

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 7<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2006 AT  
8:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Cllr. Mr M. Stevenson (Chairman)  
Cllr. Mrs A. Sharman  
Cllr. Mrs A. Nunan  
Cllr. Mr S. Blackwell  
Cllr. Mr R. Davis  
Dr. D. Campbell (Parish Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mrs A. Sleath and Mrs J. Tooley (HDC).

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were to be made when agenda items were being discussed. They will then be recorded accordingly. Councillor's attention was drawn to the information presented to them in their meeting pack concerning declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 3<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2006

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2006, were confirmed, and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

4.1 The Clerk was asked, with the help of Cllr S. Blackwell, to look at higher interest accounts. As the accounts are not ready, little can be done. It was agreed to wait until the accounts are completed before looking at this issue.

4.2 The Clerk was to find out more about the grass-cutting contract with the service providers.

**Action – Complete**

The Clerk reported the following information:

- Grass cutting in Houghton is undertaken under three separate contracts. One with Leicestershire County Council for highways related areas (verges etc),

another with Harborough District Council for open spaces etc., and a third with Houghton Parish Council for the Churchyard, the Playing Field and the Village Hall field.

- The latter contract is not a contract *per se* but more a rolling purchase order that can be stopped at the start of any year. Unless informed to stop, the grass-cutters will continue to cut the grass under this rolling purchase order.
- As it has been stipulated in the past that a cylinder mower should cut the grass (for neatness), a minimum of 12 cuts per year is required – any less and the grass ‘clumps’ making cylinder mowing impossible.

There was much discussion on this subject that resulted in the Parish Council expressing satisfaction on the way the grass of open spaces and Parish responsibility is cut. However, it was unanimously agreed that the verges were poorly cut and a mess was made of them. The Clerk was instructed to write a letter of complaint to Leicestershire County Council.

**Action – Parish Clerk**

4.3 The rights of way improvement plan was passed to Cllr R. Davis to examine it and he has responded accordingly.

**Action – Complete**

4.4 Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document – the Clerk was instructed to purchase a copy from HDC.

**Action – Complete**

*(Note: A copy is now with the Clerk in Hard copy and electronic form. Any Councillor requiring a copy should ask the Clerk).*

4.5 The Clerk was instructed to now apply for land registration.

**Action – Complete**

4.6 Over flying of the Village. The Clerk was asked to write a letter of support for the pressure group ‘DEMAND’ and to register the Parish Council’s objection to the over flying with NEMA

**Action – Complete – see ‘Black Bag’**

4.7 Insurance Policy. The Clerk was asked to go ahead and re-new the policy.

**Action – Complete**

4.8 Development of Day Services for Disabled People. Cllr. Mrs A. Nunan was to consider the documents and to report to the NHS by the time indicated. She was asked to let the Clerk have a copy of the submission and to return the documents to the Clerk for filing when she had finished with them.

**Action – Complete**

*(Note: Cllr Mrs A. Nunan had examined the documents and found little upon which to comment).*

4.9 Lift sharing. The RCC has informed the council of a lift-sharing scheme. The Clerk was asked to include it in his notes for Houghton News.

**Action – Complete**

4.10 Highway modifications

The Clerk was asked to remind the Highways department of Stretton Lane and the A47 changes. We are still awaiting their response in this area.

**Action – Complete**

*(Note: The Clerk reported that he had received an e-mail from the highways department saying that the boundary issues with properties along the A47 are turning out to be more difficult than envisaged. He would try to speed things up).*

4.11 Annual Subscription for ‘aplc’ carried over from the last meeting - £270. The Clerk was asked to determine the value to the Parish Council as well as identifying the level of past fees.

**Action – Complete**

4.12 Responses from four Parish Councils regarding donations. The Clerk had drafted a second letter to the four Parish Councils and it was agreed that the letters should be sent.

**Action – Complete**

4.13 The Garden Club has been asked to review their rules concerning the supply of plots to outside residents and to possibly increase the rent to these people. A report from the PC representative is expected.

**Action Complete – See agenda item 9**

4.14 Vandalism - The Garden Club representative was going to attend the Garden Club AGM and report on the discussion at the next Parish Council Meeting in respect of anti-vandal fencing.

**Action Complete – See agenda item 9**

4.15 Core Strategy Document - The Parish Council was invited to respond to this document and it was passed to Cllr Mr S. Blackwell to lead the consultation process. He was to co-opt Cllr Mrs A. Sharman and Cllr Mrs A. Sleath (and any other member of the Council) in order to structure a response by the due date. He was asked to let the Clerk have a copy of the submission and to return the Clerk’s files when he had finished with them. It was expected that the response would be sent by ‘the end of next week’ (16<sup>th</sup> June).

**Action – Continuing Cllr. Mr S. Blackwell and others**

4.16 The Clerk re-presented a draft letter written to the Charity Commissioners. The Council wanted to discuss it in a Working Party meeting. Due to conflicts of timing, this has not been possible but it has been re-scheduled for Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May.

**Action – Continuing -Field Association Working Party**

4.17 Re-cycling of Plastics - The Clerk was tasked with responding to the Field Association’s concerns (see correspondence) and the Chairman was going to ask Cllr. Mrs A. Sleath if she would undertake co-ordination of this activity.

**Action – Complete See item 13 and Exhibit J in Agenda minutes**

4.18 Village Web site - Mrs Ford, from the public, indicated that she had experience of web site development and would be happy to be involved in such a project. The Chairman thanked her and asked the Clerk to note this offer for Cllr Mr S. Blackwell to pass it on accordingly).

**Action Completed**

## 5. CORRESPONDENCE

5.1 Request from Houghton School to use the Committee Room. The headmaster of Houghton School has asked if the school could use the Committee Room for a changing room for the school concert. This use coincides with the next Parish Council meeting. It was decided that for this one evening only an alternative venue of the cricket pavilion could be used. The Clerk was instructed to inform the headmaster accordingly.

**Action – Parish Clerk**

5.2 Unauthorised signage in the village. A response has been received to the Council's letter asking advertising signs to be taken down from 30 Main Street. The residents at this address have insisted on the right to use advertising when having alterations done to their house. The Parish Council did not want to be drawn into any confrontational arguments and has instructed the Clerk to check on the status of the alterations, the rules governing advertising of contractors, and to obtain an undertaking that the signs will be removed as soon as the work is complete.

**Action - Parish Clerk**

## 6. FINANCIAL MATTERS

6.1 At last month's meeting, the Chairman asked the Clerk to ascertain the current state of funds and to reconfigure the budget in a suitable way for monitoring expenditure.

The Clerk had looked at the budgeted split in income and expenditure and decided to rearrange the activities that the Council in a way that would allow the monitoring of expenditure. New headings have been devised that naturally group together planned activities. The Clerk asked the councillors to note that budget does not balance – expenditure exceeds income by £1,822.00. This discrepancy is deliberate and is accounted for by a possible under spend from last year's accounts carried over into this year.

The Parish Council may only hold reserves up to a level of the annual precept plus 25%, which in our case is £15,000. The Council would do well to reduce our reserves by another £6,637 (approx) in order not to be in difficulties with the auditor.

The Clerk has looked at the Council's plans for the year, has amended the budget to include these extra activities, and balanced it with extra expenditure. Thus, we have two budgets included here – the first is the one described above and the other is the enhanced one to take into account the financial excess.

The Council should instruct the Clerk on what basis they wish to see the expenditure, bank balances, and year end projections. In addition, some discussion needs to be undertaken on what budget to adopt.

The discussion that followed was detailed and useful with emphasis on what projects should be looked at and in what order. It was agreed that our reserves should be reduced to an amount in line with the 125% guidelines and that the second enhanced budget should be the one to which we should work.

Current thoughts on suitable projects were discussed and a tree planting scheme, bulbs for verges, a 'nice' village name sign, and restoration of the village pump were all considered.

The Clerk was asked to get in touch with the tree warden of the village to establish a link with their activities.

**Action - Parish Clerk**

6.2 Discussion took place on the state of the Council's bank accounts. It holds two accounts, and on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 they were as follows:

Current account	£2,777.11
Treasury account	£20,681.46

6.3 The Clerk reported that due to illness, the previous Clerk had had little time to finish the accounts and so he would be taking them over in order to complete the formalising and auditing process.

6.4 It was decided that the Clerk should provide expenditure and budget figures every quarter to the Parish Council.

6.5 Signing of Cheques

- Annual Subscription for 'aplc' carried over from the last meeting - £270.
- Cheque for renewal of insurance - £456.89

## 7. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

7.1 Discussions took place concerning the planning application for residential development of Smart's Building Yard on Uppingham Road. Although it was seen as a positive solution to the housing situation it was also regrettable that Houghton was losing its last industrial area. The Clerk was instructed to comment upon this in his response to the Planning department.

**Action - Parish Clerk**

7.2 Before continuing with the planning issues the Chairman brought to the attention of the meeting the imminent arrival of the latest consultative document of the Local Area Framework Document that is to be issued early next week. Cllr S. Galton had contacted the Chairman to tell him of the arrival

of this document and how it may become of specific interest to the public. Cllr Galton thought it would be worth discussing this at the Parish Council Meeting to see how Houghton wished to handle the situation and consultation with the villagers. As the Parish Council had not seen the document and how it would affect Houghton there was little that could be said. It was decided that upon receipt of the document the Clerk should disseminate and allow councillors to decide if a special meeting to discuss the documents following some consultation with the Chairman.

**Action - Parish Clerk**

7.3 The Tennis Club's pavilion was discussed next, but as it had not been submitted for the planning process, and was only available for comment, it was left at this stage to be examined by councillors.

7.4 The application at 13, Uppingham Road was considered. The Parish Council had no specific issue or comment to be made concerning the application.

## 8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The subject of affordable housing for the village has been mentioned informally several times in the last 18 months and although there was some formal approach to the subject in December 2004 and some correspondence, nothing has been recorded since.

The concept of affordable housing has become more prominent recently and it is a subject that the Parish Council will need to examine in the future. It is known that there has been some informal contact on this subject between councillors and the housing department but now it is seen as appropriate that the subject be formalised so that the Parish Council can start to study and debate this subject.

The Chairman proposed the following:

***It is PROPOSED that this Parish Council undertakes a feasibility study into the options for providing affordable housing for Houghton.***

The proposal was carried unanimously.

The Chairman then propose the following:

***It is PROPOSED that, because of its importance, this feasibility study be undertaken under the control of a Working Party consisting of three councillors and that their findings and progress should be reported to the Parish Council every month.***

The proposal was carried unanimously.

Discussion then took place on who would be on the working party and it was finally agreed that it should consist of Cllr. Mr S. Blackwell, Cllr. Mr M. Stevenson, and Cllr. Mrs A. Sharman.

## 9. ALLOTMENTS

9.1 Cllr Mrs A. Nunan presented a verbal report on the activities of the Garden Club. She reported that in response to the Parish Council's request, the Garden Club have amended the rules governing their waiting list. Priority for allotments will now be given to Houghton residents with vacancies being advertised in Houghton News. She added that there was no discussion with respect to increases in rents for non-Houghton residents but would re-address this point at the next meeting.

9.2 Cllr Mrs A. Nunan reported the Garden Society's complaint of a pothole on the road approaching the allotment garden. It would appear that the responsibility lays between the owner of the private drive and the Leicestershire County Council highways authority as the hole straddles both areas of accountability. As the hole had been temporarily filled and the area is pending development, the Parish Council felt that nothing more needs to be done at the moment. The Council will monitor the situation.

9.3 It was reported that the Parish Council had received another quotation concerning the chain and post fence system upon which we had agreed. The quotation was £1,568.00. This was considerably more than expected but it was felt that if funds were available then the best job should be used to solve the problem for the last time. Another quotation is expected and then a decision will be made.

## 10. TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

10.1 A47 and Stretton Lane progress. As mentioned above, there remains some difficulty in establishing boundaries at the A47 and until that situation is clarified, little can be done. In their response to the Parish Council's prompting, there has been no response in respect of Stretton Lane. The Highways department will be prompted again.

**Action - Parish Clerk**

10.2 Bus stop removal. A letter had been received saying that a site visit will be arranged and if the work is carried out, it will not be until August.

10.3 Linwal Avenue Footpath. The letter to Mr Thompson (Development Control) at County Hall has been acknowledged and passed on to the 'rights of way' department. Mr H. Bartlet has attempted to contact the Clerk in the last few days without success but has indicated that he sees no issue to be considered. The Clerk will contact him when he becomes available to clarify the situation.

**Action - Parish Clerk**

10.4 The School Travel Plans have been received from the headmaster and now need to be considered in the light of the conversations already had with the Highways engineers. Cllr M. Stevenson agreed to look at them to see what could be done.

**Action - Cllr Mr. M. Stevenson**

10.5 Drop kerbs, Safety fencing and bollards. All that we had asked for has now been installed. The public response has been generally good although there is some misunderstanding on the purpose of the bollards in Main Street. Their effectiveness has been such that a few more on corner opposite the War Memorial corner would stop vehicles driving along that stretch of pavement as well. The clerk was asked to see if this could be arranged.

**Action - Parish Clerk**

## 11. DOG FOULING

Cllr Mr S. Blackwell addressed the meeting with the question concerning the imposition of the FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) and the powers that would be devolved to the Parish Council in respect of dog fouling and graffiti.

The discussion that followed centred upon the letter concerning the New Enforcement team and the report prepared by Cllr Mrs A. Sleath (attached to the minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2006).

## 12. CHARITY COMMISSIONERS

The draft letter to the Charity Commissioners, that needs to be discussed and decided upon before being sent, has missed another month due to councillors not being available. The Chairman pointed out that the letter is dated 4<sup>th</sup> March and in the intervening time, no one has had time to look at it. He asked that the Working Party responsible for this issue try to deal with the situation as quickly as possible.

**Action Field Association Working Party**

## 13. PARISH PLAN PROJECTS

13.1 Action 6.5 Village Seating. Due to time difficulties and the absence of Cllr. Mrs A. Sleath, no report of progress has yet been made on this subject.

13.2 Action 6.13 A 'Welcome Pack'. Houghton News has had its AGM but failed to comment upon this item. Cllr Mr M. Stevenson will contact them to find out their views.

**Action - Cllr Mr M. Stevenson**

13.3 Action 6.15 Re-cycling of Plastics. The Clerk has responded to the Field Association and has answered their concerns. It is believed that the Field Association is reconsidering the matter and will respond soon.

13.4 Action 6.23 Village Web site. Houghton News has responded to the Clerk's letter outlining the idea and the possible contents of the web site. The response was encouraging but it depends upon resources and some other considerations. Cllr. Mr S. Blackwell will arrange a meeting to discuss the matter.

**Action – Cllr. S. Blackwell**

13.5 Village Well Housing and Pump. The Clerk is awaiting a letter from Mr P. Smith concerning the cost of putting in a retaining wall and digging away the

embankment. Although this is, what the situation demands the cost of the activity means it will never happen. However cost sharing may be an option and he will write with his proposals.

#### 14.CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Following some discussion concerning the method of co-option a few weeks ago the Chairman had asked the Clerk to prepare a statement outlining the procedure for this process. The Clerk presented the law as it stands thus: -

If a vacancy occurs in the Council then the following must happen:

1. If there is six months before an election then the vacancy can be left and nothing needs to be done.
2. If there is more than six months then the following happens:
  - A public notice should be made declaring a vacancy, and if called for by 10 or more electors an election must be declared.
  - If no such requests are received then the position is advertised as one for co-option. Letters applying for co-option should be sent to the Clerk.
  - If more than one person applies for the post of a co-opted member, then it becomes necessary to hold a vote within the Parish Council to determine the successful candidate.
  - The voting process is one of a simple majority with all the councillors voting.

#### 15.REPORT OF REPRESENTATIVES

- School Governors – It is unlikely that a school governor position will be modified to suit the liaison role envisaged by the Parish Council. The Clerk however was happy to maintain the informal role currently being undertaken.
- Village Charities – Nothing to report
- Village Hall – A meeting was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May. It discussed various domestic details and the problems encountered with the new licensing laws.
- LRAPLC – Nothing to report
- Field Association – Nothing to report
- Billesdon Community Forum – Nothing to report
- Garden Club – Nothing to report

SIGNED.....

CHAIRMAN

DATE.....