

HELINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council

held on Wednesday 01 February 2023 at 7:30 PM in the Helsington and Brigsteer Village Hall

PRESENT: Cllrs. S. Carman (Chairman), J. Cooper, J. Sunderland.

In Attendance: County Cllr. J. Bland (CCC), District Cllr. K. Holmes (SLDC), Cllr. J. Battye (Shadow Cllr. W&FC), M.R. Curry (Clerk) and 1 member of the public.

58/22 Apologies: Cllrs. G. Riley, K. Ritchie.

59/22 Declarations of Interest / Requests for Dispensation: None.

60/22 Minutes: It was **Resolved** to approve the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 02 November 2022.

61/22 Public Participation: No issues were raised by members of the public.

62/22 Planning: The following applications, responses, decisions and updates were noted:

- a) **Lake District National Park Authority:** (View applications, responses and decisions online at: <http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/swiftlg/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>)
 - i) **7/2022/5777 - Broom Bank, Brigsteer, LA8 8AL:** storeroom at the north gable end of the house and solar panels. This had been circulated to the Parish Council on 21 December and whilst it had been felt that the solar panels might look a little incongruous, it was noted this is a green initiative and should therefore be supported and **No Objection** had been submitted.
- b) **South Lakeland District Council:** (View applications, responses and decisions online at: http://applications.southlakeland.gov.uk/planning_applications/welcome.asp)
 - i) **SL/2023/0023 - Land south of Prizet Filling Station:** Cllrs. Resolved to make **No Objection** but to request that approval is conditional on the one-for-one replacement of any trees lost as part of the development and the reinstatement of charging points for electric vehicles.
 - ii) **CU/22/0010 – Barn East of Prizet:** The application to determine if a change of use certificate is required to convert a barn to dwelling house was noted.
- c) **Cumbria County Council: 530000-376-WCA81 - claimed right of way at Helsington Underpass:** An order confirming a new length of public footpath made on 21/12/22 (previously considered with no objection) was noted.

63/22 Parish Land

- a) **Land Opposite the Village Hall (car-park):** It was noted that work to protect the wooden fence between the car-park and Puddleduck Cottage had not yet commenced. In an email dated 26/01/2023, Mr R Bryan for the Village Hall had confirmed that it was still intended to proceed with the work. It was noted that the car-park was leased to the Village Hall on a 25-year full-repairing lease at a peppercorn rent and that the wooden fence was owned by Puddleduck Cottage. Cllrs confirmed that they were content with the work proposed if the Village Hall Trustees were willing to undertake the work. The Clerk was asked to look at the lease for a formal confirmation of boundaries.
- b) **Tree Work on Parish Land:** The satisfactory completion of the felling work at Peat Houses was noted and the Clerk reported receipt of an invoice from Mark Sigrist of £2,220 being £200 less than his original quote. Sale of the felled timber had been negotiated to James Park at £400. Mark Sigrist will arrange for some re-planting on site at a likely cost of around £150. These costs and receipts were **Approved**. Mark S will move onto the Moss Lane trees in the next couple of weeks and will be asked to quote for the removal of an oak tree that is now leaning on the bus shelter.
- c) **Drainage Opposite the Wheatsheaf:** Councillors confirmed that during recent periods of heavy rain, water was running freely through the culvert and no flooding issues had been

noted or reported. In the meantime, the Clerk has made some general enquiries including free legal advice from which the indications are, as expected, that respective ownerships will extend to the centreline of the beck.

- d) **Registrations of Title:** This remains work in progress. It was **Agreed** to sign-up to Parish On-Line (annual subscription £45.00) which provides a range of mapping services tailored to parish council needs.

64/22 Highways

- a) **Highways Schedule:** Issues on Whetstone Lane and Brigsteer Brow were noted for the Highways Schedule (see the following item). It was noted that the work at Low Lane has been done.
- b) **Issues Arising from Cold Weather and Gritting:** The condition of the road surfaces on Whetstone Lane which is badly pot-holed and to a lesser extent on Brigsteer Brow were noted with concern. In the case of the former, the condition was felt to have been exacerbated by the barn conversions adjoining the road. Gritting had appeared to have been done quicker than in previous years and over longer stretches, though the presence of roadside grit piles had not been as evident.

65/22 Reports

- a) **Chairman and Parish Councillors:** No reports were submitted.
- b) **Helsington and Brigsteer Village Hall:** In the absence of Cllr Ritchie (on holiday) Richard Bryan had submitted a note confirming that there were no significant matters to report but raising a few questions about the arrangements for the Coronation weekend (Saturday 06-Monday 08 May). He confirmed that the Hall had been booked for community use all that weekend. In response, Councillors confirmed that the Parish Council had no plans to organise an event(s) itself. It has not yet received any guidance on arrangements but understands that the coronation will take place on the Saturday, to be followed by community organised celebrations (street parties etc) on the Sunday whilst people were being encouraged to engage in some sort of voluntary activity on the bank holiday Monday. On a further matter Councillors acknowledged the notification that hall hire rates had been increased by £1.00 per hour.
- c) **Local Police Team –** Other than the items in the periodic Newsletter (with no direct matters relating to the Parish) no report had been received.
- d) **District Council:** In advance of Cllr. Holmes' report, the Chairman reminded all present that this would be the final meeting at which a representative from the District Council would attend as SLDC would be subsumed within the new Westmorland & Furness Council as of 01 April. He took the opportunity to thank Cllr. Holmes for his regular attendance at Parish Council meetings and his representations on its behalf and in particular his recent grant towards the cost of new ICT equipment. The Council approved this note of thanks. In response, Cllr. Holmes confirmed that although business at SLDC was being conducted as usual as far as possible, great attention was being paid to the transition from it to the new Council. He was discharging his final responsibilities including that as Chair of the Lake Admin Committee (Windermere) and concluded by thanking Councillors for the support given to him by the Parish Council in his work.
- e) **Cllr. J. Battye (Shadow W&FC):** Cllr. Battye also thanked Cllr. Holmes and expressed the hope that she would be able to give as good a service to the local community as had he. She confirmed that considerable work was taking place to ensure as seamless a handover as possible on the 1st April. 90% of staff now know what posts they will be filling and work on the budget continues with the aim of final figures being confirmed in the next few weeks. She is hoping for a similar level of funding with resources available to her through a Member Budget with which to support local initiatives.
- f) **County Council:** Once again the Chairman reminded Councillors that this would be the final meeting attended by Cllr. Bland, as the County Council was also to be subsumed into the new W&FC. He thanked Cllr. Bland for his work throughout the locality over many years and Councillors again approved wholeheartedly this record of thanks for his services. In response, Cllr. Bland confirmed that he had filled the role for over 30 years and that it had been a pleasure to do so. Although he had little to report on current matters of relevance, he

reflected on his particular satisfaction in the great success of the local committee structure which had worked in a non-political way to achieve many good things.

66/22 Finance

- a) **Receipts:** Receipts for the period 01/11/22 – 31/01/23 were noted as follows:
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| 23/01/23 Electricity NorthWest: Wayleave | £2.30 |
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- b) **Payments:** Payments totalling £2,030.54 for the period 01/11/2022 – 31/01/2023 were noted and approved. The following sum was **Approved** for payment:
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| 01/02/23 - Mark Sigrist: Tree felling, Peat Houses | £2,220.00 |
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- c) **Financial Report and Bank Reconciliation:** The Clerk presented the bank reconciliation with details of receipts and payments for the period 01/11/22 – 31/01/23 and showing a balance of £13,212.37p. Taking into account projected spend to the end of the financial year, including woodland management costs and salary payments, the likely end-of-year balance (reserves) will be in the region of £6,143.00. The general guidance for reserves is that parish councils may hold reserves up to approximately the level of annual precept. Helsington therefore has about 50% of its reserves potential.
- d) **Draft Budget and Precept 2023-24:** The Clerk reported that only in recent days had confirmation been received regarding details of the precept from the new W&FC. As a result of the elapse of time there is additional financial information available which has fed into a slightly revised budget than the one presented at the November meeting. This had been circulated and amounted to a balanced budget of £11,460 including a proposed precept of £11,118. This is nearly £1,500 higher than in the previous year and represents an 18% increase in precept requirement. In addition to lowered reserves, there are clearly inflationary pressures running at approximately 10% currently, but the most significant factor is the cost of managing ash dieback as a health and safety matter in high-risk areas. There was debate about whether costs could be reduced, and Cllr. Sunderland suggested that the budget for tree work might be reduced from £3,000 to £2,500. In the light of the discussion and current circumstances, the Chairman proposed that the budget for 2023-24 should be set in line with the figures presented. It was **Resolved** to fix the budget accordingly and to submit the precept bid in the sum of £11,118.62 in addition to the Council Tax Grant awarded of £127.38.
- e) **Audit:** The Clerk reported that in the absence of Julie Hartley (the usual Internal Auditor) he had made alternative arrangements with Mr Malcolm Richardson of Heversham. External audit will be conducted by auditors appointed by the Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments team.

67/22 Parish Council Matters

- a) **Resignation of John Seddon:** Councillors noted the recent resignation of John Seddon and **Approved** a vote of thanks for his work and support whilst on the Council.
- b) **To Note the Intended Resignation of Cllr. Carman as Chair:** Councillors noted Cllr. Carman's intention not to seek re-election as Chair at the upcoming Annual Parish Council Meeting in May, though he would remain a Councillor until 2024. 2024 is an election year for Helsington PC and is therefore pivotal for the future of the Council. He felt that it would be prudent to begin a recruitment campaign for prospective Councillors to stand in 2024 in order to establish a viable Parish Council, but reflected on the difficulty presented by the split nature of the Parish. He asked all present to consider his replacement as Chair in the short-term and the recruitment of new Councillors in the longer term.
- c) **To Note Arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 05 April:** The Clerk will issue the required Notice for the Annual Parish meeting. Cllr Battye confirmed that she would give a presentation on Climate Change initiatives. The Chair and Clerk will consider the level of refreshments that might be provided.

68/22 Community Initiatives

- a) **Community Resilience and Emergency Plan:** Cllr Carman praised David Prescott for the amount of work he had put into the Plan. In hindsight the Working Group recognised some areas where minor improvements could be made and Cllr. Carman undertook to set up a review session.

69/22 Correspondence Received: The recent Schedule of Correspondence received was noted with no further action required, other than reference to correspondence relating to a newly erected fence at Plum Tree Cottage. This was not a planning issue, but there was concern about its visual impact. No action was proposed at this point, but the matter would be monitored.

70/69 Future Meetings: It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 05 April and that the Annual Parish Meeting would be held on the same evening. The Annual Parish Council Meeting will be held on 03 May.

The Meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

Signed..... Chairman

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