

PARISH COUNCIL OF HANNINGTON, HAMPSHIRE

Date and time of Meeting: 7.00pm, 10th October 2023

Present: Chair, Cllr. Alex Lowrie (AL),
Cllr. Jon Whitfield (JW)
Cllr. Nick Joslin (NJ)
Cllr. Judy Henry (JH) (in the capacity of Cllr. for the Quarterly Meeting, only).

Apologies: Cllr. Pat Coneley (PT)

Clerk: Sue Wright (SW)

Members of the Public: Two.

October 2023, Quarterly Meeting.

1. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest.

Apologies were received from Cllr. Pat Coneley, who was unable to make tonight's meeting. AL confirmed that he had reached out to the borough councillors, but not yet had a response. In lieu of attendance, Cllr. Rhydian Vaughan sent a written report to update on his work, which SW prior circulated by email. SW confirmed the declarations of interest to be up to date – and nothing additional was being made for the purposes of the quarterly meeting.

Action point: SW to reach out to Borough Councillors in respect of the December meeting.

2. Draft Minutes of the Annual meeting and the quarterly meeting held; 23rd May 2025, for approval.

AL noted several minor edits which were made to the draft minutes, prior circulated and that the minutes being examined at the meeting were the 'final' version, for Members' approval. No further comments were tabled and the minutes for the Annual meeting and Quarterly meeting, both held on 23rd May 2023, were approved. *Action point: SW to add copies of the Approved minutes for both meetings, to the parish council website (done).*

3. Matters Arising - and not appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

In a change to the published agenda, the Members agreed to bring forward the public forum to allow those members of the public attending, to speak earlier in the meeting.

1. State of Parish Bridlepaths

- a) It was brought to the attention of the Members, that certain of the bridlepaths crossing the parish around Hannington, North Oakley and Ibworth, are in a poorly maintained state, are overgrown and bordered by poorly maintained/damaged wire fencing and discarded rolls of wire.
- b) The fencing-wire has presented a hazard for riders and other users of the bridleways, by causing a trip hazard.
- c) The 'spring'-hinged, heavy, gates on certain routes, are hard for riders to open, (again because they do not appear to have been maintained, have become rusted/difficult to open), forcing riders to dismount and wrestle with the gate-opening mechanisms, in order to get by.

- d) Members were handed maps showing the affected routes and have also provided a series of photographs to help illustrate the extent of the problem.
- e) The riders present reported that they had both experienced their horses becoming entangled with the wire.
- f) Several routes were identified as presenting a particular hazard including bridleways behind the farm buildings at Ibworth, the route through the woods in North Oakley and the bridlepath around Hannington Plantation.
- g) The land would appear to belong to Kingsclere Estates.
- h) Members were requested to investigate further and contact Kingsclere Estates to ask them about their bridlepath maintenance schedule and in particular, to clear the wire.
- i) It was noted that better maintenance of all bridleways would help keep horses off the roads – increasing safety for all road users.

Members agreed to investigate the matters raised, with Kingsclere estates. AL noted that funds provided by the Lengthsman Scheme might be able to assist in the maintenance of bridlepaths and footways of particular concern and AL agreed in the first instance to speak to Tim May (Managing director of Kingsclere Estates). Members will provide an update – at the next meeting to be held in December.

Open Forum closed. Members thanked those attending and the members of the public left the meeting.

4. Policy Review

- a. **Audit Update** – Auditor's Report 2023 for discussion.

There are nine recommendations on the Auditors report.

- **Accounting Records.** The cashbook had already been provided to the auditor, before the audit deadline. Comments regarding the VAT reclaim stand and the parish still needs to pursue a reclaim of VAT owed. (See below).
- **Corporate Governance.** The council's financial regulations (available on the website) – were last reviewed in 2021.
Action: SW to prepare a new draft version of the financial regulations using current NALC/HALC model forms, for guidance, by the next meeting (Dec 2023).
- Transparency Code – a copy of this was made available to the Auditor, at the time of the Audit. It is also available on the website – but has not been recently updated.
Action: SW to prepare a new, draft version of the Transparency Code using current NALC/HALC model forms for guidance, by the next meeting (Dec 2023).
- **Payments & VAT.** The auditor commented the process for approving invoices, needs to include the physical, signing of invoices by the Chair, one other member and the RFO. It was noted that this is not practical for payments which need to be made in between quarterly meetings, so the physical signing of invoices approved for payment, may need to occur retrospectively. Reconciling bank statements with the cashbook, has already been happening – (not a new action). We are yet to process a VAT reclaim application. AL noted we need to confirm the VAT registration details for the Parish.
Action: AL to confirm VAT details for the Parish and prepare VAT reclaim application and report on progress by next meeting in Dec 2023.
- **Management of Risk.** A risk review relating to the financial regulations (V.2021) – was conducted prior to the audit. The asset register was also reviewed and confirmed to be up to date.
- **Actions:** *Members agreed to review the Insurance provision in the December 2023 meeting. SW/AL to circulate insurance summary, prior to December meeting.*

- **Budgetary Control & Reserves.** Auditor's comment was directly related to the expenditure plans. We confirmed that the council regularly reviews (at every quarterly meeting), spend against budget, and believe the reserves to be maintained at a reasonable level.
 - **Asset Register.** The asset register was reviewed and updated in March 2023 – an exercise which the council completes annually.
- b. **IT & Security** – IT/Emails – an update on legacy matters and arrangements for new members.

Email: The email service to the Parish Council is reportedly to be withdrawn at the end of the year. AL confirmed that he had spoken to the Parish Clerk at Pamber Heath, to investigate other products which are available. AL has confirmed with Jan Hertz – that all legacy emails can be archived for safe-keeping, in the event of any move to a new provider.

Hugo Fox (Website provider) has also been in contact to confirm that they were withdrawing from the local government market. SW noted that aspects of the website were already not working (including the ability to upload new documents and update other pages). AL confirmed he had spoken to Hugo Fox about maintaining access in the short term, while we investigate alternatives. AL also spoke to them regarding the possibility of remaining with Hugo Fox and they advised a new pricing regime would apply.

Action: AL/SW to investigate the email provider and website hosting, in advance of December meeting.

5. Finance

- a. **VAT Refund:** an update on the VAT reclaim: to be via the HMRC website.
See comments above under Audit Report /Policy Review (4).
- b. **Payments for approval**
Clerk fees for the quarter: 01 Jul 2023 – 30 September 2023. (£1000).
Auditing Solutions £576 (internal audit 2022-23)
Members approved the payments and signed the invoices submitted. AL noted that payroll services for the clerk's fees had not been set up, due to certain pension/payroll limitations of the provider which the parish has been talking to, so the clerk, for the foreseeable future would continue to be paid under 'Payments for Approval' at each quarterly meeting. AL asked SW to submit a simple invoice for fees, going forward. (SW Agreed).
- c. **Bank Reconciliation** – RFO to reconcile v Bank Statements & Budget
AL noted that bank statements are already being reconciled with the cash book and expenditure against budget. AL presented an excerpt of the Cash-book for Q3 (July-September). Members reviewed, confirmed as accurate and approved the cash-book entries for the last quarter.
- d. **Proposals for interest bearing accounts.**
- e. AL confirmed he has investigated interest bearing accounts for the Parish – in particular an account with an interest rate of 3.5% with a fixed deposit of between 6-9 months. Such accounts are offered by the Parish's existing bank (Lloyds). Members discussed a working balance of approximately £3000.00 (AL to confirm) for the remainder of the Council's financial year (through to April 2024) and agreed to place the rest in a new, linked savings account.
Action: AL to progress setting up of account and transfer of funds into the savings account.
- f. **Banking arrangements** – AL confirmed that JW has now been set up as a signatory and SW is to be set up as an administrator (enabling the viewing of transactions and uploading of invoices for the signatories to approve).

- g. **Coronation reserve** – Earlier in the year, a request was received from members of the parish to plant Oak trees around the village, to commemorate the King's coronation. No further details have since been provided. *Action: AL to follow-up and confirm.*

6. Roads and Footpaths: The Lengthsman has recently completed work on two paths around the village. The work completed to the footpath which routes alongside the Kennels in Hannington, has been particularly well-received. Subject to members approving budget: further work can be organised but there is a 6-8 week lead time.

7. Review of Memberships – NALC/HALC

Subscriptions to both are coming up for renewal in February 2024. SW and AL confirmed both to be a useful resource. SW noted that HALC, in particular, was a useful source of model policies and would help the Members with the policy-review update, noted in the audit report. Members agreed to continue with the subscriptions.

8. Review of Snow plan.

AL circulated the current version of the Snow Plan, last updated in January of 2022. Generally, the plan remains accurate but for the contact details for elected members.

Action: SW to produce an updated draft to reflect the changes in membership following the May election, for approval at the December 2023 meeting.

9. Review of Health & Safety Policy

Members noted that the current Health & Safety policy has not been updated or reviewed since 2016, (existing policy is on the website, under 'governance').

Action: SW to prepare a draft, new policy for the next meeting in December.

10. Clerk IT equipment – request for laptop to perform duties. Quotes to be considered.

Members noted despite repeated calls, messages and a letter – there has been no response from the outgoing clerk, regarding the return of parish-owned computer equipment. SW has to date been using her own laptop and noted she is a Mac user. SW reported that a second-hand/refurbished MacBook, costs between £675-£850 depending on the vendor. Software would be an additional cost. Notwithstanding there is currently no budget allocated for additional IT equipment – Members agreed the need to investigate this further. *Action: SW to action and report back with costs for both hardware and software.*

11. Open spaces.

Regarding the previous issue raised over concerns for the welfare of young children playing on the village green in Hannington and the risks posed by passing traffic; AL has spoken to the families with young children living around the green to ascertain their preference; which seems to be for signage and fencing. *Action: AL to investigate further and report back at the December meeting.*

12. Police Matters

No report received. Members noted that given the recent spate of rural break-ins to sheds and other outbuildings and other suspicious activity noted in the Village WhatsApp group, it would be helpful to hear an update on policing for the parish. *Action: SW/AL to reach out to local police regarding their attendance at the next meeting.*

13. Borough Councillors Report

Hannington Parish Council, – Minutes of *Quarterly Meeting* held on Tuesday 10th October 2023 (approved at the council meeting held on Tuesday 12th December 2023).

None present and no report was received, in lieu of attendance. AL noted that we had become used to our former borough councillor, Cllr. Stuart Frost, attending on a regular basis. This pattern seems to have changed with the new intake. *Action: As noted above: SW to reach out to the borough councillors and invite them to attend future meetings.*

14. County Councillors Report

The October report from Cllr Rhydian Vaughan was circulated, prior to the meeting. Members confirmed receipt.

15. AOB.

Village Noticeboard. JH noted that the village notice board, located by the green, was in a poor state (wood appears to be rotting) and could do with replacement. SW commented that the village of Oakley had recently had smart, new, noticeboards installed around the village and that Oakley parish may be able to help with the details of suppliers. *Action: SW to follow-up with Oakley PC and the borough council.*

16. Proposed Dates of next meetings:

Next HPC Quarterly meeting - 12th December 2023. (Approved).

Date for first Quarterly Meeting of 2024 - Tuesday 27th February.

End.