

HIGHCLERE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Highclere Parish Council Meeting held at

Highclere Village Hall

Tuesday 9 June 2015 at 7.00pm

Members: Sally Izett (Chairman), John Stoker (Vice Chairman)

Councillor (also Borough Councillor) Graham Falconer (from 8.30pm)
Councillor Will Flack, Councillor Mike Jenkins, Councillor Don Langan,
Councillor Horace Mitchell, Councillor Mike York.

In attendance: Clerk to the Council, Sue Edwards

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

18/15 Apologies for Absence

County Councillor Tom Thacker.

19/15 Declarations of Interest – there were no Declarations of Interest from the Councillors present. **To confirm accuracy and sign the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12 May 2015.** The minutes had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed as an accurate record by the Chairman, Sally Izett.

20/15 To Progress Resolutions from 12 May 2015 (*Matters arising from the Minutes*).

13/15 Community Asset register (the Red House, Westridge Studio); Cllr Izett explained that the Community Asset form was quite detailed and more research was needed.

Action: Chairman and Clerk to work on letter to property owners and form completion.

21/15 Public Participation – no members of the public were present.

Financial Matters

22/15 Report on Audit - The Clerk confirmed that the Notice of Appointment of Date for the Exercise of Elector's Rights, Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2015 had been posted from 11 May-24 May 2015. Documents are available from between 9am and 5pm on Mondays to Fridays 26 May-22 June 2015. Parishioners need to make an arrangement with the Clerk if they wish to view records. The Annual Return will be returned to BDO, the external auditor, before 23 June 2015.

The Clerk reported that the Internal Audit for the year ended 31 March 2015 had successfully taken place on 27 May 2015. The internal auditor accepted the Council's accounts having followed the guidelines laid out in the NALC/SLCC Book 'Governance and Accountability in Local Councils in England and Wales.'

Comments made by the Internal Auditor for the Council's attention are:

- Clerk's appointment – there should be a record in the Minutes of the appointment of the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. The minute should contain details of the Clerk's salary (this can be a scale point) and probationary period, start dates and any other details relating to the Clerk's position.
- Budget Precept. The detailed Budget (on which the Precept is based) should be a signed attachment to the Minutes. Also the resolution for the Precept should include the amount precepted on the District Council.
- Insurance – the level of Fidelity Guarantee at £50,000 is adequate for the Council but the Industry Norm seems to be £150,000. The Internal Auditor advised that perhaps the Clerk should discuss this further with Zurich.

The Accounting Statement and Audit Commission Pro-forma were presented and adopted by the Council, recorded as **Minute reference 22/15** and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Izett and the Responsible Financial Officer, (the Clerk).

The Clerk reported that she had contacted Zurich insurance by email (28 May 2015) who advised that they *“do not set the Fidelity Guarantee to the industry norm but rather what is needed by each council”*. Zurich considered that they have given the correct level of cover with regard to the bank balances and asset register supplied in May 2015.

The Financial Overseer, S, Izett completed the 3 month check of accounts on 5/6/15.

23/15 Acceptance of the Annual Governance and Accounting Statement - The Annual Governance Statement, ensuring there is a system of internal control, and which forms part of the Annual Return was read and adopted by the Council. The Governance Statement was signed by the Chairman, Councillor Izett and the Clerk, and recorded as **Minute reference 23/15**.

24/15 Budget - The detailed budget presented to the council in January 2015 – on which the Precept was based was signed by the Chairman, Sally Izett and is attached to these minutes.

The Clerk presented the bank balances to the Council and highlighted the earmarked reserves.

Action – Cllr Mitchell suggested the Council consider areas which may require expenditure in the future so that these funds are set aside.

25/15 Transparency Code - The Clerk informed the Council of the requirements of the Transparency Code. Not later than 1 July 2015, publication by smaller authorities of first annual set of data completed which includes:

- All items of expenditure above £100 (date incurred, summary of purpose, amount and VAT that cannot be recovered)
- End of Year Accounts (the statement of accounts should be accompanied by a bank reconciliation and an explanation of significant variances and any differences between ‘balances carried forward’ and ‘total cash and short term investments’)
- Annual governance statement
- Internal Audit report
- List of councillor responsibilities
- Details of public land and building assets (description, location, owner/custodian, date and cost of acquisition and present use)

26/15 Donations Policy – a full discussion took place regarding requests for donations. The Clerk provided the legal position from The Clerk’s Guide: Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration 9th ed. states:

13.1 The law on charities and public gifts has had to be adapted to the special needs of localities, first and particularly to preserve the barrier between the secular and the ecclesiastical and to continue the century old policy of relieving the locality of direct responsibility for the poor. Second provision has been made for the fact that many charities benefit more than one locality. Third, for reasons of convenience there is a provision for the continuance in office or the future creation of independent bodies of trustees. Fourth, whilst all charities are public not all public gifts are charitable...Fifth, Parliament has given to the parish ... as much control over a public gift ...as may reasonably be expected.”

LGA 1972, s137 empowers a local council to spend up to a prescribed amount in one year for the benefit of the inhabitants of a local area. Currently this is £7.36 x number of people on the electoral roll: Highclere – 664; Penwood – 600. Total 1264 x 7.36 = £9303.04.

The Clerk had circulated the EWPC request form for grant funds. The Council agreed that requests for events within the Parish should be considered but as a Parish Council it was not

appropriate to describe this as a Donations Policy. Cllr York asked how the Council is aware of the needs in the Parish. Cllr Izett explained that there have been several questionnaires distributed by hand to all residents in the Parish with reply paid envelopes and responses had been collated. These had highlighted common themes such as improvements to the roundabout at the A34 exit. Cllr Izett explained that there this had been attempted several times but had not succeeded in the past due to changes in BDBC policy. Another query had been cycling paths. Not all suggestions are within the remit of the Parish Council to fulfil. Cllr Flack asked if a consultative mechanism could be put in place perhaps on the HPC web site. **Action:** Chairman and the Clerk to draft a policy on how to respond to financial requests; to be considered by the Council at the July meeting. Clerk to investigate potential for a Forum on the HPC website.

27/15 Highclere Churchyard request – following the resolution at the May meeting to grant the Highclere Churchyard support for the extensive Church yard clearance the Council discussed the level of support which would be appropriate. Cllr Stoker proposed £1000. Cllr Langan seconded the proposal and the council agreed unanimously.

Resolution - £1000 support for Highclere Parochial Church Council. LGA 1972, S137 – on the basis that the major community event in the Parish is the Church fete which is held in the grounds of the Church yard.

28/15 Accounts for Payment

The schedule of payments (including online payments) was signed by Cllrs Stoker & Jenkins. This format takes account of the requirements of the Transparency Code. The amounts will be displayed on the HPC website as part of the minutes.

Date incurred	Expenditure	Purpose	VAT	Total
11/05/15	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council	S106 payment for Little Penwood Project	0	£7,700.00
31/05/15	Litter Warden	May Fuel Allowance	0	£13.95
31/05/15	Clerk's Expenses	Travel to auditor	0	£43.20
12/05/15	Highclere Church Parochial Council	Hire of Dunlop room for Annual Parish Assembly	0	£20.00
27/05/15	John Murray Accountant	Internal Parish Audit	0	£295.00
30/06/15	Clerk's Salary (including tax refund)	June Salary	0	£766.30
30/06/15	Litter Warden Salary	June Salary	0	£403.00
03/06/15	Application to HMRC	Refund of Tax	0	-£96.80
				<u>£9,144.65</u>

The BT telephone bill, 2 June 2015 (£15.25) will be taken by direct debit. This bill takes account of the £92.45 credit negotiated by the Clerk for the delayed provision of the Parish telephone line between January and April.

29/15 Reports from Borough & County Councillors

Cllr Falconer stated that the new Mayor is Cllr Ann Court. There will be severe cost cutting at BDBC which is the impact of reduced funding from Hampshire County Council. For instance, a fund for assisting young people had been reduced from £220,000 to £40,000. On a positive note the Taxi share service, which includes stops in Ashmansworth, had negated the impact of the closure of the C21 route. Cllr Falconer stated that the Superfast

Broadband service in the area depends on when the exchange is enabled. There are households in the outlying areas that currently have an inferior service. They will be served by the next phase of Broadband; a meeting is to be held by HCC, BDBC and BT to discuss the progress.

Action – Clerk to reply to parishioner who queried the Superfast Broadband service.

30/15 Westridge Studio

Cllr Izett confirmed that the Clerk has sent a list of HPC questions regarding the running and income of Westridge Studio to the Executor and to the Solicitor of the late D. R. Gribble. Legal advice has been sought from BDBC. Cllr Izett proposed that the next step should be to set up a working group to collate the information that it receives, which will be a step on the way to making a decision, regarding the Parish Council involvement in Westridge Studio,.

Action - The Council agreed that this working group should include representatives of the users of the hall and the HVH committee. Cllrs Flack, Langan and Izett will form the basis of the group together with the Clerk.

31/15 Little Penwood update

The Clerk confirmed that the BDBC cheque for this project would be raised on 9 June as online payment was not possible. The Clerk has asked Paul Johnson to keep HPC informed of progress.

Action – The Clerk to continue to maintain contact with Paul Johnson.

31/15 Heathlands & Woodlands Improvement Project

Cllr Izett said that the litter bin at the bus stop has been replaced and secured. The Clerk has obtained 3 quotations for a new noticeboard and refurbishing the bus shelter. These have been supplied to Cllrs Stoker and Jenkins (Environment). Cllr Mitchell proposed that the decision on which noticeboard to choose be made by these councillors (who are also to review the noticeboard on Highclere Village Hall). The Council unanimously agreed. Cllr Izett said that the Clerk has received an email from Shirley Brewer stating that the BDBC name plate team are working on the signs for Field View (formerly the old Council Houses). It will take 4 to 6 weeks to complete.

Action - Cllr Mitchell is to organise a meeting of the Heathlands & Woodlands Improvement Committee. Cllr Jenkins to join the committee.

Cllrs Stoker & Jenkins to decide on style of noticeboard and confirm bus shelter cleaning with the Clerk.

31/15 Environment

Cllr Jenkins said that the Lengthsman budget still has not been received.

Action – Cllr Jenkins was asked to obtain a quotation from the Lengthsman for putting hardcore down on the path at the side of the village hall.

Cllr Langan said that the split oak in Penwood Drove had been removed.

Stiles – Cllr Stoker stated that he had investigated the HCC small works improvement grant which was very bureaucratic and he suggested that it would be less expensive to ask the Lengthsman to complete the work on stiles on Path 734 south of Highclere. Cllr Mitchell also stated that the stiles on Highclere Castle land, the un-adopted path to the copse, were in a dangerous condition. The quotations already received from the Lengthsman:

To repair both stiles and to add a second step on both - Materials £110, labour £150. Total £260. Alternatively, to repair one stile and to add a gate - Materials £165, labour £150. Total £315.

Action - Cllr Stoker to check that these options would be to HCC standards.

Cllr Stoker to contact the Highclere Estate regarding the condition of 2 stiles along the public footpath from the Chapel.

32/15 Roads & Transport

Cllr Langan volunteered to join the Roads & Transport team and the Council unanimously endorsed this position. Cllr Flack said that he had again contacted PCSO A. Carpenter regarding training for Speedwatch but had not heard anything. There followed a discussion about the flashing speed warning sign temporarily displayed in Highclere and how the community had remarked on its presence. Cllr Izett said that purchasing a flashing speed warning sign had been fully investigated by Highclere Parish Council but it discovered that the costs for fixing the sign and moving it around the village would have been prohibitive as these were ongoing costs. Full details of the costs and outcomes are in previous Highclere Parish Council minutes.

Cllr Stoker stated that the pot holes in the C153 road by the Yew Tree were now 6 inches deep. Cllr Izett said that the repairs are on the HCC highways job list.

Cllr Izett said she had received an email from a Parishioner regarding the length of the grass at Penwood crossroads

Action – Cllr Flack to contact PCSO Carpenter.

The Clerk to contact HCC regarding grass cutting at Penwood crossroads.

33/15 Planning

BDBC No.		Date sent by BDBC	Address
15/01	15/01168/HSE	11/5/15	Little Flexford Cottage, Andover Road
15/02	15/01771/HSE	3/6/15	Horris Farm, Horris Hill
15/03	15/01804/FUL	3/6/15	Hadley, Star Lane

There were no objections to applications 15/01168 and 15/01804.

Action 15/018004 FUL - Highclere Parish Council objects to this proposed development for the following reasons:

- The development is against policy. As the application states, the development is outwith any settlement policy boundary and therefore is in 'the countryside' from a planning perspective. The proposal doesn't meet any of the requirements for a new dwelling in the countryside.
- The applicant states that the proposed dwelling would be 'affordable', but this is a private development for private occupation and doesn't fit any of the definitions of 'affordable' from a planning policy perspective. A stated intention to provide the dwelling for a family member has no relevance for planning purposes; the house would be valued at market value and would be open to being offered on the open market.
- In addition to the main policy issues, the Parish Council considers that:
 - The proposed division of the existing curtilage creates a very awkward and constricted site, with the proposed dwelling uncomfortably close to the existing dwelling and with vehicle movements to and from the existing 'Hadley' garages running uncomfortably close to the new building.
 - The absence of a garage, provision for which would now be regarded as standard for new private dwellings in a rural village, illustrates the challenges of the site.
 - The proximity of the proposed dwelling, Hadley, Hadley Cottage and Barn Court represents overdevelopment out of keeping with the immediate surroundings and with the nature and style of the local built environment and garden areas, and with the guidance in the Highclere & Penwood Village Design Statement.
- A more minor point, but which should be dealt with if the LPA is minded to grant consent in principle, is the strange proposed location of the cycle and bin store. This either requires that household waste be carried across a lawned area to the bins or that there would be additional paved area not currently shown. This should be clarified. However it also requires that full bins be moved across lawn areas (or additional paved areas) before reaching the Hadley access drive, and then bins moved a further c40 metres along the drive to reach the presumed collection point adjacent to Star Lane. Given the need for new dwellings to be suitable for elderly as well as youthful occupants, this seems an inappropriate and inadequate design approach. It also further illustrates the cramped and awkward nature of the plot.

5. We understand that the existing dwelling, 'Hadley', has an integrated garage and that the 'barn style garage' is a recent addition, presumably this was a lawful development?
6. It has been suggested that the applicant may not have the appropriate access rights to enable development and / or occupation of an additional dwelling on the site. We assume the LPA will satisfy itself as to whether the site is developable prior to considering the application.

Cllr Mitchell stated that HM reported that Cllr John Izett had attended a site meeting at Curridge Car Sales, Wash Water, with the owner and architect. A fresh planning application will be submitted to BDBC shortly.

34/15 Correspondence Received

HALC letter update on the Digital Transparency Fund.

HALC training – the Responsibilities and Risks of local council. No councillors wish to attend. BDBC confirmation of an increase in the Litter Warden grant to take account of the increase in the minimum wage to commence 1 October 2015.

Local Government Boundary Commission – Electoral Review of Hampshire. Views are sought. Posters will be placed in Parish noticeboards. More details are at

www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk or www.lgbce.org.uk

Safer North Hampshire Community News – will be posted on HPC noticeboards.

Highclere Village Hall Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 supplied to HPC as the Custodian Trustee of Highclere Village Hall.

HALC update on Consultation on the Future of NALC – questions posted on HALC website.

Invitation to Raising of Armed Forces Flag Day on 22 June 2015 from BDBC Mayor's Office

Invitation to Mayor's Civic Service on 12 July 2015.

BDBC - Planning Conference for parish and town Councillors. No councillors to attend.

Action Hants – invitation to Scenic Tour of recently completed rural affordable housing scheme in BDBC. No councillors wish to attend.

Minutes and Annual Accounts of Basingstoke District of Parish and Town Councils.

Email from Parishioner regarding superfast broadband.

Email thank you from Parishioner who was pleased to see a Slow Down sign on A343.

Thank you card from Colin Corral for the personal retirement gift from the Parish Councillors.

35/15 Councillors' matters to be included in the Agenda for the next meeting

Westridge Studio; Westridge Road Sign

36/15 Date of the next Council Meeting

Tuesday 14 July 2015.

Adjournment: there being no further business the meeting closed at 8.49pm

Summary of Actions:

Community Assets - Chairman and Clerk to work on letter to property owners and form completion.

Reserves - The Council consider areas which may require expenditure in the future so that these funds are set aside.

Financial Requests - Chairman and the Clerk to draft a policy on how to respond to financial requests; to be considered by the Council at the July meeting.

Clerk to investigate potential for a Forum on the HPC website.

Superfast Broadband - Clerk to reply to parishioner who queried the Superfast Broadband service.

Westridge Studio - The Clerk to inform members of the working group when a responses has been received from the solicitor and Executor of D. R. Gribble.

Little Penwood - The Clerk to continue to maintain contact with Paul Johnson.

Heathlands & Woodlands Improvement - Cllr Mitchell is to organise a meeting of the Committee.

Noticeboards - Cllrs Stoker & Jenkins to decide on style of noticeboard.

Stiles - Cllr Stoker to check that these options would be to HCC standards. Cllr Stoker to contact the Highclere Estate regarding the condition of 2 stiles along the public footpath from the Chapel.

Speedwatch - Cllr Flack to contact PCSO Carpenter.

Roads and Transport - Cllr Flack to contact PCSO Carpenter.

The Clerk to contact HCC regarding grass cutting at Penwood crossroads.

Planning - 15/018004 FUL Horace Mitchell to examine the application to see if it differs from the earlier application which was approved by BDBC Development Control Committee on 22 April.

Signed _____ Position _____ Date _____