

Highnam Parish Council

Highnam ~ Linton ~ Over ~ Lassington



Minutes of a Highnam Parish Council (PC) Meeting held on Tuesday 16th January 2024

Present: Cllr Charlie Coats Chair
Cllr Bill Badham
Cllr Nick Cook
Cllr Bill Nicol
Cllr Jill Smith

In Attendance: 36 Members of the Public
Wendy Barnard PC Clerk/RFO

Public Questions:

The Chair asked the members of public to hold any questions reference Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC) Strategic Local Plan until item 9.

A Member of Public asked if there had been any progress on the triangle of Land.

Cllr Jill Smith said that no one had heard who the owner was, but TBC & PC were seeking answers. Unfortunately, this is a slow progress and Village Green status can take time.

A member of public raised concern about an Ash tree that sat between 21-22 Farthing Croft. The roots of the tree are growing under the patio of his house causing damage, and no one in TBC was helping him.

Cllr Bill Badham advised to give Martyn Clarke a call who would be able to help him.

Has there been any progress on the missing footpath link 9 Maidenhall.

Cllr Bill Badham informed the PC that Highways will be considering adding a path in the new FY.

1. To receive apologies for absence

Cllr Mike Welch

2. To approve minutes of meeting held on 21st November 2023

PC approved the Minutes without amendments, the Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

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

There were none.

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

There were none.

5. **Highnam Heritage – a presentation by Maurice Atkinson Heritage Chair.**

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

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

b. **Borough Councillor report.**

A public consultation on the Strategic and Local Plan (SLP) will open from today for feedback by March 12th, 2024. This primarily looks at development in Cheltenham Borough, Gloucester City and TBC.

Members of all three councils approved the first draft to go out to consultation. Since this the maps of areas that have been put forward, under the Call for Sites exercise, have been included. This will be an online exercise using an interactive online consultation platform. This can be found on strategiclocalplan.org. There will also be a programme of engagement events that will run through January and February. There is a dedicated site that it would be worth everyone looking at on strategiclocalplan.org. or contact Ian Bowan, Planning Policy Manager on ian.bowen@tewkesbury.gov.uk.

A Draft Garden Communities Charter consultation has been publicised. This raises the awareness of Garden Communities and wants parishioners feedback, by 31st January. It is an online questionnaire, or you can e-mail gardencommunities@tewkesbury.gov.uk.

There is a grant to be given to TBC from the Kings Coronation fund to plant new micro woods and community orchards. Further information will follow.

TBC has had a lot of properties flooded over the past couple of weeks. There are grants available to affected properties and businesses, from the central Government but administered locally. Several surgeries are being held throughout the borough if anyone needs to speak directly to officers and councillors. I have sent the dates to the clerk to disseminate as necessary. (Afternote: The dates for these surgeries have been disseminated by the PC Clerk via the Highnam PC Facebook Site).

c. **Chair's report.**

The purpose of these reports is to provide a summary update of all the various activities which take place between meetings, and which do not always feature as specific agenda items. As I have not reported for two months, there is a lot to catch up on:

Land North and South Newent Road Planning Appeal: Sadly, as we all know, the appeal was upheld in favour of the appellants with all matters reserved for determination at detailed application stage except for main road access. There remains though still much to play for, and I would propose the PC engages fully and as proactively as possible with TBC Planners and the land promoters in helping to shape the details of the scheme to secure a quality, proportionate and properly integrated, sustainable development.

Land South of Maidenhall: We continue to press TBC Planning Enforcement Control Officers to progress and take enforcement proceedings against the unauthorised erection of site boundary fencing and to press Gloucestershire County Council Legal Services to process our application to have the land designated as a Village Green. In this respect we have been advised the process may take up a year to determine.

*Lassington Wood Playing Field Improvement Scheme: Slowly but inexorably the work on this long-drawn-out project nears completion. Do we wish to hold some form of “Opening Ceremony” to mark this event later in the spring? **It was agreed perhaps something could be held in the warmer months with the children from the local school.***

New Councillors: We remain three short and need to redouble our efforts to get back up to full complement to provide sufficient resources to deal with the increasing volume and complexity of work we are faced with. This is dealt with more fully later in the agenda.

TBC Standards Committee: Following an interview last week, I have been formally appointed as one of two independent PC Councillors across the Borough to sit on this committee and to provide external, objective advice and opinion on standards and probity related issues which the Borough has to deal with.

TBC Community Liaison Officer: Last week Wendy and I had an opportunity to meet with Fran Jackson, who acts as a conduit between the Borough and PCs across the south of the borough. This was a most productive meeting, and something to build on as we raised several issues with her to address. Fran has replaced Adrian Goode, who most of us will have known and who was such a great supporter of our work.

7. Finances:

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

DECEMBER 2023

Ser	Item	Expenditure	Payment Method	Power to Spend	Comment
1	Salaries	751.32	BACS	LGA 1972 s. 112(2)	Salaries
2	Currys	7.20	DDR	LGA 1972 s. 111	Laptop Insurance
3	HCCT	78.38	BACS	LGA 1972 s. 134(4)	Hall Hire x2
4	FastHosts	22.37	DDR	LGA 1972 s. 142	emails/Fasthost
5	GiffGaff	6.00	DDR	LG(FP)A1963s 5	Mobile Phone
6	Moss Naylor Young Ltd	1602.15	BACS	LGA 1972 332A	Newent Road Appeal
7	Bill Badham	90	BACS	Highways A 1980 s.156(1)	Woodchippings
8	HMRC	212.79	BACS	LGA 1972 s. 112(2)	Tax/NI
9	Highnam Baby & Toddler	300	Bacs	LGA 1972, section 137	Grant
10	The Benefice Press	200	BACS	LGA 1972 s. 142	Audit Charges
11	Jo Storey	35.2	BACS	LGA 1972, section 137	Oil For Carvings

12	Proactive	44.46	BACS	LGA 1972 s. 111	Printer Ink
13	Virtual 3	210	BACS	LGA 1972, section 137	Website Maintenance Highnam Heritage part of grant awarded
14	PATA payroll	61.2	BACS	LGA 1972 s. 143	Payroll Services
15	PWL488336	10524.63	BACS	LG(MP)A1976 s. 19(3)	Loan Repayment
16	HCCT	5195.45	BACS	S106	The Old School
	Total	19341.15			

JANUARY 2024

Ser	Item	Expenditure	Payment Method	Power to Spend	Comment
1	Salaries	751.32	BACS	LGA 1972 s. 112(2)	Salaries
2	Currys	7.20	DDR	LGA 1972 s. 111	Laptop Insurance
4	FastHosts	35.41	DDR	LGA 1972 s. 142	emails/Fasthost
5	GiffGaff	6.00	DDR	LG(FP)A1963s 5	Mobile Phone
6	HMRC	212.79	BACS	LGA 1972 s. 112(2)	Tax/NI
7	PWL	3286.5	BACS	LG(MP)A1976 s. 19(3)	Loan Repayment
8	HCCT	17734.92	BACS	S106	Old School refurbishment
	Total	22034.14			

All payments for Dec 23 and Jan 24 presented to the meeting were agreed.

b. PC to discuss and agree budget for 2024/2025 – Attached draft Budget set out in the draft minutes of the Finance, Audit, Governance & Committee.

Draft Budget 2024/2025 & Precept Requirements

	Expenditure Apr-Oct	Estimated Nov-Mar	Total Estimated Expenditure	Budget 2023/24	Proposed Budget 2024/25
Staff Costs	7855.61	4500.00	12355.61	10000.00	11,300.00
Working from Home	0.00	0.00	0.00	72.00	0.00
Council Award Scheme	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
Councillor Expenses	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
PATA Payroll Administration	51.60	51.60	103.20	110.00	120.00
Insurance	725.36	0.00	725.36	750.00	800.00
Advertising	0.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	300.00
Website	250.00	0.00	250.00	250.00	250.00
Office Broadband/Phone	348.74	24.00	372.74	400.00	80.00
General Supplies	26.05	200.00	226.05	300.00	500.00
Rent office	0.00	0.00	0.00	1000.00	0.00
Room Hire/Storage	384.25	300.00	684.25	400.00	400.00
Memberships	85.00	0.00	85.00	950.00	950.00

Training	105.00	500.00	605.00	200.00	1,500.00
Garden Maintenance	282.00	200.00	482.00	500.00	500.00
Grounds / Grass Cutting	300.00	300.00	600.00	500.00	500.00
Bus Shelters	0.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00
Audit Fees	270.00	426.00	696.00	750.00	800.00
PWLB (HMRC Loan Payment)	10524.63	10524.63	21049.26	21050.00	21,049.26
PWLB (HMRC Loan Payment) 2	0.00	1886.50	1886.50	0.00	6,459.81
Projects	0.00	9200.00	9200.00	9200.00	0.00
Grants / Donations	720.00	300.00	1020.00	1000.00	1,000.00
Environmental Committee	1342.00	900.00	2242.00	1000.00	1,000.00
Village Gates	0.00	2000.00	2000.00	0.00	0.00
Maintenance of Trees	2033.10	950.00	2983.10	3000.00	3,000.00
Total	25303.34	33062.73	58366.07	52332.00	51109.07

The budget proposal for FY 24/25 was agreed.

c. PC to agree precept for 2024/2025.

Budget Requirements 24/25

Projected Income	£	-	
Projected Expenditure		£51,109.07	
Total Budget Requirement		£51,109.07	
Last year's Precept Was		£52,000.00	
Recommend precept of		£52,000.00	reflects a 0% increase, subject to tax band notifications

The precept for FY 24/25 was agreed.

d. To agree to the recommendation from the Finance, Audit & Governance Committee that the Bank Account is changed to Unity Bank from Lloyds.

Due to the continued difficulties adding and changing signatories to the Lloyds account it was agreed unanimously that the bank account will be changed to Unity Bank, the costs involved £6.00 monthly fee. The clerk will action.

e. To agree to the recommendation from the Finance, Audit & Governance Committee that Mrs Irean Litton BEM be appointed as the councils Internal Auditor for the year ending 31st March 2024 at the cost of £200.

Mrs Litton is an internal auditor who is aware of the measures needed to fulfil the annual audit requirements. This was unanimously approved.

f. To agree to the recommendation from the Finance, Audit & Governance Committee that a Staffing Committee element is incorporated into the Finance, Audit & Governance Committee.

This was unanimously approved by the council.

8. To consider planning applications received.

As the application was received in December, the council has responded to the application, noise being the major concern to neighbouring properties.

APPLICATION NO: 23/00713/FUL
DESCRIPTION: Installation of a skateboard ramp (retrospective)
LOCATION: 8 Blacksmiths Ground Highnam Gloucester
Gloucestershire GL2 8NB
This application had been refused by TBC.

APPLICATION NO:	23/01083/FUL
DESCRIPTION:	Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension.
LOCATION:	16 Farthing Croft, Highnam, Gloucester The PC had no objections to this application.

9. To discuss the response to the current Consultation exercise – Joint Strategic Plan.

Cllr Coats outlined the key issues which the parish Council together with residents need to consider: Although the Strategic Local Plan (SLP) is in initial draft form only at this stage and now out for public consultation, there are a range of local concerns that need to be considered before a response is given. The Parish needs to take a measured approach as Highnam remains vulnerable to the possibility of being developed for housing. The SLP consultation is open until 12th March 24, and residents are encouraged to take part. There has been a call for sites exercise coordinated by TBC, where landowners were invited to put their for land to be considered for development. A number of landowners came forward with initial submissions in relation to land either side of Lassington Wood, Rodway Golf Course, land next to Lassington Reach and the land on the A40 straddling Churcham & Highnam.

There is a need for housing across the country, and the land that has been put forward may be considered by TBC to be potentially suitable for building. It is a possibility that there may have to be more houses in Highnam and as a collective we need to be open to this possibility, and have our voices heard on the way we want our village to look. The character of the village is important to all of us. We cannot be complacent, the highways, health, education and utility provision all need to be considered. The current in place infrastructure in the village at present would not sustain a significant increase in inhabitants. The PC and community need to take a lead on this with a considered collaborative approach adopted where practical to do so.

Cllr Cook reminded everyone of the difficult situation that TBC had put the village in with M7 planning appeal and that Highnam is designated as a service village by TBC. Cllr Smith asked where TBC had got the maps identifying land as potentially suitable for development as this hadn't been seen before and would be asking TBC the question. Cllr Badham asked how the 5Yr plan was put together as at some point there must be a limit

on the number of fields covered in houses.

Cllr Coats & Cllr Smith had held a meeting with Churcham, Minsterworth and Westbury on Severn Parish Cllrs, and it was agreed they would make a joint response to the plan.

The members of public present were asked if there were any questions. These are summarised below:

Perhaps the PC needs to change tact as it seems the landowners are aware of TBC difficulty in turning down planning permission. Is everyone aware when the population of a village is 7000 it becomes a town.

Does it matter what the residents think as nothing changes anyway as TBC are letting the village down.

If we do not act, we will not influence any decision. It is best to be proactive than reactive. Cllr Smith informed that a development in Churcham was dismissed due to 2000 letters from the residents, if the residents of Highnam show that support there is more of a possibility of success.

Would it be an idea that the Precept was set higher to provide extra money that is needed to fight any case.

There is money set aside in the reserves for emergencies.

Perhaps a standard letter could be put together for residents to respond to TBC.

Everyone is encouraged to visit the SLP website strategiclocalplan.org to read and respond.

Members of Public were all keen to publicise anything that was needed either by letter drop, Facebook or through Community Café etc. A public meeting will be held sometime in February to discuss this matter further on how as a community we can respond together.

N.B. It has subsequently been agreed that a Public Meeting will be held in the Gambier Parry Hall, commencing @ 7 pm on Tuesday 13 February.

10. **To appoint a Vice Chair**

Cllr Bill Badham nominated Cllr Nick Cook and was seconded by Cllr Jill Smith. Cllr Nick Cook was unanimously voted to be Vice Chair and he duly accepted.

11. **To discuss a Way Forward Initiative**

a. **Discuss and adopt a Community Engagement Strategy** - Cllr Coats presented the Draft Strategy set out below:

Preamble: *Community cohesion, pride of place, and locality identity are precious commodities. They cannot be taken for granted and require regular nurturing. Highnam is a relatively large village: it is made up of a broad range of age groups, differing interests,*

and potentially competing aspirations. How to harness these energies is a challenge, but essential to ensuring Highnam remains an attractive and valued place where all residents can live, work, and play.

The PC represents the first tier of local government. As such, it is closest to its residents: it should represent their interests, lobby on their behalf where necessary, and remain accountable for its actions. It should be accessible; relevant; alert to emerging issues and demographic trends. The PC should be a dynamic organisation which leads, influences, coordinates, and represents its community. It should have the facility to be able to gain an awareness of emerging issues by close collaborative working with local organisations.

This Paper explores ways in which these aspirations might be best achieved.

Community Contacts:

The Council interacts with a range of contacts, as summarised below:

- *Individual residents.*
- *Village based representative bodies: e.g. Staunton's Hill Management Committee; Lassington Reach Management Committee; Highnam Good Neighbour Initiative; Neighbourhood Watch; Highnam Community Centre Trust; Parochial Church Council; William Andrews Foundation etc.*
- *External Representative Bodies: Central Govt; Gloucestershire County Council; Police; Tewkesbury BC; MPs; adjoining PCs.*
- *Service providers: e.g. Primary School; Doctors' Surgery; Nursery; Bus Company.*
- *Village Clubs and Societies: e.g. Chestnut Club; Uniform Groups; Highnam Heritage; Highnam Players; FC Highnam; Highnam Court Cricket Club; Highnam Quilters; Environmental Working Group; Allotment Society; Highnam Walkers; Wild Highnam; Playgroup; Community Café; Pop Up Pub etc.*
- *Commercial Organisations: e.g. Highnam Post Office and Stores; Rodway Hill Golf Club; Canal Trust; Toby Carvery; Highnam Business Centre; Over Farm Shop etc.*
- *Major Landowners: i.e. Farmers; RSPB (Highnam Woods); Highnam Court, Fenton Estate etc.*

Aims:

The aim of this strategy is to improve the way the Council informs and consults with its residents and partners on important issues by:

- *Sharing information.*
- *Collecting views and listening to them.*
- *Being inclusive and engaging with all residents and partners.*

Objectives:

The specific objectives of the strategy are to:

- *Improve, plan and shape the future of the parish according to local needs and priorities.*
- *Use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions meet the needs of the parish.*
- *Be a stronger more active cohesive community.*

Engagement Methodology:

The Council will liaise, work, and communicate with each of the above contacts in differing ways at different times, there is no one size fits all approach. It may be necessary to establish differing engagement channels to ensure consultation includes all members of the parish by identifying hard to reach groups. The following though proposes a generic approach within each contact category:

- *Residents – The PC will encourage attendance at PC meetings; expeditiously publish meeting agendas, reports and minutes; fully exploiting the potential of social media platforms by promoting use of its website and encouraging readership of Facebook; publish monthly articles in the Village Link; publish half yearly reflective Newsletters; utilise Noticeboards to post messages and provide timely information on key issues.*
- *Representative Bodies- The Council needs to do more to proactively engage with these organisations. They represent the lifeblood of the community. They should be encouraged to provide periodic Briefing Notes on recent activities for the Council's consideration and invited to attend Council meetings as appropriate to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. The Council should offer to send representatives to attend meetings of these bodies as necessary.*
- *External Representative Bodies – Borough and County Councillors regularly attend Council meetings. These provide a vital conduit of information and opinion which should flow in both directions in a timely fashion. The Council should even more effectively lobby these bodies through these key contacts and exploit opportunities to raise concerns.*
- *Service Providers: In the past the Council had a representative councillor on the Primary School Governing Body. Consideration should be given to requesting a seat on this again, also seeking representation on the Doctors' Surgery Patients Forum or similar.*
- *Village Clubs and Societies: The Council should actively seek opportunities to either meet with these bodies on a regular, say annual, basis or establish effective lines of communication with them.*
- *Commercial Organisations and Landowners: Similar to Clubs and Societies, the PC should establish contact with each of these businesses, seeking opportunities for regular dialogue on matters of mutual interest, whilst recognising the need to maintain commercial confidentialities and special interest proprietaries.*

Summary:

Any community is the sum of its parts. The PC should be the glue that binds these disparate parts together. It should not operate in a vacuum but be sufficiently attuned to the pulse of the community, ensuring its work programme, business plan and core values reflects its needs. This strategy is designed to provide the tools and mechanisms to achieve this. It is though more an attitude of mind, not a prescriptive approach, capable of continual refinement and adaptation. Throughout proportionality should prevail it's more about consolidating and reinforcing what we already do but could, perhaps, do better.

It was unanimously agreed to adopt and promote the Strategy.

b. How we build on what we currently do.

It was suggested by Cllr Coats that the Annual Parish Meeting should have time before where local groups and businesses could talk to the community about what they do. The PC are aware that not all residents have Facebook or internet so it may be that we can letter drop to residents that request it. Perhaps a mailing list for emails could be used.

c. The recruitment of new councillors.

It was suggested that a recruitment drive take place outlining what a councillor does and can achieve. A flyer would be the best way to do this and to publicise more on the Facebook page and website. The clerk will draft something.

12. HCCT Update on new arrangements.

A new board of trustees had been voted in. It is intended that the PC and the Trust would work closely together to promote the use of the group of buildings.

13. Planning & Environment Committee – needs additional Cllrs.

It was noted that new Cllrs were needed as the committee was currently not at the required quorum. Bill Badham was nominated and duly accepted.

14. Receive an update from Cllr Badham – EWG & Payback team.

Cllr Badham informed the council that the tree that had been damaged during the storm had now been felled and was left on the ground for the EWG to tidy.

UBICO had delivered some trees that were being planted in Lassington Wood. They are a mixture of Pines/Hawthorn/Rowan/Common Beech/Crab Apple and Acer.

The payback team will work on Saturday, Sunday & Mondays in continuing to clear the brambles at the back of the allotment and in front of the woods near the football pitches.

EWG had a working party thinning out Johns Wood. The next working party would work on the butterfly crescent. Discussions continue to establish nature trails with signs and maps.

15. Road Safety in Highnam

a. Lorries causing tyre marks on grass verges at Post Office

It was suggested that white lines be put down the middle of the road to encourage shop users to park close to the pavement, but this would not stop drivers of larger vehicles driving on the grass when a lorry was delivering to the shop.

b. Speeding around village, especially on Newent Road, a resident is concerned about how she can safely leave her house either by foot or by car.

Unfortunately progress regarding measures to challenge speeding in Highnam had been put on hold, however the council will now look at activity that may be conducted to address these concerns. A question was raised on progress of the village gates and speed cameras. *An update to this will follow in due course.* Mirrors on poles to aid viewing in blind spots was discussed. There are a couple around the village, but it was noted that the erecting of additional ones is now not policy compliant. This is according to Highways Legislation released in 2016. They are now considered to be a hazard to other road users.

16. Correspondence

A member of public suggested that the PC could record their meetings uploading them for

viewing. This will be looked in to.

The meeting finished at 9.18pm

17. Date of the Next Meeting

Tuesday 20th February 2023 7.30pm The Old School Highnam

Signature.....

Name.....

Date.....