coats explained that although the appeal was originally going to take 6 days it had been reduced to 1 ½ days as the Education Authority had satisfactorily resolved the issues beforehand. As TBC had withdrawn their support it was left to Highnam Parish Council to put the case against the application. TBC have fallen short on their Five-Year Housing supply requirement as areas such as Twigworth and Innsworth etc are now counted as part of the northern urban area of Gloucester. Cllr Coats thanked Cllr Smith and Cllr Cook for their support and also the residents that attended for support too. The decision will hopefully be in the New Year, and although the Parish Council have done all they can if the decision goes against us then we will help shape any new development. Cllr Cook agreed that it was a very difficult situation. The village is in a vulnerable situation as TBC need to reach their housing target and has been identified as a service village.

Cllr Smith introduced TBC's Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan – Public Consultation (Regulation 18) document to the meeting. Discussion was had about the proposal at Scenario 4 in the document which discussed the option to seek the delivery of 4,000 new homes with supporting infrastructure with 3 potential locations identified based on information submitted by landowners/promoters. One of these sites included a potential option straddling Churcham and Highnam.

The council took the view that it would have to pro-actively prepare its objections and participate in the forthcoming formal Consultation process to this plan. Given the unknown timeframe for recommendations for the plan to be made and for objections to be lodged there may be a requirement for an extraordinary Parish Council Meeting to be held in December 23 to discuss the stance the Parish would take.

14. Environmental Working Group update.

Cllr Badham firstly answered the member of public's questions.

- After the Parish Council Chair had said not to cut the grass the EWG didn't. It was only cut in the first place to keep the village tidy.
- Salt and vinegar were only being trialled for killing weeds.

- The grass cuttings were used for mulch on the whips on Lassington Reach and the rest will be removed.

Cllr Badham gave the following update:

Lassington Reach. Hedge has been removed on safety grounds at the same time drivers exiting from Lassington Reach are not always paying attention and drive out with no concerns for anybody else, also could we not clear the view looking up Lassington Lane as this visibility is also not up to regulation.

B4215. Gloucestershire County Council have been asked to clear the footpaths on both sides of the road, they have inspected as in line with their policy does not require immediate attention but will be checked during routine inspections, we cannot do it ourselves as we need a Highways Licence.

Safety Rail. Tewkesbury have been asked if a safety rail could be installed as the footpath approaches the B. Their response was, this has been investigated and there is no requirement to do this at present but your concerns have been noted, also no funds available as this would cost £1500

EWG. A comprehensive and detailed report has been included in the Link which is delivered to every household, it is also on the HPC website and HPC Facebook. To summarize the whips we planted on Lassington Reach have been moved closer to the fence line to allow for grass cutting. A working party event was held on Sunday 20th to removed saplings in Lassington Woods behind Butterfly Crescent, members of the allotments were invited to join us for them to secure a supply of bean canes for the gardeners, this is not an open invitation to others. The Payback team have been filling bags of rubber chippings for us to use. The rubber chippings from the playground have been reused on the footpath from Mary Grove and Lassington Lane as well as along the short path leading to the stiles on Monkey Bank the surplus will go to landfill. We have had a delivery of wood mulch to help with the boggy ground and lay on rubber chippings.

The Playing Field. Working under extreme weather conditions Greenfields have coped well. Rubber Chippings have been removed from the swinging tyre and seesaw and replaced with spongy matting, the tunnel has been removed and the steps improved, the 2 springers have been replaced and new spongy matting laid. 4 new picnic benches (2with wheelchair access) have been provided. The goal and hoop frame (not basketball) +are in situ, groundwork to follow, the activity climbing frame is finished and New cross hatch matting laid to allow the grass to grow through. The teenager pod is nearly finished.

15. Waste Bins. To consider and approve the installation of a Waste Bin to be sited by the Football club changing rooms.

£270+VAT for bin £132+VAT installation This was agreed by the council.

16. To consider and agree to making a grant to the Village Link

It was agreed that the village Link is useful to the village and as the Parish Council use more than they originally paid for (£100) they would now pay £300 a year.

17. To consider and agree to making a grant to The Baby & Toddler group.

It was agreed that the group was an important part of the community and that a sum of £300 would be granted to the Baby & Toddler Group. The grant would be used to provide a guaranteed capital to support the group with a steady income to support its expenses when numbers and income attending group are can only run if numbers are unpredictable on a weekly basis which does not support financial planning. Chair also commented that additional funding may also be sought from the Highnam Players 'Pop Up Pub' which generates income and provides grants to Highnam charitable organisations.

18. Oakridge Footpath. To receive and update on the condition of the footpath.

Adrian Clements, TBC Assets Officer, had taken a walk around the path with Cllr Badham & Cllr Coats having pointed out the weeds and uneven path he has agreed to give the matter some consideration.

19. Flooding. To receive an update on the outcome of enquiries into the solution to the flooding of the junction B4215 & A40

Cllr Keene has met with Max Kelly and discussed the flooding at length. Their standard cycle of drain cleaning is being carried out towards the end of the month. It can't be sooner due to having to book lane closures and being tied to that.

Max Kelly is keen to see what improvements occur after that. Cllr Keene have explained that he thought they're blocking because excess water is on the road dragging detritus into them, but at least some action is taking place.

20. Correspondence. To receive and note any correspondence.

It was agreed that the sum of £49,888.38 would be paid to HCCT for payment to Kings Builders as part of the Council's agreed contribution to the refurbishment of the Old School.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.53pm

Date of the Next Meeting

Tuesday 16th January 2024 in The Old School at 7.30pm

