



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of Helsby Parish Council held virtually at 7pm on Monday 13th July 2020 via Zoom

Present:

Cllr. Peter Duffy – Chairman
Cllr. Alan Gardner
Cllr. Terry O’Neill
Cllr. George Randles

Cllr. Chris Ellams
Cllr. Mags Porter
Cllr. Sarah Temple
Claire Jones, Parish Clerk

Cllr. Michelle Massey
Cllr. Patricia Holder
Cllr. Mike Branigan

In attendance:

Mrs Marj Thoburn representing Helsby News
Mr Bill Pearson – resident
Mr Gordon Karling - resident

Chairman’s announcements: The Chairman thanked all those involved in the cemetery tidy up working party on 9 July. He said that the team had done a brilliant job and had put the area back into a good order. He expressed his thanks in particular to David Temple and Nick Massey who had put in a huge amount of hard work in to help the council.

1. Public Air Time. Proposed by Cllr. O’Neill, seconded by Cllr. Ellams and **RESOLVED – that the meeting be suspended for public participation – HPC51/20.**

Mr Gordon Karling and Mr Bill Pearson spoke in relation to their objection to planning application 20/01926/FUL (Land at Stephens Grove). They both referred to 4 previous planning applications on this site that had been refused, the poorly designed access to the site, increased levels of traffic and the negative impact of the proposed development on this environmentally and ecologically sensitive part of Helsby. Mr Karling tabled a number of photos showing the visual impact of the proposal on the neighbouring landscape and its dominance on Helsby Hill. He also spoke about its non-compliance with many policies in the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan.

Mr Pearson expressed concern that the application had not considered the impact on residential amenity with his own property which shared a 40m open border with the garden of Quarry Cottage. He also expressed concern that that the developer wasn’t showing due care to the environment or the village as several mature trees had been felled on the site before they had submitted a tree survey to the local planning authority. The Chairman thanked both speakers for their input and said that the application would be considered by the council later on in the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr. Ellams, seconded by Cllr. Randles and **RESOLVED – that Public Air Time be closed and the meeting reconvened – HPC52/20.**

2. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Kimpton.

3. Declarations of Interest. Cllrs. O'Neill and Randles declared non-pecuniary interest in Item 13 as both were Executive Members of Helsby Community Sports Club. Cllr O'Neill declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 11.1 as he was a Board Member of ChALC.

4. Police Matters

4.1 A report was submitted from PCSO Davies as follows:

- Deployments of Helsby Trucam

Trucam had been deployed on Chester Road and Primrose Lane on various dates as well as in various locations in Frodsham and Elton. A request had been put out on social media to see if there were any other roads of concern.

- Bike Marking

A bike marking event was carried out on 4th July. It was a massive success with over 30 bikes security marked. More funding was needed to purchase bike marking kits to run another event.

- Anti-social Behaviour

Sherwood Court – The police are aware of issues and carry out regular patrols in the area. A video had been gained and police will be attending Helsby High School to see if any offenders could be identified.

Helsby Hill – fewer ASB issues have been reported this month. However, the area remains on the regular patrol plan.

HCSC Bowling Green – PCSO had attended and spoken to the club, offered reassurance and regularly patrols during late shifts. Cllr O'Neill expressed his thanks to PCSO Davies for her prompt response in dealing with this matter.

4.2 No members reports were received.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting. Proposed by Cllr. O'Neill, seconded by Cllr. Randles and **RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2020 be accepted as accurate and duly signed by the Chairman – HPC53/20.**

6. Matters arising from the previous meeting.

6.1 The following member's reports were received:

- Progress on the re-opening of Old Chester Road. Following the resolution at the last meeting to write to the Chief Executive of CW&C to complain about the lack of action from their Highways Department, several councillors expressed their dismay at the response which was felt to be out-of-date on the matter. It was agreed that the clerk would reply to express the council's disappointment with the response and to ask the council to lay out a proposed timetable for action. It was also requested that the correspondence was copied to the local MP and Cllr. Bowers so they were aware of the situation;
- Helsby News Working Group – it was reported that a small working group had been set up and a meeting had been arranged for 16 July;
- COVID-19 health and safety statement for HPC employees – it was reported that a small working group had been set up to discuss all HR issues on 15 July; and
- Rake Lane Cottage (19/03851/FUL) – the clerk agreed to contact CW&C's Planning Department again to see if there was any update on the ongoing road works associated with this development.

- 6.2 An amendment to the minutes of 9th March was noted – Miss Mary Moss, Chairman of the Community Association, was in attendance at the meeting, not Mrs Wright.
7. Cheshire West and Chester Council
- 7.1 Councillors noted that Cllr. Ellams had responded to a consultation on Highways Service Delivery on behalf of the Parish Council.
- 7.2 Cllr. Bowers did not attend.
- 7.3 Cllr. O’Neill outlined that he had reported the poor markings around the disabled parking bay by the post office on Chester Road and someone from CW&C’s Highways Department had agreed to visit the site in due course. He noted that there was no option for reporting poor road markings on their online fault reporting form.
8. Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 29 June 2020. Cllr. O’Neill presented the draft minutes (previously circulated) that included the following recommendations:
- 8.1 Cllr. O’Neill elected as Chairman;
- 8.2 Cllr. Temple elected as Vice Chairman;
- 8.3 Grants and Earmarked Reserves table to 31st March 2021 – updated and included with the minutes;
- 8.4 Investment programme – Proposed by Cllr. O’Neill seconded by Cllr. Randles and **RESOLVED to add Claire Jones (clerk) as signatory to Co-op and Monmouthshire accounts – HPC54/20;**
- 8.5 Internal Auditor’s Report – the Audit Report had 2 recommendations as follows:
- (i) ISSUE – An incorrect balance is entered on the annual return for Box 8 Total value of cash and short-term investments. It is stated as £132,457 when it should be £133,070 which is the reconciled bank balance. RECOMMENDATION – the annual return should be amended. **To be noted that these figures were amended during the audit – unanimously agreed.**
- (ii) ISSUE – We could not find evidence that three quotes were obtained for the following contract as per the financial regulations of the council (which requires three quotes for contracts over £250): Maddocks Landscaping £380. RECOMMENDATION – Contracts should be awarded as per the financial regulations of the council. Council should ensure when the periodically review the financial regulations that procurement levels remain appropriate. **Noted. Council to review financial regulations to ensure that levels remain appropriate. Unanimously agreed.**
- 8.6 Budget Analysis updated and included with the minutes;
- 8.7 Review of Financial Regulations – it was proposed by Cllr. O’Neill, seconded by Cllr. Duffy and **RESOLVED to accept the following changes to the Financial Regulations: Page 6 (Contracts) to increase the lower limit for requiring three quotes for any contracts to be increased from £250 to £500 – HPC55/20;**
- 8.8 Clerk to review the council’s financial regulations, asset register and financial risk assessment in advance of the next meeting; and
- 8.9 Helsby Community Centre – it was proposed by Cllr O’Neill, seconded by Cllr. Temple and **RESOLVED to accept forwarding the £10,000 grant from CW&C to Helsby Community Association to cover their losses during COVID-19 – HPC56/20.** Clerk to write to HCA with the payment and to request some information about any expenditure in this respect in case CW&C monitors grant spending at a later date;

- 8.10 5 Year Plan – Cllr. O’Neill reported that he had updated the action plan and had circulated this to all councillors. It was proposed that this could be adopted at the next Finance Committee meeting, along with the financial figures presented in the plan (currently still out for consultation). The Chairman thanked Cllr. O’Neill for his work on this.
9. Parks, Cemetery and Allotment Matters
- 9.1 Cllr. Temple reported that the Government had announced that parks and outdoor gyms could re-open from 4 July but the decision to re-open and any responsibility associated with this was left to the landowners. A risk assessment had been drawn up and had been circulated to councillors along with some draft signage. It was proposed by Cllr. Temple, seconded by Cllr. Gardner and **RESOLVED to re-open the play area subject to any measures identified in the risk assessment, including signage to say that the facilities were used at people’s own risk – HPC57/20.** The clerk to make sure any measures were in place as outlined in the risk assessment before the park was opened and to liaise with PSCO Lauren Davies to give it her passing attention once open.
- 9.2 Cllr Temple reported that Winsford Town Council representatives had carried out an inspection of the cableway following the latest ROSPA report. They had noted that both the traveller mechanism and the cable were showing signs of deterioration and whilst not currently felt to be dangerous, had recommended replacement. Following the inspection, the general assistant removed the chain and seat parts to avoid any further use. Given that this was specialist play equipment, the clerk had only managed to obtain 2 quotes for replacement, one from the manufacturer HAGS directly and a slightly cheaper one from Northwich Town Council for £1035. Proposed by Cllr. Temple, seconded by Cllr, Gardner and **RESOLVED to accept the quote from Northwich Town Council to replace the cable and traveller mechanism on the cableway at the play area – HPC58/20.**
- 9.3 It was noted that 2 new signs had been purchased from Kestrel Image Makers at a cost of £50 to replace the turnpike stone sign that had been vandalised recently at the park.
10. Financial Matters
- 10.1 It was proposed by Cllr. O’Neill, seconded by Cllr. Temple and **RESOLVED that the bank reconciliation sheet detailing £245,799.96 as at 30th June 2020 be accepted as accurate and duly initialled by the Chairman – HPC59/20.**
- 10.2 It was proposed by Cllr. Temple, seconded by Cllr. O’Neill and **RESOLVED to pay the Chairman an annual allowance of £175 (not £150 as recorded in the previous minutes (HPC31/20) – HPC60/20.**
- 10.3 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2019/20 Part 3.
- (i) Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20. The Chairman read out Questions 1-9. It was carried **UNANIMOUSLY that Helsby Parish Council was able to respond with the answer ‘Yes’ to Questions 1-8 and N/A to Q9 in Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 of the AGAR for 31st March 2020 demonstrating that the Parish Council had a sound system of internal financial control in place – HPC61/20.**
- (ii) Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20. Proposed by Cllr. O’Neill, seconded by Cllr. Temple and **RESOLVED that Helsby Parish Council approved the amounts in Section 1-11 of the AGAR for 31st March 2020 confirming that £133,070 was held in balances as at 31st March 2020 – HPC62/20.**

10.4 Payments. Proposed by Cllr. Temple, seconded by Cllr. O'Neill and **RESOLVED** that **the following payments totalling £6,039.94 paid by either standing order, direct debit, bank transfer, cheque or under delegated authority for June be approved and duly noted – HPC63/20.** The following receipts totalling £7,125.25 were also noted:

Payments

Date	Method	To whom paid	Particulars of payment	Amount
1/6/20	SO	Arndale Transport	Rent	320.00
15/6/20	DD	Water Plus	Water - community centre	30.48
15/6/20	DD	Scottish Power	Electricity - community centre	166.00
29/6/20	DPC	BT	Line rental	82.77
29/6/20	DPC	C. Jones	Postage, mileage and Zoom	59.00
29/6/20	DPC	S. Temple	Replacement allotment tap	6.50
29/6/20	DPC	Helsby VPA	Compost for planters	33.00
29/6/20	DPC	P. Duffy	Chairman's allowance	175.00
29/6/20	DPC	JDH Bus. Services	Internal Audit	330.48
29/6/20	DPC	BHIB	HPC Insurance	1829.16
29/6/20	DPC	Northwich TC	Grass cutting	499.80
30/6/20	DPC	C. Jones	Salary June 2020	1505.18
30/6/20	DPC	J. Robotham	Salary June 2020	364.00
30/6/20	DPC	J. Stockton	Salary June 2020	45.00
30/6/20	DPC	HMRC	Deductions Tax and NI June 2020	593.57

Receipts

Date	Method	From whom paid	Particulars of payment	Amount (£)
8/6/20	101006	J C Clarke	Burial fees	880.00
8/6/20	BACS	HMRC VTR	VAT reclaim	4,605.85
12/6/20	BACS	Buckley Memorials	Memorial stone fees	75.00
22/6/20	DPC	R A Cooper	Burial admin fee	60.00
24/6/20	100972	Helsby Comm Assoc.	Electricity and water	1,504.18
30/6/20	Auto	NatWest	Interest June 2020	0.22

11. Council Memberships and Subscriptions 2020/21

11.1 Proposed by Cllr. Randles, seconded by Cllr. Ellams and **RESOLVED** to **renew the council's membership with Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) at a cost of £1,449, along with one copy of NALC's Local Council Review at £17 – HPC64/20.**

11.2 Proposed by Cllr. Randles, seconded by Cllr. Temple and **RESOLVED** **join the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) at a cost of £227 plus a £15 joining fee – HPC65/20.** Clerk to investigate if this is an individual membership or whether it covers the full council.

11.3 Proposed by Cllr. Temple, seconded by Cllr. Holder and **RESOLVED** to **take out an annual subscription with Zoom at a reduced cost of £83.93 plus VAT – HPC66/20.**

12. Helsby Community Association – Cllr. Holder reported that a meeting of the association had been scheduled for 22 July. The clerk was asked to investigate when the centre may re-open to the public.

13. Helsby Community Sports Club

13.1 Cllr. Randles reported that progress on the new build continues and it is expected that it will be ready by the end of October.

13.2 It was noted that a meeting had been held in relation to the lease agreement for the new parish office. It was felt that the draft agreement was too complex as currently written and Cllr O'Neill had sent some proposed amendments to the club's solicitors for their consideration.

14. RSK rent waiver

Following discussion regarding a further request by RSK for deferral of any rent payments for another 3 months, it was proposed by Cllr. Randles, seconded by Cllr. O'Neill and **RESOLVED that the rent due from RSK for the Mountain View building be deferred for another 3 months i.e. to 1st October 2020 when the matter will be discussed by the council again – HPC67/20.**

15. Protos

Cllr Temple gave the following update:

- **Community Benefit Fund (CBF)**

- Panel met as planned on 20th May but via Zoom and approved the following applications:
 - Friends of Harmers Wood (replace fencing around the quarries)
 - Helsby Community Sports Club (two vacuums for maintaining the bowling greens)
 - Elton Gardeners Association (improvements to communal area at allotment site and a rotavator)
- Next CBF Panel meeting is 16th September 2020.
- There is about £16K left in the fund for 2020. Funding is discretionary and we have no idea if/how much Peel will provide in 2021. Please encourage any applications from Helsby groups before September!

- **Community Forum**

- The Community Forum meeting/AGM planned for 10th June was postponed, possibly until September.
- Development activities at the Protos site are mostly "on hold" due to Covid19 apart from maintenance for health and safety purposes. The biomass facility should now be operating as usual after a planned shutdown in April/May.
- The Protos site development manager, Jane Gaston, is on furlough/maternity leave until June 2021 but her deputy Lois Kay, is covering the role.

- **Air Quality (AQ) Monitoring**

- AQ monitoring is a condition of several planning applications that have been approved for different Protos facilities. The unit at the Eccies is run by a contractor, Ricardo, who until now have been engaged by the individual companies involved in each facility. Peel are now taking over the contract directly with Ricardo.
- Peel have requested a formal lease between themselves and HPC for the area related to the AQ monitor. This area is already separated out from the HPC-RSK lease so shouldn't be a problem. Peel have offered to prepare the legal document and the clerk will work with Lois on this.

- **Ellesmere Port AQ Forum**

- The meeting scheduled for 23rd April was postponed until further notice. The meeting is an annual event, attended by Cllr Temple. It is organised by CWAC and brings together reps from local industries and councils around the general area of the marshes.

16. Cheshire Association of Local Councils

Cllr O’Neill reported that ChALC’s first virtual finance meeting would be held on 16 July and a full ChALC Board meeting had been arranged two weeks later.

17. Planning

17.1 The council’s responses to the following planning applications were duly noted:

App no.	Address	Proposal	Comments
20/01487/FUL	Land at Profitts Lane	Proposed agricultural shed and stable block - amendment	Neither support nor object but as before, remain concerned about intrusion within the Green Belt. Should be restricted to private use
20/01926/FUL	Land at Stephens Grove	Erection of one dwelling	Objection – contrary to Helsby NP including in relation to visual amenity of Helsby Hill ENV2 and backland development H6. Also located in proposed conservation area
20/01187/FUL	Helsby Post Office	Create 3 apartments - new information/amendments	Neither support nor object but concerned about loss of footpath and more traffic on Mountain View
20/00053/REF	8 Old Chester Road	APPEAL: New 3 bed detached dwelling (amendments to 12/03879/FUL)	Clerk to re-iterate objection and original comments
20/02292/TPO	The Old Hall	Application for works to trees subject to a tree preservation order (TPO)	Awaiting comments

17.2 The council noted the following planning decisions from the planning authority:

App no.	Application address	Decision
20/01026/FUL	14 Landscape Dene	Approval
20/00692/LBC	Helsby Railway Station	Approval
19/02011/FUL	Westwood	Approval
20/01384/FUL	45 Lower Robin Hood Lane	Approval

17.3 Members Reports – Cllr. O’Neill reported that the Weaver Vale Housing Trust proposal to build 11 new 2 and 3-bedroom affordable homes on Sherwood Court had been approved. Cllr. Temple reported that in relation to the Westwood application (19/02011/FUL), CW&C has put an agreement in place to ensure the annexe is tied to the house to avoid it being sold as a separate dwelling (subject to a legal 106 Agreement). It was proposed by Cllr. Randles, seconded by Cllr. Ellams and **RESOLVED to write to Rob Charnley in relation to an update on the construction of the brick building on Towers Lane – HPC68/20.**

18. Dates of next council meetings

27th July 2020 Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee via Zoom
10th August 2020 Parish Council meeting via Zoom

19. Part B – Exclusion of the Press and Public. Proposed by Cllr. Randles, seconded by Cllr. Branigan and **RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paras 7, 8, 9 and 12 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 – HPC69/20.**

PART B – Exclusion of the Press and Public

20. Confidential Item – Agreed that Helsby Garden Services be appointed as the contractor for the cemetery maintenance contract.

The meeting closed at 8.14pm

Chairman’s signature..... Dated.....