

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON-ON-THE-HILL PARISH
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, VILLAGE HALL, MAIN
STREET, HOUGHTON-ON-THE-HILL ON WEDNESDAY 1st MARCH 2006
AT 8:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Cllr. Mr M. Stevenson (Chairman)
Cllr. Mr R. Davis
Cllr. Mrs A. Nunan
Cllr. Mrs A. Sharman
Cllr. Mrs A. Sleath
Mrs K. J. Grundy (Departing Parish Clerk)
Dr. D. Campbell (Incoming Parish Clerk)

1. PRESENTATION BY MR A. LEE HEADMASTER, HOUGHTON
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Before the Parish Council meeting was opened, the Council was pleased to hear a short presentation by two pupils and Headmaster of Houghton Primary School on work they had done in encouraging all pupils to walk to school and the results of their efforts. A reduction of traffic congestion in the area of the school in order to improve safety is a target for the Parish Council, School Governors, and Teachers. The efforts and the publication of the results from the school are thus welcomed by the Council. The safety of our children is seen as the highest priority by all parties.

The children presented ten ways in which the school encouraged parents and children to walk to school. The Council discussed these points and took from the presentation some follow-up actions. Mr Lee then presented some survey statistics that showed the proportion of walkers had not significantly changed over the three years of the campaign (49.4% in 2006; 49.8% in 2005; and 46% in 2004). Some slight reduction in traffic had been achieved by car sharing.

The Council discussed the statistics and the steps taken by the school. It was decided to consider the presentation and the results and discuss this as an agenda item for the next Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Council thanked the pupils and the Headmaster for their work and presentation.

Following this presentation the Chairman opened the meeting at 8:30 pm.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Mr S. Blackwell.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made when agenda items were being discussed and recorded accordingly.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 1st FEBRUARY 2006

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 1st February 2006, were duly amended, confirmed, and signed.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

a) Village Pump.

In view of the repair cost for the door of the pump housing, the Chairman asked that another quote be obtained. Another quote had been received at £445 (+VAT). The original quote was £235. Before placing the order for the smaller amount it was decided to have a site visit and discuss the whole issue of the village pump and its condition. *(See Clerks note in Appendix 1 of these minutes)*

Action Completed

b) Insurance Cover

The insurance cover for the Parish Council was to be examined and reported upon by the Clerk. The Clerk was asked to find out the cost of premiums to cover Council member's liability while serving on other bodies and committees. The information received was that no cover could be provided and it was up to the individual bodies to provide such liability insurance.

Action Completed

c) Field Association Working Party.

It has been decided that a letter should be written to the Charity Commissioners expressing the Parish Council's concern. After discussion with the Field Working Party members (Cllr Mrs A. Sleath & Cllr. Mrs A. Nunan), the Clerk was asked to provide a draft letter for discussion.

Action Parish Clerk

d) Unauthorised advertising sign in Main Street

Two advertising signs are now affixed to the side of the house in Main Street. As it was not known if these represent Companies undertaking work on the premises it was decided to leave them until the next meeting.

Action Completed

e) Highways issues

The Highways engineer was happy to meet the Parish Council to discuss the problems of the A47 and a meeting was provisionally scheduled for the end of February. This was cancelled and rescheduled for 6th March at 14:30 outside the Rose & Crown.

Action Completed

f) Village Notice Boards

The Parish Clerk was asked to respond to Mrs Thomas concerning her letter and the Parish Council's policy on village notice boards.

Action Completed

g) Low Flying Light Aircraft

The issue would be brought up at the next Billesdon Forum (to be held in Houghton) in March to see if there was a consensus from all of the surrounding parishes on this matter.

Action Continuing – Cllr Mrs A. Sleath

h) Public Involvement in NHS

A new poster on public involvement was to be put on the notice board in the village.

Action Completed

i) Clearance of ground in St Catharine's Churchyard

The Chairman undertook to discuss this with the Church Wardens to see if the Parish Council or the Church Wardens should place the order. It had been agreed that the Parish Council should place the order.

Action Completed

j) Garden Club Estimates

Cllr D. Campbell undertook to ensure that the Garden Club did not ask work to be done without an estimate be prepared first and approval given by the Parish Council before work commenced.

Action Completed

k) New Parish Clerk

A short list for interviewing candidates was to be drawn up in the next few days and interviewing to start in the next few weeks.

Action Completed

l) Parish Plan Action Group

A meeting has now been arranged between councillors to discuss the way forward with this issue. Date 15th March 7:30 at Parish Clerk's house.

Action Complete

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 Highway Patrol – Annual Highway Safety Inspection

The annual highway patrol letter has been received and as the Council is anxious to draw the Highways department attention to some issues within the Parish, the Clerk

has been asked to list the issues and to ask if members of the Parish Council could accompany the Officers on their walk through the village.

Action - Parish Clerk

6.2 Neighbourhood Watch

A letter had been received from Mrs Woodcock asking if the Parish Council would fund the supply of new Neighbourhood watch signs. She asked for eight signs to be purchased at a price of £5.29 (total of £43.32). The Parish Council thought this a good idea and approved the action. The Parish Clerk was asked to write to her giving her permission to purchase the signs.

Action - Parish Clerk

7. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Two planning applications had been received, both concerning a development at 25 Uppingham Road. The first was an application concerning an extension to a bungalow and as the date for submission for comment was before this present meeting, a response had already been submitted with the agreement with all Council members. The second application concerns a double garage at the same address and after some discussion the Clerk was asked to prepare a report to reflect the Parish Council's objection to this development.

Action - Parish Clerk

8. FINANCIAL MATTERS

8.1 Grants to Outside Bodies

Houghton Village Hall – Mrs Ann Sharman presented the audited accounts of the Village Hall which allowed the payment of its grant of £2000.00

Houghton Methodist Church – The annual donation of £400.00 was approved.

Houghton Field Association – No audited accounts had been presented and so no grant could be paid.

8.2 Parish Clerk's 4th quarter payments

The Outgoing Parish Clerk presented her final quarters payment details and expenses. The Parish Council approved this and payment was made of £495.65.

9. BEST VILLAGE COMPETITION

The application forms for the 'Best Village Competition' are now due to be submitted. A discussion took place as to whether Houghton was going to take part in this competition this year. Cllr Mrs Ann Sharman felt that since the old form of competition (Best Kept Village) had been abandoned in favour of a new definition, there was a reduction in the intrinsic and practical value in being in such a competition. It was decided that Houghton would reserve its position with respect to this new competition and would not submit an entry this year.

10. ALLOTMENTS

10.1 Responses from four Parish Councils regarding donations

Three out of four Parish Councils have responded to the request of the Parish Council asking for a donation in support of non-resident persons using a Houghton amenity. All three responses have been negative and with a refusal to consider any such donation. Some discussion took place between Councillors and it was decided to postpone any decision until the final letter had been received and some discussion had taken place with the Garden Club. The issue was to be an agenda item for next months meeting.

10.2 Land Registry

The Parish Clerk is to identify the allotment deeds and who has them before any registration can take place.

Action - Parish Clerk

10.3 Garden Club representation

The issue of the negative response from Parish Councils regarding donations and the loss of the Garden Club's representation on the Parish Council is to be discussed with them before the next meeting.

Action Cllr M. Stevenson

11. PARISH COUNCIL CLERK VACANCY

A new Parish Clerk had been appointed. He is Dr D.R.J. Campbell who is currently a councillor on this Parish Council. His duties start today (1st March 2006).

12. PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCY

The new Parish Clerk, being a councillor, has had to resign from the Council and consequently there is now a vacancy. As the Council has less than a year to go before all members are up for re-election it was decided not to advertise the position but to make it generally known and co-opt any single application. Multiple applications would require an election and this was thought to be a waste of public money so near the Council re-election date.

13. SCHOOL GOVERNOR VACANCY

The new Parish Clerk, being a School Governor representative of the Council, has to resign from this position as he no longer is a Councillor. He explained that the role of School Governor has changed significantly recently with more responsibility and work being devolved to Governors from the Local Education Authority. He felt that to do the job properly and conscientiously he would have to take on as much work, if not more, than he did in his role as Councillor. Although the work load was unsustainable when coupled with a Councillors role (and especially with a Clerk's role) the job was very important as there was an essential need to strengthen the links between the school and the community. There was general agreement with the issue of work load and the expectation of maintaining this position whilst undertaking the job of Parish

Clerk was unreasonable. The Chairman pointed out that it was only the liaison between the Council and the School that was important and asked if an *ex-officio* or observers role could be negotiated. The overall responsibilities of a full governorship were not envisaged at the time of the appointment of this Council – School link. The Clerk was asked to write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors to see if such a role could be arranged.

Action - Parish Clerk

14. REPORT OF REPRESENTATIVES

- School Governors – Nothing to report (see item 13 above).
- Village Charities – Nothing to report.
- Village Hall – The Village Hall AGM was held on 6th February 2006. Mostly it was concerned with internal affairs and a copy of the Annual Report 2005 was passed to the Clerk for record purposes.
- LRAPLC – Nothing to report
- Field Association– Communication has been received from Mr D. Woods asking for permission to use the format and most of the contents of the Parish Council’s Policy on Travellers and Unauthorised Encampment. The Council felt that a unified policy was sensible but would like to see the Field Association’s draft document before giving final approval.

Action - Parish Clerk

- Billesdon Community Forum – The next meeting is planned for the 7th March 2006 at Houghton’s Methodist Church Hall.
- Garden Club – As Cllr Dr. D. Campbell was the Parish Council’s representative at this club and he has resigned from the Council, another representative needs to be found. This was to be discussed with the Garden Club before the next meeting (see 10.3 above).

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 22:00 pm.

SIGNED.....
CHAIRMAN

DATE.....

APPENDIX 1

PARISH CLERK'S REPORT ON SITE VISIT TO VILLAGE PUMP

A site visit to the Village Pump was arranged for 14:00 on the 2nd march 2006. As this was only 18 hours after the Parish Council Meeting discussed the Village Pump issue (See item 5a of these minutes) it was thought that for the purposes of completion and clarity the comments and findings of that visit should be included in these minutes.

The site visit was made with Cllrs. Mr R. Davis, Mrs Ann Nunan, Mrs Ann Sharman and Mrs Ann Sleath, and with Dr D. Campbell, Parish Clerk, in attendance.

The condition of the pump house was examined and the following defects were obvious from casual inspection:

- The lintel over the door is rotten at one end and not supporting the weight of the roof.
- The bottom of door is rotten
- Only a single hinge supports the door
- The single hinge supporting the door has been broken away from door
- A padlock locking the door closed has rusted solid and no key is known to exist (not that it would work anyway)
- Roof slates are broken and some are smashed and scattered in the road.
- Soil from embankment behind pump house lies against pump house and spills onto the roof.
- Ivy had grown up and over one side on pump house roof
- Old tree roots and still living Cypresses surround the pump house and have significantly contributed (and are still contributing) to the slow destruction of the structure

The Councillors agreed that simply to repair the door was insufficient and much more is needed to be done. It was agreed that:

- Harborough District Council should be contacted as it was the collapse of their embankment that has done significant damage to the pump house.
- The tree roots and vegetation around the pump house has and continues to have a contribution to its dereliction.
- Without a retaining wall any repairs to the pump house would be a waste of money
- It was important to try to obtain some funding from HDC to affect some repairs.
- It was important to try to obtain some funding from other sources to repair and restore the pump.

In the first instance the Clerk was instructed to write to HDC to try to get them to look at the situation and build a retaining wall for their embankment. Other actions would follow based upon HDC's reaction.