

HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Hermitage Parish Council held at Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, Berkshire RG18 9ST on Thursday 19th October 2023 at 7.30pm

- Present** Cllr R Cottingham, Cllr A Goldsmith, Cllr D Brown, Cllr P Turner, Cllr I Govier, Cllr R Marr.
- 01.10.23 Public participation**
None.
The meeting began with a minute's silence in respect for the untimely death of David Barlow (former chairman of Hampsted Norreys PC) and his new wife, Celia.
- 02.10.23 Apologies for absence**
District Cllr P Dick, District Cllr H Codling, Ms N Pierce (clerk).
- 03.10.23 Minutes of meeting held on 21st September 2023**
The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- 04.10.23 Declarations of interest**
None.
- 05.10.23 Actions agreed and matters arising from the minute of the last meeting not referred to elsewhere**
Internal Audit Report: clerk and officers had met and prioritised some actions.
- 06.10.23 Reports**
6.1 District Councillors
Dist. Cllr. P Dick & Dist. Cllr. H Codling reports have been circulated. Noted.
6.2 Chairman's report
Noted. Discussed as appropriate under other Agenda items. Copy appended.
- 07.10.23 Planning**
7.1 New Applications.
23/02273/HOUSE, Fir Tree Cottage, High Street, Hermitage RG18 9SR. Proposed front/side porch. Only small addition. **No Objection**
23/02183/HOUSE, Erynwood, Hampstead Norreys Road, Hermitage RG18 9RS. Proposed single storey side extension to create family room and shower room.
Significant addition but not out of keeping and no objections. **No Objection**
22/03032/FUL, Windmill Farm, Yattendon Road. Hermitage. Modifications to previously-proposed arrangements. One public objection due to speeds on Yattendon road, but not questioned by Highways. HPC does not object to the changes. No further comment required.
7.2 Planning Enforcement
HPC has been advised of land encroachment and unauthorised business activities at Priors Court Farm: emails forwarded from neighbour's agent. Vice chairman has also previously reported unauthorised fence to planning enforcement. HPC agreed that, as a matter of principle, they should object to any development that, like this, increased risks to public, blocked highways and/ or is detrimental to views of the AONB.
Vice Chairman to draft message to go to Dist. Councillors and Planning Enforcement **Clerk**
7.3 Decision notices
23/01745/CERTE, The Cabin High Street Hermitage: 1-bedroom apartment. **Lawful.**
7.3 Neighbourhood Development Plan
Cllr Cottingham provided an update: see also appended report. Actions Completed. Grant should have been paid but not yet appearing in bank account.
Examiner had indicated no immediate concerns and intention to visit site this week.

08.10.23 Finance and report of Responsible Finance Officer

8. Financial position as of 30th September 2023

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£206,814.16
Receipts to 30 th September	£ 74,277.74
Payments to 30 th September	<u>£ 38,773.74</u>
Balance in hand (total)	£242,318.76

8.1 Report of Financial Officer (Clerk's report)

Noted. No comments or questions.

8.2 Payments for consideration October 2023

8.2.1 Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	£ 269.57
8.2.2 Grass maintenance/Contractor	£ 777.00
8.2.3 Cost of administration	£ 988.40
8.2.4 Administration expenses, postage, and gift/training, stationary	£ 45.98
8.2.5 Wicksteed, annual playground inspections	£ 475.20
8.2.6 Castle Water, burial ground	£ 46.13
8.2.7 Autela Payroll services (July – September)	£ 80.36
8.2.8 WBC Grounds maintenance charges	£ 603.00
8.2.9 N Burraston, Connecting Communities webinar	<u>£ 12.50</u>
Total	£ 3,298.14

All approved and to be entered and endorsed on-line.

8.3 Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionas (web site) monthly payment	£ 5.99
NEST monthly payment	£ 97.78

8.4 Receipts September 2023

Noted.

Self-Storage (return of advance payments)	£248.51
Burial Ground	£182.00

8.5 Village Hall Grant payment badminton lines.

Chairman and Vice had met with VH Chairman and Ms Arden-Hunt. Clarified that grant was for floor preparation as well as lines. Floor alone had cost far more than anticipated for whole, i.e. grant represented smaller percentage than requested. Agreed no further action necessary.

8.6 FWP report.

Noted. The Chairman noted that we currently have too much (>£85k) in current account but this will be remedied by forthcoming spend.

09.10.23 Burial ground

Nothing to report.

10.10.23 Highways

Action: Cllr Govier to report on possible speed reduction by school. A WBC meeting has been held that agreed a meeting was required.

HPC has received complaints about surface of Yattendon Road. Cllr Turner advised that a "cloverleaf" man hole cover appeared raised because the road had sunk. He also noted that the subsidence by the Fox (recently resurfaced) was returning. HPC was concerned that this might be a symptom of something more serious. Cllr Goldsmith advised she had reported that verge alongside Marlsdon Rd between Slanting Hill and Grimsby Castle Road was washing away and gully could do serious damage if cars went off road.

Clerk to write to Highways on the 3 concerns: Cllr Turner will provide w3w locations **Clerk**

11.10.23 Environment

11.1 Playgrounds

Annual inspection done by Wicksteed on 19th September. Report Circulated: Action Complete.

11.1.1 Councillor inspection reports

Cllr Govier had circulated the September report. Nothing to add of annual inspection: damages to the faulty net have had temporary repairs. (Action on Chairman Complete).

11.1.2 Work to be done

Vice Chairman as safety rep has advised that damaged net on Activity trail requires replacement. The unusual shackles were noted as possibly making it difficult for HPC to do. It was agreed that this should be done by professionals.

To obtain quotes for net replacement

Clerk

There were no other important safety issues; however, it was suggested that Cllr Govier/ Cllr Turner could do minor tasks and seek assistance from volunteers, e.g., painting, removal of pins holding mats under giant swing etc. Cllr Govier was unwilling to do this; his preference was to pay professionals, although the Chairman advised that our insurance would cover volunteer's work.

Giant swing in Pinewood Playground: minimal cost improvements considered; further site visit required to better understand options. Even apparently quick fixes would not be simple.

11.2 Furze Hill

See Chairman's report. Two ash trees identified as potentially having die-back do not. Quote from surveyor (£2,940) includes felling and planning application. Query to be answered before it can be accepted, but agreed in principle.

11.2.1 Fencing repairs to exclusion fence and Pinewood Playground

Clerk has advised contractor that original scope has been authorised: Action Complete.

Quotes of £1,300 plus vat for labour, £854 plus vat for materials for additional work received.

To check that quote remains appropriate for metal posts and count failed posts

Chairman

11.2.1 Recreation Ground

Clerk has complained about mowing and advised CAFC of need for signs when marking lines (Actions complete). Two dog owners had been seriously worried by their dogs eating wet paint; this is harmless.

11.2.2 Fencing repairs to Furze Hill recreation ground fence

Quotes of £150 plus vat for labour, £142.34 plus vat for materials accepted, order to be placed. Clerk Will come from commuted sum.

11.2.3 WBCS tasks for October 31

Chairman has not yet had time to plan. Will take advice from H Whetter. New (free) trees yet to be ordered.

11.3 Other open spaces

Nothing to report on Dines Way, Lipscomb Close, Charlotte Close.

Dines Way Battery Box: letter drafted as Actioned, but not yet sent.

Clerk.

12.10.23 Other matters

12.1 Village Hall

Storage has been rearranged and shelves moved to accommodate more tables: needed now both halls in use.

12.2 Defibrillator checks

Done.

12.3 Consultation on West Berkshire draft ROWIP

Comments provided to Chairman (Action Complete). To collate and pass to WBC

Chairman

12.4 Christmas Tree

To be lit **8 Dec** at the Fox. Manager is keen to host but advised this is the last year the tree will be hosted by the Fox because of events at the Village Hall. Cllr Marr advised it is unlikely there will be more beer festivals.

Suggest to VH that the Fox is asked to run the bar at any similar VH events

Cllr Marr

Tree to be ordered as last year

Clerk

Check that Fox can erect

Chairman

Concerns expressed re safety due to cars entering and leaving car park; have tried stopping before with no success. Will need volunteers for traffic management.

12.5 Communications

Cllr Govier's report was noted. Advised HPC already recognises that communications need improvement, but has been hampered by loss of responsible councillors in March and need to train clerk to take over.

Cllr Turner noted that CAPC website is very much better: agreed, but noted that they are much larger, so have more people and money. Would need to seek outside help; first step to enable clerk to post on Facebook as HPC and to seek a volunteer web designer.

Speak to O Cronk re clerk posting as HPC on Hermitage general Facebook sites and ask CAPC who did their web page

Chairman

Draft Facebook post re website designer and repost, clerk to post on HPC page
Cllr Govier/ Clerk
An achievable plan is needed.

Draft outline plan for improving communications & send to officers & clerk

Cllr Turner

13.10.23 Policy Review

Anti-bullying and harassment

Cllr Govier

Investment and fraud to be considered by

Cllr Turner

Freedom of information for review by

Cllr Brown

The draft open spaces policy had been revised since previous review following discussions with VH and circulated prior to meeting. Changes minor only. Accepted: to be put on website
Clerk

14.10.23 Correspondence received since the last meeting not referred to elsewhere

Correspondence noted on agenda.

15.10.23 Reports from Parish Council representatives who have attended meetings of outside bodies on behalf of the council

Nick Burraston – Connecting Communities on 9 November, report to follow attendance.

Chairman will attend BALC AGM. Expecting same officers for election and proposal not to increase subscriptions. HPC agreed we should support these. Cllr Turner and Chairman will attend finance training.

16.10.23 Items to be raised by Councillors (information only)

Nothing to report on Youth Clubs.

17.10.23 Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent (information only)

The chairman said she would be sending condolences to the Barlow family and HNPC on behalf of HPC.

18.10.23 Date of the next meeting

Thursday 16th November at 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21:30.

Signed _____ Dated _____

Appendices

Chairman's Report